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PROTEST AND REFORM: THE DESEGREGATION  
OF OKLAHOMA CITY

A DISSERTATION  
SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY  
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degree of  
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BY  
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Norman, Oklahoma

1969

PROTEST AND REFORM: THE DESEGREGATION  
OF OKLAHOMA CITY

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This dissertation, a study of the desegregation process in Oklahoma City, was inspired by Jimmy Stewart and Clara Luper Clark. Both of these Negro leaders were prominent in the desegregation struggle and believed that this period should be recorded and analyzed. Their records and impressions were invaluable. —

This paper was written under the supervision of Professor Harry Holloway, a scholar of great patience and skill. His knowledge of the Negro and southern politics was of great value. But the greatest value derived from his supervision was his attempt to teach the author to write clearly and coherently about a detailed and complex subject. His supervision of this study is greatly appreciated.

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PROTEST AND REFORM:  
THE DESEGREGATION OF OKLAHOMA CITY

CHAPTER I

OBJECTIVE AND PURPOSE

This study will be an attempt to define, analyze, and evaluate a significant period in the political life of a border state community, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, pivoting on a political analysis of desegregation practices. It will focus on how a community was able to meet the demands of a potent desegregation movement and resolve much of the conflict that emanated from this confrontation. The central problem of concern is the elimination of segregation practices<sup>1</sup> and the subsequent enlargement of traditional political consensus. This allowed for meaningful participation for the Negro in the broader society. The transformation of a caste society into a relatively modern community based on considerable consensus will constitute the major thrust of

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<sup>1</sup>Racial integration, although apparent in some instances, is not the major concern of this study, but only the formal act of desegregation.

this study. An attempt will be made to explain why this community behaved politically as it did and to trace the functioning of the political processes that emanated from this behavior. No attempt is made here to write a history of the segregation practices of this community. Rather, the purpose is to relate the succession of ideas and techniques utilized to bring about the transition from segregation to desegregation and the dynamics of this transition. The research has been conducted and the findings examined within a functional analytical framework.

The time span covered will be from the early 1920s, when Oklahoma City exhibited its most blatant segregationist practices, to a more modern and integrationist posture which it assumed by 1968.

In its earliest stages, Oklahoma City evidenced a pattern of segregation practices and attitudes heavily reinforced legally. The early 1920s witnessed the Ku Klux Klan parading through downtown Oklahoma City. Posters in windows of public restaurants welcomed the Klan and encouraged their patronage. Public school students were actively recruited to join the Klan organization.<sup>1</sup> Race riots plagued her sister city, Tulsa. There was constant, and

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<sup>1</sup>Interview with George Fagin, District Director, Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith (1947-1958), September 10, 1967.

often intense, friction between local law enforcement agencies and the Negro population.<sup>1</sup> Negroes were strictly segregated in housing, employment, and education. They were thoroughly separated from the main currents of Oklahoma City life. A rigidly enforced ghetto atmosphere was maintained. Indeed, the Negro position in the community resembled a caste system.

By the early 1960s this community had eliminated its stringent segregationist practices and attitudes and had peacefully desegregated. In the 1920s, the State of Oklahoma and its capital city seemed to be very much a part of southern life, but by the 1960s this was not so valid an assessment. Between 1922 and 1968, the years covered in this paper, the state as a whole was moving away from traditional southern attitudes and into mainstream politics "in accord with the national ideas of constitutional morality."<sup>2</sup> Indeed, Oklahoma City during this time transformed itself from a caste system to one more generally based on consensus.

The proposition is offered and supported by research

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<sup>1</sup>Interview with John Dunjee, Editor of The Black Dispatch, September 9, 1967.

<sup>2</sup>V.O. Key, Jr., Southern Politics In State and Nation (New York: Vintage Books, Random House, 1949), p. 664. Key states that the race question and one party rule were some of the main characteristics of southern life. Other characteristics derived from economic and demographic traits which were all common to Oklahoma in varying degrees.

that desegregation in Oklahoma City was accomplished by non-ideological politics which turned upon "practical" political mechanisms rather than ideological strife. This seems to be consistent with broad American political tradition. Concrete, specific gains, rather than the conquest of political power with a view to reorganizing society was the principal aim.

