

The Early History of the Civil Rights Movement (1900–1950)

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NOTE TO THE READER: Mr. Hart completed his senior thesis in the winter and spring of 2020, during the early weeks of the 2020 COVID-19 viral pandemic, which resulted in the closure of the campuses of universities and colleges across the United States, including the state of Indiana and Hanover College. From early-March forward, all sources for student papers, including senior theses, could only be procured through digital access online. Interlibrary loans of hard-copy monographs and other texts ceased with the closure of the Hanover College campus and Duggan Library in early March 2020.

INTRODUCTION

The early Civil Rights Movement was an era of collaborative efforts by African Americans and other races to end segregation and racial discrimination. After the Civil War, during the reconstruction era, the U.S. Constitution had been modified by the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments. These Amendments impacted African Americans by extending and defending their racial and legal equality. As Aimin Zhang observed, “The 13th Amendment prohibited slavery and provided that the U.S. Congress was entitled to enact certain laws to eliminate the ‘remnants’ of the system of slavery. The 14th Amendment gave a wider interpretation and definition to such terms as ‘Due process of law’ and ‘Equal protection of the laws,’ and forbids their being denied to any citizens. The 15th Amendment gave black citizens the right to vote.”¹ These Amendments dealt with black male suffrage, racial segregation, and discrimination from higher-powered whites. They were essential because they provided a foundation upon which African Americans later mobilized the Civil Rights Movement.

However, the Civil Rights Movement did not fully take off until African Americans developed and acquired additional resources. The foundations of the Civil Rights Movement emerged through the complex interrelationships of several other twentieth-century movements and groups: Jews suffering from anti-Semitic discrimination who supported the founding of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (hereafter NAACP); the Black Social Gospel Movement; the Labor Movement; advocates of Socialism and Communism; and the Peace Movement of the 1930s–1940s. The interaction of Jews and Blacks led to the formation of the NAACP, which served as the cornerstone of the early Civil Rights Movement. The ministers of the Black Social Gospel Movement promoted social and political justice and opposed racial lynching. Socialists and Communists resisted the oppression of the African-American proletariat. The International Labor Movement fought for Labor Unions and focused on eliminating capitalistic exploitation of poor African Americans while the Peace Movement condemned the

¹ Aimin Zhang, *The Origins of the African American Civil Rights Movement, 1865–1956* (New York: Routledge, 2002), xii.

brutality of Jim Crow. Collectively, these movements coalesced and paved the way for the emergence of prominent figures such as Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Civil Rights legislation of the Lyndon B. Johnson Presidency.

EMERGENCE AND EVOLUTION OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

Blacks' and Jews' Struggle for an Alliance

During the first half of the 20th century, anti-Semitism helped form what would become known as the Civil Rights Movement by strengthening the relationship between Jews and blacks. This partnership led to the founding and then contributed to the growth of the NAACP. The history of Jews' and blacks' relationship before the early 20th century is complex, but helped gradually transform the two groups into allies. This is vital because, as allies in the early 20th century, Northern Jews and blacks worked together to combat the inequalities that each group faced.

Before the early 20th century, African Americans envied and even resented the Jews, who often served as their landlords. However, their relationships strengthened as they both encountered prejudice and fought the struggle in the South for equal rights.² Prior to the Civil War, many Southern Jews had been slaveholders.³ This helps explain the negative relationship that initially developed between Jews and blacks before the early 20th century. Jews depended on the hardships of African-American slaves to make a name for themselves in America. For example, Jews held slaves under their control because it kept them from being at the bottom of the American social hierarchy. Also, Jews engaged in slave trading because it brought them revenue. By engaging in the slave business, Jews were able to sit at an advantage in America. And after the end of slavery, Jews were well positioned as landlords for blacks living and working in urban areas.

During these early years, African Americans struggled to gain assistance and recognition from Jewish individuals even as Jews avoided affiliation with African Americans. Roy Wilkins, executive secretary of the NAACP from 1955–1977, conceded, “Some [Jews] have joined the Negro’s opposition for safety’s sake—and perhaps understandably so.”⁴ Wilkins was convinced that some Jews did not associate with blacks because they feared the consequences. Moreover, Allison Schottenstein observed, “as long as antebellum Jews were able to embrace the ideals of what it meant to be Southern and white, they could potentially fit in.” Tensions between Jews and blacks only increased over time as blacks rented housing from Jewish owners. However, “during the depression of the 1890s and after, surging anti-Semitism caused the whiteness of Southern

² Huey L. Perry and Ruth B. White, “The Post-Civil Rights Transformation of the Relationship between Blacks and Jews in the United States,” *Phylon* 47 (1986): 51–60 at 52.

³ Roberta Strauss Feuerlicht, *The Fate of the Jews: A People Torn Between Israeli Power and Jewish Ethics* (New York: Times Books, 1983), 186.

⁴ Clive Webb, *Fight against Fear: Southern Jews and Black Civil Rights* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2001), 25.

Jews to again be questioned.”⁵ Not surprisingly, by the early 20th century Jews and blacks were drawing a parallel that would ultimately connect them both to the Civil Rights Movement. Collectively, blacks and Jews both struggled with discrimination at the hands of whites.

Booker T. Washington once commented, “In Russia, there are one-half as many Jews as there are Negroes in this country, and yet I feel sure that within a month more Jews have been persecuted and killed than the whole number of our people who have been lynched during the past forty years, but this, of course, is no excuse for lynching.”⁶ The parallels that he drew between Russian Jews and African Americans clearly did not go unnoticed as other African-American leaders compared the oppression of Russian Jews with the ill treatment of African Americans back home. An editorial in the *Nashville Globe*, entitled “Persecution of the Jews,” reminded readers “that where two races [are] living in the same country and one [is] allowed to deprecate upon the rights of the other with impunity, the dominant one has always grown bold, arrogant, tyrannical and criminal toward the other What is true of the treatment of the Jews in Russia is hardly less true of the treatment of the Negro race in America.”⁷ This was vital because many blacks felt like they were experiencing difficulties similar to those experienced by Russian Jews.

In the December 1910 editorial entitled “Charity Begins at Home,” however, the editors of the African-American weekly, *Atlanta Independent*, instructed their readers “not to pray for the relief of the oppressed Jews, but to wash their hands clean with duty at home before they go ten thousand miles away to demonstrate their charity.”⁸ In other words, they should begin to deal with racism at home before concerning themselves with the plights of Jews suffering in Russia. Ultimately, African Americans made it their goal to utilize events overseas to impact the beliefs and actions of Southern Jews, many of whom remained uncertain of the proper response to the oppression of blacks. As Webb noted, “Southern Jews were in reality deeply divided by the integration issue. Divisions existed between men and women, young and old, religious leaders and congregations. Small-town Jews were more restricted in their actions than city Jews. The same distinction can be made between the Jews of the Lower and Upper South.”⁹

Jews, of course, had never despised African Americans, nor had they as a rule mistreated them as Southern whites often had done. This is important because it created a window for the opportunity to form a positive relationship in the early 20th century when Jews began to collaborate with blacks and participated in the NAACP. Due to the persecution Jews faced at the hands of

⁵ Allison Schottenstein, “Jews, Race, and Southernness,” in *The New Encyclopedia of Southern Culture*, vol. 24: *Race*, ed. Thomas C. Holt, Laurie B. Green, and Wilson Charles Reagan (University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 73–77 at 74–5.

⁶ Webb, *Fight against Fear*, 35.

⁷ Webb, *Fight against Fear*, 36.

