“Let Our Voices Speak Loud and Clear”: Daisy Bates’s Leadership in Civil Rights and Black Press History

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This thesis titled

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Abstract

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"Let Our Voices Speak Loud and Clear": Daisy Bates's Leadership in Civil Rights and Black Press History

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This thesis examines the advocacy and journalistic work of civil rights activist and newspaper publisher Daisy Bates. It explores her ability to negotiate her black womanhood, while navigating the discriminatory practices in the South in the 1940s and 1950s. Bates and her husband founded the *Arkansas State Press* in Little Rock, Arkansas, in 1941, which echoed the sentiments of the civil rights movement at the time. As this thesis demonstrates, Bates's journalistic advocacy mirrored the practices of northern black publications, while defying the traditions of southern race relations. Her journalistic style, characterized by militant sarcasm and provocation of both whites and blacks, came to cement her as a trailblazing black journalist in a region heavily shaped by blacks' oppression. More than being a black woman in times of white male preeminence, Bates defied the double burden of racism and sexism as she reported on stories that attacked white supremacy and accounted for racial injustice in the South.

Through an assessment of her journalistic work, this thesis applies a historical research method to restore Bates's place in black press history and situate her within black feminist thought, as a radical frontrunner for women of color in the South in the twentieth century.

Dedication

To my academic advisor and mentor in life, Dr. Mike Sweeney.

And to my brother Sebastian,

Because a promise is a promise.

Acknowledgments

I am indebted to my wonderful committee, without who this thesis would not have been possible. A special acknowledgement to my chair, Dr. Mike Sweeney, for lighting the path and putting up with my incessant enquiring on research and life advice. I am forever grateful for everything you have taught me. To Dr. Aimee Edmondson for broadening my horizon and for being a true force of inspiration, in so many ways. And to Dr. Marilyn Greenwald, for teaching me to be a better writer and for your kindness and guidance.

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Introduction

On August 28, 1963, Daisy Lee Bates found herself at the marble steps of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C. Clad in narrow sunglasses, delicate pearl earrings, and a soft felt hat, she looked more like a first lady than a newspaper editor from southern Arkansas. Bates, a seasoned civil rights advocate, had spearheaded desegregation of public schools in the South in the late 1950s, while running the largest black newspaper in Arkansas, the *Arkansas State Press*, with her husband Lucious Christopher "L.C." Bates. As a newspaper publisher and editor, and an avid member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People in the 1940s and 1950s, she had grown to fame during the nadir of America's race relations, and cultivated fond alliances with fellow advocates of the movement, including Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. On that sweltering August day in 1963, a crowd of 250,000 huddled at the National Mall. People from all over the country had flocked to the nation's capital as part of the March on Washington, joining forces to demand equal job opportunities for blacks and urging Congress to pass pending legislation on civil rights issues.[1] Efforts to organize the march began in 1941, but it took twenty-two years for a coalition of civil rights leaders to realize the mass demonstration.[2] The interracial march centered on demands for equal access to jobs and fair pay, decent housing, voting rights for blacks, and a complete end to racial segregation.[3]

The most prominent leaders of the movement—including Dr. King, A. Philip Randolph, and Roy Wilkins[4]—had trooped down Constitution Avenue and gathered at the bottom of Lincoln Memorial. No women had walked alongside the group of men and

no women had been scheduled to speak that day.[5] However, a last-minute decision was made for Bates to briefly address the crowd. Among the towering male leaders, her petite figure dwarfed as she took the podium and commanded the attention of her fellow advocates:

> The women of this country, Mr. Randolph, pledge to you, to Martin Luther King, Roy Wilkins and all of you, fighting for civil liberties, that we will join hands with you as women of this country. . . . We will walk until we are free, until we can walk to any school and take our children to any school in the United States. And we will sit in, and we will kneel in, and we will lie in if necessary until every Negro in America can vote. This we pledge as the women of America.[6]

Despite being interrupted by thunderous applause, Bates spoke no longer than one minute. She urged the leaders of the movement not to forget the women fighting beside them, and reminded them that women too were willing to partake in every step of the battle to secure civil liberties for black Americans.[7]

The March on Washington was momentous in the quest for civil liberties and captured the attention of a torn nation. Bates's words reverberated an often-disregarded truth. The movement was a quest for racial justice through equal rights, but her speech—the only female speaker that day, not counting the musical performances from singers Mahalia Jackson, Marian Anderson, Joan Baez, Odetta, and Mary Travers of Peter, Paul, and Mary—resonated another issue of disparity. As a reflection of the repressive patriarchy that restricted the liberties of women in white 1960s America, gender discrimination saturated the everyday lives of black women in African American communities throughout the country. Bates addressed the gathering at the Mall at a time when women were supposed to be seen, not heard, thereby briefly entering a rhetorical space ordinarily occupied by men.[8]

Female protagonists, particularly in leadership roles, have been relegated to the background during the course of American history, and the civil rights era has been no exception. Even though certain women of color have been celebrated as trailblazers in historical movements, such as Ida B. Wells and Charlotta Bass, the predominance of black women advocating for social justice continues to be largely invisible in the American narrative. In civil rights history, black women have long been acknowledged merely as wives of prominent black men. Therefore, when Bates spoke from the footsteps of the Lincoln Memorial in 1963, she defied a longstanding tradition of women being subjected to inferiority through silence, as her words echoed the double bind of racism and sexism that women of color had suffered.

When Daisy and L.C. Bates launched the *State Press* in Little Rock in 1941, the couple advocated black uplift and reported with exasperation on the lack of civil liberties for blacks in their region. As circulation increased, the newspaper broadened its coverage to national issues, sparking controversy both within and outside the Deep South.[9] The Bateses attacked—at times mockingly—the tyrannical superiority of white Southerners and alluded to the cowardice of blacks who sided with whites or remained passive in times of oppression. The belligerent and assertive tabloid style made the *State Press* the most vocal clarion against white supremacy in the state, the aggressive rhetoric uprooting the region's race relations and sparking violent clashes.

In 1952, at the age of thirty-eight, Bates was elected president for the local NAACP chapter in Arkansas.[10] Aware that education was a vital instrument for black advancement, she adopted equal education in public schools as her core mission.[11] By the

late 1950s, she spearheaded racial integration in the state's public schools as she famously co-organized the integration of the whites-only school, Little Rock Central High. Bates had taken it upon herself to mentor the nine black students, the first to integrate the school in September of 1957. The mission to desegregate faced staunch resistance from white supremacists, as Governor Orval E. Faubus instated National Guardsmen in an attempt to block black students from entering the school. Weeks of white outrage and harassment of integrationists and the black students led to extensive media coverage. What emerged as a local integration controversy catalyzed a national debate on the South's regressive race relations.[12]

Nearly a month after integration was scheduled to take place, the federal government under President Eisenhower could no longer ignore the conflicts surrounding the desegregation of Central High, prompting the president to federalize the Arkansas National Guard, bringing them under his command, not Faubus's. Eisenhower ordered the freshly federalized troops to escort the black students into the school.[13] While daily harassment and discrimination was far from over, the official entry of black students into an all-white public school was a landmark event in the quest for racial equality. Behind this milestone stood Daisy and L.C. Bates, two pillars who had rallied the community through their newspaper and spurred national attention to successfully integrate the school.

Daisy Bates was applauded as a civil rights heroines by major black newspapers especially in the North as she successfully integrated Central High and displayed her boldness in guiding the nine students despite countless attacks and threats. However, in

1959 the *State Press* shuttered, unable to stay solvent because of a boycott of advertising revenue led by pressures on black advertisers by white supremacists in Little Rock. In the aftermath of the integration mission and the closure of the newspaper, Bates would continue her work with the NAACP as she toured the country to lecture at black universities.

Bates's participation in the desegregation of Central High has been documented in civil rights history, and her fight for racial equality has predominantly been restricted to one- or two-page biographies in encyclopedias or monographs. Occasionally she has been granted a full chapter in historical accounts of desegregation in the South. Two biographies on her role as a civil rights heroine through the lens of Little Rock provide extensive details about her personal life and her role as a mentor for the nine students. Bates was the co-founder, co-publisher, reporter, and eventually, the city editor, for the *State Press*, even though she had no prior experience within the newspaper industry and no formal education. Her name seldom appeared in the paper, reflecting a time in press history, both in the mainstream—white—press and in the black press, when women's bylines were primarily confined to "society pages," and their opinions considered inferior or irrelevant to those of male reporters.[14] Despite being a woman in times of male preeminence, she came to report on issues and write stories that brutally documented racial injustice in the South. She often relied on provocative sarcasm and militant narration to relay the realities of whites' oppression and persecution of blacks. However, as will be detailed in a literature review in the next chapter, limited mentions of her journalistic advocacy and involvement with the *Arkansas State Press* exist and therefore,

this part of her life has remained largely unknown in both civil rights and black press history.

Bates's resentment of white supremacy and quest for racial justice through equal education and voting rights came to saturate her work as an activist and as a journalist. This thesis seeks to restore Bates's place among southern journalists, both black and white, and will underscore that Daisy Bates was a force to be reckoned with, not shy to break with the confinements of southern race relations and the societal and legal status of being a black American. Furthermore, she came to siege spaces that were otherwise reserved for men in the early and midtwentieth century. Her blatant, and at times aggressive advocacy, left both white and black Southerners bewildered; she broke the South's deeply ingrained color line and pushed the boundaries of what it meant to be a woman, even in the civil rights movement. Her journalistic style challenged the traditions of contemporary black publications and she put herself in harm's way on numerous occasions.

This thesis argues that Bates's role as a female civil rights leader and journalist is significant and worthy of further examination. She was a head-on, assertive black advocate in a white man's world, but she was also a woman in a black man's world. While the civil rights movement fought for racial equality, the imminent reality was that sexism within black communities was as real as it was in America's white communities. While defying notions of early twentieth-century womanhood, she advocated for an end to white supremacy. She challenged both white and black leaders and came to access rhetorical spaces otherwise reserved for men. Through predominantly primary

documents, this thesis will give an in-depth assessment of Bates's journalistic work and contextualize her role as a female advocate and leader in the civil rights trajectory. This will be achieved through a qualitative historical analysis of Bates's articles in the *State Press*, and a broader comparison of the style and content of the *State Press* with contemporary black Southern newspapers.

The first chapter situates Bates as a female protagonist within the historical context of the civil rights movement and press history. Through an examination of existing literature on women in civil rights and black press history, as well as an assessment of existing scholarship on Bates, this chapter establishes the lack of research on Bates's journalistic work. The chapter concludes with an overview of the methodological approach applied in this historical study.

Through a blend of primary and secondary documents, chapter two serves as an account of Bates's early life and career, centering on her work as co-founder, editor and reporter for the *State Press,* and her advocacy work with the NAACP.

Chapter three is dedicated to an in-depth analysis of Bates's journalistic advocacy through an assessment of her editorial and written contributions in the *State Press.* This chapter focuses on Bates's journalistic voice and style, comparing her work with the customs of contemporary black newspapers in the South, while highlighting her notorious and blatant journalistic advocacy.

Chapter four situates Bates within black feminist thought to examine how she negotiated her dual membership identity, at the intersection of gender and race, and to

further explore how she navigated societal and institutional discriminatory practices as a black woman in a white man's world.

The final chapter serves to contextualize the role of Bates within both civil rights and black press history.

NOTES

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[1] Grif Stockley, *Daisy Bates: Civil Rights Crusader from Arkansas* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi Press, 2005).

[2] A. Philip Randolph to Walter White, March 18, 1941, "NAACP: A Century in the Fight for Freedom," Library of Congress, http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/naacp/world-war-ii-and-the-post-war-years.html#obj1; and Louise Jefferson, "The Negro in National Defense," NAACP Conference, Houston, Texas, June 24-29, 1941, poster, NAACP Collection, Library of Congress, http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/naacp/world-war-ii-and-the-post-war-years.html#obj1. In Randolph's letter, written on letterhead of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, he proposed a mass march to Washington, D.C., to protest discrimination against blacks in the armed forces and defense industries. The threat ultimately prompted President Franklin D. Roosevelt to sign Executive Order 8802, banning discrimination in the "defense industries receiving government contracts."

[3] The author has decided to primarily use the term "blacks" rather than "African-Americans". In public records and official documents, white people are referred to as either white or Caucasians, not European-American, while minority races are labeled

using hyphenation. This can be considered a perpetuation of enforcing second class citizenship upon minority groups, and is therefore deterred from in this thesis.

[4] A. Philip Randolph was the founder of the first labor union of African Americans. Roy Wilkins was executive secretary of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

[5] It is seldom mentioned that the March on Washington in 1963 initially included no female speakers, neither black nor white. Bates's speech was very brief, nevertheless, she was the only woman who spoke in front of the crowd. Douglas Brinkley's biography of Rosa Parks accounts for Parks's experience of the exclusion of women at the march: "Parks found the entire event, including King's soaring oratory, tainted by male chauvinism every bit as ugly in its discrimination as Jim Crow." See Douglas Brinkley, *Rosa Parks* (New York: Viking Penguin, 2000), 185; and Carolyn Calloway-Thomas and Thurmon Garner, "Daisy Bates and the Little Rock School Crisis: Forging the Way," *Journal of Black Studies* 26, no. 5 (1996): 616-17.

[6] Quoted in ibid, 7. Also see sound recording of excerpts of speeches at the March on Washington, August 28, 1963, Exhibit 15, National Civil Rights Museum, Memphis, Tennessee. Besides King, Bates named A. Philip Randolph, the founder of the first labor union of African Americans, and Roy Wilkins, executive secretary of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

[7] Qtd. in Stockley, *Daisy Bates*. Also see sound recording of excerpts of speeches at the March on Washington, August 28, 1963, Exhibit 15, National Civil Rights Museum, Memphis, Tennessee.

[8] Calloway-Thomas and Garner, "Daisy Bates and the Little Rock School Crisis," 616; and Paula J. Giddings, "When and Where I Enter: The Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America" (New York: William Morrow, 1984), 314.

[9] "Whatever Happened to Daisy Bates?" *Ebony*, September1984, 92-94.

[10] Daisy Bates, *The Long Shadow of Little Rock: A Memoir* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2014); and Daisy Bates, interview by Elizabeth Jacoway, *Southern Oral History Program Collection*, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, October 11, 1976.

[11] Linda Reed, "The Legacy of Daisy Bates," *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* no. 1 (2000): 80.

[12] See Gene Roberts and Hank Klibanoff, *The Race Beat: The Press, the Civil Rights Struggle, and the Awakening of a Nation* (New York: Knopf, 2006) for a more detailed discussion.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Armistead S. Pride and Clint C. Wilson II, *A History of the Black Press* (Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1997), 93.

Chapter 1: Literature Review

Throughout the course of African American history women have engaged in the same resistance to racial oppression and civil injustice as men. Yet, their participation has often been overlooked or underappreciated in both mainstream—white—and black history.[1] Black women as protagonists in the civil rights movement have only in recent decades begun to receive noticeable recognition and become an area of systemic study for historians.[2] The scholarly acknowledgement of black women journalists within the scope of media history remains even scarcer.

Black women have fought racial discrimination and struggled with gender restrictions inflicted upon them by both white and black men, leaving them confined by a double bind of racism and sexism. As detailed below, numerous scholars have urged for research on women's influence and leadership in black history, and while certain scholars have taken on the cumbersome task of documenting the work of some of these pioneering women, there is still a long way to go. Since the 1980s, several archival collections dedicated to historically significant black women have been established in the United States, paying tribute to a small percentage of the thousands of black women who have crusaded for social change.

As scholars have begun to document the sociopolitical work of black women through an assessment of their historical contributions, the research of historians Rosalyn Terborg-Penn, Sharon Harley, Gerda Lerner, Lynne Olson, and Darlene Clark Hine, offers some of the most significant contributions on black women as social reformers in the United States.[3] Their research provides foundational knowledge about the historical

influence of women of color and examines both the individual and the collective marginalization and discrimination that black women have suffered since they first stepped foot on American soil.

The 1995 seminal work *"We Specialize in the Wholly Impossible": A Reader in Black Women's History* situates the experience of black womanhood in the US in a geographically and theoretically broad framework.[4] From a global to a local perspective, several chapters are exclusively devoted to black women's encounters with race and gender discrimination during emancipation and up through the twentieth century. The authors, Linda Reed, B. Collier Thomas and V.P. Franklin, Davis W. Houck and David E. Dixon, and Zita Allen, address the resistance of black women as embodied in women's organizations and clubs, while exploring notions of womanhood, self-construction and self-expression.[5] The authors examine the individual experiences of black womanhood in America, however contextualizing these by documenting black women's collective progress—from actively engaging in anti-slavery societies and gender equality movements to educating their young and acquiring property. Delving into both the individual and the collective experience of black women, the authors emphasize a pattern of subordination and restrictions imposed by white and black males, culminating in an overarching sociopolitical system founded on both racial prejudice and gender discrimination.

Historians Terborg-Penn and Harley assess previously undocumented stories of trailblazing black women, including Sarah Remond,[6] Sojourner Truth, Frances Ellen Watkins Harper,[7] and Harriet Purvis, Jr.,[8] and their descent into civic action through the

scope of the women's rights movement. The individual stories are framed by a chronological narrative of the general triumphs and setbacks of the mainstream suffragist movement in the US, interlinked with black women's quest for voting rights for black Americans.[9]

Lerner's book, *Black Women in White America: A Documentary History,* intertwines with the research of the aforementioned scholars, and contributes to the existing literature on black womanhood by examining the formation of women's clubs and the impetus of black women during the nineteenth and twentieth century. Lerner's work underscores the transition in black women's social position, from slavery and domestic work to social reformers and racial crusaders. Lerner explores the influence of womanhood in the manifestation of racial pride, through solidarity in black nationalism and cultural heritage.[10]

Olson pays tribute to the unsung heroines in the civil rights movement by documenting the accomplishments and social endeavors of historically overlooked women activists.[11] She examines the deep-rooted sexism that laced the movement and subsequent historical accounts, sexism that echoed the gender barriers in contemporary white America. Through her work, Olson stresses the paradox in fighting for racial equality while continuing oppression of women within the movement itself. Women have consistently been relegated to the background despite their reformist actions and visions that proved vital for black progress. Speaking of the March on Washington, Olson noted;

> When the March on Washington took place in August of 1963, the women of the civil rights movement were all but forgotten. In later years, the march would be remembered as the most glorious moment of the civil rights struggle, the culmination of years of blood-shed, arduous work, and incredible hardship. Yet

> on that red-letter day, women, who had played such vital roles in launching the modern movement and propelling it forward, were thrust into the background.
>
> --Lynne Olson in *Freedom's Daugters.*[12]

In contrast, black men have been praised as the main protagonists of the movement, reinforcing a general tendency in historical narratives where men have been endorsed and praised as social frontrunners and revolutionaries of historical development. Defiantly, Olson challenges the status quo by situating several black women as leaders for the race cause in the civil rights era, disputing the incentive of the male leaders and their sincerity in the quest for true equality between the races and the sexes. While Olson contributes to the understanding of race relations in the civil rights movement, her insight on the tainted relationship between the movement's men and women illustrates the extent to which gender barriers and sexism were enforced by some of the most prominent and equality-praising male leaders. Thus, her research is fundamental in beginning to fully grasp the implications of male chauvinism in the civil rights flight, and the obstacles black women had to combat to become forebears at the time.

The scholarship of these authors lays the groundwork for further studies on black women's progressiveness and participation in social movements, as well as their leadership roles within the scope of both mainstream history and African American history.

A Long-Standing Tradition: Black Women Mobilization

Black women campaigning for racial equality is a tradition dating back to the early days of slavery in the United States.[13] Women played pivotal strategic roles and helped assert some of the main concepts of the abolitionist movement, such as anti-

slavery societies that sought to free blacks and change public sentiment on enslavement.[14] A pillar example of women's engagement with anti-slavery organizations and societies is the Underground Railroad, a secret network that "engaged in helping fugitive slaves to reach places of security in free states and Canada."[15] Women partook in establishing these flight routes, and particularly the efforts of Harriet Tubman, a former slave herself, have been asserted by historians to have proved paramount in the saving of scores of slaves through the Underground Railroad.[16]

During the abolitionist movement, freed slaves took extensive measures to enlighten whites and free blacks in the North, delivering first-hand accounts of the misery and inhumanity of slavery in public lectures. Offering emotional imageries of the horrid conditions that blacks were subjected to in southern enslavement, freed blacks hoped to terminate the public discourse on black inferiority and in the course of time, eliminate slavery. These lectures can be considered an early attempt by black women to challenge traditional gender barriers; by addressing public assemblies, black women lecturers did not merely break with the confinements of nineteenth century womanhood, they broke with the notion of black women as sharecroppers and field workers whose voices were not only inferior to those of whites, but also to black men.[17] Even though women occasionally were granted an opportunity to address the crowd at the lectures, they were still largely subjected to inferiority through silence, enforced by the all-pervading patriarchy of the nineteenth century.