However, before the concrete, specific gains could be attained or even bargained for, a changed perspective became imperative. In this sense, an ideological struggle was at least initially present. The ideological struggle was simply an attempt to bring one or another class of problems into focus. Therefore, once the change in the political ideology became apparent in this community a whole new set of problems came into view and were systematically acted upon in pragmatic fashion.

Furthermore, as the political ideology altered so did the attitudes of the white community. This is reflected in the problem solving struggle itself. By itself neither the alteration in political ideology nor the modification of attitudes promoted much change, it is important to note. But it was clearly a prerequisite for reform.

Above all, the cohesiveness of society was maintained. The desegregation movement in this community emerged with a structure and form that were compatible with

American life. A community was undergoing significant change and yet there were relatively few eruptions of hate or fear that characterized the desegregation process in many parts of the South and border areas. The society exhibited stability as social changes were brought about which allowed Negroes to enter the broader community.

The process of change from a caste society of some forty years ago to one based on considerable consensus in recent years is analyzed in the following manner. In the chapter entitled, "Background of a Border State Community," an attempt will be made to describe the pertinent aspects of a pattern of life that was operative previous to the desegregation transformation. This chapter will present the legal, social, economic, and political setting of the early twentieth century in this community when segregationist attitudes and conduct reached an intensity never before or since equaled. Emphasis will be given to the interplay of these forces and their effect upon the Negro in the community. A population profile will be presented and the prevalence of typically southern characteristics in Oklahoma will be stressed.

A society sharing the characteristics of a caste society will be examined. The Negro community was isolated within a larger white community. The Negro, from the early 1920s to the beginning of World War II was denied

access to jobs, schools, housing, politics, and general community participation common to the white community. This environment was maintained intact by utilizing an entire gamut of controls ranging from violent outbursts in the 1920s to more subtle and legal forms in later years.

The next chapter, "Readiness for Desegregation: The Roots of Conflict," will focus attention on the period between the World War II years and the early 1950s when the caste system began to falter. The traditional political consensus at this point began its expansion to allow for Negro participation. The chapter will relate how, since the post World War II era, an equalitarian-integrationist perspective became increasingly the official posture of the entire community. This change occurred because of a complex mixture of motives deriving from official spokesmen of religious, labor, educational, and governmental institutions in addition to the spokesmen of the major private pressure groups sensitive to the issues. Simultaneously, Negroes were being readied for the desegregation struggle by developing new ideas about themselves in relation to the entire community.

The major thrust of this section will be toward the description of a setting that prepared the community for the transformation. Consideration is given to the many factors, political, social, and economic, that were now coming to



bear upon the community with a new intensity. An old ideological framework was being restructured to allow room for change. Overall, an atmosphere conducive to conflict between the Negro and white communities was being formed. This chapter will describe and evaluate this formative stage in the desegregation struggle and its process of development.

The pivotal chapter centers around "The Politics of Desegregation." This section focuses attention upon the ideas and techniques utilized after the new perspective had been formed in gaining the right to vote, to work, to acquire learning, property, and access to public accommodations. Emphasis will be given to the fact that, although non-cooperation with segregation was maintained at all times by Negro protesters, the tactics were dictated chiefly by expediency and not by a master plan of strategy based on an ideology incompatible with the American political system. The community under examination did not experience a movement to overthrow the basic value systems of society, but rather to extend these values to another segment of the population.<sup>1</sup> The instruments of implementa-

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<sup>1</sup>Morris B. Abram, "The Challenge of the Courtroom: Reflections of the Adversary System," The Law School Record, II, No. 2 (1963), 6-7. Abram states that when a movement seeks to overthrow the basic value system of a society it is revolutionary. However, a social movement designed to extend basic values to another segment of the population is reform oriented.

tion were governed by moderate goals.