⁸ Webb, *Fight against Fear*, 36.

⁹ Webb, *Fight against Fear*, 219.

Adolf Hitler and his Nazi associates in Germany during the 1920s–1940s, as well as in the United States, Jews could empathize with blacks who, too, were suffering persecution from whites. This facilitated the building of better relationships and, in turn, led to the founding of the NAACP. As Hasia Diner observed, the benefits of this relationship could be seen “in the Jewish efforts for the NAACP’s drive for financial stability as well as in the association’s legal efforts, publicity campaigns and political programs.”¹⁰ This collaboration between Jews and African Americans strengthened the Civil Rights Movement in the North as well as in the South.

The NAACP had been formed in 1909 as a bi-racial organization whose avowed purpose was “to end racial discrimination and segregation in all public aspects of American life.”¹¹ As a result of its guidance and highly-capable leadership on both the local and the national levels, the NAACP soon became the organizational face of the Civil Rights Movement. African Americans linked with Jews and white liberals to form this organization. Gilbert Jonas noted, “As the organization emerged physically, its members accepted as their primary mission the role of advocacy, initially to publicize the evils of lynching and, thereafter, to expose each manifestation of racial injustice within American society.”¹² The NAACP’s list of concerns included: “freedom to purchase property and to live in the area of one’s choice, to travel without being segregated, to secure meals and lodgings in restaurants and hotels that are open to the general public, and to read books in libraries, sit in public parks, look at pictures in museums, and watch animals in zoos”¹³ Beyond this, the NAACP sought to end African-American disfranchisement throughout southern states and eradicate segregated transportation. “The Call” of the NAACP did not “spell out a long-term plan, [but] it did identify the critically important areas of human endeavor on which the NAACP would focus for the next half-century: voting rights, employment opportunity, equality before the law, desegregation of key civil institutions such as public schools and services, and the same property rights enjoyed by the white majority.”¹⁴ In short, the members of the NAACP sought to create an equal environment for the black minority.

African Americans had always been treated differently. When accused of breaking the law, they were always identified by race in the newspapers, unlike other races which were rarely, if ever, labeled. By the 1910s, the NAACP obtained some key victories that helped mollify references to African Americans in the press. For example, they handled a housing concern in

¹⁰ Hasia R. Diner, *In the Almost Promised Land: American Jews and Blacks 1915–1935* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1977), 124.

¹¹ Langston Hughes, *Fight for Freedom: The Story of the NAACP* (New York: Norton, 1962), 11.

¹² Gilbert Jonas, *Freedom’s Sword: The NAACP and the Struggle Against Racism in America, 1909–1969* (London: Routledge, 2004), 5.

¹³ Hughes, *Fight for Freedom*, 11–14.

¹⁴ Jonas, *Freedom’s Sword*, 11–12.

Kansas and, in 1912, they stopped the dismissal of African-American firemen when white railroad brotherhoods attempted to replace them.¹⁵ These victories were essential because they led to an expansion of branches within the NAACP. According to Langston Hughes, “By the end of 1913 the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People had 24 branches in the United States, and its budget had increased to \$16,000.”¹⁶ This was vital because the NAACP needed to be on a national level to become impactful, but their spotlight also led to heightened racial discrimination from whites. Yet this increased racial discrimination was hardly the only issue the NAACP tackled during its early years, for the organization lacked approval from the prominent Booker T. Washington. They also stood accused by the Communist Party of contributing to the wrongdoings of America. Later, the NAACP confronted “labor unions and employers in a long and frustrating campaign to open the nation’s workplace to Negroes.”¹⁷ Despite the hatred and opposition its members faced, the NAACP tackled the problem of lynching and Jim crow laws. One of their most well-known victories was their success in *Brown v. Board of Education*.

In America, at least, Jews had an easier transition than blacks. As Peter I. Rose observed, “Even the Jewish immigrants who arrived between 1880 and 1920, impoverished refugees from Czarist pogroms and general economic blight, were still better off than the black Americans who had been here for more than two centuries.”¹⁸ In contrast, African Americans were often targeted. “Between 1889 and 1918, over 2,500 blacks were lynched.”¹⁹ “During that period, [just] one Jew was lynched, Leo Frank in Georgia.”²⁰ That disparity emphasized the targets on African Americans’ backs, though Jews also faced discrimination in the job market and in social circles. Apart from this, both ethnic groups were in search of a new opportunity in America, which generated more issues. In fact, Rose stated, “Within another decade the Jews were to be rated as the most successful of all ethnic groups in the United States on a variety of measures, including

¹⁵ Hughes, *Fight for Freedom*, 26.

¹⁶ Hughes, *Fight for Freedom*, 27.

¹⁷ Hughes, *Fight for Freedom*, 6.

¹⁸ Peter I. Rose, “Blacks and Jews: The Strained Alliance,” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 454 (1981): 55–69 at 56. A rather rosy interpretation of the plights of Jews in the U.S. by Feuerlicht, *The Fate of the Jews*, 189, and other writers was boldly challenged in the Hollywood film, *Gentleman’s Agreement*, starring Gregory Peck, Dorothy McGuire, and John Garfield (who himself was Jewish), and based upon the novel by Laura Z. Hobson.

¹⁹ Robert Weisbord and Arthur Stein, *Bittersweet Encounter: The Afro-American and the American Jew* (New York: Schocken Books, 1972), 5.

²⁰ Weisbord and Stein, *Bittersweet Encounter*, 8.

financial attainment, academic achievement, and professional status.”²¹ Meanwhile, as slaves, blacks had been taught to oppose Jews. According to Clive Webb, “slaves learned that the Jews had rejected the teachings of their Lord and had him killed.”²² There were also slave spirituals created whose lines included, “Virgin Mary had one son / The cruel Jews had him hung.”²³ These sermons and spirituals taught black slaves to become frightened or at least suspicious when encountering Jews, and this was not entirely without justification. Webb asserted, “It must be remembered that Jews are influenced in their attitude toward Negroes by the mores of the dominant group, which is the white American group.”²⁴

In fact, in both the *antebellum* and *postbellum* eras, Southern Jews were only accepted in white circles if they conformed to the norms espoused by Southern white leaders. “Not only were a disproportionate number of Jews slave owners, slave traders, and slave auctioneers but when the line was the line was drawn between the races, they were on the white side.”²⁵ Confrontation increased when the Great Black Migration took place, during which about 6 million African Americans left Southern rural areas. The North, of course, held rapidly growing industries. According to the U.S. census, “the proportion of blacks living in cities increased from 20 percent in 1890 to 27 percent in 1910.”²⁶ The more industries there were, the more opportunities existed for blacks. These opportunities, however, produced competition for housing.

Though housing for blacks became limited, it was common for a Jewish person to be a landlord of these homes or a store owner. This resulted in black and Jews having frequent contact. Such contact was by no means a purely negative issue, as many African Americans quickly became aware, for Jewish store owners were more sympathetic to their plights than most whites. Thus Clive Webb declared, “In stark contrast to the typical white retailer, Jewish merchants willingly extended credit to African Americans, allowed them to sample goods, and addressed them as ‘Mr.’ and ‘Mrs.’”²⁷ In addition to treating African Americans with dignity and respect, Jewish employers also provided longer hours and higher pay for black workers. Civil Rights activist John Lewis

²¹ Rose, “Blacks and Jews: The Strained Alliance,” 56. Also see Alice Kessler-Harris and Virginia Yans-McLaughlin, “European Immigrant Groups,” in *American Ethnic Groups*, ed. Thomas Sowell (Washington, DC: The Urban Institute, 1978), 107–37.