Reconstruction had offered a brief but deep-felt prospect for black uplift.[18] Despite the initial hope for race conciliation and armistice based on the promise of

liberation, Reconstruction turned out to be a disheartening enigma for black Americans.[19] The freedmen and women were nowhere near free and blacks would continue to suffer under racial barriers for more than a century to come, particularly so under the imposed Jim Crow laws, enshrined in the 1896 Supreme Court ruling in *Plessy v. Ferguson*, which restricted the liberties and rights of blacks by establishing separate facilities for whites and "colored."[20]

During Reconstruction, freedwomen found themselves in an unprecedented dilemma, as their legal status was far below that of whites, and unlike the social status of black men. Their position in American society was not yet rigidly outlined by custom or law, their race precluding them from obtaining full citizenship rights.[21] Post-emancipation, white southerners expected black women to continue their labor in the fields or as servants, considering them too inferior to take on the privileges and ideals of white womanhood, including full-time domesticity.[22] Thus, aware that education was a primary tool for upward mobility, blacks—and black women in particular—took it upon themselves to elevate their race by educating their young.[23] Black women pushed to uplift their race by establishing schools and libraries, and campaigning for voting rights for free blacks in the North.[24] Concurrently, black women taught other black women domestic work, home economics, and the ways of being a good wife and mother, which at the time was considered the utmost goal for a woman.[25] However, due to the perceived lack of womanhood—an ideal prescribed to white women—and the fact that the majority of blacks lived in acute poverty due to structural racism and lack of civic rights, black women rarely had the opportunity to be stay-at-home mothers and were therefore often

forced to take on hard labor. Thus, even though the late nineteenth century saw an upsurge in number of black teachers, black women in the South continued to live in opposition to whites' ideal of womanhood, predominantly occupying hard labor and field work.[26] Notwithstanding tedious efforts to educate their young, black women continued to be at a great disadvantage due to legislative racism, and social and legal customs of gender restrictions.

Women's imposed inferiority drew parallels to that of slaves, enraging them to form the women's rights movement in the 1850s as a direct response to their discontent with the lack of gender equality in the abolitionist movement.[27] First-generation black women suffragists—including Sojourner Truth, Nancy Prince, Mary Ann, and Amelia Shadd[28]—addressed racial injustice in America, but while doing so they were subjected to discrimination by white members within the movement itself. White women's internal discrimination of black women came to present an ironic dichotomy; white women discriminated against black women while protesting men's discrimination against women. However, as the movement arose in the nadir of American race relations, black oppression appeared to be inescapable, even within the women's rights movement.[29]

In addition to the internal race conflicts, the notion of gender equality caused mainstream politicians to ridicule the suffragist movement's progressive ideologies, caricaturing the members as radical dissenters or old maids.[30] Beyond general public ridicule and internal racism, black women irrefutably faced obstacles beyond those of white women. White women did not have to struggle with poverty, illiteracy, and lowly employment to the same extent as most black women did, notably in the South. By the

1880s, black women's suffrage goals came to center on their identification as women of color in addition to their quest for universal suffrage, causing an ideological separation of black and white suffragists.[31] Thus, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, separate racial groups emerged as a response to the internal discrimination, and as a means for black suffragists to campaign for racial solidarity and black identity alongside their fight for gender equality on a national level.[32]

Another paradigm in reaching gender equality was the lack of access to equal and advanced education for black women.[33] All women, but persistently so for women of color, were long denied access to higher academic institutions, and although Ohio's Oberlin College—the first university to accept blacks and women from its founding—opened its doors in 1833, only nine black women had managed to graduate from the school by 1871.[34] Despite this tendency in educational institutions, black women advanced in several other fields at a significant rate when compared with black men.[35] Most notable was their advancement within professional services as they took on positions such as schoolteachers and nurses in black schools and hospitals in great numbers. Beyond educating black children and taking on higher positions than their male peers, black women campaigned to empower their sisters and did so through launching and participating in women's clubs that sought to empower the lives of black women through philanthropic and welfare work.[36]

Despite their involvement in the women's rights movement's formative years, black women and the internal struggle with racism have rarely made it into scholarship on women's suffrage in the U.S.[37] The efforts of prominent black women, such as Harriet

Tubman and Sojourner Truth, may be acknowledged in certain chronicles and literary works, but a comprehensive documentation of the internal suppression of women of color in the movement remains largely absent.[38] A more complete documentation of the hundreds of black women who took on leadership roles during the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, both within the suffragist movement but also in the broader historical development of America's race relations, is yet to be undertaken.[39]

Changing Times

By the early twentieth century, the number of black men versus black women in labor was highly disparate; approximately 81 percent of black men were employed, while just below 39 percent of black women were.[40] While these statistics do not account for the black men and women who worked off record, it is worth noting that according to these demographic statistics, black men primarily worked within agriculture, and mechanical and manufacturing industries, while the preponderance of black women worked in agriculture and within the domestic and personal services as servants and launderers.[41]

As a continuation of the previous century, the African American economy continued to center on southern cotton agriculture in the early 1900s.[42] *Plessy v. Ferguson* asserted a legal basis for racial segregation, legalizing discriminatory restriction on the civil liberties and rights of blacks, which continued until 1954 with *Brown v. Board of Education*. Such discrimination was especially pertinent in the South, a region that sought to preserve white superiority through the Jim Crow laws, intended to suppress blacks and keep them in their place, which according to whites, was in the field

or as servants to whites.[43] With legalization of segregated public facilities and educational institutions followed an uneven distribution of resources, resulting in black schools that were underfinanced and overcrowded.[44] Bolstering the nineteenth-century ideal of womanhood—a stay-at-home mother who cared for the house and the children while the husband was the sole breadwinner—educational facilities were extensively inaccessible to women, and women of color in particular. Moreover, blacks tended to struggle with poverty because of repression and socio-economic inequality, reflected in the percentage of black women in the labor force when compared with the comparative number of white women.[45]

The enforcement of oppressive and often brutal Jim Crow laws, combined with an increasing demand for labor in the North, left thousands of blacks little choice but to migrate to northern states in the beginning of the twentieth century.[46] The migration to the North was encouraged by northern black publications, such as the *Chicago Defender* and the *Crisis,* which published advertisements boasting the opportunities for blacks in Northern cities, often through first-person accounts. However, even though millions of blacks would eventually escape the Jim Crow South, life in the North was not without racial barriers. While southern racism embedded itself through legally segregated schools and public facilities, racial discrimination in the North manifested itself in discrimination in housing and jobs.[47]

By 1920, nearly one million blacks had left the South and settled in the North.[48] Northern states had previously relied heavily on the cheap labor of European immigrants, but World War I and its political and economic aftermath caused the influx of Europeans

to US soil to decline.[49] As a result, blacks became a new means for cheap labor in the North. This northbound migration pattern is further reflected in census data, which reveals a significant shift in the occupation of America's black population between 1910 and 1920.[50]

In the span of a decade, occupations within the agricultural sector saw a drop of 20 percent, underscoring an even more astonishing decrease among America's women, with a decline of 44 percent.[51] These numbers echoed similar changes occurring within black communities. The number of agricultural workers dropped significantly—17 percent for men and 25 percent for women—and while both black men and women took on employment within the manufacturing and mechanical industries in great numbers—an upsurge of 27 percent and 50 percent respectively—and black women in addition increasingly took on jobs within domestic and personal services.[52] Even though the total number of black women who held positions within professional services was significantly low when compared with other sectors, they still saw a 40 percent upturn over the decade, compared with a small increase of only 8 percent for black men.[53] These numbers reflect a time when the country underwent a significant shift to industrialization, and the severity of the Depression and its toll on American agriculture was brutally evident.

Historical research on women in the US in the early and midtwentieth century has centered on women's gains in the 1920s, when the suffragist movement succeeded with ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment, and the 1960s, when a second feminist wave rolled over the nation in a quest to establish legal and political equality for women.

However, the years in between have largely been omitted in both mainstream US history and women's history. Existing literature on women's social positions in the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950sprimarily focuses on loss of jobs in the 1930s and then, with the groundswell of changes brought by World War II, how white women increasingly entered the workforce as a result of loss of white male labor. Additionally, several scholars have long argued that the Depression and the subsequent World War II period brought minor gains to women collectively and thus once again, historical studies of the era have been male-centered. However, more recent scholarship proves that contrary to previous assumptions, women advanced in this period in politics and through women's clubs and organizations.[54]

The literary work of Susan Ware provides key insight into women's contributions and gains during the 1930s and 1940s. Her books *Holding Their Own: American Women in the Twentieth Century* and *Beyond Suffrage: Women in the New Deal* offer extensive documentation of women's changing social positions in this two-decade period and emphasize women's experiences as they gained higher social and political positions.[55] Nevertheless, Ware's research primarily focuses on the advancement of white women, echoing the general historical tendency to deprive minorities of their voices—in this case black women—in times of social and cultural eruption. Therefore, literature on the experience of black women during the Depression and the World War II period is limited. Even more limited are studies on African American's gains over the two decades.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt's federal programs under the New Deal—public works and welfare programs set to lift America out of the Great Depression—came to benefit African Americans too. Even though the New Deal primarily benefitted whites, and white men in particular as they were considered the primary breadwinners of their families, blacks saw disproportionate gains under the programs. According to historian Cheryl Lynn Greenberg, the programs made the difference between "food and starvation, allowed children to stay in school and families to keep their homes, and provided new access to skills and jobs."[56] Furthermore, Roosevelt appointed a group of black public policy advisers on civil rights issues, a group that informally became known as the Black Cabinet, a term coined by educator and activist Mary McLeod Bethune. Even though blacks still experienced stark racial prejudice and the majority of New Deal programs were executed according to traditional patterns of segregation, especially in the South, the mere appointment of black advisors on federal issues came to symbolize a step closer toward racial equality for a black population that had not been appointed significant governmental positions since Reconstruction.[57]

By 1941, Roosevelt signed Executive Order 8802 to be enforced by the Fair Employment Practices Committee (FEPC) banning discrimination in defense and government jobs, as a means to ensure equal opportunities for the country's citizens of color. The order came as a response to concerns led by African American leaders, including the pre-eminent leader of the race's labor movement, A. Philip Randolph, and Mary McLeod Bethune, who had been appointed director of the National Youth Administration's (NYA) Division of Negro Affairs in 1935.[58] Alongside other appointees

from the Black Cabinet they persevered to implement the executive order, backed by Roosevelt and first lady Eleanor Roosevelt. While these enactments proved vital to the progress of African Americans in the 1930s and 1940s, the premise for racial equality under Roosevelt was still predominantly steered by the notion of the separate but equal doctrine of *Plessy v. Ferguson*.

In retrospect, blacks' advancements in the 1930s and 1940s have been deemed minor in the light of events that transpired during Reconstruction and the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s. However, the appointment of a Black Cabinet under the president and the establishment of organizations such as the NYA, that included the voices of blacks—both men and women—are key to contextualizing and understanding the slow but steady growth of minority voices in American history. However, despite the significance of the black public policy advisors under the Roosevelt Administration and the establishment of the FEPC and the NYA, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), originally founded in 1909, has come to cement the progress and perseverance of black Americans, culminating in a vacating of the separate-but-equal doctrine in the Supreme Court's 1954's ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education.*[59]

Women in the NAACP

In the aftermath of Emancipation, black women initiated daring resistance to violent attacks on blacks. Social reformer and muckraking journalist Ida B. Wells led a crusade to end whites' brutality toward blacks by exposing the lynching practices whites carried out especially in the South and primarily without punishment or dire

consequences. Through her journalistic work in the 1890s, she exposed the harrowing and morbid killings of innocent blacks, providing detailed and gut-wrenching descriptions of the attacks and their inhumanity in her journalistic writings.[60]

The same year as *Plessy vs. Ferguson*, the National Association of Colored Women was established on the initiative of black suffragist and social reformer Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin, who was also a journalist.[61] In the late nineteenth century, several black women's clubs had emerged as a means to protest police brutality, lynching, and discrimination of blacks, but it was Ruffin who initiated the union of these clubs to form a national organization in 1896. Under pioneering black women, including Ida B. Wells and Mary Church Terrell, the organization advocated for women's right to vote, opposed racial suppression, and sought an end to lynching.

By 1909, Wells and an interracial group of men and women, including Terrell, W.E.B. Du Bois, Charles Edward Russell, Oswald Garrison, and Mary White Orvington, founded the NAACP. Lynching had become a weapon of racial terror that haunted the lives of blacks, boosting white superiority while normalizing black fallibility.[62] Justified by whites as a means to punish black criminals—often black men were the victims of lynching, as they were accused of raping or even looking at a white woman in a wrong way—the motives for lynching were often political or economic,[63] as a means to maintain the racial inferiority of blacks. Thus, fighting for the race cause, anti-lynching campaigns became a core mission for the NAACP in the organization's formative years. The NAACP set out to redeem the civil rights granted to all Americans by the Constitution's Fourteenth Amendment and to introduce legal measures to protect blacks from whites.

While the NAACP started out as a small coalition of activists, the organization would steadily flourish to eventually become the "largest, most powerful, most feared, and most respected civil rights organization in the nation's history."[64]

Since the launch of the NAACP, women have taken on pivotal leadership roles and been at the core of the organization. Among the founding members, four were women: Wells, Orvington, Florence Kelley and Terrell. Orvington, a white social worker, was a suffragist and journalist who initiated the meeting that would eventually lead to the formation of the NAACP. Kelley, also a white social worker, was a political reformer who had primarily fought on behalf of children's rights. Wells and Terrell were the only two black women among the founders, and while Orvington held the position as the first female chairman between 1919 and 1934, it would be fifty-six years before a black woman, Margaret Bush Wilson, would be elected chairman in 1975.[65]

While overlooked in historical accounts of the Progressive Era and even in their work with the NAACP, black women achieved major gains during the formative years of the NAACP and into the midtwentieth century, when the civil rights movement erupted into national and international view. Between 1900 and 1920, more than 50,000 women became engaged with social justice causes through women's clubs and organizations launched by women themselves, clubs that proved vital to the success of the civil rights movement.[66] While the mainstream suffragist movement was pushed along by a quest for women's rights, the fate of black women suffragists was closely tied to the fate of all African Americans, female as well as male.[67]

The Black Press Emerges

> A newspaper was an indispensable tool in Negro attempts to improve the quality of life for African Americans. Moreover, it had to be a newspaper Black in content, Black in appeal, Black in personnel, and Black in direction and ownership.
>
> —historians Armistead S. Pride and Clint C. Wilson II[68]

The first black newspaper, *Freedom's Journal*, was published in New York in 1827, thirty-six years before the Emancipation Proclamation.[69] The newspaper presented strategies for black uplift and declared itself the first publication devoted in its entirety to improve the lives of black people.[70] Before the Civil War, black newspapers were published in northern states, "where blacks were literate and had the freedom to publish."[71] Even though *Freedom's Journal* did call out the human injustice of enslavement and racial oppression, it managed to control its anti-slavery tirades, knowing that being too outspoken about racism would likely prove fatal to black journalists and their press.[72]

Despite the two-year life span of the *Journal*, it became the template for subsequent black publications in the nineteenth century, and with the end of the Civil War, black newspapers slowly started to appear throughout the South. The emerging southern black press was undeniably influenced by a desire to rebuild a divided America by urging reconciliation and cooperation between blacks and whites.[73] In 1862, the year before the Emancipation Proclamation, the first Southern black newspaper, *L'Union* of the Union-occupied city of New Orleans, thundered; "The hour has come for the struggle of the great humanitarian principles against an evil and sordid interest spawned of

arrogance, ambition, hypocrisy, falsehood, that silences conscience, that voice of heaven that cries without ceasing: You are born for liberty and happiness!"[74]

Furthermore, the early black newspapers were laced with political opinions and commentary, reflecting a time in both the black and mainstream—white—press in which partisanship dominated the newspaper industry. The black newspapers supported the agenda of the Republican Party, hopeful that the promises of Abraham Lincoln and Reconstruction would finally bring salvation to blacks.[75] Even though it emerged out of an abusive and violent period in U.S. history, the southern black press predominantly appealed for peaceful and wholesome relations between whites and blacks, rather than revenge. Despite the initial hopes for reconciliation and armistice from the promise of liberation, Reconstruction turned to be a disheartening enigma for African Americans. The freed blacks were nowhere near free and they would continue to suffer under white supremacy and racial repression for more than a century.

Extensive literature exists on the black press and its social, cultural, and political functions in U.S. history.[76] Two central threads have continuously been identified throughout scholarship on the black press: the first is the self-help pacifist approach, which advocated reconciliation and unity in the aftermath of emancipation of slavery and later, during the unfolding of the civil rights era. The second is a more aggressive, at times militant, crusader attitude, which initially permeated black newspapers in the North after the Civil War, where blacks were freer and the literacy rate was higher than in the South.[77] However, as the civil rights movement progressed, first in the early twentieth

century and in the aftermath of World War II, black upheaval in the South led to a change of tone in black newspapers throughout the entire nation.

The pacifist approach was founded in the notion of accommodation and black uplift. Black publications, especially in the South, educated fellow blacks on how to accommodate to a life in oppression after emancipation.[78] Newspaper publishers such as Robert S. Abbott of the *Chicago Defender* taught black Americans how to behave in society, how to dress, and how to conduct themselves in public spaces to avoid trouble with whites.[79] Aware of the risks that would come from challenging white leaders and the existing racial structures, the majority of black publications in the South focused on the black community's achievements and reported on positive stories as a means to permeate a favorable image of blacks; by centering on black achievements—both local and nationally—the black press sought to combat the perpetuated negative perception of blacks as the inferior race, which whites had ingrained into American history.[80] The pacifist approach can arguably be interpreted as a means to survive and encourage blacks, in a society where they were largely marginalized and oppressed by whites.

On the contrary, an aggressive stance on racial injustice and call for equality prevailed in several black publications, particularly in the North. Similar to the papers that followed the more conciliatory approach, the aggressive crusader newspapers likewise centered on news stories that reported on achievements within their local black communities to encourage upward mobility. However, these papers tended to prominently display news of hate crimes and generally unjust activities by whites on the front pages, often accompanied by loud headlines and photographs of either the victims

or the perpetrators, in publications such as the *Baltimore Afro-American*, the *St. Louis Argus*, and the NAACP's *The Crisis*.[81] This approach became increasingly popular in northern newspapers in the early and midtwentieth century. The continuing discrimination of blacks, in the form of racist legislation and violent repression, in the South—which ultimately escalated during the civil rights movement's apex in the 1950s and 1960s—made it not only financially unsustainable, but also dangerous for blacks to engage in the belligerent and aggressive journalism.[82]

Women Trailblazers in the Black Press

In 1994, historian Rodger Streitmatter noted that in attempt to place the life and work of Alice Dunnigan, a black journalist, author, and civil rights activist, into a broader context of fellow black women journalists, he could find no such context documented.[83] While the acknowledgement of the work of white women journalists slowly emerged in the latter part of the twentieth century, the stories about women of color and their contributions in journalism remained largely overlooked.

Just like their male counterparts, women have contributed to the work and writings, and inevitably the history, of the black press. Nevertheless, much like in civil rights history, women have been overlooked and portrayed primarily as background figures in the history of the black press.[84] While certain prominent African American women have been acknowledged for promoting civil rights and equal opportunities in existing scholarship—the most prominent being Rosa Parks, Ida B. Wells, Harriet Tubman, Charlotta Bass, Fannie Lou Hamer, and Coretta Scott King[85]—the majority of black female journalists have remained unknown and literature on women in black press

history remain scarce.[86] Inevitably, the historiography of black women journalists is still largely to be written.

During the post-Reconstruction years, writings by black women were increasing. In 1908, journalist Nellie F. Mossell wrote about the uplift of black women in the book *The Work of the Afro-American Woman:*

> There was a day when an Afro-American woman of the greatest refinement and culture could aspire no higher than the dressmaker's art, or later who would rise higher in the scale could be a teacher, and there the top round higher employment was reached. But we have fallen on brighter days, we retain largely the old employments and have added to this literary work and its special line of journalistic effort.[87]

Many female writers, like Mossell, wrote about the empowerment of women and reported rigorously on stories considered of interest to women.[88] Women journalists, both black and white, have historically been confined to society pages, and more often than not, the mobilization of soldiers during World War II was credited with women journalists moving into other spheres of reporting or managing newspapers.[89] By the midtwentieth century, one-third of the journalist workforce in the U.S. were women; nevertheless, journalism history continues to be mainly told through the stories of the most prominent, white men of the press, such as Horace Greeley, Joseph Pulitzer, and William Randolph Hearst.[90] Women journalists, and especially black women journalists, have been at large, invisible.

One of the most controversial and outspoken black female writers, Ida B. Wells, managed to, according to Washburn, "spearhead the black papers' revulsion against lynching and turn it into a national issue."[91] Wells—a slave turned teacher, turned civil rights activist and journalist—wrote for several black publications in the late 1800s and

vigorously attacked white supremacy and blacks who had betrayed other blacks to gain favor with or impress whites.[92] Wells's often inflammatory editorials about the immorality and brutality of whites led to numerous death threats and eventually, the end of the black publication, the *Free Press*, in Memphis, of which she had been part owner. Wells's contemporaries, Mary Church Terrell and Charlotta A. Bass, likewise sought to elevate the African American people through their journalistic work.[93] Like Wells, Terrell—who wrote for a broad array of publications, such as the *Washington Tribune*, *New York Age*, and *Baltimore Afro-American*[94]—used journalism to advance her advocacy on racial equality, but also addressed gender issues and "sought to counter the negative perceptions of black women while defining their roles as not only essential to the race, but as leaders in the home and public arena."[95] Bass ran the *California Eagle*, the largest black publication on the West Coast, and employed it as an outlet to fight racial discrimination, both in local businesses and in educational institutions.[96] She unveiled the perpetual discrimination against blacks in Los Angeles County, including the General Hospital's reluctance to hire black employees. Through extensive coverage and an appeal to the county board of supervisors, the policy was successfully overturned. After her husband's death, Bass continued to edit and manage the paper and took a militant stance on racial injustice.