The politics employed contained stabilizing tendencies that affirmed the political system. Indeed, a certain reciprocity existed between the political structure and desegregating forces. Attention will be given to how the techniques of desegregation (the sit-in, economic boycotts, legal action, marches, and face-to-face confrontation) were utilized. Further, those individuals prominent in stimulating this process shall be identified.

In the next chapter, "The Politics of Accommodation," attention will be directed to the completion of the desegregation process. The aftermath of the Negro protest will be assessed. Various indicators, covering significant areas of community life, will be established as guideposts of progress. Overall, it will be demonstrated that the stability of this community was maintained, indeed, even strengthened as the traditional political consensus was enlarged allowing Negroes entrance into the broader society.

A summary of the major findings and their implications is included in the final chapter. Again, stress will be placed upon the cohesiveness of a social system that has undergone significant internal transformation. These questions will be evaluated and the results summarized: "How was a society able to move from caste to consensus with so

little upheaval? What were the accomplishments? How were they brought about? What is the importance of the findings?" It will be shown that the aggregate of all the individual steps analyzed in various chapters is larger by far than the sum of the individual parts.

In sum, a caste system had been eliminated and in its place a new system emerged. A new and largely consensus-based society arose that extended to all segments of society. Nor were techniques utilized for this change in conflict with the cultural system; if anything, they contributed to its maintenance.

### Sources

Four techniques were used in gathering and evaluating the information for this study: (1) participant observation (the author lived in the community being studied for a major portion of his life); (2) surveys were utilized in major areas, followed by interviews conducted on an open-ended basis with the assistance of schedules; (3) examination of documentary materials, private files, and official and personal correspondence; and (4) examination of basic studies in this area.

All these techniques were employed in order to establish the proper perspective to survey the field. By living in the community for a long period of time the author was able to develop a knowledge of its structures

and functions that seem essential for such a study. Moreover, personal friendships with leaders, especially in the field of civil rights, have been exceedingly helpful and were established both within the Negro and white communities. These acquaintanceships were invaluable in helping to understand the Oklahoma City area properly.

One general survey was conducted in addition to personal interviews. First, a representative group of Negro leaders as well as white local and state political personalities were orally questioned, utilizing a strict questionnaire schedule. Negro leaders were selected by examining the lists of officers, past and present, of local civil rights organizations. Also, past newspaper reports were studied to ascertain the identity of white and Negro participants in protest activities. White politicians were selected by identifying those in office at vital periods in the desegregation struggle. Frequently, those already interviewed suggested other persons who might provide added information. The research was directed at the attitudes of these personalities to utilize their general impressions and to couple these with specific incidents as guidelines.

This survey was devoted to specific questions and allowed for extended comment focusing on these questions: "Have the attitudes of public officials toward desegregation changed in recent years? If so, in what direction,

and what factors contributed to the change? Is Oklahoma City reacting too fast, too slow, or just about right in its movements toward desegregation as compared with other sections of the nation? What individuals in private or public positions have contributed most to the desegregation movement? What techniques worked to further the movement? What techniques were detrimental to the movement?" The results to these questions will be referred to often in this study.

Additional interviews with other political and civil rights personalities were conducted in an open-ended fashion because of an interest in qualitative rather than quantitative material. This technique seems to be more revealing than any other. Also, the scope of the material to be covered with certain individuals was too great for such a precise technique as structured questionnaires. The personal interviews were conducted in such a way as to enable the pertinent and important data to be recorded concisely. Some lasted for many hours and allowed for personal reminiscences. These interviews were conducted with such people as white local and state political leaders, attorneys, Negro leaders, newspaper reporters, and civic officials. Throughout the study direct quotes are utilized where possible. They help convey the actual feelings of the participants: their bitterness, frustration, complacency,