²² Webb, *Fight against Fear*, 26.

²³ Webb, *Fight against Fear*, 26.

²⁴ Webb, *Fight against Fear*, 30.

²⁵ Feuerlicht, *The Fate of the Jews*, 187.

²⁶ Zhang, *The Origins of African American Civil Rights Movement, 1865–1956*, 18.

²⁷ Webb, *Fight against Fear*, 29.

claimed he developed empathy for Jews as a black man in Troy, Georgia, because he could “see that their struggle was very similar to ours.”²⁸

At the same time, by 1920, this frequent contact contributed to rising anti-Semitism among some blacks who lacked employment, land, capital, and entrepreneurship. Thus as customers they believed that the Jewish store owners were over-pricing their rents. Also, few Jewish landlords implemented plans to repair the homes which blacks were renting. Jews seemed only concerned about the rent money which caused many blacks to despise them. According to James Baldwin, “The landlord treated us this way only because we were colored, and he knew that we could not move out.”²⁹ Those actions frustrated blacks, who were forced to live under poor conditions while Jews were able to collect their money and go home to a clean environment. African Americans naïvely had assumed that Jews would automatically display empathy towards them.

Other issues soon clouded the picture further. Initially, for example, Jews remained neutral during the dispute about integration versus desegregation, in part because of the need to secure their lives against violence by white supremacists. As many Jews created suspicion by marching with blacks during the Civil Rights campaign, however, hostile Evangelical fundamentalists came to see them as the cornerstone of the integration movement. Thus the desegregation upheaval reignited and inflamed prejudice against Jews. In the South, politics posed more of a threat than in other areas. Again, according to Clive Webb, “It is only in this context of extreme danger that the consequent actions or inaction of Southern Jews can be understood. Their standard of living, their social status, and their influence in civic affairs were all entirely reliant upon their relationship with a white Gentile majority sworn to the preservation of racial segregation.”³⁰ In July 1954, Robert Patterson arranged a White Citizens’ Council in Indianola, Mississippi. As Citizens’ Councils were organized in most major cities across the South, their membership quickly expanded. Jews were threatened if they refused to join the Councils. For example, “In Montgomery, Alabama, for instance, the Council began a door-to-door membership drive threatening to publish the names of all those who refused to join.”³¹

At the same time, white leaders chose not to infuse the Councils with anti-Semitic extremism because of its potential effect upon segregation. For example, ultra-segregationist Asa Carter had been dismissed for requesting that Jews be banned and for attracting anti-Semitic spokesmen. Carter created the North Alabama Citizens’ Council, which denied membership to individuals who did not believe in Christ and eventually focused on maintaining segregation. Likewise, in Louisiana the Greater New Orleans Council was overthrown by the South Louisiana

²⁸ Webb, *Fight against Fear*, 28.

²⁹ James Baldwin, “Negroes Are Anti-Semitic Because They’re Anti-White,” in *Black Anti-Semitism and Jewish Racism* by Nat Hentoff et al. (New York: Richard W. Baron, 1969), 3–14 at 3.

³⁰ Webb, *Fight against Fear*, 46.

³¹ Webb, *Fight against Fear*, 47.

Citizens' Council. Leander Perez, who was the organization's president, held Jews responsible for the crisis. Perez observed, "African Americans who were otherwise content to accept the status quo were being used as the unwitting pawns in a Zionist conspiracy to stir up hatred between the races and thereby destroy our white Christian civilization."³²

In the South, Council spokesmen linked Jews to integration and also to Communists, another group targeted by Southern whites. F. J. Shriver of the Citizens' Council in Elore, South Carolina, asserted that integration was "part of an international Communist plot made and being executed by the Jews."³³ Yet Jews were accused of far worse wrongdoings in the community. "Anti-Semites furiously peddled the idea that civil rights organizations like the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) were just a front for Jews conspiring to achieve world domination."³⁴ Thus Jews in the NAACP were linked to a supposed global Communist conspiracy. By the 1950s, a number of groups professing anti-Semitism had been established. The Ku Klux Klan, for example, also targeted Jewish businesses. In 1944, white supremacist Jesse B. Stoner attempted to get Congress to recognize "that the Jews are the children of the devil, and that, consequently, they constitute a grave menace to the United States of America."³⁵ Stoner, founder of the National States' Rights Party (NSRP) and its party chairman for many years, was linked with members of the NSRP to the 1958 bombings of Birmingham's African-American Bethel Baptist Church and the Hebrew Benevolent Temple in Atlanta.

The National State's Rights Party was challenged by the press and political leaders of the Jewish Community Council. In response, Rear Adm. John G. Crommelin went on the offensive. After the Second World War, Crommelin ran for office as a Democrat between 1950 and 1962; he seemed to be the perfect candidate for racist white men. Crommelin infamously stated, "The Negro is the malarial germ, but the Jew is the mosquito."³⁶ Crommelin here was alluding to the fact that African Americans would have been fine under segregation, but Jews got in the way. He was also outspoken about informing individuals that a Communist-Jewish conspiracy had been set in place for the Jews to control the world. His outspoken ideas led him to endorsements. Crommelin became connected with anti-Semitic extremists as the NSRP's Vice President.

These White Citizens' Councils included the most influential men in the area, such as mayors, chiefs of police, and local business leaders.³⁷ Despite the anti-Semitism of these Councils, most Southern Jews paid the membership fee because they believed it was best for their well-being and hopefully would keep these individuals and their subordinates from retaliating against them.

³² Quoted by Webb in *Fight against Fear*, 49.

³³ Webb, *Fight against Fear*, 50.

³⁴ Webb, *Fight against Fear*, 51.

³⁵ Webb, *Fight against Fear*, 53.

³⁶ Cited by Webb, *Fight against Fear*, 54.

³⁷ Webb, *Fight against Fear*, 47.

For example, David Halberstam noted that, before the arrival of the Councils, “a man who spoke up against Jim Crow merely ran the risk of being known as a radical; today he faces an organized network of groups consciously working to remove dissenters—his job and his family’s happiness may be at stake.”³⁸ This demonstrates how much power the Councils had.

Despite their personal sympathies, Southern Jews had to be very careful about their actions. If Jews refused to participate in racist political activities, Council members became suspicious, yet whenever they did so, as Clive Webb observed, “in their very support of segregation, Jews were upholding the same caste system that led to their own marginalization.”³⁹ Racist politicians such as U.S. Senator (Georgia) Herman Talmadge made it extremely difficult for minorities to be shielded. As the southern Jewish journalist Harry Golden reported, “there is no hiding place down here. No more. Each thing is a piece of the whole thing; the struggle for democracy; for human freedom; for the dignity of the human spirit.”⁴⁰ Clearly no minority was safe. Golden despised racial bigots and instead advocated equal treatment of all races, yet argued that if God wanted the races to blend, he would have created us all the same race.