In 1966, Ethel Payne, a foreign correspondent for the *Chicago Defender,* became the first black reporter covering the Vietnam War. With more than fifteen years of experience covering both domestic and foreign issues critical to the lives of black Americans, she was stationed in Vietnam to cover the war experience of African-

American troops.[97] Payne's early journalistic work had centered around the civil rights struggle at home, from the landmark decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954 to the March on Washington in 1963.[98] She served as the White House correspondent for the *Defender* under president Dwight D. Eisenhower and would march alongside thousands of other blacks from Selma to Montgomery in 1965. Payne's most memorable feat occurred in February 1954. Payne attended one of Eisenhower's weekly press conferences in the White House's executive office building, a black woman in a room of nearly two hundred journalists, most of them white men.[99] A week prior, a choir group from the black college Howard University had been scheduled to sing at a Lincoln Day Celebration at the White House but had been turned away at the entrance by guards. No larger media outlets had reported on the incident, as blacks being rejected from a primarily white event was no news sensation—rather, it was a commonality. In her quest for justice, Payne braced herself and rose to confront the president about what had transpired. Eisenhower assured the room that he had no knowledge about the incident and that, "if that choir was barred by the reasons that you seem to fear, of anything about race or of color or anything of that kind, I will be the first to apologize to them."[100] In the following days, mainstream media outlets covered the event with enthusiasm, including the Washington D.C.-based *Washington Evening Star*, which applauded Payne for addressing the issue as a civil rights matter.[101] It was rare that a press member would outright question the President's intentions, let alone a black woman. Payne grew confident, and in the following weeks, she continued to voice her concerns over the treatment of blacks and other minorities in the country; she questioned the discrimination

in federal housing and immigration quotas.[102] Payne and Eisenhower had established a courteous relationship during the weekly meetings, and he had welcomed her unconventional inquiries. However, in July of 1954, a remark that challenged the administration's segregation of interstate traveling on buses, infuriated the president. He refused to answer her question, and proceeded to ban her questions in the following press conferences. Even though she had not won the fondness of the "leader of the free world," Payne had gained the support of the millions of blacks who sought to equalize blacks and whites in a troubled America.

Despite their journalistic advocacy, both Terrell, Bass, and Payne have primarily been written about in relation to their roles as activists during the civil rights movement—or in Bass's case, being the first African American woman to be nominated for vice presidency in 1952,[103] and only occasionally acknowledged for their journalistic contributions. Several black women have since contributed to the news media and the course of history, and "although they were isolated from each other, both by time and geographic location, they all defied conformance to the limited spheres that the societies of their respective crass defined as those of the African-American woman," Streitmatter wrote.[104] Thus, an extensive examination of women journalists in the black press is necessary to fully comprehend and situate the role and influence of Daisy Bates's work in both black press and civil rights history.

The Arkansas State Press

The early records of black publications in the South remain incomplete, and between 1900 and 1979, researchers have been able to identify only ten black newspapers

published in Arkansas.[105] Following the traditions of the black press in the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth century, the early black Arkansas papers focused on black uplift and were careful not to challenge whites; "they spoke for the black community, defended its legal and socioeconomic rights, and promoted racial pride," Suggs wrote.[106] After emancipation, southern states had passed legislation to reestablish white supremacy and keep blacks inferior. This led to a total subjugation of blacks, which would not be overcome until after World War II.[107] Thus, the majority of black papers in the South continued to push for gains in employment, education, and politics, much as they had in the immediate aftermath of the Civil War, and steered away from anti-white tirades like their cousins in the North. The number of black publications in the South steadily increased between the two world wars, as they were the primary medium through which blacks could get news related to or about themselves.

The *Arkansas State Press* launched after war broke out in Europe in 1939 but before the U.S. entered the conflict. The U.S. went to war in late 1941—half a year after the *Press* had run its first issue—after the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor and shattered America's position as bystander. By the time the country entered the war, historian Patrick S. Washburn argues that "the black press enjoyed unprecedented power because of an amazing rise in circulation."[108] Black publications were thriving, and their outspokenness attracted readers both black and white. However, this apparent autonomy was short-lived, and with the end of the war, the black press once again subjected itself to a degree of self-censorship and suppression under white supremacy and the scrutiny of the U.S. government.[109]

Most black newspapers in the South continued the pacifist approach, aware that aggressive and outspoken reporting of the brutal realities of racial discrimination and violence would only cause anti-black aggression to grow. Thus, when the Daisy and L.C. Bates published the first issue of the *Press* in 1941, the blatant and belligerent tone of the paper would come to stir not only the white communities but also the black communities within the state. The *Press* eventually grew to become the largest black publication in Arkansas, with a circulation of more than 30,000.[110] The Bateses spiraled to national fame in 1957 when they led a press campaign supporting the operation to desegregate Little Rock Central High School, and ultimately, when they came to mentor and guide the nine black students from the safety of the Bateses' own home.

Scholarship on Daisy Bates

Daisy Lee Bates has been acknowledged in civil rights history for her involvement with school desegregation and mentorship of the Little Rock Nine. Yet, her journalistic advocacy remains virtually unacknowledged. The majority of scholarship on the Bateses and the *Arkansas State Press* has centered on L.C. Bates and his role as an acknowledged publisher of the paper. Only two books have been written about the life of Daisy Lee Bates, Grif Stockley's biography *Daisy Bates: The Civil Rights Crusader from Arkansas* and Judith and Dennis B. Fradin *The Power of One: Daisy Bates and the Little Rock Nine*.[111] However, her memoir, *The Long Shadow of Little Rock*, alongside a biography written by Grif Stockley, provides the greatest insight into Bates's personal life and career. The memoir stands out as a detailed account of Bates's own reflections of her relationship with L.C., and more notably, her involvement with both the NAACP and

the *Press*. In her memoir, Bates writes about pivotal events that came to shape her life as an aggressive advocate for racial equality, her relationship with L.C., their initial launching of their own newspaper and finally, the demise of their paper two years after they had helped ensure racial integration at Little Rock Central High School. Stockley's biography is based on extensive research and seeks to address some of the previously unanswered questions about Daisy Bates's life. It presents a detailed account of Bates's involvement in the civil rights movement, through her work for the NAACP and the couple's mission to desegregate Little Rock Central High School. While Stockley reflects on Bates's work with the *Press*, like most other scholars, he pays more attention to her work with the NAACP and attributes the successes of the newspaper to her husband.

Additionally, one- or two-page summaries appear in an array of biographical series[112] or encyclopedias, such as the American National Biography Online, the *Encyclopedia of the African and African American Experience*, and a handful of journal articles, which examine Daisy Bates's role as a frontrunner for desegregation in the South in the 1950s.[113]

Bates and the State Press

The majority of scholarship on the Bateses has centered on their involvement with the desegregation of Central High, while literature on the *Arkansas State Press* has predominantly focused on L.C. and his work as the paper's publisher. While Bates served as a fulltime editor and reporter for more than a decade, her byline seldom appeared on stories in the paper. In her memoir she reflects on particular issues she reported on, yet these stories often ran without her—or anyone else's—byline, which was common in the

newspaper industry at the time. Furthermore, Preston Toombs, who worked as a printer for the *State Press* between 1948 and 1956, in a later interview acknowledged that while Bates's work at the paper was not clearly defined in the 1940s, she did everything from bookkeeping and soliciting money for advertisements, to accompanying the newspaper's photographer, Earl Davy, on assignments as a reporter.[114] While this to some extent gives us a sense of the breadth of her involvement with the paper, it is still not possible to confidently assert how many of her stories actually made it into print.

According to Bates's memoir, she had started taking classes related to the newspaper business at all-black Shorter College in North Little Rock when she and L.C. first arrived in town in 1940**.** Yet, her actual writing remained scarce, and while she would come to serve as an editor and reporter for the *State Press*, she would heavily rely, especially in the first few years, on the two secretaries who worked for the newspaper, Ivy Wesley and Jewel Porce, to type the stories as she dictated them.[115] According to Stockley, L.C. would always go over her stories before printing them, likely to ensure that her articles reflected the general style of the paper and that they were, after all, coherent.[116] In the later years, according to accounts from Bates's own memoir, she would type up the stories herself, but L.C. would almost always go over them before they went into the paper.

Stockley argues that Bates rarely wrote for the *State Press*; however, her byline appears on at least a dozen editorials when one searches the entire run of the newspaper (between 1941 and 1959), and according to Bates's memoir and interviews with several of the employees at the paper, her weak skills as a writer may have rendered her unable to

type up the stories herself in the earlier years, but that did not stop her. Toombs argued that L.C. and Bates often would sit together and plan out a story and he would be the one to type it up.[117]

Black Women Invisibility

An in-depth examination of existing literature illustrates that black women's portrayal in historical accounts as inactive protagonists for social change is largely due to a lack of recognition of black women as leaders in America's social consciousness; black women have long been portrayed as passive victims of racial oppression, rather than as active participants in progressive movements.[118] When black women have been largely disregarded in historical progress, they have been so not because they lacked capability or did not actively participate, but rather because of a lack of opportunities as an outcome of social pressures from both racism and sexism, or an overall neglect of their historical importance because of their womanhood.[119] Racism and a male perception of women as inferior—and thus, historically insignificant—have resulted in vast numbers of unexplored primary sources on noteworthy women, scattered in boxes in basements of archives and libraries across the country.[120]

This thesis seeks to amplify the voice of a black woman who did not merely stand in the shadow of her publisher husband, but who took to the streets, the podiums, and the written word, to protest racially segregated facilities and advocate for the right to equal education. She furthermore challenged the traditions of contemporary southern black newspapers and broke with the gender confinements imposed on her by both white and black men in the early and mid-twentieth century.

Research Focus and Method

This thesis situates Daisy Bates as a leader in the civil rights trajectory and argues that her involvement with the *Arkansas State Press,* as both editor and writer, is highly significant. Her husband might have been an avid civil rights activist, who cemented his testament to equal rights by repeatedly declaring, "We can sacrifice a friend, but never a principle," but it was Daisy who became the frontrunner for the couple's advocacy. This thesis assesses a variety of primary sources, including the full run of the *Arkansas State Press*, Bates's autobiographical account, a selection of interviews with Daisy Bates and the Little Rock Nine published by the Columbia University Oral History Collection and the Southern Oral History Program, and Bates's personal correspondence digitalized by the Library of Congress. The author argues that Daisy Bates's journalistic advocacy is worthy of consideration among contemporary black newspapers, that her public engagement and work defied traditional gender roles at the time, and that she took on a leadership role in the civil rights movement historically recognized as the domain of black men.

This research draws on a variety of primary sources. The full collection of the *Arkansas State Press*'s early run (1941-1959) was retrieved through the website America's Historical Newspapers, a historic newspaper database, where users can access a wide range of early newspapers, from ethnic newspapers to campaign newspapers to newspapers of record.[121] The website holds a digitized version of the complete early run of the *Press*, from the first issue published in May 1941 to the last issue in October 1959. Given that Bates was not the editor of the paper until 1945, and therefore had little to no

influence over the content prior to that year, this study will focus on the period 1945 to 1959. Each issue has been reviewed, as the purpose of this study is to access Bates's advocacy in her contributions as both writer and editor.

Attempts to search for Bates's byline in the paper proved scant; while a search of Bates's various titles—including "Mrs. L. Christopher Bates," "Mrs. L.C. Bates," and "Daisy Bates"—presented 188 results, only a small number of these proved to be stories written by Bates herself, revealing that the *Press* only included bylines sparingly. The majority of news stories including Bates's name reported on her work as chairman for the local NAACP citizen education committee and her involvement with the desegregation of Little Rock Central High School. Bates's name appeared in the occasional "Letters to the Editor" section, which was primarily comments from readers either praising Bates and her work, or readers voicing opinions that resonated with the publication's political stance. The search for Bates's byline further revealed the various roles she took on during the span of the newspaper's life: business manager, city editor, managing editor, and finally, publisher.[122] Through an in-depth qualitative assessment, the paper's race-based content can be divided into three primary categories: (1) wrongdoings and social justice, (2) black uplift/achievements, and (3) accommodation. After the author organized the content into its corresponding categories, the news stories were reviewed and analyzed to answer the central research questions: How did Daisy Bates's work as an editor and writer for the *Press* correspond with the traditions of the black press in the South, and how did she break with the gender confinements imposed by both black and white American society in the midtwentieth century?

Furthermore, this research relies on Bates's memoir, *The Long Shadow of Little Rock*, which provides detailed and subjective reflections of events during the Little Rock crisis and of Bates's early childhood. Interviews conducted with Bates (who died in 1999) alongside an array of correspondence between Bates and prominent advocates from the civil rights movement likewise were examined to place her leadership role as a black woman advocate in the 1940s and the 1950s into a contemporary historical context.

Even though Bates resurrected the *State Press* in 1984, the paper's later run has not been part of the in-depth analysis of this historical study. An examination of the *Press*'s content in the 1980s—Bates sold the paper in 1988 due to financial struggles—reveal a tendency to reflect back on events that occurred at the height of the civil rights movement in the 1940s and 1950s. The relaunched paper's content was often stories of past events, especially recounts of the Little Rock Mission, rather than actual news stories. It appears then that Bates, eager to return to a time when L.C. was still alive and when they were working alongside one another, saw the paper as a means to continue to advocate for the black race, but through historical narratives rather than hard-hitting news. Times had changed and by 1988, financial struggles and a poor health left Bates little choice but to give up her paper once and for all.[123]

NOTES

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[1] Gerda Lerner, *Black Women in White America: A Documentary History* (New York: Vintage Books, 1972), xvii; Bernice McNair Barnett, "Invisible Southern Black Women Leaders in the Civil Rights Movement: The Triple Constraints of Gender, Race, and Class," *Gender & Society* 7, no. 2 (1993): 162-82; Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, "African-American Women's History and the Metalanguage of Race," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 17, no. 2 (1992): 251-74.

[2] Linda Reed, "The Legacy of Daisy Bates," *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* no. 1 (2000): 76; B. Collier Thomas & V.P. Franklin, *Sisters in the Struggle: African American Women in the Civil Rights-Black Power Movement* (New York: New York University Press, 2001); Davis W. Houck & David E. Dixon, *Women and the Civil Rights Movement 1954-1965* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2009); Zita Allen, *Black Women Leaders of the Civil Rights Movement* (New York: Franklin Watts, 1996).

[3] Ibid.

[4] Darlene Clark Hine, Wilma King, and Linda Reed, *"We Specialize in the Wholly Impossible": A Reader in Black Women's History* (Brooklyn, NY: Carlson Pub, 1995).

[5] Linda Reed, "The Legacy of Daisy Bates"; Davis W. Houck & David E. Dixon, *Women and the Civil Rights Movement*; Zita Allen, *Black Women Leaders.*

[6] Sarah Remond was a member of the American Equal Rights Association and an abolitionist lecturer prior to the uprising of the Civil War, see Rosalyn Terborg-Penn,

African American Women in the Struggle for *the Vote, 1850-1920* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 25.

[7] Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, an author, suffragist, and social reformer, whose work became known during the antebellum era and in the years after the Civil War. See ibid, 26.

[8] Harriet Purvis, Jr. was a first-generation suffragist who helped establish the Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society. See ibid.

[9] Terborg-Penn, *African American Women in the Struggle for the Vote, 1850-1920*.

[10] Lerner, *Black Women in White America.*

[11] Lynne Olson, *Freedom's Daughters: The Unsung Heroines from the Civil Rights Movement from 1830 to 1970* (New York: Scribner, 2001).

[12] Ibid, 13.

[13] Bettye Collier-Thomas and V.P. Franklin, *Sisters in the Struggle: African American Women in the Civil Rights-Black Power Movement* (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 1; Michael Ezra, *Civil Rights Movement: People and Perspectives* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2009), 139.

[14] Black women formed the first female anti-slavery society just one month after the American Anti-Slavery Society (AASS) was founded in 1833. See Dorothy Sterling, *Black Foremothers: Three Lives* (New York: Feminist Press, 1988); Lerner, *Black Women in White America.*

[15] Wilbur Henry Siebert, *The Underground Railroad from Slavery to Freedom*

(New York: The Macmillan Company, 1898), 1.

[16] Kate Clifford Larson, *Bound for the Promised Land: Harriet Tubman, Portrait of an American Hero* (New York: Ballantine, 2004), 254.

[17] Amii Larkin Barnard, "The Application of Critical Race Feminism to the Anti-Lynching Movement: Black Women's Fight against Race and Gender Ideology, 1892-1920," *UCLA Women's Law Journal* 3, no. 1 (1993): 1-38.

[18] Sterling, *Black Foremothers*, xxix.

[19] Armistead S. Pride and Clint C. Wilson II, *A History of the Black Press* (Washington D.C.: Howard University Press, 1997), 85.

[20] Plessy v. Ferguson, 163 U.S. 537 (1896)

[21] Karin L. Zipf, "Reconstructing "Free Woman": African-American Women, Apprenticeship, and Custody Rights during Reconstruction," *Journal of Women's History* 12, no. 1 (2000): 9.

[22] Jacqueline Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work, and the Family, from Slavery to Present* (New York: Basic Books, 2009), 44.

[23] Lerner, *Black Women in White America*, 75-99.

[24] Sterling, *Black Foremothers*, xxvii.

[25] Ibid., xxx.

[26] Ibid., xxx.

[27] Terborg-Penn, *African American Women in the Struggle for the Vote, 1850-1920,* 13-35.

[28] First generation black suffragists (Shadd sisters etc.)

[29] Sharon Harley and Rosalyn Terborg-Penn, *The Afro-American Woman: Struggles and Images* (Baltimore, MD: Black Classic Press, 1997), 18.

[30] Terborg-Penn, *African American Women in the Struggle for the Vote, 1850-1920*, 14.

[31] Ibid., 36-53.

[32] Harley and Terborg-Penn, *The Afro-American Woman: Struggles and Images*, 17-18.

[33] Sterling, *Black Foremothers*; Lerner, *Black Women in White America*; Terborg-Penn, *African American Women in the Struggle for the Vote, 1850-1920.*

[34] Lerner, *Black Women in White America*, 77.

[35] U.S. Census Bureau, "Color of Race, Nativity, and Parentage of Occupied Persons" Table 5. https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1920/volume-4/41084484v4ch04.pdf (accessed February 17, 2018).

[36] Gerda Lerner, "Early Community Work of Black Club Women," *The Journal of Negro History* 59, no. 2 (1974): 158-67.

[37] Sterling, *Black Foremothers*, xxix.

[38] Larson, Kate Clifford. *Bound for the promised land: Harriet Tubman, portrait of an American hero*. One World, 2004; Nell Irvin Painter, *Sojourner Truth: A life, a symbol*. WW Norton & Company, 1996.

[39] Beverly W. Jones, "Mary Church Terrel and the National Association of Colored Women, 1896 to 1901," *The Journal of Negro History* 67, no. 1 (The University of Chicago Press, 1982), 20-33; Terborg-Penn, *African American Women*, 45-47;

Sterling, *Black Foremothers*; Lerner, *Black Women in White America.*

[40] U.S. Census Bureau, “Color of Race, Nativity, and Parentage of Occupied Persons” Table 5.

[41] Ibid.

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[45] U.S. Census Bureau, “Color of Race, Nativity, and Parentage of Occupied Persons” Table 5.

[46] Maloney, “African Americans in the Twentieth Century.”

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[49] Sterling, *Black Foremothers,* xxxviii.

[50] U.S. Census Bureau, “Color of Race, Nativity, and Parentage of Occupied Persons” Table 5.

[51] U.S. Census Bureau, “Color of Race, Nativity, and Parentage of Occupied Persons” Table 3. https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1920/volume-4/41084484v4ch04.pdf (accessed February 17, 2018).

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[70] "To Our Patrons," *Freedom's Journal,* March 16, 1827.

[71] Suggs, *The Black Press in the South*, 3.

[72] Washburn, *The African American Newspaper.*

[73] Pride and Wilson, *A History of the Black Press*, 89.

[74] *L'Union*, September 27, 1862.

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[113] See Bates, Daisy Lee Gatson (1914-1999), Print Journalist, Civil Rights Activist. *Encyclopedia of African American History 1896 to Present* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, n.d.; "Daisy Lee Gatson Bates (1914-1999)," *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, no. 26 (1999): 44; Elizabeth Jacoway, "Bates, Daisy Lee Gatson, November 11, 1914-November 4, 1999," *Notable American Women: Completing the Twentieth Century.*

[114] Stockley, *Daisy Bates,* 43-44.

[115] Preston Toombs interviewed and quoted in Stockley, *Daisy Bates,* 44.

[116] Stockley, *Daisy Bates,* 154.