or warmth, or whatever.<sup>1</sup>

The examination of documentary materials was necessary in order to establish the race relations patterns and the processes of social control in the community's past. Newspapers have been one of the major sources of information. This study has relied heavily on all of the local newspapers published for the community at large plus a local Negro newspaper entitled The Black Dispatch, which has been in operation for over fifty years. Additional information was obtained from the Southern School News; published monthly by the Southern Educational Reporting Service, it provides detailed, state by state coverage of civil rights activities. Use was made of the Oklahoma Statutes, Session Laws, and the Official Journals of both the Oklahoma Senate and House of Representatives and various municipal records of Oklahoma City. These sources were used to provide for a proper sequence of events and helped to clarify general impressions obtained from the interviews. Also, uncatalogued material and correspondence in the possession of those interviewed was used extensively. The uncatalogued material and the correspondence referred to may not be available

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<sup>1</sup>Some of the quotations are verbatim, but others are simply the sense of their statements and were formed from general notations when direct statements were difficult to obtain. Some of the interviews were quite lengthy, and to have obtained direct quotations would have greatly impeded the interview. Consequently, most of those interviewed allowed for the utilization of quotes derived from general statements.

always as portions of this material are scattered among other personal items and not separately bound. In addition, the author has also been allowed to attend the meetings, executive sessions, and activities of pertinent administrative agencies, civil rights groups, and civic action organizations over a one and one-half year period. Finally, basic text material and significant studies that bear upon this field have been extensively utilized. They will be referred to often in this study.

## CHAPTER II

### PROFILE OF A CASTE COMMUNITY

The Oklahoma City community, until recently, did not contain the economic, political, or social factors which were required to convert ethnic solidarity into economic and political power. The Negro was separated from the mainstream of community living. This section will relate how the separation was maintained and to what extent. We shall examine the entire city as a whole, interrelating all of the demographic, economic, social, and physical components that nurtured a segregated environment. The time span covered will be from the early 1920s to the immediate post World War II period.

This examination of background information is necessary for an understanding of the community's past race relations patterns and processes of social control. It also helps account for the transition from a caste society to a more integrated community in the near present.

#### Oklahoma--A Southern State

Oklahoma City, as the state's capitol, was directly influenced by the political configuration of the state. The



State of Oklahoma has been described by most political commentators as either a southern or a border state with emphasis on the former. V. O. Key, Jr., for example, makes reference to Oklahoma as a state positioned "on the rim of the South."<sup>1</sup> Others have described Oklahoma solely as a southern state. Cortez A. M. Ewing, in his studies, assumed that Oklahoma was southern in its political orientation.<sup>2</sup> Recent reports of the Twentieth Century Fund<sup>3</sup> and the United States Commission on Civil Rights<sup>4</sup> define and characterize Oklahoma as a southern state. Likewise, academic political journals include Oklahoma in this category.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>V.O. Key, Jr., Southern Politics In State and Nation (New York: Vintage Books, Random House, 1949), p. 669.

<sup>2</sup>Cortez A.M. Ewing, Primary Elections in the South: A Study in Uniparty Politics (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1953). Ewing lived in Oklahoma, taught in the Political Science Department at the University of Oklahoma for many years, and had closely observed the state and its politics.

<sup>3</sup>"The Advancing South: Manpower Prospects and Problems," Twentieth Century Fund Report (New York: Twentieth Century Fund Report, October 15, 1967). This report defined the South as the eleven states that seceded from the Union in 1860 and 1861, plus Oklahoma and Kentucky.

<sup>4</sup>United States Commission on Civil Rights, 1961 Report, Vol. 1, (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1961).

<sup>5</sup>William H. Nichols, "The South As a Developing Area," The Journal of Politics, XXVI, No. 1 (February, 1964), 22.

Processes and Techniques of Control:  
The State--Its Impact Upon the City

The Oklahoma City community was naturally affected very deeply, as the capitol city, by the attitude and direction of the entire state. There was no doubt regarding its posture. The State of Oklahoma maintained and nourished a strict policy of segregation that rivaled any of the southern states and state laws reflected this orientation.