Jews’ frame of mind on the race question throughout the 20th century was defined by their status and security among the whites. As Roberta Strauss Feuerlicht observed, “Like other white ethnics, Jews choose to be blind to the black experience, but Jews are the only whites who compete with blacks for the stature of suffering.”⁴¹ Often, Jews strove to fly under the social radar. Yet many Jews remained quiet during the Civil Rights Movement due to their fear of anti-Semitic persecution. Their absence during the Civil Rights era of the 1950s–1960s, in turn, contributed to blacks’ negative opinions of Jews. “A Jew can be a man on the street and a Jew at home, but a black is black wherever he goes.”⁴² Even Southern Jews did not always help blacks with their struggles. Martin Luther King, Jr., was upset by this because he believed Southern Jews were supposed to be African American’s most powerful associates. Nonetheless, Southern Jews as a whole grew more supportive towards the end of racial segregation due to their mutual persecutions. At the same time, relatively few Northern Jews were active in the Civil Rights demonstrations of the 1960s. Those Jews who did participate, however, experienced arrest, abuse, violence, and even death. This did not go unnoticed, for as King admitted, “It would be impossible to record the contribution that the Jewish people have made toward the Negro’s struggle for freedom.”⁴³ Thus the efforts of Southern and Northern Jews who helped blacks during the Civil Rights Era of the 1950s–1960s challenged those Northern Jews who opted not to get involved. Meanwhile, the

³⁸ Webb, *Fight against Fear*, 47.

³⁹ Webb, *Fight against Fear*, 45.

⁴⁰ Webb, *Fight against Fear*, 45.

⁴¹ Feuerlicht, *The Fate of the Jews*, 186.

⁴² Feuerlicht, *The Fate of the Jews*, 186.

⁴³ Webb, *Fight against Fear*, 24.

longstanding problem of Jewish ownership of urban slums in Northern cities, coupled with what was perceived by many blacks as the apathy of Northern Jews towards the plight of African Americans, clouded the views of blacks toward Jews and even led some of them to adopt anti-Semitism. Martin Luther King, Jr., summed up the complexity of the situation:

The limited degree of Negro anti-Semitism is substantially a Northern ghetto phenomenon; it virtually does not exist in the South. The urban Negro has a special and unique relationship to Jews. He meets them in two dissimilar roles. On the one hand, he is associated with Jews as some of his most committed and generous partners in the civil rights struggle. On the other hand, he meets them daily as some of his most direct exploiters in the ghetto as slum landlords and gouging shopkeepers. Jews have identified with Negroes voluntarily in the freedom movement, motivated by their religious and cultural commitment to justice. The other Jews who are engaged in commerce in the ghettos are remnants of older communities.⁴⁴

The Black Social Gospel Movement

The Black Social Gospel Movement served as another key component in the early formation of the Civil Rights Movement. The Black Social Gospel was a religious expression of faith that emphasized that Christ advocated on behalf of enslaved individuals. According to Gary Dorrien, “It emerged from the ravages of the transatlantic slave trade, the birth of African American Christianity, and the legacy of the abolitionist tradition, addressing the crisis of a new era.”⁴⁵ Many individuals involved in the Black Social Gospel Movement believed that using the Spirit of God would lead them to equality. The Black Social Gospel also used the combination of Black Nationalism, abolitionism, and Marxism in the early 20th century in support of African-American civil rights. The movement’s goal was to use religion to conquer social justice and be more aware of modern politics. Thus Gary Dorrien has defined “Black Social Gospel” as combining “an emphasis on black dignity and personhood with protest activism for racial justice, a comprehensive social justice agenda, an insistence that authentic Christian faith is incompatible with racial prejudice, an emphasis on the social ethical teaching of Jesus, and an acceptance of modern scholarship and social consciousness.”⁴⁶ The Black Social Gospel not only proclaimed a belief in social justice that later became a theme adopted by the Civil Rights Movement, but also reacted to the claims of the Progressive Era by attacking the ideas of Social Darwinism, thereby challenging racial bigotry and oppression.

⁴⁴ Clayborne Carson, ed., *The Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (New York: IPM and Grand Central Publishing, 1998), 310.

⁴⁵ Gary Dorrien, “Achieving the Black Social Gospel,” in *Breaking White Supremacy: Martin Luther King Jr. and the Black Social Gospel* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), 1–23 at 2.

⁴⁶ Dorrien, “Achieving the Black Social Gospel,” 3.

The Black Social Gospel Movement differed from the White Social Gospel Movement in that the black movement incorporated the concepts of social structure and social justice into African Americans' fight for freedom even as its promoters applied Christian ethics to everyday social problems and issues related to civil rights. Again according to Gary Dorrien, "The black social gospel grew out of the abolitionist tradition, but it was a response to the challenges of a new era: the abandonment of Reconstruction, the evisceration of Constitutional rights, an upsurge of racial lynching and Jim Crow abuse, struggles for mere survival in every part of the nation, and the excruciating question of what a new abolition would require."⁴⁷ Thus the Black Social Gospel Movement was closely aligned with the Civil Rights Movement.⁴⁸ The Black Social Gospel, in sum, "combined an emphasis on black dignity and personhood with protest activism for racial justice, a comprehensive social justice agenda, an insistence that authentic Christian faith is incompatible with racial prejudice, an emphasis on the social ethical teachings of Jesus, and an acceptance of modern scholarship and social consciousness."⁴⁹ Put another way, these black Christian leaders emphasized a gospel message that put the ethical teachings of Jesus into practice to eliminate racial injustice while at the same time acknowledging the progressive scholarship and social awareness found among their white counterparts in the Social Gospel Movement such as Walter Rauschenbusch, who in *Christianity and the Social Crisis* (1907) had written, "Whoever uncouples the religious and the social life has not understood Jesus. Whoever sets any bounds for the reconstructive power of the religious life over the social relations and institutions of men, to that extent denies the faith of the Master."⁵⁰ Key figures in the Black Social Gospel Movement such as A.M.E. Bishops Reverdy C. Ransom and Richard R. Wright, Jr., along with Baptists Clayton Powell, Sr., and Nannie Burroughs, used persuasive speaking as well as their writing to achieve their goals and paved the way for protest figures who followed such as W. E. B. Dubois.

The Black Social Gospel took on tasks such as finding solutions for African Americans' racial problems. Ida B. Wells was another key figure within the Black Social Gospel organization that helped African Americans. After an increase of mob killings, Wells stepped up and spoke at as many events as she could. In 1893, she moved to Chicago to begin writing for the *Chicago Conservator*, the city's oldest African American newspaper."⁵¹ Here she studied and opposed

⁴⁷ Gary Dorrien, "Breaking White Supremacy: The Black Social Gospel as New Abolitionism," *American Journal of Theology & Philosophy*, vol. 37, no. 3 (2016): 197–216 at 199.

⁴⁸ Bill Fletcher and Fernando Gapasin, *Solidarity Divided: The Crisis in Organized Labor and a New Path Toward Social Justice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 9.

⁴⁹ Dorrien, "Breaking White Supremacy," 199.

⁵⁰ Walter Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis* (New York: Macmillan, 1907), 48–49.

⁵¹ Dorrien, "Achieving the Black Social Gospel," 105.

lynching which, she concluded, had occurred in three distinct phases. The first phase involved Virginia judge Charles Lynch, who beyond the authority of the law, had initiated the lynching of citizens during the Revolutionary War. The second phase was lynching used to maintain slavery in the *antebellum* South. The third phase came after the Civil War as lynching became more widespread as a racial terror tactic. Wells ensured that her supporters questioned the racial lynching that was occurring in their towns. According to Ralph E. Luker, “In 1900, Ida B. Wells-Barnett returned to her crusade as chairman of the Afro-American Council’s Anti-Lynching Bureau. ‘Our country’s national crime is lynching,’ she said.”⁵² Thus at grave risk to herself, she rejected and confronted the unwritten white law justifying the lynching of blacks.