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[118] Sterling, *Black Foremothers*, xxi.

[119] Lerner, *Black Women in White America,* xxxvi.

[120] Sterling, *Black Foremothers, xxi*; Lerner, *Black Women in White America,* xviii.

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[122] Gene Roberts and Hank Klibanoff, *The Race Beat: The Press, the Civil Rights Struggle, and the Awakening of a Nation* (New York: Knopf, 2006), 151.

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Chapter 2: "Who Killed My Mother?": The Life of Daisy Bates

Daisy Bates (née Daisy Lee Gatson) was born into the turmoil of southern racial segregation in Arkansas on November 11, 1914, five years after the NAACP had been founded by the National Negro Committee in New York City and three months after World War I broke out in Europe. As racial discrimination bellowed through the country, blacks' lives, especially in southern states, were saturated by white terrorism and racial segregation. Arkansas was no exception.

Bates's early life remains shrouded in mystery. Her exact date of birth has been disputed, yet the predominance of scholarship has asserted her birth to have been in November of 1914.[1] In her memoir, she reflects on her upbringing in the small town of Huttig in southern Arkansas, where the main road drew a clear distinction between the town's white and black neighborhoods. Despite racial separation it was, to her, a childhood of blissful ignorance. She grew up with two doting parents, who gave her enough freedom to roam and play with the other children—both black and white—in her neighborhood, and enough love to shelter her from the realities of a world where blacks were considered both socially and legally subordinate to whites. However, at the age of eight a town rumor shattered her childhood naiveté, when she learned that the couple whom she had known as her mother and father, Susie and Orlee Smith, where not her parents. In reality, her birth mother, Millie Riley, had been brutally raped and murdered by a mob of white men and her body dumped in a shallow millpond, when Bates was still just a baby. Her birth father, John Gatson, had subsequently fled town in despair, leaving Bates with the Smiths, who were close family friends.[2] The truth about her birth mother's

killing forced Orlee to rationalize to a young Bates the dire realities of being black in the Deep South—and in particular, the realities of being a black woman. In her memoir Bates recalled:

> He told me of the timeworn lust of the white man for the Negro woman—which strikes at the heart of every Negro man in the South. . . . Even so, it was difficult to explain to an eight-year-old girl; but he spoke plainly, in simple words I could understand. He wanted me to realize that my mother wouldn't have died if it hadn't been for her race. [3]

When learning of her real mother's murder, Bates, still just a child, found herself determined to learn the identity of the perpetrators. While no one was ever charged with the murder, Bates encounter with a white man at the commissary in town left her assured that she had unearthed at least one of the men. One day she overheard two men talking about the white man who had made a daily habit of sleeping off his drunkenness on the porch bench outside the store. One of the men informed the other that the drunkard was in fact the man who had killed "that colored woman they found in the mill-pond a few years ago."[4] She came to refer to him as the "Drunken Pig" and would make a habit of passing him as he lay on the bench as often as she could. On certain days, she would walk to the commissary just to stare at him as to "make him pay for his sin," as he lay there drowsy in the sweltering southern heat.[5] After pestering the man for several weeks, he one day disappeared and was found dead in a narrow alleyway, where he had succumbed to his drinking habits. Bates found his death bittersweet; even though she believed that he had gotten what he deserved, her hatred for what he had done spilled over to animosity toward other white people. As she recalled in her memoir, she grew a deep hatred for whites, and she found it hard to look at them, let alone to have a conversation with a

white person. The white children with whom she used to play suddenly became strangers, and whenever a white person would appear at her home, she would refuse to utter a word. She came to understand that the black man had no rights compared to a white man in 1920s America, and she hated the white man because of it.

Little has been written about the remainder of Bates's early life. While her own memoir provides insight into her early upbringing, from sizzling summer days spent on the family's farm in southern Arkansas to learning the truth about her birth parents, Bates's early life remains largely undocumented. Historian Grif Stockley provides some of the most detailed information about Bates's life in Huttig and even challenges Bates's own narrative. Through extensive research, Stockley finds no evidence that a Millie Riley was murdered and dumped in a millpond in Huttig between 1913 and 1920, and through archival searches and contact with Bates's relatives he finds no information about her supposed birth father, John Gatson. Instead, speculations about the true identity of her birth parents remain disputed, and one family member even contemplated that her biological father was a white man.[6] Nonetheless, Bates's recollection of her youth, and the stories she came to live by, culminated in a life of advocacy for racial justice and opposition to white supremacy.

Bates was still in her early teens when she first met L.C., who knocked on her parents' door one day intending to sell them an insurance policy.[7] L.C. Bates, who was thirteen years older than Daisy, was born in the predominantly white town of Liberty, Mississippi, in 1901, to a minister father and a stay-at-home mother. As a pastor, his father was cherished and respected in the community, which meant that L.C. was granted

access to attend—however, not enroll in—a white school in town.[8] He would later enroll in a public black high school, before studying journalism at Wilberforce University in Ohio. After graduation, he worked for several years as a journalist at a newspaper in Colorado before moving to Kansas City, Missouri, to work for the black newspaper, *The Call*.[9] However, as the Great Depression swept across the country in the early 1930s, the prospects for a young black journalist were marginal and he lost his job at the paper.[10]

To make ends meet he took a job as an insurance salesman, which had brought him to Arkansas where he first met Daisy's family. He became a close friend of her foster father, Orlee, and often came around the house and brought presents for everyone, including Daisy. When Orlee became gravely ill and eventually died, L.C. was quick to ask for Daisy's hand in marriage. Daisy, who had long been captivated by his maturity and charisma, readily accepted.[11] What happened between then and their launch of the newspaper in Little Rock in 1941, remains unclear. While Daisy skips over this period of their life in her memoir, public documents reveal that when L.C. proposed to her, he was already married to another woman. It is not clear exactly when he asked Daisy for her hand in marriage, but the couple started dating in 1932 when Daisy was just eighteen years old. He did not file for divorce from his first wife until 1941, when the couple had already settled in Little Rock, and were about to run the first issue of the *State Press*.[12] Thus, from various documents pieced together by Stockley, it becomes clear that Daisy and L.C. were together for nearly a decade before he officially divorced his first wife, a detail carefully omitted from Daisy's own narrative.

Launching the Arkansas State Press

L.C. undeniably mirrored the sentiments of Bates, making them a compatible pair. They were equally passionate about black uplift and had experienced racial injustice first-hand; Bates's fiery demeanor had been sparked by her mother's murder, and L.C. had spent his youth in a segregated educational system that favored white students in every aspect. When the couple moved to Little Rock, L.C. continued his work as an insurance agent for the first few years; however, the dream of being a journalist and owning his own newspaper never vanished. He and his wife knew that a newspaper would serve as a tool for advancement of blacks, in that not only would it provide local blacks with information relevant to their community—the mainstream white press rarely printed stories about blacks and if they did, they were mostly saturated by racial bias and stereotypes—it could furthermore function as a channel through which the Bateses could promote black uplift, advocate for the race cause and issue a call to action.

Mirroring the racial tensions throughout the rest of the region in the early twentieth century, Little Rock was separated into black neighborhoods and white neighborhoods. Ninth Street came to symbolize the color line, separating the black and white neighborhoods in the downtown area.[13] Ninth Street was a mecca for blacks, serving as an urban district for black businesses. It included a movie theater, restaurants, barber shops, grocery stores, and doctor's offices and pharmacies, as well as many black homes.[14] Thus, it was only natural that the Bateses would launch their newspaper out of a Ninth Street location. In 1941, the Bateses jeopardized their entire savings by purchasing equipment from a church newspaper that had been struggling for years, and relaunched it

as the *Arkansas State Press*. After all, both L.C. and Bates agreed that "a newspaper was needed to carry on the fight for Negro rights as nothing else can."[15]

Inspired by two northern black publications, the NAACP's *The Crisis* and the *Chicago Defender*,[16] the Bateses modeled the *State Press* on traditions of advocacy journalism. The newspaper's content was primarily devoted to stories on civil and racial injustice and to document the achievements of blacks, both on the local and national level. The *State Press* rapidly cultivated a large group of followers, and within the first six months of its existence the circulation reached more than ten thousand readers.[17] In the early days of the *State Press*, the Bateses focused on reporting on police brutality in and around Little Rock. The newspaper crusaded against the violence and callousness of the town's white police force, which saw the smallest infraction as an excuse to beat up blacks, they reported. In March 1942, the paper reported on the shooting of black U.S. Sergeant Thomas Forster, which took place on Ninth street. The paper called out the white police's indifference as one of their men shot Forster and killed him on a crowded street, as he lay defenseless on the ground. As expected, the white community dismissed the ordeal, deeming it an act of self-defense. Blacks however, were infuriated. As Daisy Bates arrived at the scene to get the story, she encountered a young black soldier who was moaning and weeping as he stomped on his Army cap.[18] There appeared to be neither safety nor justice for blacks in Little Rock and the illusion that Ninth Street was a refuge for blacks had been shattered.

Bates was not one to beg for justice at the hands of white southerners, and the story she reported in the *State Press* that week reverberated with her wrath and vexation

with the South's race relations. Under the headlines "CITY PATROLMAN SHOOTS NEGRO SOLDIER, Body riddled while lying on the ground, white military police look on,"[19] the Bateses outed the injustice by the white police and called on the black community to take action. As an outcome of the newspaper's confrontational and frank coverage of Forster's killing, a group of influential Little Rock blacks set out to investigate the shooting on their own. The group identified as the Negro Citizens Committee (NCC) and took it upon themselves to collect eyewitness statements from the hundreds of people who had been present at the night of the shooting.[20] The NCC, unsurprisingly, found that the shooting was unjustified, leading the local black community—including the Bateses—to rally for an induction of black police officers on Ninth Street and an extensive investigation of Forster's killing.[21] The *State Press'* relentless push for the instatement of black officers resulted in an infuriated white community that sought to put pressure on the Bateses' paper by threatening their local advertisers.[22] But L.C. and Daisy refused to fold as they withstood the boycotts and continued their demand for black police on the most popular black street in Little Rock. After a few months, eight black officers were hired to patrol Ninth Street and despite having limited powers of arrest—it was not in their powers to arrest whites—it was a major step forward for the black community. The feat came to symbolize the force of the Bateses, and it would be the first of several black advancements the Bateses would spearhead in the South during the next two decades. The paper continued to report on police brutality, white efforts to suppress voting rights for blacks, racial harassment and

discrimination in both public and private businesses, and eventually, the need for equal education. The paper was assertive and often inflammatory to both whites and blacks.

With many years of experience at various newspapers as both a reporter and editor, L.C. inevitably became Bates's mentor. She had no formal education nor any experience working within the field, making L.C.'s know-how and proficiency indispensable in launching and running their paper. During the first four years, Daisy Bates was not involved with the production or actual writing for the newspaper, even though she did take on reporting gigs. Rather, she spent the majority of her days in the couple's home or at the newspaper's headquarters, occasionally supervising or cleaning the office.[23] With time, her knowledge of the newspaper industry came from observing her husband and the journalistic work that unfolded around her every day. By 1945, she became the *State Press's* city editor and a contributing writer, occasionally marking the weekly issues with her byline. She was passionate about her advocacy and stood at the forefront of her newspaper's crusade whenever police brutality or racial injustice transpired.[24]

Despite their passion for racial advocacy, the Bateses often found themselves in a conundrum; the newspaper relied heavily on advertisements from both black and white local businesses and often the stories they reported proved upsetting, particularly to whites in Little Rock. It became a fine balance for the couple, who experienced several boycotts from local establishments, oftentimes struggling to stay solvent. Losing advertising revenue forced the Bateses to increase circulation; "if blacks wanted a paper

that supported them, they would have to support the *State Press*. It was war," Stockley wrote.[25]

"A Woman Whom Everyone Knows"[26]

Soon after launching the *State Press,* the Bateses reached celebrity status in Little Rock's black community. In response, many whites in the local area who sought to preserve the ways of the old South, deemed the couple too controversial and outspoken in their quest for racial justice. Others, primarily blacks, saw the couple as a beacon of hope and an as an emblem of progress. L.C., a man of slender and tall stature who always wore his thick-rimmed glasses in public, preferred to remain in the background. Even though his advocacy was aggressive and militant, it was primarily so in print. Daisy, on the other hand, was outspoken in public. She appeared to enjoy being the public face of their advocacy, and was known for her warmth and friendliness inside and outside of the newspaper's headquarters.[27] She was the one to cultivate personal friendships and mutual admiration from civil rights activists and prominent black protégés, as evident in later correspondence with various NAACP members and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. In June of 1958, King wrote a letter to Daisy, thanking her for her hospitality upon a recent visit to Little Rock. A month later, he wrote her once again, inviting her to be the guest speaker at the Women's Day event at the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama, later that same year;

> I don't have to tell you, Daisy, how much it would mean to the women of this area to have you come. . . .if we could have a woman whom everyone KNOWS has been, and still is in the thick of the battle from the very beginning, never faltering, never tiring. . . .it would be the greatest impetus, the greatest inspiration, the greatest challenge to the women to carry on, even as you are so courageously.
>
> *--Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., in letter to Daisy Bates, 1 July 1958.*[28]

Bates was respected, and prominent civil rights leaders such as Dr. King and Roy Wilkins of the NAACP often corresponded with her instead of L.C., even when the message was directed to both of them. She grew especially close to Wilkins, and developed a sisterly friendship with lawyer and minister Harold Flowers, who would eventually spearhead school desegregation in Little Rock with her. However, a friendship that stood out was the one that developed between her and the young Edith Irby Jones. Jones later recalled her first encounter with Bates as a heartwarming one, describing her as the kind of woman who "would come into a room and within half an hour she would know everybody in the room."[29] Jones had been accepted into University of Arkansas Medical School (UAMS) as the first African American student to attend the institution, and as the first black student to attend any medical school in the South.[30] Her admission became a catalyst for racial desegregation in the South and set a powerful example for other young blacks who aspired to attend some of the country's prestigious white schools. However, Jones came from an impoverished background, which meant that attending medical school would be impossible without financial support.

It remains unclear exactly who, but someone advised Jones that if she found herself in need of money she should reach out to the Bateses of the *Arkansas State Press* on Ninth Street.[31] When she presented herself at the paper's headquarters and explained her predicament, Bates, without hesitation, grabbed fifty dollars out of a small can and handed it to Jones.[32] Without knowing the young woman, Bates took it upon herself to support Jones's pursuit toward a degree. The two women formed a strong friendship, and

every week Bates rode to Jones's apartment to hand over a small stash of bills that she had collected from "black professionals" in the area.[33]

Bates took Jones under her wing, ensuring that she had everything she needed. Yet, even though Jones received the financial support from Bates to sustain her degree and even though her initial acceptance into the prestigious institution had become a symbolic milestone for progress toward racial integration, her time at UAMS was greatly influenced by segregationist rules. She was not allowed to use the same facilities, such as bathrooms, the dining area, or housing, as the white students. When she graduated in 1952, she defied all the restrictions placed upon her black womanhood by society at the time, and set up her own practice in Houston, Texas. In time, she co-founded Mercy Hospital and accumulated staff-privileges at several hospitals in and around Houston. Jones achieved recognition and Mercy Houston hospital was eventually renamed Edith Irby Jones M.D. Medical Care Center in tribute.[34] By 1982, she was elected the first female president of the National Medical Association (NMA) and continued to expand her medical work beyond U.S. borders.[35] Jones accomplished educational and career means beyond that of the average black woman in midtwentieth century in the U.S. and her achievements might not have been possible if it not for the financial support of Bates.

Actions such as these reveal Bates's commitment to the advancement of blacks—from local petitions forging the way for the instatement of black officers on Ninth Street to taking it upon herself to collect and deliver money to a young student so she could attain her medical degree, Bates's breadth and compassion was wide-ranging, and her

eagerness to obtain racial equality became even clearer in the 1950s, as school segregation in the South made it to the top of her agenda.

Waking the White Beast: Southern Opposition to Desegregation

In 1956, two years after the U.S. Supreme Court ruled segregated public schools unconstitutional in *Brown v. Board of Education*, southern members of Congress promulgated the Declaration of Constitutional Principles in an attempt to reverse the ruling and preserve white supremacy in the South.[36] The document would become known as the Southern Manifesto and, according to historian John Kyle Day, it "stated opposition to both federally mandated public school desegregation . . . and the emerging Civil Rights Movement that ultimately destroyed the southern caste system known as Jim Crow."[37] The document was a blow to the federal government's plan to uproot the South's traditional race hierarchy, a counterrevolution to the federal government that would virtually put school desegregation in the South to a complete standstill.[38]

In *Brown*, the U.S. Supreme Court had called for desegregation to be carried out with all "deliberate speed," providing a vague time frame for integration of public schools. This ambiguous phrasing was seized upon by white southerners, who undertook extensive measures to postpone implementation and inflate white rancor. Resistance movements in the shape of white supremacist organizations emerged throughout the country, but particularly in the Deep South.[39] One such organization was the White Citizens' Council, which fought to oppose desegregation of educational institutions and voter registration of blacks. With chapters cropping up across the South, the organization sought to discredit the objectives and the authority of civil rights campaigners, including

the NAACP, and embraced both political and economic strategies to induce institutional discrimination.[40] Even though extensive measures had been taken in the immediate aftermath of *Brown*, it was the Southern Manifesto that came to validate the severity of racial demagoguery among America's white supremacists in the midtwentieth century.[41] The manifesto called the *Brown* verdict unconstitutional and condemned it as an abuse of judicial power. Senators and representatives throughout several southern states signed the decree, including many from Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Arkansas.[42]

In Arkansas, Governor Orval E. Faubus halted the planned integration of black students at Little Rock Central High School in September 1957, citing the black students' safety as justification for instating Arkansas National Guard troops to block the students from entering the school's premises. Out of fear that the white southerners would retaliate and riot against those who sought to desegregate the school, Faubus decided to prolong the ways of the Old South by delaying integration indefinitely, rather than to advance toward racial integration. It was here that Daisy Bates's involvement with school desegregation in Arkansas escalated. With the help of local black leaders, she recruited nine students—which would eventually become known as the Little Rock Nine—to integrate the white school. Nearly a month after integration was scheduled to take place, the federal government took action. President Dwight Eisenhower could no longer ignore the conflicts surrounding the desegregation of Central High, prompting him to appoint federal troops to escort the black students into the school.[43] While daily harassment and discrimination was far from over, the official entry of black students into an all-white public school was a landmark in the quest for racial equality. Behind this landmark stood

Daisy and L.C. Bates, two pillars who had rallied the local community through their newspaper and spurred national attention to successfully integrate the school. Daisy, above all, had taken it upon herself to provide the students with unwavering support, as she mentored the students in the harrowing first months, while campaigning for the desegregation through the NAACP and reporting for the *Press.* Each morning the nine students would gather at the Bateses home before walking together to Central High, and each evening they would return to reflect on what had transpired on the given day. She saw them as her own children, and would continuously refer to them as such. She was in close contact with their parents, who would call her, night and day, concerned about their children's safety. From her basement, Bates encouraged the students to continue onwards but also offered an ear to stories about harassment they experienced and their concerns.

During its lifespan, the newspaper stirred its community with its unrelenting stance on racial injustice and aggressive advocacy, in a hard-hitting tabloid style. With the desegregation in 1957, the Bateses ascended to national fame. Nevertheless, the desegregation and the national attention led to an infuriated white South, which led to a campaign to shut down the newspaper and finally silencing the Bateses. In 1959, the *Press* shuttered, unable to draw enough advertising to stay solvent. Local advertisers were facing boycotts from the ruling white supremacist groups for supporting a belligerent black newspaper; local black commissionaires and stores were broken into and trashed, and threatening notes were left, swearing further destruction or even death upon those who continued to support the paper.

In the following years, the Bateses continued their civil rights advocacy, working with the NAACP. Daisy traveled around the country to engage with large assemblies at black universities' events. She continued to advocate for the rights of black Americans and challenge white supremacy well into her late eighties.

"The man you married in Arkansas":[44] Allegations and Divorce

Daisy's own account of her relationship with L.C. is characterized by her admiration of his acuity bound by his older age, his intellect, and his eagerness to advance the black race. Even though she described herself as more than hesitant to start the *State Press*, she also wrote with pride of her husband's perseverance to be a voice for blacks in the state, an opportunity she simply could not, and would not, let pass. In the latter years, she described their partnership, both as husband and wife and as business partners, as a nurturing and stimulating relationship; L.C. mirrored the same yearnings that Daisy had carried with her since she was still just a young child, which was to partake in social change and ensure that blacks attained unchallenged rights. His prior experience within the newspaper industry enabled both of them to actively engage in the local community and become an outlet for the concerns and interests of blacks in Little Rock.

Even though Bates mentions their occasional disagreements, such as whether or not they should spend all of their savings on launching the paper in 1941, she neatly omits the quarrels and tensions that would transpire in their marriage in the later years. As documented by Stockley, L.C. and Daisy's relationship was characterized by admiration but also resentment and emotional tensions. She was outgoing and

commanded the attention of room as soon as she stepped into it, while L. C. preferred a more quiet existence in which the written word served as the primary channel for his vexations on social injustice.[45] Even though the Bateses were extremely private about their personal life, letters unearthed by Stockley disclose the strains and struggles that came to characterize the last two and a half decades of their relationship, before L.C. passed away in 1980.