The pattern of life for Negroes in Oklahoma City, from the early 1920s through World War II, was maintained by a number of socio-political factors and processes. Many controlling devices were employed to maintain the status quo; these ranged from the more visible and violent mechanisms to those of a more subtle variety not visible to the community at large and to the Negro community in particular.<sup>1</sup> A major portion of this chapter will be devoted to classifying, describing, and analyzing the processes and techniques of control exercised at the state and local levels over the Negro population of Oklahoma City.

Oklahoma maintained complete separation of the races in personal and public affairs for the major portion of its history. Public and private educational facilities were completely separated. "The public schools of the

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<sup>1</sup>See: Peter Bachrach and Morton S. Baratz, "Decisions and Non-Decisions: An Analytical Framework," American Political Science Review, LVII (September, 1963), 632-642.

State of Oklahoma shall be organized and maintained upon a complete plan of separation between the white and colored races...."<sup>1</sup> Comprehensive civil and criminal penalties were provided for any attempt at mixing the races in public or private schools. If any "person, corporation, or association of persons" maintained or operated an institution for both races they could be "...deemed guilty of a misdemeanor...and each day such school, college, or institution shall be open and maintained shall be deemed a separate offense."<sup>2</sup>

Furthermore, it was considered unlawful for any white person to attend an institution receiving colored pupils and a fine upon conviction was provided. If any instructor taught at an institution receiving both races he could be severely fined.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, Oklahoma's public school system was the only one in the nation maintaining separate school budgets for white and Negro schools.<sup>4</sup>

Oklahoma's laws deeply affected the private lives of Negro citizens. Early sessions of the Oklahoma Legislature

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<sup>1</sup>Oklahoma Statutes, Title 70, Article 5-1. (1961).

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., Article 5-5.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., Article 5-6.

<sup>4</sup>See Ollie E. Hatcher, The Development of Legal Controls in Racial Segregation in the Public Schools of Oklahoma: 1865-1962 (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Oklahoma, 1954), pp. 100-102A, for a discussion of the development of this peculiar financing scheme.

saw the enactment of a miscegenation law forbidding marriage between Negroes and whites and a "Separate Coach Bill" which made it mandatory for Negroes and whites to be separated on railroads traveling through the state.<sup>1</sup> Subsequently, legislation was enacted to regulate the use of phone booths<sup>2</sup> and bathing facilities<sup>3</sup> to ensure that Negroes and whites would not come into contact with one another socially. Supplementing these statutes and adding to their viability were administrative policies continuously enacted by various state administrations.<sup>4</sup>

The Oklahoma Constitution even went so far as to define the difference between colored and white persons so that segregation statutes could be clearly understood. "The term 'colored'...shall be construed to mean all persons of African descent who possess any quantum of Negro blood, and the term 'white' shall include all other persons."<sup>5</sup> Thus, it is evident that Oklahoma maintained and adminis-

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<sup>1</sup>Arthur Lincoln Tolson, The Negro in Oklahoma Territory, 1889-1907: A Study in Racial Discrimination (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Oklahoma, 1968).

<sup>2</sup>Oklahoma Statutes, Title 17, section 135. (1951).

<sup>3</sup>Oklahoma Statutes, Title 45, section 231. (1951).

<sup>4</sup>Interview with Dr. Oliver Hodge, State Superintendent of Public Instruction, State of Oklahoma, February 4, 1963.

<sup>5</sup>Oklahoma Constitution, Statutes 1961, Title 70, Article 5-2.

tered a thoroughgoing southern oriented legal system.