In addition, Black Social Gospel leaders employed a combination of abolitionism, Black Nationalism, and Marxism in the early 20th century as they contributed in their own way to the formation of the Civil Rights Movement. This group opposed Booker T. Washington’s policy of black appeasement of whites. According to Paul Harvey, another strand, “identified with the founding of the NAACP and with Du Bois himself, carried on the abolitionist and egalitarian traditions of the 19th century.”⁵³ They supported abolitionism’s radical policies of racial equality and socio-economic justice.⁵⁴ This abolition ideology centered around Jesus’s embracing of the poor and meek, as well as upon Christ’s crucifixion on the cross and argued that white society could never take away blacks’ human dignity nor their belief in Jesus and assurance of salvation.

Black Nationalism and Marxism, too, formed key components of the Black Social Gospel. One strand of Black Nationalism emphasized emigration to Africa.⁵⁵ African Americans believed all people of African descent shared something as a common heritage and should be identified biologically. Many believed that they should create their own nation in Liberia. Marxism explained the oppression of a black proletariat at the hands of a white capitalist society. Again, according to Harvey, critical here was “a much smaller group [of Black Social Gospelers] actively pursuing Marxism and Socialism, seeing black American struggles as a subset of a broader worldwide movement of oppressed working people.”⁵⁶ In the end, Black Social Gospel leaders used moral suasion in their sermons, speeches, and writings to slow the rise of, and eventually abolish, Jim Crow laws by emphasizing Christian churches or political parties that stressed the Holy Spirit.

⁵² Ralph E. Luker, *The Social Gospel in Black and White American Racial Reform, 1885–1912* (Chapel Hill: University Of North Carolina Press, 1991), 195.

⁵³ Paul Harvey, “The Black Social Gospel,” *The Christian Century*, February 3, 2016, <https://www.christiancentury.org/reviews/2016-01/black-social-gospel> (accessed March 31, 2020).

⁵⁴ Dorrien, “Achieving the Black Social Gospel,” 6.

⁵⁵ Dorrien, “Achieving the Black Social Gospel,” 5.

⁵⁶ Harvey, “The Black Social Gospel.”

The Communist Party and the Civil Rights Movement

The Communist Party was connected to the early formation of the Civil Rights Movement through its fight for the liberty of blacks, non-citizens, workers, unions, and foreign immigrants. The Communist Party first started off with two separate parties. According to Theodore Draper, “The Communist Party, the larger of the two, was rooted in small foreign-language federations of mostly Eastern-European working-class immigrants who predominated in the American East. The Communist Labor Party was stronger in the West and had comparatively more American-born members.”⁵⁷ These two parties arose and spread in the aftermath of World War I. During this period the United States was challenged by stagnation, inflation, and disease. There were also cultural problems occurring due to the black migration. As a result, Jennifer Ruthanne Uhlmann observed, “In April 1919, for example, the California legislature passed one of the most comprehensive criminal syndicalism laws, used on several occasions against Communists.”⁵⁸

Thus critical laws were put in place to penalize Communists. This included the Espionage Act, which prohibited individuals from spying or assaulting the government. Many American cities, too, adopted laws that placed limits upon the Communist Party. In the U.S., it was common for Communists to be targeted for maltreatment. Most maltreatment occurred to prevent Communists from encouraging cultural fairness in the South and spreading the idea of socialism. However, the efforts of Communists in the legal system helped them defend themselves politically. Thus, according to Uhlmann, “In the early 1920s, then, in response to government repression, Communists made it a priority of their legal activism to fight for their First Amendment Freedoms.”⁵⁹ Indeed, Communist Party members fought for the equality of their party leaders, activists, and non-citizens in order to keep their hopes alive as a legal political organization. Initially, they lost multiple court cases because many judges viewed Communism as a serious political threat. Even as the party faced defeat in the court system, however, the new principle of incorporation enabled a significant liberalization of the interpretation of the law in favor of individual rights at the expense of state rights.⁶⁰ This was a vital win for Communists because it allowed them to defend themselves and their party’s interests while exercising freedom of speech.

By the mid-1920s, Communists had successfully survived the initial Red Scare which allowed them to mobilize as an organization. Next, party members began to involve themselves in labor and agricultural politics. The International Labor Defense (ILD) was a key factor to the Communist Party’s contribution to politics. This defensive organization hired the most

⁵⁷ Theodore Draper, *The Roots of American Communism* (New York: Viking Press, 1957), 188.

⁵⁸ Jennifer Ruthanne Uhlmann, “The Communist Civil Rights Movement: Legal Activism in the United States, 1919–1946,” (Ph.D. thesis, UCLA, 2007), 19.

⁵⁹ Uhlmann, “The Communist Civil Rights Movement,” 92.

⁶⁰ Uhlmann, “The Communist Civil Rights Movement,” 93.

accomplished attorneys. According to Uhlmann, “Like all ‘front’ organizations, that is, organizations secretly controlled by the party but with diverse memberships, the ILD followed to main principles of command and control.”⁶¹ Communists infiltrated important positions to fill the party. Above all, the ILD labored to help Communist who had been incriminated.

In the U.S., the Communist Party’s connection with the early formation of the Civil Rights Movement came through its Marxist rejection of the oppression of the African-American proletariat, as well as by attempts to end racism and the creation of labor unions for minorities. After World War I, Socialist Party membership in the U.S. fell off due to disputes between party blocs about the “Russian Revolution of October, 1917, and the question of supporting or opposing the newly established dictatorship of the Party.”⁶² This allowed the surviving members of the Socialist party to form the new Communist Party, which set out to improve upon the failures of the Socialist Party. For example, they emphasized the African Americans’ problems, instead of ignoring them. Blacks’ keen political and social awareness attracted members of the Communist Party. According to Wilson Record, the Communist Party planned to “carry on agitation among Negro workers to unite them with all class-conscious workers.”⁶³ Thus the Communist Party believed the African Americans’ role in the Party to be critical.

Much like Martin Luther King, Jr., Communist Party leaders attempted to link lower-class African-American workers with poor white workers because they saw no fundamental difference between the two groups: both were members of an oppressed American proletariat.⁶⁴ Soon the Communist Party began to expand nationally by building a revolutionary black labor organization. In other words, additional programs and organizational branches would support the formation of the Communist Party. This forced regional committees to incorporate African-American workers into organized labor. This technique languished because the Communist Party mainly focused on urban blacks in the North due to the African Americans’ in the South lack of established agencies and resources.⁶⁵ Communists also discounted religion and the black churches in the South.

During the first half of the 20th century, the Communist Party achieved considerable success in the United States and also spread to other countries. Communists operated with

⁶¹ Uhlmann, “The Communist Civil Rights Movement,” 98.

⁶² Wilson Record, *The Negro and the Communist Party* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1951), 17.

⁶³ Communist Party Platform, *American Labor Year Book*, vol. 5 (1920): 149.

⁶⁴ Record, *The Negro and the Communist Party*, 31; Carson, ed., *The Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, 10–11, where King observed that, while working at a factory during his late teens, he first saw the “inseparable twin of racial injustice . . . and economic injustice. . . . Here I saw economic injustice firsthand, and realized that the poor white man was exploited just as much as the Negro.”