After the *State Press* shuttered in 1959, L.C. became the field secretary for the NAACP in Arkansas, promising a monthly salary of $600 and requiring him to correspond and socialize with the organization's other branches, thereby breaking with the more calm life he had spent behind his typewriter.[46] Daisy had signed a book contract with the David McKay Company in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in May of 1959, agreeing to finish a manuscript for a memoir of her mentorship of the Little Rock Nine by the end of the year.[47] However, with the closure of the newspaper in October and the couple's financial struggles, it would be another three years before the book was published in the fall of 1962. Besides working on the book manuscript in the early 1960s, Daisy promoted the work of the NAACP at various speaking engagements, especially at black colleges, in attempt to inspire and employ new members and support for the organization's activities. Moreover, she remained in close contact with the Little Rock Nine students of whom several were off to college. In charge of the NAACP's educational trust, Daisy saw that the students received financial aid to sustain their educational progress beyond their time at Central High School.[48]

As a field secretary, L.C. came to work under his wife, who still served as president of the NAACP's state chapter. Two copies of a letter from the National Director of Branches Gloster B. Current, were mailed to L.C. and Daisy separately and affirmed that the work of L.C. would occur under the direction of the president, i.e. Daisy.[49] Even though Daisy had become the public spokesperson of the couple during the integration mission, L.C. had remained in charge of the paper after all. Contrarily, with his newly assigned role as field secretary, the tables had turned, and he no longer had the last say. Daisy was often working out of town while L.C. remained in the Little Rock area. In a 1959 article in *Jet* magazine, L.C. was described as the forgotten force behind Daisy; "the man who makes her tick—the fountain of her strength."[50] The story portrayed a "rod-straight, stick-thin" editor who tirelessly spent his days and nights protecting the couple's home "in an over-stuffed easy chair, gun handy, alert" while he "sees his wife an average of six days a month—if her schedule is not too demanding."[51] The story serves as one of the few public peepholes into the couple's marital problems. It portrays Daisy as the "famous star" who had nearly abandoned—or forgotten—her husband who tirelessly worked to protect their home from bombings and other attacks by white supremacists, while she was away.

Within their immediate family their marriage became surrounded by rumors of infidelity in the late 1950s. Daisy was rumored to have another man and she would eventually accuse L.C. of being with other women. In 1960, Daisy moved to New York, temporarily she argued, informing friends and family that it was necessary to finalize her book.[52] Given their secrecy even amongst close friends it is unclear if there ever was

another man or another woman, but in the summer of 1962 the couple signed a separation agreement, and by February of 1963 their divorce was finalized.[53] A letter from L.C. to Daisy written in December of 1962 revealed his despair, but not much about what exactly had transpired between the two: "I wanted you because I loved you and I was happy trying to make you happy. However I did not know at the time that I was only making you hate me."[54] In the letter it becomes clear that Daisy had forced him to move out of their house in Arkansas, leaving him on the verge of what can easily be read as suicidal thoughts. In his final remarks he informed her where she could find his insurance policies, followed by the statement "This drives me to insanity, and naturally I can only think of the easiest way out."[55] Despite tales of unfaithfulness—especially on Daisy's side based on letters written by L.C.'s mother—the couple remarried in 1964, just six months after their divorce had been finalized.[56] Their short, yet tumultuous divorce remained unknown amongst friends and colleagues, and was completely absent in Bates's memoir when published in 1962. Presumably, neither Bates or her publisher wanted *The Long Shadow of Little Rock* to reveal the dark side behind the famous couple. It was a story of a heroine, a black woman trailblazer, not the despairing truth about her trembling marriage. To reveal the truth would not only break with the public image the two had created over the years, it would also uncover Daisy's own fragility. Ultimately, her story became partly fictional as it cemented the Bateses as the unwavering couple who could both promote black uplift and tell other blacks how to behave and conduct themselves. Despite the chaotic reality of their relationship in 1962, Daisy concluded her book;

> L.C. and I have committed our lives to this crusade. Together we continue to take an active part in the fight for the emancipation of the Negro in the South. . . .

> Together we look to the time when the citizens of this land will erase the shame of Little Rock, when the Constitution of the United States will embrace every man regardless of his color.
>
> *--Daisy Bates in The Long Shadow of Little Rock.*[57]

According to Stockley, Daisy likely found in the older L.C. the comfort and security she had lost when Orlee died.[58] But even though she loved L.C., he came to represent the sternness of a father figure, and his need to control might have been what eventually drew her away. Their different views of the black plight may also have contributed to their marital disputes. Daisy was militant, encouraged blacks to actively fight back, and mocked black complacency. L.C., on the other hand, saw sit-ins and freedom rides as both purposeless and degrading to blacks.[59] Instead, he placed all his energy in the power of the written word and sought for blacks to advance by acquiring the right to vote. Contrarily to his wife, he was more conservative and old-fashioned. That Daisy would eventually leave him was according to his December letter to little surprise, "I have been expecting you to ask for divorce for several years. Especially since 1958…"[60] he wrote, without clarifying what had occurred that year. Nevertheless, he indicated that he was not going anywhere and that he was eager to get his wife back. He signed his name under the sentence "Yours (as far as I am concerned) as ever, The man you married in Arkansas."[61]

What exactly made Daisy change her mind remains unsaid. Yet, just half a year after divorcing her husband of twenty-one years the Bateses remarried, and she moved back to Arkansas. L.C.'s fatherly sternness and control might have driven her away temporarily, but the security and comfort he had come to represent were presumably what

pulled her back by the end of the day. After all, she had known him for the majority of her life and he had been her pillar when she as a young girl had lost her foster father who she was immensely close with. One could also rightfully speculate that impacting her decision to return to L.C. and the place she called home, was the small stroke she suffered in 1964—the first of many.[62] It debilitated her temporarily and left L.C. to care for her. Yet, it was the summer of the following year that changed her health radically. She became gravely ill in June and was hospitalized for over a month. No diagnosis was ever publicly revealed but correspondence between NAACP members referred to her state as a "real cause for concern" and her abilities to communicate to be "quite incoherent."[63] By the beginning of 1966 her health had improved and she started working with local youth groups in Little Rock. By 1967, her health was stable enough for her to undertake a seven-year-long project through the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) to initiate an anti-poverty program in Mitchellville in Desha County, renowned for its severe poverty and being an all-black town.[64] She moved to Mitchellville and stayed there until 1974, commuting back to Little Rock to be with L.C. on the weekends. Bates helped secure funds for the black town to be self-sufficient, ensuring a doctor's office, classrooms, recreational spaces, and a credit union.[65] She wanted to prove to the rest of the country that blacks could be self-sufficient through government collaboration.

After once again returning to Little Rock in the late seventies, where she continued her work with local youth groups and the NAACP, Daisy suddenly found herself alone when L.C. died in 1980. The couple had been together since 1932, and despite periods of separation and marital tensions, they had been together for nearly fifty

years. In 1984 Bates decided to revive the *State Press.* On April 11, the first issue of the resurrected paper was printed. In bold letters the front-page glared "Special Commemorative Edition: Dedicated to the memory of Lucious Christopher Bates."[66] The second run of the *State Press* echoed the ideals and reported on similar issues that had spurred the paper to national fame in the 1950s. However, the times had changed and more often than not, the articles would be a reflection of past events rather than news reports. By 1988, Bates sold the paper after no financial success.

NOTES

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[2] Ibid, 17.

[3] Daisy Bates, *The Long Shadow of Little Rock* (Little Rock: University of Arkansas Press, 1962), 43.

[4] Ibid., 44.

[5] Stockley, *Daisy Bates*, 17.

[6] Ibid*.,* 19.

[7] C. Calvin Smith, "From "Separate but Equal to Desegregation": The Changing Philosophy of L.C. Bates," *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 42, no. 3 (1983): 254-70, 225.

[8] Ibid., 225.

[9] Bates, *The Long Shadow*, 33.

[10] Smith, "From 'Separate but Equal to Desegregation'", 225.

[11] Bates, *The Long Shadow*, 33.

[12] Stockley, *Daisy Bates*, 24.

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[15] Bates, *The Long Shadow,* 33.

[16] Grif Stockley, "Arkansas State Press," *The Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture* (2017). Retrieved from http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=592.

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[18] Ibid., 35.

[19] "City Patrolman Shoots Negro Soldier," *Arkansas State Press*, March 27, 1942.

[20] Stockley, *Daisy Bates*, 38.

[21] John Kirk, "Ninth Street Matters: The killing of a black army sergeant by a white city policeman on West Ninth Street in 1942 led to the appointment of black officers," *Arkansas Times*, March 17, 2016.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Stockley, *Daisy Bates*, 28.

[24] Bates, *The Long Shadow*, 35.

[25] Stockley, *Daisy Bates*, 39.

[26] Martin Luther King Jr. to Daisy Bates, July 1, 1958, *The Martin Luther King, Jr. Papers Project*, Stanford University, http://okra.stanford.edu/transcription/document_images/Vol04Scans/445_1-July-1958_To%20Daisy%20Bates.pdf

[27] Earnest Dumas, interviewed by Grif Stockley, February 19, 2002, as quoted in Stockley, *Daisy Bates*, 46.

[28] Martin Luther King Jr. to Daisy Bates, July 1, 1958, Martin Luther King Jr. Papers Project, Stanford University, Palo Alto, California

[29] Stockley, *Daisy Bates,* 27.

[30] Diana Fisher, *Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture,* "Edith Irby Jones (1927-)" 2017.

[31] Stockley, *Daisy Bates,* 46.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Edith Irby Jones, interviewed by Natalie Garza, January 17, 2014, as part of Texas Medical Center Women's History Project, The TMC Library, https://digitalcommons.library.tmc.edu/tmc-whp/?utm_source=digitalcommons.library.tmc.edu%2Ftmc-whp%2F6&utm_medium=PDF&utm_campaign=PDFCoverPages

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[35] Ibid.

[36] Brent J. Aucoin, "The Southern Manifesto and Southern Opposition to

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[37] John Kyle Day, *The Southern Manifesto: Massive Resistance and the Fight to Preserve Segregation* (Oxford: University Press of Mississippi, 2014), viii.

[38] John Kyle Day, "The Southern Manifesto: Massive Resistance, Growth Liberalism, and the Interpretation of Brown II," *Journal of School Choice* 10, no. 4 (2016): 420-35; Lynne Olson, *Freedom's Daughters: The Unsung Heroines from the Civil Rights Movement from 1830 to 1970* (New York: Scribner, 2001), 134.

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[42] James T. Patterson, *Grand Expectations: The United States, 1945-1974* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1996), 398.

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[44] L.C. Bates to Daisy Bates, December 10, 1962, Madison, as cited in Stockley, *Daisy Bates*, 262.

[45] Stockley, *Daisy Bates*, 165.

[46] Ibid, 186.

[47] Ibid, 152.

[48] Ibid, 154.

[49] Gloster B. Current to Daisy Bates, February 29, 1960, Group 3, C223, Papers of the NAACP, as cited in Stockley, *Daisy Bates*, 259.

[50] "L.C. Bates: Little Rock's Forgotten Man" *Jet Magazine*, June 4, 1959.

[51] Ibid.

[52] Stockley, *Daisy Bates*, 173.

[53] Ibid, 186.

[54] L.C. Bates to Daisy Bates, December 10, 1962, Madison, quoted in Stockley, *Daisy Bates*, 187.

[55] Ibid.

[56] Stockley, *Daisy Bates*, 189.

[57] Bates, *The Long Shadow,* 224.

[58] Ibid, 190.

[59] Ibid, 183.

[60] L.C. Bates to Daisy Bates, December 10, 1962.

[61] Ibid.

[62] Stockley, *Daisy Bates*, 201.

[63] Edward Muse to Henry Lee Moon, June 27, 1965, Papers of the NAACP, as quoted in Stockley, *Daisy Bates,* 201.

[64] Stockley, *Daisy Bates,* 207.

[65] Ibid, 211.

[66] *Arkansas State Press*, April 11, 1984.

Chapter 3: The Journalistic Advocacy of Daisy Bates

A close study of more than nine hundred primary documents, including Bates's memoir, *The Long Shadow of Little Rock*, a selection of her personal letters, and an in-depth assessment of her articles in the *Press*, reflect a woman in transition and the becoming of an activist. This chapter delves into Bates's journalistic voyage by examining the overarching themes in the *Press*'s coverage of race issues, and specifically by conducting an in-depth analysis of the articles that appeared under Bates's byline. Finally, the chapter examines the portrayal of Bates and her work in the *Arkansas State Press* and how it evolved over two decades.

The Arkansas State Press

The content of the *Press* (1941-1959) is saturated by escalating racial strains in the South and the civil rights movement's intensifying pressure on both societal and legal structures throughout the United States in the mid-twentieth century. Three overarching themes stood out upon reviewing the content of the Bateses's newspaper. The first, which was especially prominent and took up the majority of space in the weekly issues during the paper's first five years, was content that promoted black advancement by highlighting the accomplishments of blacks. These stories initially centered on the accomplishments of blacks living in the Little Rock area where the paper was based, but as circulation increased and the Bateses's fame amplified, their content progressively came to account for the achievements of blacks throughout the rest of the country. These stories were primarily centered on blacks who broke the color line, from starring in a local opera or working their way into elitist Hollywood film jobs to taking on positions at the federal

level. The second most prominent category was news stories that either attacked or accounted for wrongdoings committed by whites toward blacks. This content became more and more frequent as the *Press* expanded its coverage, and as the Bateses' involvement with the NAACP and the Little Rock desegregation mission intensified in the late 1940s. The third category was accommodation. While less prominent throughout the entire paper's run when compared with the other two categories, references to accommodation repeatedly emerged, particularly in the newspaper's earlier years.

An assessment of the full run of the *Press*, from May 1941 to October 1959, reveal several narrower themes in the paper's content. An unwavering emphasis on black pride and unity is reiterated throughout the entire run, primarily manifested in stories that advocated for black advancement by reporting on blacks who had managed to break the color line, either as individuals or through group efforts. These stories undeniably sought to establish a sense of unity among blacks, both on a local but also a national level, and encouraged blacks to persevere through oppression and injustice by depicting what was often considered unachievable to blacks, as being achievable. In the later years of the *Press,* unity was further exemplified in articles that called for action and challenged the existing social structures that sought to repress and segregate blacks from whites. These stories often centered on the race cause, and the tone of voice was primarily assertive, occasionally condescending, as the newspaper did not only encourage blacks to act, but moreover called out blacks who had been bystanders in times of oppression. These kinds of uproars and calls to action sought to provoke black readers into actively engaging with

the race cause, to ultimately achieve black advancement on both a societal and legal level through unified action.

An example hereof appeared in an issue on February 1957, where the Bateses called for black unison under the headline "Less [*sic*] We Forget." The story, which occurred before the Little Rock integration mission at Central High, underscored the couple's pursuit for desegregation, roaring that "the action this week of the segregationists,[1] should be a warning to the Negro that it is time for him to put more emphasis on unity. As this paper has stated before, that we have missed the ball somewhere, all is not lost if we pool our strength [together]."[2] The story reveals another piercing theme of assertiveness, which is purposely weaved through the theme of unity. As the paper would repeatedly call to action and challenge white supremacy, it would do so in a resounding fashion. A key example of this is evident in the issue of rolling back southern restrictions, both legal and quasi-legal, on black voting rights, which the paper continually reported under headlines such as "REPRESENTATION CAN ONLY BE HAD THRU PARTICIPATION."[3] In a forceful and direct voice, the *Press* declared an end to complacency: "[N]ow is the time to discard that air of appeasement and cowardice, and show to the world that you are willing to accept the responsibility of citizenship."[4] The Bateses did not merely encourage their readers to vote, they demanded it, and provided them with no excuses to abstain. The couple meticulously printed how-to guides, which navigated the readers through the voting process—how to vote and where to vote depending on in the reader's legal residence—creating a sense of companionship and duty through guidance.

The theme of assertiveness was repeated in news stories that covered whites' wrongdoings toward blacks. These types of stories were, more often than not, highlighted with bold headlines across the top of the page and large photos of either the victim or the perpetrator, and reported primarily on wrongful convictions, blacks being abused by white law enforcement, or white mob violence against innocent blacks. These articles tended to emphasize the difference in treatment between whites and blacks, and the obscurity of whites' justification hereof. In February of 1948, a front-page story glared, "Woman and sons sentenced to die in Georgia – would be free if were white, says white defense lawyer."[5] The story reported on a black middle-aged woman and her two sons who had been sentenced to death by electric chair, after the self-defense killing of the white farmer who employed them. The farmer had attacked the mother, and as the two sons had jumped to her defense they accidentally killed him in the altercation. These kinds of stories frequently appeared in the *Press* and typically were printed on the front page.

Similar to other southern black newspapers at the time, the *Press*'s content chiefly centered on black uplift and accommodation in the early years of its life and up until the late 1940s. Recognized as a co-founder, Daisy Bates did not officially begin her work with the newspaper until 1945 when she was assigned to be the city editor. However, in the paper's first four years she occasionally took on work as a reporter in the Little Rock area. In Bates's early days as an editor, the newspaper's content was foremost centered on these news stories of black uplift. The stories highlighted the accomplishments of blacks, often on the front page, with a big headline and a portrait photograph of the

person or group of people who had managed to break the color line and thereby step into "white territory."

Between 1945 and 1950, stories about blacks' achievements concentrated chiefly on Little Rock residents. In June of 1946, the paper celebrated a local resident who had become the "First American Negro to Star in Major Opera,"[6] while a few months later, the newspaper declared that a young black Arkansas policeman had acquired a job in Washington, D.C., under the headline "Arkansas Boy Makes Good in Nation's Capital."[7] These stories appeared prominently in the first decade of the paper's run when its readership was still mainly local; however, the content expanded to account for more nationwide issues as the Bateses got more involved with the NAACP, and as the civil rights movement grew and reached the nation's capital. Mirroring this progress, the stories on black achievements magnified to account for black accomplishments on a broader, national level. Stories additionally progressed from focusing predominantly on individual successes, to the achievements of blacks as a larger community. In 1953, the *Press* celebrated "No More 'Soap Bubbles' Queries for Negro Voters,"[8] informing readers that poll workers could no longer pose difficult civic questions to potential black voters as a means to disqualify them. Three years prior, the newspaper had celebrated a small, yet significant, step toward racial equality in the South, "NEGROES VOTE FOR THE FIRST TIME."[9] This front-page story informed readers of a small town in western Arkansas, where blacks for the first time were allowed to vote in a local election.

During the 1940s, accommodation was a reoccurring topic in the *Press*, often conveyed through small cartoon depictions and brief guides written by L.C. Bates[10] The

blurbs told readers how to behave in public, including dressing in clean and neat attire and not spitting in the street.[11] These recommendations reflected the traditions of black newspapers at the time, both in the north and the south of the country, which sought to combat the negative image whites had of blacks by teaching them proper manners and how to conduct themselves among whites. Thus, by centering on the black community's achievements and educating its readers on how to behave and dress in public, the *Press*'s news stories resonated the endeavor of black uplift that was repeated throughout the majority of black newspaper, especially in the South, in the early and mid-twentieth century.[12]

Daisy Bates: City Editor, Reporter, and Contributing Writer

While L.C. practiced a more pacifist approach—reflecting the nonviolent tactics of civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. in his quest for racial equality—which centered on accommodation and black uplift, Daisy Bates's advocacy echoed a more radical and aggressive means to achieve racial justice. During her years as editor and writer for the *Press*, the newspaper ran numerous controversial articles that would cause a stir within Arkansas's white community, and likely among those members of the black community who sought a peaceful co-existence with whites.

An in-depth reading of Bates's stories in the *Press* reveal two central recurrent topics in her journalistic work. The first topic was calling out black cowardice. Particularly in her editorials she addressed the complacency of blacks who did not contest whites' oppression, and occasionally, she even attacked the accommodationist approach, which was preached by her own husband during the paper's earlier years. Another

reemerging topic was her use of sarcasm and name-calling, often mocking white establishments and white supremacists for their actions in their quest to maintain and enforce white superiority.

In the assessment of the full run of the *Press,* two particularly interesting tendencies emerged. First of all was the shifting portrayal of Bates, from merely being mentioned as the wife of L.C. to eventually being portrayed as the central figure of the couple. Stories that reported on Bates transitioned from centering on her role as the publisher's wife, who traveled and undertook small-town affairs, to Bates as an independent civil rights activist, who advocated for desegregation and racial equality through her advocacy, especially her work with the NAACP. Finally, the stories reflect a Bates who came to undertake an attitude of unwavering resistance to the opposition she encountered, as reflected in her perseverance toward the violent threats and harassment she was exposed to.

The "Tail-Tucking Dog Type of Negro":[13] Attacking Black Complacency

Bates's frustration with black complacency is exemplified in various ways in her journalistic writings. Rather than positive encouragement, her advocacy was often carried out in a somewhat belligerent tone and sought to provoke readers into action. Her advocacy was centered on a journalistic approach that relied on forceful and aggravating assertions, rather than encouraging notions of uplift and reassurance. Occasionally, her editorials hinted at a sense of hopelessness and despair.