In order to sustain legal admonitions, Oklahoma's political personalities echoed the segregationist doctrine.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, the opening address by the President of the Oklahoma Constitutional Convention set the tone for Oklahoma when he proclaimed:

"We should...provide for separate schools (for Negroes) and give the legislature power to separate them in waiting rooms and on passenger coaches and all other institutions of the State...As a rule they are failures as lawyers, doctors, and other professions. He must be taught in the line of his own sphere as porters, bootblacks, and barbers and many lines of agriculture, horticulture, and mechanics in which he is adept...."<sup>2</sup>

In accordance with the desires of Oklahoma's political leaders, Negroes were effectively isolated from the political process. Oklahoma, like other southern states, formally, and informally deprived the Negro of the right to vote. Initially, by the use of the "grandfather" clause, Oklahoma effectively disfranchised the Negro.<sup>3</sup> Later the white primary and fraudulent practices were contributing

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<sup>1</sup>Arthur Lincoln Tolson, The Negro in Oklahoma Territory, 1889-1907: A Study in Racial Discrimination (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Oklahoma, 1968).

<sup>2</sup>Opening address by William H. Murray (later to become Governor of Oklahoma) to the Oklahoma Constitutional Convention, Guthrie, Oklahoma, November 20, 1906.

<sup>3</sup>This technique was effectively ended in *Guinn v. U.S.*, 238 U.S. 347 (1915).

factors to his continued disfranchisement.<sup>1</sup>

In 1952, the Department of Justice prepared a brief history of the protection of Constitutional Rights during the preceding twenty years. Concerning the right to vote and general participation in the political process the report stated that in 1932,

"In these twelve southern states (Oklahoma included) Negroes were so effectively disfranchised, regardless of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments of the Constitution, that considerably fewer than a hundred thousand were able to vote in the primary elections."<sup>2</sup>

Aside from official policy, Negroes in Oklahoma City were effectively removed from the political process at the state level because of vast distortions in apportionment which left the urban areas underrepresented. Furthermore, the fact that Oklahoma traditionally has maintained a one-party legislature made it difficult for Negroes to enter the political arena. The Democratic party for years made no significant attempt to gain Negro votes and the Republican party, when it emerged with any numbers at all, did so only in the north-central portion of the state. Even the Republicans made no effort for years to attract Negro voters. Oftentimes, Negro voters, having no other alternative but

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<sup>1</sup>For nullification of the white primary see *Nixon v. Herndon* 273 U.S. 536 (1927).

<sup>2</sup>United States Commission on Civil Rights, 1961 Report, Vol. 1, (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1961).

to give the Republicans their support, were repudiated by the party. Early in Oklahoma history, a movement known as "Lily-Whiteism" developed among white Republicans to remove from the party the "stigma" of its connection with Negroes.<sup>1</sup> Oklahoma City, the largest city in the state and one with a relatively sizable number of white Republicans, experienced this reaction to a great extent.

The state legislature, as influenced by one-party rule and distorted apportionment, created an environment that was singularly nonresponsive to Negro needs and desires.<sup>2</sup> The Negro was so effectively isolated from the state's political scene that none had ever served, from 1907 to the mid-1960s, in the state legislature from the Oklahoma City area. Judicial positions were far beyond their grasp and indeed, Negroes throughout the state were not even permitted to serve on juries for many years.<sup>3</sup> Further, state

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<sup>1</sup>Arthur Lincoln Tolson, The Negro in Oklahoma Territory, 1889-1907: A Study in Racial Discrimination (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Oklahoma, 1968).

<sup>2</sup>For a general study of the Oklahoma Legislature and how it responds under these conditions consult: Samuel C. Patterson, "Dimensions of Voting Behavior in a One-Party State Legislature," Public Opinion Quarterly, XXVI (1962), 185-200.