⁶⁵ Record, *The Negro and the Communist Party*, 37.

progressive strategies in support of revisionist aims to exploit the distance between individual liberty and the progressive fight against Socialism. In the 1930s, Communists began to focus on labor unions and racial equality for citizens. According to Uhlmann, “To a Communist, Civil Rights included workers’ right to unionize, and strike, foreign immigrants’ rights to political conscience, radicals’ rights to First Amendment freedoms, African-American rights to full, integrated and equal political and civic participation, and finally, inalienable human rights.”⁶⁶ In short, the Civil Rights Movement did not focus solely on Southern blacks. Instead, all individuals were impacted. Influenced by the Great Depression and the New Deal, Communists believed they would acquire peace by aiming to enhance working individuals’ conditions worldwide.

The Communist Civil Rights Movement in the U.S. began in 1933 and lasted until 1941. According to Robbie Lieberman, “The Communist Movement, similar to numerous sects that preceded and succeeded it, satisfied real needs. Especially for young people, it provided certainty and community.”⁶⁷ During this period, Communists were able to launch a National Defense Committee and Labor Defense Council. The ILD’s legal activity assisted with many aspects of this movement and provided the movement with mass organizations that led to success. For example, the organization helped protesters who were accused of small crimes during strikes.⁶⁸ Attitudes toward Communists were shifting as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and Socialists assisted with Communist efforts, which aided with the unity of their organizations. According to Uhlmann, “They sought a federation of defense organizations that would coordinate a wide range of legal work for working-class activists, blacks, the foreign-born and victims of European fascism.”⁶⁹ However, the organization also had to maintain financial stability in order to assist with discrediting false accusations. They had to prove they supported unity, so many of the ILD organization lawyers and activists networked with liberal lawyers to unite the movement. As the national organizational secretary, Frank Spector wanted to implement a plan that involved the ILD, ACLU, League for Industrial Democracy, NAACP, National Committee for the Defense of Political Prisoners, and other groups to form a primary defense organization that would also focus on fighting for labor rights. The ILD in particular was encouraged to participate in black and white liberal organizations to help black Civil Rights.

One major event that connected the Communist Party with the Civil Rights Movement was the Scottsboro case. “In March 1931, two white prostitutes were allegedly raped by nine blacks on

⁶⁶ Uhlmann, “The Communist Civil Rights Movement,” 6.

⁶⁷ Robbie Lieberman, *“My Song is My Weapon”: People Songs, American Communism, and the Politics of Culture, 1930–1950* (Urbana and Chicago, University of Illinois Press, 1989), 16.

⁶⁸ Uhlmann, “The Communist Civil Rights Movement,” 360.

⁶⁹ Uhlmann, “The Communist Civil Rights Movement,” 361. Also see Jones, Secretariat of the Executive Committee of the IRA, “Draft letter to the ILD-USA on the Reorganization of the Work,” December 31, 1935, ILD file (microfilm) Meiklejohn Civil Liberties Library.

a freight train near Scottsboro, Alabama.”⁷⁰ This case was vital because it was a clear incident of racism and an example of a corrupt justice system. On April 2nd, it was announced that Alabama bosses had organized a “trial” that would see the nine African Americans lynched. This forced the Communist Party to publicize its anti-lynching policy. According to Hugh, “the ILD telegraphed Judge Hawkins and other Alabama officials, denouncing the trials and demanding the immediate release of the African-American boys.”⁷¹ This demonstrates the Communist Party’s willingness to take decisive action in support of the nine boys to prevent them from getting lynched. After Communists were turned down by attorneys Stephen Rodd and Clarence Darrow, they were able to retain attorney George W. Chamlee of Chattanooga, Tennessee. Also, they promoted a mass social protest to enable individuals to rally behind the Scottsboro boys. Thus an estimated 20,000 individuals protested in New York, demanding that the court release the boys. African-American groups participated by speaking on the behalf of the Scottsboro boys. According to Hugh, “these speakers informed them that the boys were innocent, the girls were prostitutes, the courts were biased, and the defense had been inadequate.”⁷² This was important because black organizations such as the NAACP, the National Urban League, and the Universal Negro Improvement Association all supported the Communist front. This led these groups to form an alliance.

The Labor Movement and the Civil Rights Movement

The Labor Movement, a defensive response to capitalism, was connected to the early formation of the Civil Rights Movement through its intersection with the NAACP.⁷³ This was important because the Labor Movement made it seem more reasonable for workers to achieve common ground with their employers, which in turn minimized conflict between employers and workers. However, there was a color line when organizing the Labor Movement. Prior to the 1930s immigrants, women and people of color were excluded from the labor unions. This exclusion forced blacks to protest. As a result, after the establishment of the NAACP in 1909, blacks decided to create their own union. The NAACP offered a platform for blacks to focus on providing a better quality life to working people by improving their conditions, offering better wages, and providing better hours. The organization also focused on giving blacks lower-class white workers facing discrimination greater opportunities in the workforce. Thus during the early 1900s, as the North

⁷⁰ Hugh T. Murray, “The NAACP versus the Communist Party,” *Phylon*, vol. 28, no. 3 (1967): 276–87 at 276.

⁷¹ Murray, “The NAACP versus the Communist Party,” 277.

⁷² Murray, “The NAACP versus the Communist Party,” 278. For a thorough discussion of both the campaign to free the Scottsboro Boys and the Communist party’s support of the demands of blacks in Harlem for greater rights and opportunities, see Mark Naison, *Communists in Harlem during the Depression* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983), 57–94.

⁷³ Fletcher and Gapasin, *Solidarity Divided*, 9.

experienced tremendous industrial growth, black workers had an increased opportunity to apply for a job. Due to the new opportunities for employment, Labor Unions shifted their efforts toward bringing racial equality within the workforce, also a central aim of the Civil Rights Movement.

First, one main reason why Labor Unions supported black workers was because of the increase in cost of living during the First World War. They wanted blacks to have equal access to employment. According to Philip S. Foner, the “main cause of labor unrest was the continued rise in the cost of living, which had advanced inexorably throughout the war period.”⁷⁴ As a result, there was an increased number of strikers, especially in the year 1919 when 3,630 strikes were called involving 4,160,000 workers, 2,933,000 more than had been the case in 1917.⁷⁵ The workers were only able to afford the increased housing prices during the war by working overtime or earning bonus pay. What’s more, many factories manufacturing war materiel were shut down with the end of the war or at least ceased offering overtime. According to Foner, “On November 12th, within twenty-four hours of the Armistice, a directive issued jointly by the chairman of the Shipping Board and the secretaries of the Navy and War called for the immediate cessation of Sunday and overtime work under all government-supervised contracts.”⁷⁶ The shutdown was critical because it triggered a recession that seriously affected the industrial workers. Their reduced salaries at a time of inflation made it difficult for workers to survive the increased cost of living and triggered the strikes.

The Labor Union focused on the rising costs of living and the resulting need for increased income to maintain a basic standard of living. With the end of the war and inflation during the year 1919, it was no longer realistic for a worker to work an eight-hour shift, and yet, shifts of more than eight hours only were available at essential jobs. According to Florence Peterson, “demands for higher wages, shorter hours, and union recognition caused 80 percent of all the strikes.”⁷⁷ Both the American economy and its labor force were resilient, but signs of dissatisfaction were beginning to appear.

During the mid-1930s to the late 1940s, industrial unions helped modify black and white relations, civil rights, and fairness for African Americans. According to Larry Isaac and Lars Christiansen, “Major civil rights social movement organizations, including the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the National Urban League (NUL), and the Congress for Racial Equality (CORE), were influenced by, and in turn, influenced,

⁷⁴ Philip S. Foner, *History of the Labor Movement in the United States*, vol.8: *Postwar Struggles, 1918–1920* (New York: International Publishers, 1987), 1.