In an editorial from 1946, she expressed embarrassment over the inactivity of black Little Rock residents in the NAACP's attempt to pass a proposed Fair Employment

Practice Commission (FEPC) bill in the U.S. Congress. She informed her readers, "I was forced to admit, with reluctance, that we are asleep."[14] Calling out the dormancy of blacks in Little Rock, she continued the provocation as she went on to claim that blacks were afraid of the white man. "We are not going to give too much of that, if it causes the white man to take a second look at us."[15] The editorial ran alongside another front-page story, which highlighted the tireless efforts of the NAACP in proposing a revised FEPC bill to Congress. Emphasizing the work of certain blacks—in this case the NAACP, which included Bates herself—underscored the discrepancy between those blacks who actively had been involved and continued to advocate for the race cause, and the blacks that were too afraid or too complacent to speak out and fight the social injustice so deeply rooted in the systemic racism in 1940s America. Bates was clearly frustrated, as evidenced by her distressed and confrontational remarks.

Another editorial, written in the same year, illustrated a different approach undertaken by Bates in calling out appeasement and complacency of blacks. In the article, she referred to a transition that occurred in the aftermath of World War II and the emergence of a "new Negro."[16] Despite a reference to the black man prior to the war as a "[t]ail-tucking dog type of Negro," her editorial, overall, read as both encouraging and empowering. Warning whites of the empowerment of blacks upon their return from fighting overseas for the civic rights and principles endowed by democracy, she predicted the emergence of a new black man who would not accept the abuses or inferiority previously inflicted upon him by the white man. However, while the story read as predominantly encouraging to blacks and as a warning sign to whites, it was also a call-

out to those blacks who had been "tucking their tail" between their legs and accepting a life in inferiority. Utilizing blacks' efforts in the war, she illustrated the paradox that came to shape their participation in the war; they fought, and risked their lives, for democratic liberties for people abroad, only to return home and find themselves entrapped in the same position of inferiority and without the civic rights and liberties of their white peers. The paradox presented by blacks' participation in the war and their return to less than civic rights and liberties, was further echoed in another in nationally prominent paper, the *Pittsburgh Courier* and its Double V Campaign. Bates underscores this exact injustice of blacks' lack of liberties upon return:

> These new men did not return to American soil, the soil of their birth, seeking favors from the white man, neither did they return to resume the role of the inferior group, accepting abuses, insults and dog-like treatment from any other group.[17]

Given that the *Press*'s readership was primarily black, this was undeniably a means to provoke them into action, first of all, by presenting them with the bare realities and unfairness of their situation—risking their lives for their country, while still being treated as second-class citizens—and moreover, by calling the complacent black, a tail-tucking dog. Bates was not shy to brutally shove her opinion in the reader's face, and her writings, peppered with militant and provocative imagery, emphasized the need for unified action—and all of those who did not participate, were, according to her, considered cowards.

More than a decade later, when school segregation in Little Rock was causing racial tensions to accelerate, the paper quoted in large bold letters on the front page a

statement of NAACP Executive Secretary Roy Wilkins; the headline glared, "Dixie 'Gestapo' to Stir Hate Charged before Senate Unit."[18] Gestapo, the article elaborated, referred to the white supremacists who sought to maintain racial segregation throughout the South. The newspaper's comparison of white supremacists to the Nazis' secret police, who had suppressed and shipped Jews to concentration camps during World War II, would undoubtedly cause an uproar within Little Rock's white community. The Bateses' ability to upset the white community became evident, when shortly after the front-page story ran, the couple returned home to find that a massive, professionally constructed cross had been torched on their front lawn. The assault was just one out of numerous attacks the Bateses had experienced, from bricks and small homemade bombs being thrown through their windows,[19] to several cross burnings on their front lawn. An article published the following month, under the headline "School Integration Here Causes KKK to Try Intimidating Negroes" revealed that the cross burning was the third one of that year. According to the article, "because of the Bates' stand on constitutional rights for all people, and because they stand behind what they stand for, they have been a target for the dixiecrat element of the white populace and many Negroes whom the white man can control."[20]

Again, Bates used the opportunity to call out black cowardice:

> Mrs. Bates made it clear that she was concerned, not with the people who parade at nite [*sic*] and afraid to show their faces in the light, she is concerned with the people who say they want first class citizenship, equality in education, but when her organization makes these things possible, they are too ward [*sic*] to take advantage of them.[21]

Thus, calling out blacks who were too scared to stand up for racial equality was a repeated theme in Bates's own articles, and the articles that reported on her work with the NAACP. In an article that reported on the NAACP's youth work, Bates bellowed: "Every year has brought us closer to the ultimate realization of first-class citizenship. We shall not lessen our pressure. We cannot pause to look back, to rejoice unnecessarily long in our victories, for there are those among us who are impatient."[22]

Bates's persistent, and at times condescending, call-out to blacks to rise up to achieve constitutional rights for everyone—often in relation to equal employment opportunities, voting rights, desegregation of educational institutions, or transportation systems—caused whites, and potentially several black community members, to feel disdain toward the Bateses and their newspaper. Bates felt justified in her rage. In an article printed in early 1957, which once again reported on her work with the NAACP, Bates was quoted for attributing anger to the growing trend of the organization;

> Mrs. L.C. Bates, state president told the group to disregard agitation coming from Capitol Hill, that the NAACP in Arkansas is stronger now than it has ever been in the past. She said it is stronger, because the people are mad. And when people get mad, they go into action. She said it was unfortunate that the good name of Arkansas has to be tainted with such undemocratic legislation,[23] but for the Negro's fight for freedom, it is a blessing, for it aroused him.[24]

According to Bates, anger was what fueled the movement; this explains her aggressive stance on civil rights, both from the personal perspective of wanting justice for herself and all blacks, but also as a means to agitate and cause people to unite and fight back.

A year later, in July of 1958, the *Press* reported that Bates had been hanged in effigy on the courthouse lawn in Camden, Ouachita County. It was the second time within just two days that an effigy of Bates appeared in the town. The effigy had a sign reading "Old Daisy Bates—Ike's Best Friend," around its neck and a face made from a rubber mask.[25] The paper reported that even though Bates had no connection with politics, she was indeed one of Governor Orval E. Faubus's strongest opponents. The hate crimes targeting especially Daisy Bates illustrated the extent to which she went to advocate for the rights of blacks, again and again.

The Bravery of the Ku Klux Klan and Other Tales

Another of Bates's advocacy approaches and means to evoke her readers was the use of a darkly sarcastic underlying tone and name-calling when writing about the wrongdoings by whites. A story on a local black man who had refused to get into a white man's car and consequently, was shot dead, ran under the headline, "Talks Back to White—Killed!"[26] Another news story reported on a "poor" white woman, who had randomly chosen her rapist among a group of 150 black men, after which the "rapist" had been dragged into the forest by an angry white mob and gunned down.[27]

In an editorial written in March 1946, she encouraged readers to boycott the local bus system in Little Rock, arguing, "No right thinking person in any community wants to see violence in his community . . . but it is a certainty in Little Rock as long as the officials of the transportation company continue the employment of low-grade-Negro-hating-uncouth-hoodlum-type to drive transportation buses."[28] This type of hostile name-calling was repeated throughout the majority of her articles. The editorial furthermore

employed a sense of assertiveness and almost mocking spitefulness, as she vowed that the anger that would ensue if there was no justice in sight (for blacks to be treated as equals on public transportation busses and to be hired as drivers) would "make the atom bomb look like the average Fourth of July firecracker" in comparison.[29]

Threatening with black outrage—and some would probably argue, inciting outrage—her stories caused a stir among the white community in Little Rock, as evidenced by the cross burnings and other acts of intimidation. Yet Bates never appeared hesitant to make herself unpopular with white or black readers. She addressed black cowardice and warned of a new day, where reluctant blacks had disappeared and the emergence of a "new Negro, who has been taught to expect a new deal, and one who has been trained by the best instructors in the world to die for the principles of democracy" had been realized.[30] Her editorial took a stab at the conditions and treatment black soldiers returned to after World War II, a war in which more than 700 were killed in combat. These "new Negroes" had fought civic injustice abroad, yet found themselves confined upon their return, by the same racial oppression and discrimination they had suffered prior to the war.

In another of Bates's articles, a short opinion piece written in the summer of 1948, she mocked the Ku Klux Klan and the scare tactics they applied in their efforts to continue black suppression. The headline said, "The Klan Rode in the Land of the Free and the Home of the Brave," a clear nod to the U.S. national anthem, the "Star Spangled Banner," and the paradox racism presented within the nation's avowed freedom. The use of sarcasm was repeated, as she provokingly referred to the "bravery" of the hundred men

in white robes, who broke up a national training camp for Girl Scouts and threatened to burn down the camp if they continued to teach "the niggers Communism."[31] Once again, she employed hostile name calling, however this time by reference to Stalin, dictator of the Soviet Union, and engaged in the same rhetoric of sarcasm as in the previous article, "Could Stalin be less considerate than that?"[32] By drawing a parallel between KKK members and Stalin, who at the time had ruled the Soviet Union under strict dictatorship for nearly two decades, Bates accentuated the inhumanity of the Klan. Moreover, the comparison undeniably cast a sense of absurdity on the Klan's cause, and painted the KKK as a detached outside force that attempted to control and restrict democratic western values.

In an earlier editorial, from February 1946, Bates employed sarcasm to mock white privilege, when covering an issue on black pressure to pass a bill in relation to the Fair Employment Practice Committee;

> Imagine a poor white farmer from the state of Mississippi, owning a mule, a cow, two acres of red hill land and a box of Garrett snuff and a plug of brown mule tobacco, with half of it in his beard, walking around in the nation's capital, and I quote: "I had to come up here to help [Theodore G.] Bilbo and [James] Eastland, by god, Um not gonna have any damn 'nigger yankee' or smart Mexicans working for me, milking my cows or feeding my goats."[33]

Much as she would later refer to the bravery of the KKK, she here referred, with staunch cynicism, to the "poor white farmer" who despite his many possessions was unfortunate because he was at risk of having either a black or Mexican milking his cows and feeding his goats. In this passage, Bates additionally painted a degrading portrayal of the white farmer, with leftover tobacco stuck in his beard and speaking with a heavy

accent as demonstrated in the direct quote. What is particularly interesting about this article however, is an assertion she made regarding other white southerners from "below the imaginary Mason-Dixon line," in Washington, D.C. Here, she claimed that not all whites replicated the same racist tendencies as the depicted white farmer.[34]

Out of all the stories that appeared in the *Press* under her byline, this was the only story in which she acknowledges and praises the white communities supporting the race cause: "There are plenty, who are not members of the country's minorities nor affected by the passage of this bill putting forth every effort possible to get this measured passed. . . . [They are] taking abuse along with inconveniences going out in the fight for our benefits."[35]

Bates's advocacy and journalistic work was largely steered by an innate dislike for whites and the systemic racism that seethed through legal and societal structures. In her memoir, she emphasized her mother's murder as a catalyst for her hatred for whites, and how this hatred eventually kindled her advocacy in the race cause. Yet, in the later years, as reflected briefly in this editorial, and as mentioned in her memoir, she came to salute the work of those whites who, much like herself, sought and advocated for racial justice and an end to black discrimination.

Two years later, Bates once again employed sarcasm in a short opinion piece that ran under the headline "When the Freedom Train Comes to Little Rock Democracy Goes Into Action" and a subheading that read "Discrimination Takes a Holiday."[36] The story reported on the arrival of the Freedom Train[37] in Little Rock, and Bates used the occasion to exemplify to readers that peaceful co-existence of blacks and whites was attainable

after all. Under the somewhat mocking subheading, Bates assured the readers that no whites had been harmed, or that it "had not lessened the dignity of the white race at all," to visit the historic train alongside black visitors. Once again, Bates underscored the absurdity of not merely racial segregation, but furthermore mocked whites' belief that the presence of blacks would either prove harmful or scar their dignity. Finally, she used the example to illustrate that democracy was in fact possible on that specific day, and therefore, it would be possible again, as thousands of blacks and whites patiently waited alongside one another in the cold to go on the train.

The same sarcastic theme of white "suffering" was present in her editorial on racial segregation in public transportation, from March, 1946. Here she asserted that no whites suffered from sitting in seats next to blacks, or from sitting next to the "plague of inferiority," as she characterized to it, obviously mocking whites' irrational fear of blacks.[38]

"I Am Determined to Arouse My People":[39] Bates's Call to Action

Encouraging black readers to act against white supremacy was a recurrent theme throughout the *Press*'s content over the years. To evoke and encourage blacks to take action against the discrimination that continuously oppressed and deprived them of their civic liberties and thus, refrained them from the position of equality that the Constitution had otherwise sworn to them, emerged as the central cause of the Bateses' paper. Therefore, it is not surprising that Bates's own writings would reflect the same methods of supporting and stimulating black uplift to incite action.

In an attempt to arouse readers, Bates recited a line from a song her mother used to sing to her, “Must I be carried to the skies on flowery beds of ease, while others fought to win the prize and sailed through bloody seas.”[40] The line is part of the hymn, *Am I a Soldier of the Cross?* by Isaac Watts, which describes the pain and turmoil of human struggle and perseverance through militant imagery. The last two stanzas depict a militant battle in which glory and victory will go to those who fight with courage and endure the pain.

By referring to this specific hymn, Bates called up strong emotional imagery, which insinuates not merely the power of perseverance and resilience, but that also draws on Christian beliefs. Christianity played a central role in the civil rights movement, both in its foundational pillars and in the oratory of prominent leaders.[41] The church functioned as a place of solace and was considered a safe haven for blacks, free of white dominance, especially in the South.[42] As the church operated as a protected and open space to all blacks, no matter which social or economic groups they belonged to, faith and scripture came to symbolize unity in the race cause and shared efforts in the quest for racial justice. Religion was pivotal to the ordained leaders, but also to local black activists who believed in the redemptive promises of virtuous suffering.[43] By drawing on religious virtues, Bates presented her cause as a righteous one, deeply rooted in humans’ central purpose and as part of the pursuit for ultimate good.

In an article that ran on the front page of the *Press* in August of 1947, Bates took on a different approach in her advocacy that was unlike her previous belligerent and assertive journalistic style. The story reported on the execution of two young men who

had been sentenced to death after murdering a white man. The article—unlike many of the other stories that the newspaper reported on in relation to black criminals, which were often centered on innocence and racial injustice—Bates never argued for the men's innocence. Instead, she blamed societal structures for their actions. She questioned the society in which young black men were forced to grow up in subordination, without access to the same "corrective social action as the community provides for white boys."[44] Bates pondered if the young men would have chosen the criminal path if they had been white.

She proceeded to paint a picture of two thoughtful young men who had acknowledged and professed to the courts, and to Christ, their crime. The two men, she wrote, had been less than fortunate in life. Unlike fellow-aged white men, she argued that the black men had no social or financial security or privileges. As the old saying urges the individual to pull himself up by the bootstraps, Bates depicted two men with no boots to pull on. In her final remarks, she questioned the unfairness and inequality blacks were born into:

> Can it be that as an outraged society judges the criminal at the bar, and he finds him weighed in the balance and found wanting, so the God of education, recreation, social security, and general opportunity weighs a negligent society for its abandonment of its young to their own devices—particularly to its Negro young. . . . Double execution of criminals or double condemnation of social neglect—which?[45]

The article did not draw on the same emotions of anger and provocation as the majority of Bates's other stories. However, it drew on the emotions of unfairness and echoed a feeling of frustration. It was a frustration that no matter how much her and

fellow activists sought to fight for the race cause, societal structures were inherently restrictive and oppressive to blacks, leaving them far below whites from the minute they came into the world. Her sentiment here was likely a call to both white and black readers, to enlighten them about the conditions young blacks grew up in, illustrating how fair and equal treatment could potentially eliminate criminal activities.

Lawsuits and Federal Scrutiny

As a result of the Bateses' rhetorical flourishes, they faced staunch resistance from white supremacists in the Little Rock area, evident by the numerous attacks they faced over the years. In an interview with *Jet* magazine in 1959, L.C. recounted that their house had been under attack a total of fifty times over the prior two years, ranging from bombs and fires to gunfire and rocks.[46] More than "white hoodlums" however, the couple was faced with opposition from both black and white leaders and came under increasing scrutiny as their influence in the civil rights quest grew.

In December of 1957, Bates was fined $100 for refusing to expose names of NAACP members. One year later, Bates and the president of the North Little Rock branch, Birdie Williams, were each fined $25 for refusing to release membership records and contribution lists affiliated with the organization's activities in Little Rock.[47] The two women were found guilty by the lower court, which asserted that for the NAACP to remain a "tax-exempt organization in that state, [it] would have to reveal the names of its members."[48] After an initial appeal, the Arkansas State Supreme Court affirmed the ruling. A petition filed by NAACP attorneys in March the following year with the U.S. Supreme Court asked the court to reverse the ruling. In February 1960, the country's

highest court ruled that the NAACP was not compelled to release the membership lists. While these events undoubtedly challenged Daisy Bates, they also underscored her stubbornness and unwillingness to comply with societal and legal structures she deemed unfair. Several of such occurrences would take place during the span of the newspaper's life, but particularly two legal conflicts would serve as financial struggles for the Bateses.

In 1946, just one year into her editorship, Bates briefly replaced L.C. as editor-in-chief as he left for a vacation in the first few weeks of March.[49] At a southern cotton oil mill not far from the paper's headquarters, oil workers had been on strike. Walter Campbell, a picket, had been killed by his replacement, Otha Williams. Williams, a white man, was acquitted but three other black workers were arrested on charges of violating the state's right-to-work law and sentenced to one-year imprisonment. According to Bates, the three men had been charged because "if any violence occurs on a picket line, any striker present can be found guilty."[50] When L.C. returned home from his trip, she had just finished writing the story. He cautioned her to run the story, according to her memoir he worried; "Daisy, this is a pretty strong story. Do you realize that Judge Auten is one of the most powerful men in the state?"[51] Fully aware, she insisted on running the story and account for the injustice that continued to seep through the southern judiciary system. In the first paragraph of the article that ran on March 29, she asserted;

> Three strikers, who by all observation were guilty of no greater crime than walking on a picket line, were sentenced to one year in the penitentiary yesterday by a "hand-picked" jury, while a scab who killed a striker is free. The prosecution was hard pressed to make a case until Judge Lawrence C. Auten instructed the jury that the pickets could be found guilty if they aided or assisted, or just stood idly by while violence occurred.
>
> *--Arkansas State Press, March 29, 1946.*[52]

Only a few days later, two uniform-clad police officers knocked on the door with a warrant for their arrest. On April 29, Auten sentenced them to serve ten days in jail and to each pay a fine of $100. According to Bates, Auten had charged that "the article in the *State Press* implied that the entire court was dishonest and carried an implication that these men [Negro strikers] were railroaded to the penitentiary" and therefore, the couple had set out to discredit and obstruct the creditability of the Pulaski Circuit Court.[53] Justice Griffin Smith of the Arkansas Supreme Court ordered that the Bateses were immediately released upon posting a bond of $500 each.[54] In November, in *Bates v. State*, Griffin ruled that the publication did not create a clear and present danger to judicial administration. Citing the prior ruling in *Pennekamp v. Florida*, Griffin proclaimed;

> Those elected to office must expect, and they usually receive, approval and disapproval that alternate. A Judge, per se, is in no different situation from that occupied by another who undertakes to discharge legally imposed public responsibilities. Courts are institutions wherein the State's judicial powers repose.[55]

Given that the article was written at a "point in the proceeding [where] it was possible (though highly improbable) that no new motion for a new trial would be filed" Griffin argued that the article would not impair judicial power, stating that "the dignity of a particular individual sitting on the bench is not a matter of importance paramount to the institution our system has designated a Court."[56] The court ruled unanimously in the Bateses favor. The ruling confirmed the influential reach and power of the Bateses. It further underscored Daisy Bates's unrepentant approach in her quest for racial equality,

in which no individual—no matter their social status—were to be spared, even if it meant that she would be arrested and prosecuted.

Four years later, the couple once again came under public scrutiny for rubbing a local celebrity the wrong way. This time was different though, as the individual was a black pastor, Reverent M.D. Willett of St. Paul Church of Christ. In 1950, Willett sued the Bateses for libel following a story criticizing his Sunday night sermons. The article, printed on February 24, 1950, on the front page of the paper mockingly stated;

> The odor from a cesspool that has been exposed to the rays of the sun from the morning of creation down to the present moment could not be any more offensive to the sense of smell than the Reverend M.D. Willett's radio program.[57]

The article further taunted Willett's radio program for being more harmful to blacks than any violence led against the race, claiming that trying to influence and improve his on-air program would be as purposeless as "providing medicine to the dead."[58] Infuriated, Willett sued the Bateses for $15000. He argued that the article had been libelous, causing him to lose members of his congregation by damaging his reputation. On March 31, the *State Press* informed their readers about the libel suit, running a picture of the reverend above a statement jeering "The Press Made Him Mad, Now He Seeks $15,000.00 For His Feelings."[59] Despite having a $15000 lawsuit hanging over their heads, which would unquestionably pull the paper under if they were to lose, the Bateses refused to change their tone. They did not merely mock Willett for his hurt feelings, they proceeded to print the full text once again as if to poke a sleeping bear. However, on January 25, 1952, the *State Press* unwillingly informed its readers that a "$1,500.00 Verdict Against Press" had been reached, with the high court asserting that

the original article had been motivated by actual malice.[60] The verdict was a financial blow to the paper, but it was also an impediment to the Bateses unapologetic approach. The couple's frustration was evident in the January article. The Bateses defended their actions in stating that they had acted on behalf of the black race, while Willett's program "was not in the best interest of the Negro race. . . .and that the plaintiff lowered the race and moreso, the honor of Negro womanhood."[61] The couple further implied that Willett had been successful because he had been represented by two white attorneys. Finally, the story concluded that the Bateses had the support of several other prominent black ministers in Little Rock, who likewise saw Willett's Sunday night sermons as destructive to the uplift of the black race.

The Bateses may have had the support of other black ministers in the local community, but their aggressive attack on a black pastor was astounding given the sacredness placed upon clergymen in the civil rights plight. The paper had long been known for its didactic nature, both in L.C.'s cartoons titled "Do's and Don'ts" and "Don't be a Clown in Public", which taught blacks how to conduct themselves in public spaces, but also through Daisy's bouts on black complacency.[62] However, belligerently attacking a minister would unquestionably have caused a stir within the black community. Nevertheless, their confident stubbornness was unrelenting and even though the verdict proved harmful to the financial state of the *State Press*, the Bateses felt that their actions were justifiable.

The Bateses faced staunch resistance and like other prominent black activists in the 1940s and 1950s, they came under increasing federal scrutiny. A Federal Bureau of

Investigation file from March 1957 reveals that the couple was suspected of being affiliated with the Communist Party.[63] In 1948, the couple had first gained suspicion from FBI informants when they began to publicly support Henry Wallace's candidacy for the presidency against Harry Truman in their weekly paper.[64] The Bateses had further been noted for financially aiding the Progressive Party and for socializing with members of the Communist Party, which would ultimately be used against them during the integration mission in 1957. According to the March 1957 file, Wallace had refused to sign an affidavit that his party "is not directly or indirectly affiliated by any means whatsoever with the Communist Party of the United States, the Third Communist International, or any other foreign agency, political party, organization or government."[65]

The FBI investigation sought to discredit the efforts of the Bateses and the NAACP, asserting that "every organization and association supposedly organized for the purpose of benefitting the Negro, had, to some extent, been infiltrated by the Communist Party, or its sympathizers. These organizations included the NAACP."[66] Inevitably, the report concluded, the objective of such organizations was to create racial unrest rather than racial equality. In his research, Stockley found no evidence that neither Daisy or L.C. were ever interested in joining the Communist Party, however, they also saw no fault in associating with its members. The 1957 file, compiled at a time crucial to the reputation and social standing of the Bateses, concluded—through an intricate diagram—that racial unrest in the state of Arkansas could solely be traced to Daisy Bates through the NAACP.[67]

Even though the Federal Bureau attempted to discredit the Bateses through accusations of connections with Communism and thereby discredit her motivation in the integration mission in Little Rock, their efforts were non-successful. Still, the Bureau's investigation serves to underscore the fear of the NAACP and Daisy's advocacy. Federal informants went to great extends in attempt to halter her impact not only in Little Rock but the entire state, an attempt that reflects the governmental trepidation of her potential impact on the South's race relations. Even though the Bateses would face attacks, lawsuits, and scrutiny from those in the highest offices, these obtrusions also served to underline the power of the Bateses at a time where the South was heavily segregated and blacks were normally kept "in-place" by Jim Crow laws.

Portrayal of Bates in the Arkansas State Press

Another interesting finding is the portrayal of Bates in the *Press*. In the earlier issues from the 1940s, Bates was rarely mentioned, even after becoming city editor. Given that the couple grew to local fame in Little Rock and throughout the state, their activities and work for the NAACP were occasionally addressed in the newspaper. In these stories, the article always mentioned L.C. first and Daisy second; "Mr. L.C. Bates and his wife."[68] Moreover, the paper primarily reported on Daisy in relation to her travel plans. A short news blurb in June of 1945 informed readers, "Thursday night we said good-bye to Mrs. L. Christopher Bates (the boss' wife) when she left on a fast streamlined train for an extended vacation."[69]

During the 1950s, Bates was catapulted to national fame for working as the president of the NAACP's Arkansas chapter and for leading the Little Rock Nine mission. Therefore, in the last years of the *Press*'s life, the newspaper frequently reported

on Bates's achievements; in early 1958, the newspaper reported that "AP Names Mrs. Bates among Top Nine Headliners in 1957."[70] Later the same year, the paper once again announced that Bates had been awarded a Spingarn Medal;[71] the *Press* repetitively printed this information under the headline "WORTH REPEATING: Give Daisy Bates the Spingarn Medal."[72]

In an opinion piece from December 1957, the tone had changed drastically, as the newspaper reported on her upcoming trip to Los Angeles, California: "Mrs. L.C. Bates, who has recently become one of the most widely known and admired citizens of Arkansas for her shrewd and courageous handling of a delicate problem in the land of magnolias, honeysuckles, cotton, corn and prejudice, addressed one of the most spectacular civil rights rallies ever held in California."[73] An article printed in 1958, on a recent NAACP meeting, referred to the Bateses as "Mrs. Bates and her husband."[74] This development reveals how Daisy Bates progressed from being almost anonymous and working behind the scenes in the early 1940s, to being the more prominent of the couple by the late 1950s.

The direct and at times mocking tone toward the newspaper's readers emphasizes Bates's eagerness to stir upheaval within the black community. Well aware that many blacks were afraid of punishment and prosecution for causing any commotion or trouble, she incorporated though-provoking and anger-arousing rhetoric to ignite will power and emotion strong enough for blacks to go to the polls, to oppose educational segregation, and generally, to publicly express their dissatisfaction.

NOTES

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[1] Referring to Arkansas's passing of an "anti-negro bill," i.e. a racial desegregation bill, *Arkansas State Press,* February 22, 1957.

[2] "Less We Forget," *Arkansas State Press*, February 22, 1957.

[3] "REPRESENTATION CAN ONLY BE HAD THRU PARTICIPATION," *Arkansas State Press*, February 22, 1946.

[4] Ibid.

[5] "Prejudice has Condemned a Negro Mother," *Arkansas State Press*, February 27, 1948.

[6] "First American Negro to Star in Major Opera," *Arkansas State Press,* June 26, 1946.

[7] "Arkansas Boy Makes Good in Nation's Capitol," *Arkansas State Press*, October 25, 1946.

[8] "No More 'Soap Bubbles' for Negro Voters," *Arkansas State Press*, January 30, 1950.

[9] "West Memphis, Arkansas: NEGROES VOTE FOR THE FIRST TIME," *Arkansas State Press,* November 24, 1950.

[10] Grif Stockley, *Daisy Bates: Civil Rights Crusader from Arkansas* (Oxford: University Press of Mississippi, 2009), 30.

[11] Untitled, *Arkansas State Press*, January 25, 1946.

[12] Patrick S. Washburn, *The African American Newspaper: Voice of Freedom*

(Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2006), 1-9.

[13] Daisy Bates, "The Ultimatum of the Ninth Street Bus Situation???" *Arkansas State Press*, March 22, 1946.

[14] Daisy Bates, "The Fight for a Permanent FEPC Continues Stronger than Ever," *Arkansas State Press*, February 22, 1946.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Bates, "The Ultimatum of the Ninth Street Bus Situation???"

[17] Ibid.

[18] "Dixie 'Gestapo' to Stir Hate Charged before Senate Unit," *Arkansas State Press*, February, 22, 1957.

[19] "Another Bomb for the Bates' Home," *Arkansas State Press*, January 31, 1958.

[20] "School Integration Here Causes KKK to Try Intimidating Negroes," *Arkansas State Press*, August 30, 1957.

[21] Ibid.

[22] "State President Speak to Lake Village NAACP Sunday: Youth Chapter Formed," *Arkansas State Press*, February 26, 1954.

[23] Bates here referred to the "Racial Bills" that were set out to intimidate and disunite blacks toward their quest for constitutional rights.

[24] "NAACP Grows When People Made Mad," *Arkansas State Press*, March 15, 1957.

[25] "Arkansas's Naacp Head Hanged in Effigy in Camden," *Arkansas State Press*, July 18, 1958

[26] "Talks Back to White—Killed," *Arkansas State Press*, June 6, 1947.

[27] "She Cries Rape Negro Mobbed Law Lauded," *Arkansas State Press*, August 8, 1947.

[28] Bates, "The Ultimatum of the Ninth Street Bus Situation???"

[29] Ibid.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Daisy Bates, "The Klan Rode in the Land of the Free and the Home of the Brave," *Arkansas State Press*, June 18, 1948.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Bates, "The Fight for Permanent FEPC Continues Stronger than Ever."

[34] Ibid.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Daisy Bates, "When the Freedom Train Comes to Little Rock Democracy Goes into Action," *Arkansas State Press,* January 23, 1948

[37] The Freedom Train traveled across the U.S. from September 1947 to January 1949. On board, it carried historical documents central to American democracy, and the idea was to provide all Americans with access to the documents to gain knowledge about U.S. history. While the train was supposed to be open for all citizens, both black and white, certain scheduled stops, such as Memphis, Tennessee. and Birmingham, Alabama, denied blacks access to the train, ultimately leading to the train not stopping in these locations.

[38] Bates, "The Ultimatum of the Ninth Street Bus Situation???"

[39] Bates, “The Fight for a Permanent FEPC Continues Stronger than Ever.

[40] Ibid.

[41] Davis W. Houck and David E. Dixon, eds., *Rhetoric, Religion and the Civil Rights Movement, 1954-1965*, vol. 1 (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2006).

[42] Bernard LaFayette Jr., “The Role of Religion in the Civil Rights Movements,” paper presented to the Faith and Progressive Policy: Proud Past, Promising Future Conference, Center for American Progress, June 9, 2004, www.precisionmi.com/Materials/UniveralVirtuesMat/FaithandProgressivePolicy.pdf.

[43] Houck and Dixon, eds. *Rhetoric, Religion and the Civil Rights Movement, 1954-1965*, 1.

[44] Daisy Bates, “Social Neglect Ends in a Double Execution at Dawn,” *Arkansas State Press*, August 15, 1947

[45] Ibid.

[46] “L.C. Bates: Little Rock’s Forgotten Man” *Jet Magazine*, June 4, 1959.

[47] “Mrs. L. C. Bates Fined $100.00: Still Refuses to Expose Members” *Arkansas State Press*, December 6, 1957; “Review of Mrs. Bates’ and Mrs. Williams’ Cases Sought by NAACP” *Arkansas State Press*, March 20, 1959.

[48] “Anti-NAACP Ruling Studied for Possible Appeal” *Arkansas State Press*, January 9, 1959.

[49] Daisy Bates, *The Long Shadow,* 38.

[50] Ibid, 39.

[51] Ibid, 40.

[52] "FTA Strikers Sentenced to Pen by a Hand-picked Jury" *Arkansas State Press*, March 29, 1946.

[53] Daisy Bates, *The Long Shadow*, 41.

[54] Ibid, 42.

[55] Bates v. State, 210 Ark. 652 (1946).

[56] Ibid.

[57] "It Stinks to the High Heavens" *Arkansas State Press*, February 24, 1950.

[58] Ibid.

[59] "State Press Sued For $15,000.00" *Arkansas State Press*, March 31, 1950.

[60] "HI COURT UPHOLDS: $1,500.00 Verdict Against the Press" *Arkansas State Press*, January 25, 1952.

[61] Ibid.

[62] Stockley, *Daisy Bates*, 30.

[63] Federal Bureau of Investigation, March 27, 1957. https://archive.org/details/foia_Banister_Guy_HQ-2

[64] Stockley, *Daisy Bates*, 48.

[65] Federal Bureau of Investigation, March 27, 1957, 16.

[66] Ibid, 24.

[67] Ibid, 33.

[68] *Arkansas State Press*, March 21, 1947.

[69] "Around Town," *The Arkansas State Press*, June 4, 1943

[70] "A Prosperous New Year to All!" *Arkansas State Press*, January 3, 1958.

[71] The Spingarn Medal is annually given by the NAACP for outstanding achievement by an African American.

[72] "WORTH REPEATING: Give Daisy Bates the Spingarn Medal," *Arkansas State Press*, June 13, 1958.

[73] "What a Difference Space Makes," *Arkansas State Press*, December 6, 1957.

[74] "Mrs. Bates Commended by NAACP Board Chairman," *Arkansas State Press*, October 4, 1957.

Chapter 4: "Ain't I a Woman?"

This chapter serves to situate Daisy Bates within black feminist thought to examine how she negotiated her dual membership identity at the intersection of gender and race, and to fathom how she navigated societal and institutional discriminatory practices as a black woman in a white man's world.

The oppression of African American women in the United States has been a propagated historical phenomenon, embodying three interdependent scopes of oppression.[1] The economic oppression of black women has been exemplified since the early days of slavery, underscoring the continuous exploitation of black women's labor especially in the service industries. Politically, black women have been deprived their right to vote, excluded from public offices, and denied access to quality education, if granted access to educational institutions at all. Finally, black women have suffered under degrading stereotypical representations, accentuating the racist and sexist ideologies that have saturated their social statuses throughout American history.[2]

Women, both black and white, have been historically confined to roles of inferiority and subordination to their male counterparts, urging feminist scholars to encourage greater scholarship on women's narratives and perspectives on social reality, to raise awareness and challenge dominant knowledge claims that have conventionally been based on the experiences of white men.[3] The notion of womanhood has been an ideal prescribed to white women, perpetuated in social structures and transferred through media discourse. The black woman has repeatedly been positioned as a laborer in a society where the epitome of femininity is founded in domesticity.[4] Historically, black

women have been forced to occupy hard labor and field work, and despite efforts to brake with socio-economic and stereotypical confinements, their role in American society remains contested.[5]

On May 29, 1851, Sojourner Truth, who had been born into enslavement and later became a renown abolitionist and suffragist, delivered her "Ain't I a Woman?" speech at the Women's Rights Convention in Akron, Ohio. In her brief speech, Truth rebuked the dominant views of racial inequality and women's inferiority;

> Look at me! Look at my arm! I have ploughed and planted, and gathered into barns, and no man could head me! And ain't I a woman? I could work as much and eat as much as a man - when I could get it - and bear the lash as well! And ain't I a woman? I have borne thirteen children, and seen most all sold off to slavery, and when I cried out with my mother's grief, none but Jesus heard me! And ain't I a woman?[6]

Her words resonated multiple axes of social differentiation, highlighting how race and gender came to intersect in the social context of the mid nineteenth century.[7] When Truth addressed the crowd, blacks were largely confined to slavery—seen as the property of the white man—and women the property of men. Though brief, Truth's speech broke with the prevailing truth claims about black women in the patriarchal slave society at the time, and furthermore, reflected that identity formation is a social construct, relational to the power positions people are embedded in.[8] Her words underscored that women's identities were relational to men, and black women's identity were relational to not only white men and women, but also to black men.

Existing scholarship illustrates that women of color belong to two marginalized groups bound by their sex and race, leaving them confined by an intertwined web of

injustice and discrimination.[9] Their stories and knowledge have recurrently been excluded from institutional structures and narratives, ultimately negating the black female reality.[10]

Black Feminist Consciousness

The term "intersectionality" was not coined until 1989, when scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw presented it in her essay "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics." In her seminal work, Crenshaw asserted that women of color find themselves at a crossroad in which their identity and social position is influenced by a unique multidimensionality of racist and sexist confinements.[11] The discrimination that black women live under does not fit neatly into the legal definitions of either sexism or racism, instead it is a combination of the two, solidifying black women as legally invisible.

While many black women have fought for women's rights throughout the course of American history, it has never been a singular cause in itself. Given the intersectionality that has come to shape the lives of black women in the U.S., they never had the luxury of only having one status to fight.[12] Instead, their lives have been characterized by the multiple burdens they have been destined to challenge in their quest for equality. Therefore, the experience of black womanhood cannot be understood solely through an examination of race or through an examination of gender. Black womanhood is compound of both concepts and is positioned within the complexity of intersectionality, and therefore, must be examined accordingly.

Black feminist theory posits that the narratives and experiences of black women depend on their historical conditions, and are bound by the intersectionality of sexism, race, gender, and social class.[13] A scholar of black women and feminist thought, Patricia Hill Collins, has presented central themes in the social construction of black feminist thought, from the standpoint of women of color. Collins theorizes that women of color empower themselves through self-definitions and assertions of black womanhood. Black feminist consciousness is bound on the premise that black women are greatly deprived of status, because of the discrimination they face based on both their race and their gender, and thus, self-definition and the practice hereof, is central to black women's resistance to stereotypical portrayals and suppression in American society.[14] Moreover, even though the lived experiences affirm individual ideas of black womanhood, the historical oppression of black women in the U.S. has led to a shared resistance to fight negative portrayals and discriminatory social practices. Black women have fought these oppressive social structures and engaged in intellectual thought and political activism, spurred by a pride founded in their cultural heritage, to ultimately emancipate themselves as manifested in a collective expression, i.e. black feminist thought.[15]

Black feminism does not merely stem from the disagreements that sprung in the early suffragist movement between white and black women, but also from a need to improve conditions for emancipation on their own terms.[16] During the first wave of feminism in the U.S., black women were predominantly legal properties of whites. While freed black women were not living in enslavement per se, they still suffered under social and legal confinements and the same stereotypical portrayals of black womanhood; black

women were seen as either Jezebels or the Mammy, which played into a mythology of sex and race.[17] The Jezebel and the Mammy representations presented a dichotomy in which the Jezebel painted the black woman as controlled by her libido and thereby exempted miscegenation, while the Mammy portrayal affirmed the black woman as a servant to whites.[18] Inevitably, as forewarned in Truth's speech from 1851, black women rose to oppose both racial and sexual oppression.

In the 1920s, the suffragist movement culminated in a split between black and white women, as blacks sought to extend their suffragist fight to include racial equality. Advocates Ida B. Wells and Marcy Church Terrell trailblazed the black suffragist movement, and sought to uplift black women through the right to vote, while launching campaigns, such as the international anti-lynching campaign, in their quest for racial justice.[19] The passing of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920 came as celebratory feat for women in America, promising no voting restrictions based on sex. The celebration for black women was, however, short-lived. The ratification of the amendment did not guarantee black women's right to vote and instead, they were challenged at the polls through questions of ridiculous character to ultimately legitimize the exclusion of black votes in both local and national elections. More than three decades would pass before blacks gained the same legal rights—including the right to vote without fear of racial discrimination—as promised under the U.S. Constitution. The monumental Civil Rights Act of 1964, signed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson on July 2, 1964, prohibited segregation in public places, and banned discrimination based on race, sex, and religion in employment.[20] However, in the decades leading up to the ratification in 1964, black

women facilitated mass demonstrations, organized clubs, and participated in organizations that fought for the race cause, and sought to uplift the race by teaching fellow black men and women how to read and write. The culmination of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 led to a second wave of feminism, which spurred a collective black feminist consciousness.[21] While prominent black men came to represent the leadership of the civil rights movement in historical narratives, women participated at every stage in the battle for civil liberties and equality for blacks. The work of eminent black women, including women such as Jo Ann Robinson—a black educator and member of the Women's Political Council, who was central in organizing the Montgomery Bus Boycott—and Ella Baker—who organized the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and the subsequent sit-ins and freedom rides—came to cement the tremendous organizational work and willpower of black women in the movement in a quest for equitable treatment under the law.[22] The political preparation that came with organizing the non-violent demonstrations became the foundation for the work of black women in the women's liberation movement in the 1960s.

The struggle for civil liberties and a life without discrimination underscores the burden of blacks and the double burden of black women. Mirroring the tendencies of contemporary white America, black women suffered greatly under the patriarchal structures that subsisted in the black communities in the nineteenth and twentieth century. Moreover, even though male leaders of the civil rights movement preached about the equality of races, chauvinism heavily influenced the power dynamics in the battle for

racial equality, a battle in which black men have been heralded as the leaders and black women's political activities have been unrecognized.

To contextualize the life of Daisy Bates it is necessary to examine her social status from an intersected positional of both gender and race in the midtwentieth century. While the period between the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920 and the uprising of the Women's Liberation Movement in the 1960s have often been overlooked in women's history, the era was particularly important to the advancement of blacks, and was detrimental to the advancement of black women through their collective activism.

Education has been a vital tool for upward social mobility and black advancement in African American history. As black women have stood at the intersection of race, gender, and class oppression, their quest for equal access to educational facilities have been a long and difficult one. Aware that education was a crucial mean to escape poverty and ultimately, an imposed position of inferiority, black women increasingly took on positions as teachers and sought to educate their young in the early twentieth century. Census data reveals that by the 1930s, the vast majority of black teachers were women—more than 80 percent—and by the end of the decade, more than 70 percent of black elementary school teachers and just above 60 percent of black high school teachers were women.[23] Even though black women came to be the primary educational force of young blacks in the early and mid-twentieth century, they were still largely absent from leadership roles.