⁷⁵ Florence Peterson, *Strikes in the U.S., 1880–1936*, U.S. Department of Labor, Bulletin No. 61 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Labor, 1938), 21 and 39, Table 18.

⁷⁶ Foner, *Postwar Struggles, 1918–1920*, 2.

⁷⁷ Peterson, *Strikes in the U.S., 1880–1936*, 391.

the industrial union movement.”⁷⁸ For example, there was an alliance between the CORE organization and unionists. CORE leaders were heavily involved in the industrial unions, and, as members of the unions, they attended CORE events. Also, an institution known as the Highlander School founded at Monteagle, Tennessee, was valuable because of its ability to connect the industrial unionists and Civil Rights Movement. The school focused on educating individuals about the tactics of labor and Civil Rights activists. These included, for example, “many of the tactics (sit-downs to sit-ins, boycotts, marches), and even some songs that were to play key inspirational roles in the early Southern civil rights movement.”⁷⁹ Through them members from the Labor Unions and Civil Rights Movement formed an alliance.

Thus the 1930s and 1940s were vital for African Americans in the Labor Movement. Nonetheless, according to John Oliver Killens, “from the American Knights of Labor and the American Federation of Labor to the Congress of Industrial Organizations, black men have been second, third and fourth-class citizens in the labor movement.”⁸⁰ However, when the Congress of Industrial Labor increased in power, it changed the perspective of racists. For example, again according to Killens, “Everywhere they shouted the slogans: ‘Organize the unorganized!’ ‘Black and white, unite and fight!’”⁸¹ The acceptance of black workers impacted the formation of black and white organizations, fueling blacks’ and whites’ hopes for equality in the workplace.

The Peace Movement and the Civil Rights Movement

The Peace Movement, too, was closely connected to the early formation of the Civil Rights Movement. A social movement designed to limit oppression and the number of wars in America by establishing peace, the Peace Movement can be defined as “groups that opposed Cold War policies: the arms race, military intervention in the name of anticommunism, the development of the hydrogen bomb and the large increase in the military budget, nuclear testing, and the growth of a national-security apparatus.”⁸² The Peace Movement emphasized non-violence, which meant not only antiwar, but also antiracism and anti-segregation. Many African American activists believed that there was no disconnect between peace and freedom; leaders such as Paul Robeson

⁷⁸ Larry Isaac and Lars Christiansen. “How the Civil Rights Movement Revitalized Labor Militancy,” *American Sociological Review*, vol. 67, no. 5 (2002): 722–46 at 724.

⁷⁹ Peter Levy, “The New Left and Labor: The Early Years (1960–1963),” *Labor History* 31 (1990): 294–321 at 296; Aldon Morris, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement: Black Communities Organizing for Change*. (New York: Free Press, 1984), 41–57.

⁸⁰ John Oliver Killens, “Black Labor and the Black Liberation Movement,” *The Black Scholar*, vol. 2, no. 2 (1970): 33–39 at 34.

⁸¹ Killens, “Black Labor and the Black Liberation Movement,” 35.

⁸² Robbie Lieberman, *The Strangest Dream: Communism, Anticommunism, and the U.S. Peace Movement, 1945–1963* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2000), 14.

and W. E. B. DuBois linked this movement of peace to freedom from oppression in the United States. Both individuals also wanted “peaceful coexistence” with the Soviet Union and opposed the U.S. Cold War policies.⁸³ As a result, both men came under attack in the press as “Communists” and suffered the revocation of their passports during the early 1950s. For several years Robeson and DuBois could not travel outside of the country, and even later, after his passport had been restored, the U.S. State Department refused to renew DuBois’s passport while he was residing abroad in Ghana so that he could no longer return to the U.S.

Another important aspect of the Peace Movement that connected it to the early formation of the Civil Rights Movement was its promotion of non-violent protests. Non-violence was the key to the Civil Rights Movement.⁸⁴ According to Samuel Eliot Morison, the Peace Movement started because it “resulted from a century of European wars culminating in the Continental struggles of the Napoleonic era and extending to the New World in the war of 1812.”⁸⁵ Between 1905 and 1917 the Peace Movement was reconstructed through a change in leadership and as the number of individuals who formerly had participated as a trustee, committee, and officer declined.⁸⁶ According to C. Roland Marchand, many peace organizations and churches “were driven by a variety of motives including, for most of them, the natural desire to exercise influence and control over events and the ultimate vision of a world untorn by violence and unscarred by war.”⁸⁷ This was vital because it connected to themes of the Civil Rights Movement.

During the 20th century, the Peace Movement became more practical. Again according to Marchand, “the peace movement became part of their efforts to prevent their ideas and programs from being eclipsed by war, and thus to gain for their political conceptions or social programs, an international ‘place in the sun.’”⁸⁸ World War I strengthened the Peace Movement through the impact of negative perspectives on the war in the media upon American citizens. According to Harry Emerson Fosdick, “In February 1937, when Americans were asked, ‘If another war like the World War develops in Europe, should America take part again?’ 95 percent answered ‘no.’”⁸⁹

⁸³ Lang and Lieberman, *Anticommunism and the African American Freedom Movement*, 21.

⁸⁴ Charles F. Howlett, *History of The American Peace Movement, 1890–2000: The Emergence of a New Scholarly Discipline* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2005), 1.

⁸⁵ Samuel Eliot Morison, “Dissent of the War of 1812,” in Samuel Eliot Morison, et al., *Dissent in Three American Wars* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970), 2–20 at 2.

⁸⁶ C. Roland Marchand, *The American Peace Movement and Social Reform, 1889–1918*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1972), 384.

⁸⁷ Marchand, *The American Peace Movement and Social Reform, 1889–1918*, 388.

⁸⁸ Marchand, *The American Peace Movement and Social Reform, 1889–1918*, 390.

⁸⁹ Harry Emerson Fosdick, *The Living of These Days: An Autobiography* (New York: Harper, 1956), 293; *New York Times*, November 18, 1931; Hadley Cantril, ed., *Public Opinion, 1935–1946*

Young men were refusing to join the military. The Peace Movement promoted absolute pacifism. Peace activists rejected limitations on liberty, the praise of violent acts, and anti-Semitic acts. According to Howlett, “The advocates of the ‘modern’ movement believed ‘that, for peace to advance in the world, reform must advance at home through the non-violent extension of justice under order . . . [I]t literally thrived on the success of other reform endeavors, like racial justice and women rights, that aimed to grant each person his or her due.”⁹⁰

According to Howlett, “the most vigorous and effective of the groups in the peace movement’s militant wing was the National Council for the Prevention of War (N.C.P.W.), founded in 1921 by the Quaker pacifist Frederick J. Libby.”⁹¹ This organization helped unite other pacifist groups. For example, it enticed farmers and labor workers to adopt ideals of peace. These members opposed fascism and the belief that war was the answer to issues. Rather than focusing upon a specific group or religion, the movement rejected war as a solution to international disputes.

Moreover, Peace Churches exerted an impact upon the Civil Rights Movement by advocating Christian Pacifism. These churches were designed to heal the damages of war. Those who participated believed that war was unethical because Christ taught peace. Thus the first major peace groups were Christian collaboratives. For example, the New York Peace Society, the Massachusetts Peace Society, and the American Peace Society all were formed. Collectively, these communities helped the Peace Movement expand.