Alert that the future of her race depended on access to equal education, desegregation of public schools became a core cause for Bates. Without any formal

education herself, she took on the role as an avid campaigner for black education, exemplified by her mentorship of both the Little Rock Nine and Edith Irby Jones. Jones's attendance at the UAMS would not have been possible without Bates's financial assistance, which she personally sought to collect from local blacks and hand over to Jones on a weekly basis. Jones was elected the first female president of the National Medical Association, becoming a female frontrunner for black advancement, undeniably setting an example for fellow young black women who had grown up in an impoverish childhood. Likewise, Bates's involvement with the Little Rock Nine illustrates her perseverance and strength at a time where women were supposed to be seen and not heard.

The period leading up to the desegregation mission of Central High School and the attacks carried out against Bates and L.C. in the aftermath underscores her might and grit. Their house was bombed on multiple occasions and the couple would wake up to rocks or bricks being thrown through the windows at night with vile messages wrapped around them. Frequently, they would return home to find large, professionally constructed crosses torched on their front lawn, and occasionally, Bates was hanged in effigy or posters would appear throughout town with threatening racist messages underneath a photo of her on them. Nevertheless, she never hesitated to continue her advocacy and fight for racial equality.

After one of the multiple cross burnings, she informed local reporters that rather than being scared of white supremacists, she was scared for the cowardice of blacks who did not fight for the race cause. On another occasion, after their house had been attacked

with bricks and homemade bombs, and their windows shattered, she posed for a photo in the *Press*, standing proudly, smiling, in front of one of the broken windows outside of the couple's home. Even though L.C. was also an ardent supporter for the race cause, it was Bates who was the spokesperson and became the public persona of the couple's advocacy, breaking with traditional gender roles in the mid-twentieth century.

While Bates did not address her womanhood directly in her journalistic work, an assessment of her personal letters, speeches, and interviews indicates a woman who proudly boasted her femininity through fashionable clothing, poise, and ladylike charm. In an interview with *Jet* magazine on October 17, 1957, Bates told the interviewer that her femininity was part of her arsenal and that it was her father who had taught her to be a proper lady.[24] Her feminine appearance, often highlighted by pointy glasses, pearls, and a-lined skirts, combined with her charm yet sternness, would prove both intriguing and intimidating to the people who encountered her.[25]

Even though both L.C. and Bates never hesitated to call out the timidity of fellow blacks or criticize the leadership of prominent black men, L.C. never had the predisposition to step forward and demand to be a frontrunner himself. Contrarily, Bates commanded the attention and position of authority—breaking with the modesty and elegance associated with mid-twentieth century womanhood—demonstrated in an array of her activities, including an unyielding petition to become the president of the NAACP's Arkansas Chapter. The NAACP's Arkansas branch had been founded in the mid 1940s and by 1948, Bates sought to form a new branch in Pulaski County, contacting the organization's headquarters in New York and nominating herself as the new branch's

president.[26] Even though her initial proposition fell through, she was eventually elected president of the state chapter in 1952, despite hesitance from several NAACP members, given the Bateses previous inclinations to attack respected blacks in the local community in their newspaper.[27] Over the next decade, Bates became the driving force of the state branch in an organization otherwise characterized by the leadership of older conservative black men, who mirrored the sexist behavior of their contemporary white counterparts.

The *Arkansas State Press* also aided Bates's advancement and leadership, serving as her primary booster. By continuously highlighting her advocacy and work with the NAACP, and an array of other local and national organizations including the Fair Employment Practice Committee (FEPC) and the Arkansas Council on Human Relations, the newspaper channeled her work and put her into the limelight for better and for worse. Despite numerous threats to the paper, and especially to her, the *Press* eagerly reported on her work—often in celebratory, bold headlines on the front page—thereby facilitating her advocacy, and her influence in both the local community but also in the broader trajectory of the civil rights movement. Bates public persona as a ladylike, yet assertive black female activist was therefore largely built upon the *Press*'s coverage. The newspaper reported avidly on her accomplishments, as for example when she won the Spingarn medal,[28] but reported just as often on her assertive, at times belligerent, view of white supremacy and black cowardice.

Especially in the paper's last ten years, Bates occupied either front-page space or be including in the opinion section on a weekly basis. The stories were more often than not accompanied by large printed photographs of Bates. The stories that reported on her

upcoming travels (often as part of her work with the NAACP) would primarily run alongside a portrait photograph, whereas other stories that reported on her mentorship with Little Rock Nine or her trips to the capital, would be followed by photos of Bates interacting with other blacks.

It can be argued then that through her attire, her poise and charisma, and the way she carried herself and made sure to stand out in a room, Bates asserted her femininity, and ultimately, her womanhood. Through her gestures and appearance, she broke with the negative portrayals of black women in the mid-nineteenth century. Rather than a feisty loud-mouth labeled by either sexual deviance or for being a servant of whites, Bates carried herself with grace and sternness, which affirmed that both her etiquette and appearance were in fact ladylike. By breaking with the southern confinements of stereotypical portrayals of black women, she found empowerment through her self-definition as an aggressive and assertive civil rights activist, who embodied her femininity both in appearance and manners, and utilized this to establish her own black womanhood. This assertion of Bates's persona, as a black woman activist, was further aided by the *Press*'s frequent coverage of her work, which painted a picture of an eloquent but stern force of nature, not to be reckoned with.

Bates was uncompromising and occasionally militant in her advocacy, which she carried with her in the aftermath of the shuttering of the *Press*, when she toured black campuses and offered motivational speeches to the young students. In 1964, WLIB Radio in New York aired a brief monologue by Bates. Even though there was still a long way

for America to right its wrongs and that the continuous efforts of blacks were needed, Bates was hopeful for the future;

> If those of us who have felt the anguish of segregation and the pains of discrimination; and those of us who have labored in the vineyard trying to help a nation mold its morals, religion and politics; not by the sermons we preach, but by the lives we live, would look around we would see many signs of freedom sparks glittering in the dark of despair, like a flock of dancing lightening bugs whirling through the dark night of discrimination.
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> --*Daisy Bates, WLIB Radio, June 4, 1964.*[29]

NOTES

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[1] Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 4.

[2] Ibid.

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[4] Bonnie Thornton Dill, "The Dialectics of Black Womanhood," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 4, no. 3 (1979): 543-55, 553; Sara Evans, *Personal Politics: The Roots of Women's Liberation in the Civil Rights Movement and the New Left* (New York: Vintage, 1979).

[5] Jacqueline Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work, and the Family, from Slavery to Present* (New York: Basic Books, 2009), 44.

[6] Sojourner Truth, "Ain't I a Woman?" (Speech, Ohio, May 29, 1851), Internet Modern History Sourcebook, Fordham University,

https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/mod/sojtruth-woman.asp

[7] Avtar Brah and Ann Phoenix, "Ain't I A Woman? Revisiting Intersectionality," *Journal of International Women's Studies* 5, no. 3 (2004): 75-86, 76.

[8] Ibid, 77.

[9] Frances M. Beal, "Double Jeopardy: To Be Black and Female," *Meridians* 8, no. 2 (2008): 166-76; Thornton Dill, "The Dialectics of Black Womanhood"; Rosemary Hennessy, "Women's Lives/Feminist Knowledge: Feminist Standpoint as Ideology Critique," 8, no. 1 (1993): 14-34.

[10] Collins, *Black Feminist Thought,* 12.

[11] Kimberle Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics," *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 1989, no 8, 139. https://proxy.library.ohio.edu/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?

[12] Evelyn M. Simien, 2004, "Black Feminist Theory: Charting a Course for Black Women's Studies in Political Science," *Women & Politics* 26, no. 2 (2004): 84.

[13] Ibid., 81–93.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Ula Taylor, "The Historical Evolution of Black Feminist Theory and Praxis," *Journal of Black Studies* 29, no. 2 (1998): 235.

[17] Ibid, 236.

[18] Darlene Clark Hine, "Ar'n't I a Woman?: Female Slaves in the Plantation

South--Twenty Years After," *Journal of African American History* 92, no. 1 (2007): 13–21, 17.

[19] Taylor, "The Historical Evolution," 238.

[20] Civil Rights Act of 1964, Pub.L. 88-352, 78 Stat. 241 (1964).

[21] Taylor, "The Historical Evolution," 239.

[22] Ibid.; Evans, *Personal Politics*, 41.

[23] Safoura Boukari, "20th Century Black Women's Struggle for Empowerment in a White Supremacist Educational System: Tribute to Early Women Educators," Information and Materials from the Women's and Gender Studies Program 4, 2005, http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/wgsprogram/4.

[24] Grif Stockley, *Daisy Bates: Civil Rights Crusader from Arkansas* (Oxford: University Press of Mississippi, 2009), 54.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Ibid, 57.

[28] "WORTH REPEATING: Give Daisy Bates the Spingarn Medal," *Arkansas State Press*, June 13, 1958.

[29] Daisy Bates, WLIB Radio Transcript, June 4, 1964, Special Collections, University of Arkansas Libraries, Fayetteville, Arkansas.

Chapter 5: "Haven't We Walked Long Enough?"

With their hard-hitting and belligerent rhetoric, the Bateses came to stir the local white and black communities in Little Rock, Arkansas, in the mid-twentieth century. At a time when southern black newspapers were under severe pressure from white supremacist groups, and likely to be disdained by blacks who sought to live in peaceful co-existence with whites, the militant reporting on white supremacy and black cowardice set the *State Press* apart from other southern black publications at the time.[1]

The Bateses experienced countless attacks on their home as a result of their unapologetic approach—from rocks and home-made bombs flying through the windows at night, and crosses burning in their front yard to letters that swore death and destruction upon them.[2] From an assessment of their direct and primarily aggressive tabloid-style journalistic practices it is clear that the couple—and Daisy Bates in particular—were not willing to sacrifice their beliefs or right to express themselves at any cost. The *Press* frequently reported on attacks on the Bateses home, especially in the later years as the desegregation mission steered the couple into intensifying clashes with white supremacist groups in Little Rock. The articles revealed their relentless stubbornness and sarcastic approach in dealing with the weekly assaults; in November of 1958, a front-page story under the scornful headline "Faubusites fail again to set Bates house afire" reported that it was the seventh attack using either incendiary bombs or cross burnings within the past two years, and poked fun at the white attackers inability to successfully set the house afire.[3] Earlier the same year, the paper printed a photo of the façade of the Bateses' house, showing a shattered window neatly held together with tape. Above it the headline

glared ""Nobody Can Say I Haven't Been Kind to Negroes" -Orval E. Faubus." Another article sarcastically informed readers that "where once you looked forward to weekly attacks, now it is daily without any interference on the part of those who have taken oaths to uphold law and order."[4]

As illustrated in this thesis, three themes were recurrent in the *State Press* over the years. The Bateses encouraged black uplift by reporting on blacks who broke with the color line, asserting a central theme of black advancement. Another theme, whites' wrongdoings, occurred in the stories that accounted for whites' attacks on blacks and the misconduct of white supremacists. While accommodation and black advancement were not unusual themes in black publications, the militant imagery and belligerent wording that accompanied stories on racial injustice in the *State Press* broke with socially permissible race boundaries in the South at the time. Another thought-provoking find was the Bateses's unrelenting tactic in striving for racial justice as exemplified in their scrutiny of prominent black leaders who they did not consider to have the black race's best interest at heart.

According to several sources, L.C. was often quoted for declaring, "We can sacrifice a friend, but never compromise a principle."[5] While his contributions to the paper were largely steered by a need to hold whites accountable for their discriminatory practices and to uplift and advance the status of blacks, his work also echoed the need to break with the role of the inferior race through accommodation. He would teach blacks how to dress and conduct themselves in public spaces, such as through small cartoons titled "do's and don'ts."[6] Contrarily, Daisy's journalistic work reverberated the practices

of northern black publications, and at times she even mocked the accommodationist approach. She used similar strategies as the leading black newspapers in the North, including the *Chicago Defender* and the *Crisis*, to highlight the oppressive social and legal structures that penetrated every part of the nation's social, economic, and political strata.

Bates's stubbornness was not only mirrored in her reporting and writing style, but also in the stories that reported on her advocacy. She was arrested and charged with misconduct on multiple occasions. She was charged twice with violating local ordinances for refusing to disclose association records and membership lists while she served as the president for the state's NAACP chapter. More severely, the couple was sued for contempt of court and later libel, each of these financial hurdles for the paper.

Inevitably, Daisy Bates's militant and provocative work made the *Press* stand out from contemporary black newspapers in the South. An aggressive stance on racism subjected southern black publications to steep criticism and ultimately the risk of boycott, violence, and death. Arkansas saw less than ten black newspapers published in the state between 1900 and 1979,[7] reflecting the general oppression of blacks and the hardship of publishing a black newspaper in the South. However, the *Press* survived for eighteen years despite numerous attempts by white supremacists to shut it down.[8] The *Press* was the largest black publication in the state, and unlike many contemporary black newspapers, the *Press* did not merely advertise itself for blacks; while the majority of its content was founded on black achievements and wrongdoings by whites, it advertised

itself as a newspaper for everyone and sought to inform whites about the achievements of blacks and encourage black advancement overall.

Another interesting find is the portrayal of Bates in the *Press*. In the early issues from the 1940s, Bates is rarely mentioned, even after becoming the newspaper's city editor. Given that the couple grew to local fame in Little Rock in the paper's early years, between 1941 and 1945, their involvement and work for the NAACP would occasionally be addressed in the newspaper. From the late 1940s and until its final issue in 1959, the newspaper regularly reported on Daisy Bates's achievements. An example is a news blurb from early 1958, announcing that "AP Names Mrs. Bates among Top Nine Headliners in 1957."[9] Later the same year, the paper once again announced that Bates had been awarded a Spingarn Medal.[10] The *Press* repetitively printed this information under the headline "WORTH REPEATING: Give Daisy Bates the Spingarn Medal."[11]In stories on the Bateses, the articles would always mentioned L.C. first and Daisy second; "Mr. L.C. Bates and his wife."[12] However, in the 1950s Daisy was catapulted to national fame for her work as the president of the NAACP's Arkansas chapter and for leading the Little Rock Nine mission, and by 1958, the newspaper printed an article on an NAACP meeting, referring to the Bateses as "Mrs. Bates and her husband."[13] This development reveals how Daisy Bates progressed from being almost anonymous and working behind the scenes in the early 1940s, to being the more prominent of the couple by the late 1950s.

The newspaper's evolving portrayal of Bates came to bolster her public persona as centered on both her womanhood and her race. Whether it was the stories written

under Bates's own byline, or the stories that reported on her advocacy outside of the newspaper's headquarters, Bates was portrayed as a persuasive and graceful woman, who was never afraid to speak her mind and call out both white and black leaders. At the time, Jim Crow laws were deeply implemented in the South in its attempt to maintain separatist race relations and keep blacks in oppression. Jim Crow laws affected both men and women of color; however, black women were considered of lowest social status, burdened by their position at the intersection of gender, race, and class. The Bateses sought to uplift blacks and break with the confinements of the Jim Crow South, aware that Daisy was the public face and spokesperson for the couple's advocacy, her womanhood and definition of self largely constructed and channeled through the *Press's* coverage. Despite the awareness that being too outspoken could lead to boycott of their paper, violence against themselves and their friends, and in the worst case, death, the couple never hesitated to continue their firebrand style of advocacy.

While it is difficult assert a direct causation of the events that transpired in a person's childhood, several incidents in Bates's early life—as illustrated in her personal memoir—likely influenced her journalistic career. An article published by the *Press* citing an interview with Bates in *Ebony* in 1958 relays that Bates as a young child suffered under segregation. According to the original interview, Bates was repeatedly forced to wait while whites were served before her, which "has never left her memory, and in later life, with her publisher husband L.C. Bates, [she] has campaigned against segregation, discrimination, police brutality, and all forms of man's inhumanity to man."[14] In her memoir, *The Long Shadow of Little Rock*, Bates evokes the heartbreaking

memory of the day she found out that her real mother had been brutally raped and murdered, her body dumped in shallow pond by a mob of white men. This tragic life event is told with great detail and emotion, and Bates asserts that she grew a hatred for white people that made it difficult for her to speak with them. This can likely be seen as another catalyst for Bates's aggressive stance on racial discrimination and whites' suppression of blacks, given her emotional and very personal relationship with racially charged discrimination towards blacks.

The assessment of Bates's journalistic work and an in-depth read of her memoir and personal letters, indicate a transition in Bates's perception of whites. Notwithstanding the hatred that spurred from learning of her birth mother's brutal death, a hatred that was later evident in her reporting and writing practices, Bates eventually came to acknowledge and celebrate the work of the whites who also fought for the race cause. In February of 1959, the paper announced on its front page that Bates was being honored in New York by U.S. Senator Kenneth Keating, who described her as "one of the great home-front heroines of American history."[15] In the article, a smiling Bates appeared in a photograph amongst a group of white police officers and the senator, and she was cited for acknowledging and applauding the work of white policemen in protecting the American public. Moreover, her concluding remarks in her memoir heralded the white men and women fighting alongside blacks in the civil rights plight.

Throughout her adult life, Bates became involved with various organizations that channeled the race cause and sought for an end to segregation. She was outspoken and assertive in her journalistic advocacy, mirroring the traditions of northern black

publication. Her journalistic practices likewise echoed the voice of three other prominent black women reformers and journalists, respectively, Ida B. Wells, Mary Church Terrell, and Charlotta Bass. All of these women attacked white supremacy and racial injustice and saw it as their mission to account for the wrongdoings of whites and to uplift their race. Unlike Wells, Terrell, and Bass, however, Bates was stationed her entire life in the South. Her journalistic style, characterized by an often-militant sarcasm and provocation of both whites and blacks, came to cement her as a voracious, trailblazing black woman journalist in a region heavily shaped by blacks' oppression and racial restrictions. She engaged in both political and intellectual activism, as illustrated in her persistence to educate young blacks and defy the Southern Manifesto's delay of school integration.

As racial discrimination and oppression became the livelihood of the *Arkansas State Press*, it grew to become the largest black publication in the state, with its assertive, hard-hitting tabloid journalistic style, which exposed the wrongdoings of whites and praised the achievements of blacks to spawn black uplift. However, in 1959, after nearly eighteen years of publishing, the paper shut down after being subjected to steep criticism and boycotts from advertisers sparked by the fear of white supremacist groups that sought to silence the voice of the *Press*. The newspaper had faced resistance and been close to shuttering on multiple occasions over the years, and despite efforts from the NAACP to provide the Bateses with funding to stay solvent, the paper succumbed in October of 1959. Even though the boycott did not happen overnight, the *Press*'s livelihood became its death. Beyond the boycotts, sparked by the fearmongering spread by local white supremacists, the newspaper succumbed at a time where black papers were generally

declining. One could speculate then that beyond local boycotts, other factors played into the death of the *State Press*. With the escalation of the civil rights movement and its ability to catch the attention of not only the U.S. but people around the world, the mainstream press became increasingly interested in attracting black readers. They began hiring black journalists, often at a better salary than the black papers could offer. As the mainstream papers integrated, and the government continued its scrutiny and persecution of the black press based on concerns of Communism, black papers were slowly, but steadily, put out of business.[16]

Nevertheless, the newspaper's attack on white supremacy became a brave yet perilous tactic in the midst of the fuming racial pressures in the mid-twentieth century South. While this rhetoric propelled the Bateses into the spotlight in the late 1950s, it also poised the end of the *Arkansas State Press*; being aggressively outspoken towards racial injustice in the 1950s would reveal a short-term strategy for a paper that by the end of the day had to survive under white supremacy rule.

NOTES

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[1] Gene Roberts and Hank Klibanoff, *The Race Beat: The Press, the Civil Rights Struggle, and the Awakening of a Nation* (New York: Knopf, 2006).

[2] Daisy Bates, *The Long Shadow of Little Rock: A Memoir* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2014), 23.

[3] "Faubusites fail again to set Bates house afire" *Arkansas State Press*, November 7, 1958.

[4] “More Vandalism At The Bateses Home” *Arkansas State Press*, February 28, 1958.

[5] Irene Wassel, *L.C. Bates, Editor of the Arkansas State Press* (Little Rock: University of Arkansas at Little Rock, 1983), 5.

[6] “Do’s and Don’ts” *Arkansas State Press*, December 6, 1957.

[7] Henry Lewis Suggs, *The Black Press in the South*, *1865-1979* (Westport, CT.: Greenwood Press, 1986), 5.

[8] Grif Stockley, *Daisy Bates: Civil Rights Crusader from Arkansas* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi Press, 2005).

[9] “A Prosperous New Year to All!” *Arkansas State Press*, January 3, 1958.

[10] The Spingarn Medal is annually given by the NAACP for outstanding achievement by an African American.

[11] “WORTH REPEATING: Give Daisy Bates the Spingarn Medal,” *Arkansas State Press*, June 13, 1958.

[12] *Arkansas State Press*, March 21, 1947.

[13] “Mrs. Bates Commended by NAACP Board Chairman,” *Arkansas State Press*, October 4, 1957.

[14] “Tells Mrs. Bates’ Story in September Issue,” *Arkansas State Press*, August 22, 1958.

[15] “Mrs. Bates honored in New York” *Arkansas State Press,* February 27, 1959.

[16] Evelyn Cunningham, “Putting itself out of Business,” PBS. https://www.pbs.org/blackpress/educate_event/putting.html

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