Notably, many anti-Communists believed that the Peace Movement arose simultaneously with the rise of the Soviet Union. Robbie Lieberman stated, “Any other nations of peace were treated as suspect for aiding and abetting the expansion of our ultimate enemy, the Soviet Union.”⁹² Successful peace organizations that developed during World War I were questioned about Communism during the Cold War. By the late 1940s, during the McCarthy Era, the Peace Movement was associated with dangerous Communist ideals. Many believed that if an individual did not embrace “Americanism,” then that individual promoted Communism.

However, Communists believed that peace issues were intricately linked with political issues. Lieberman importantly noted, “For those born in the Communist movement, the issues were all linked: labor, peace, and civil rights.”⁹³ This highlights how willing Communists were to help labor unions and to protect individuals’ rights. Peace was a bigger problem than other issues due to its affiliation with foreign policy. They opposed the Cold War foreign policies because they

(New York: Harper, 1956), 986; Francis Sill Wickware, “What We Think about Foreign Affairs,” *Harper’s*, 179 (September 1939): 397–406 at 404.

⁹⁰ Charles DeBenedetti, ed., *Peace Heroes in Twentieth Century America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986) 5–6.

⁹¹ Howlett, *History of the American Peace Movement, 1890–2000*, 123.

⁹² Lieberman, *The Strangest Dream*, xiii.

⁹³ Lieberman, *The Strangest Dream*, 5.

were worried about the long-term consequences involving the military budget and civil rights as well as the threat of nuclear war. In 1948, the presidential campaign set off a conflict against the Cold War argument that Western freedom depended on containing Communism. Against this view, Henry Wallace and the Progressive Party insisted that peaceful coexistence was both necessary and possible. Wallace and his supporters, including Paul Robeson, were denounced as being Communist sympathizers. Shortly after the Second World War, liberals, pacifists, and Communists were connected because they shared a common idea that peace would be established through collaboration between the U.S and the Soviet Union. Communists drew concerns about the atomic bomb and fascism because they believed the pair could lead to another war.⁹⁴ The reaction against pacifism was hardly new. According to Lieberman, “Many [Quaker] Friends were bound in chains for refusing to fight in the French and Indian War, and they suffered equally harsh penalties for refusing to take sides in the American Revolution and the Civil War.”⁹⁵ Pacifists were tired of going to war and instead hoped for peace. Individuals chose not to participate in war as conscientious objectors due to its brutal results and its moral consequences. The idea of peace threatened war because it undermined violent acts. And after Hiroshima, war could potentially mean the annihilation of the human species on the planet earth. And still, if an individual refused to participate in war or marched against war in protest, it was considered an “un-American” act.

To conclude, the Peace Movement contributed to the formation of the Civil Rights Movement. The Peace Movement was significant because the goal of the movement was to control disarmament. To limit disarmament, organizations were formed to control international affairs. The organizations were also outspoken when it came to determine whether war was right or wrong. The support of non-violent acts contributed to the Civil Rights Movement because it emphasized peace and justice. The hope of limiting war contributed to the rise of Pacifism. Pacifists refused to adopt any violent policies. Women also played a vital role during the Peace Movement through such groups as Women Strike for Peace (W.S.P.).

CONCLUSION

The foundations of the Civil Rights Movement came into being through complex interrelationships between anti-Semitism, the NAACP, the Black Social Gospel Movement, Socialism and Communism, the Labor Movement, and the Peace Movement. Each movement and association connected or impacted one another and, in the process, contributed to the black Civil Rights Movement. Anti-Semitism helped Jews’ and blacks’ form a mostly positive relationship which led to the creation of the NAACP. As the centerpiece, the NAACP worked to end discrimination and oppression. The NAACP, in turn, supported movements such as the Labor Movement and Peace movement. Both movements fought for minority equality. Thus the Labor Movement fought for equality in the workforce, while the Peace Movement fought for equality worldwide in its

⁹⁴ Quoted in Lieberman, *The Strangest Dream*, 35.

⁹⁵ Lieberman, *The Strangest Dream*, xiv.

determination to limit war and oppression. Many individuals who supported the Peace Movement were accused of being Communist. Communism also shared a connection with the Civil Rights Movement due to its support of labor unions for African-American workers and opposition towards certain U.S. policies. The Black Social Gospel was connected to the Peace Movement because common religion and churches created peace within the community. Advocates of the Black Social Gospel also sought racial justice. The racial discrimination African Americans experienced led them to their involvement in mass communications which included the evolution of organizations, protests, unions, black churches, and social reforms. Each advancement, organization, or movement had a connected theme which was to achieve peace and equality. Each would prove key to the formation and future success of the Civil Rights Movement.

The black migration northward in the late 19th century led to the interaction of Jews and Blacks. Their relationship started off problematic due to their fight for opportunity in the United States. Initially, Blacks were infuriated with Jews because they believed Jews took their opportunities for housing and employment; plus, they believed Jews sided with whites during their racial discrimination due to their neutrality. Most Jews were landlords and businessowners. However, both groups realized that they shared a common experience at the hands of whites. Regarding their relationship with whites, Jews suffered from anti-Semitic persecutions while blacks faced racism. The alliance of Jews and blacks led to the creation of the NAACP.

The NAACP served as the cornerstone of the early Civil Rights Movement. Jews and Blacks came together to form this interracial organization. W. E. B. DuBois was one of the main leaders of the organization. The NAACP's main goal was to use peace to achieve political, social, educational, and economical equality. Also, the NAACP wanted to eliminate discrimination in voting, employment and housing. However, in order to achieve those goals, they had to be involved with politics on a national level. This motivated the NAACP to collaborate with other organizations and movements. This later influenced the Black Social Gospel and Communism.

The Black Social Gospel used religion to connect to the ideologies of the NAACP. Specifically, the notion of Christianity was utilized to promote peace and equality. The Black Social Gospel also identified with the NAACP by applying the abolitionist concept. Abolitionists set out to eliminate the tradition of lynching and economic injustice. This theory was intended to relate to Jesus on the cross, which meant white society could not eliminate Christian beliefs of salvation. The Black Social Gospel also witnessed a significant increase in the number of black churches. These churches' goals were to achieve peace and equality by challenging individuals to become more social ethical and follow the teachings of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount.

Undoubtedly, the rise of Communism was connected with the formation of the NAACP through the formation of the International Labor Defense (ILD). As the ILD expanded, members of the NAACP supported its efforts. Like the NAACP, the Communist Party used its platform to combat lynching. Both organizations came together to support the Scottsboro case as they established a Scottsboro defense Committee. Furthermore, the Labor movement was connected to the Communist party, for as Marxists, Communists also focused on labor unions. The Communist Party supported the lower-class African American proletariat being exploited by capitalist bosses

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and attempted to create a peaceful Negro Labor organization. The Labor Movement protested to help improve workers' conditions, obtain better wages, and work fewer hours.

By all accounts, the Peace movement connected to each movement. The main goal of the Peace movement was to eliminate all wars. By eliminating all wars, the Peace movement would hint at achievement of world peace. Non-violence was critical for the rise of the Civil Rights Movement, not only in the ending of racial lynching, but also in providing a mechanism of peaceful protest. The Peace movement was able to establish groups that highlighted the importance of pacifism. This movement also contained peace churches that helped reach the goal of equality.

Again, anti-Semitism; the Black Social Gospel; the NAACP; Communism; the Labor movement; and the Peace movement all contributed to the early Civil Rights movement. Collectively, these movements coalesced and paved the way for the emergence of prominent figures such as Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Civil Rights legislation of the Lyndon B. Johnson Presidency.

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