<sup>3</sup>In Oklahoma, even though no statutory provisions required Negro exclusion from juries, this exclusion was apparent from the administrative practices of state jury selection officials. *Hollins v. State of Oklahoma*, 295 U.S. 394 (1941), 55 Supreme Court 784, and *Mitchell v. U.S.*, 313 U.S. 80 (1941).

law enforcement positions, except in minor instances, were completely closed to Negroes.<sup>1</sup>

State policy also worked to control the Negro in socio-political areas utilizing methods which were not clearly discernible to either the Negro or the white community. It is doubtful if even the white manipulators were fully conscious of their role in maintaining the status quo. The covert and unintended consequences of white and Negro actions are as important, if not more important and revealing, than the obvious and intended purposes and consequences of more overt action.<sup>2</sup>

Maintenance of the status quo in this manner is exhibited in the socio-political patterns embracing the Negro community. For years, Oklahoma extended relatively great amounts of money in welfare oriented programs.<sup>3</sup> Indeed,

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<sup>1</sup>The author was in attendance at a meeting of the Oklahomans for Progress (statewide non-partisan group of Negro educators, civil rights leaders, journalists, and legislators), held July 6, 1967, when this topic was discussed.

<sup>2</sup>For a discussion of "Latent and Manifest Functions" consult Robert K. Merton, Social Theory and Social Structure (Glencoe, Illinois: Free Press, 1957), pp. 72-82.

<sup>3</sup>U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, "Welfare in Review," The Statistical Supplement, 1965 Edition (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1965). For example, in fiscal 1964 Oklahoma spent more in total assistance per inhabitant (\$21.42) than any other state in the nation.



Oklahoma's lawmakers, to this date, have supported "ear-marking" of specific revenues toward welfare programs. This, perhaps, has had the undesired effect<sup>1</sup> of keeping those in the lower socio-economic levels fairly complacent or at least comfortable enough so as to forestall any large demands from this sector of society. Further, throughout the years adverse economic reports and high unemployment figures,<sup>2</sup> when they occurred and were compiled by federal agencies, were de-emphasized by state authorities.<sup>3</sup> This was not done specifically to mollify the Negro community, but to soothe the entire community. Nevertheless, Negroes were not provided with the type of information that might have precipitated unrest by encouraging them to demand more jobs and a more favorable economic and political climate.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Robert K. Merton has discussed phenomena of this type in Social Theory and Social Structure (Glencoe, Illinois: Free Press, 1957), pp. 72-82.

<sup>2</sup>The United States Department of Labor prohibited employee census by race for many years. This directive was changed in 1967. Interview with W. J. Bowman, Director of Research, Oklahoma State Employment Commission, September 8, 1967.

<sup>3</sup>Interview with M. Jeltz, Minority Group Representative, Oklahoma State Employment Commission, September 8, 1967.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., M. Jeltz interview. This was done not by the State of Oklahoma, but was a federal directive effected by the Employment Security Agency in the late 1950s. Apparently, as far as could be determined, this policy is no longer operative.

In addition to all other control mechanisms a violent flavor was frequently added. Violent reactions between the races were not infrequent in Oklahoma. Racial turbulence during Oklahoma's territorial days was not uncommon.<sup>1</sup> Anti-Negro riots spread across Oklahoma Territory during 1902 and affected residents of towns close to Oklahoma City, such as Norman, Lawton, and Shawnee. The intensity of this racial discrimination is demonstrated by the establishment of twenty-seven all-Negro towns before or shortly after statehood.<sup>2</sup> Oklahoma City's sister city, Tulsa, on May 31, 1921 experienced one of the most devastating race riots in the nation's history after a Negro was arrested and threatened with lynching by a white mob. After the violence had subsided, over two miles of the Negro section of Tulsa was devastated and seventy Negroes and nine whites had been killed.<sup>3</sup>

The Klan's influence over state and local politics was immense.<sup>4</sup> During the 1920s, their membership in Okla-

<sup>1</sup>Arrell Gibson, Oklahoma: A History of Five Centuries (Norman, Oklahoma: Harlow Publishing Co., 1965), p. 359.

<sup>2</sup>Arthur Lincoln Tolson, The Negro in Oklahoma Territory, 1889-1907: A Study in Racial Discrimination (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Oklahoma, 1968).

<sup>3</sup>Arrell Gibson, Op. Cit., p. 359.

<sup>4</sup>In 1923 Governor Jack Walton was impeached. Among the major charges leading to his conviction was his "handling" of the Klan issue. Subsequent elections at both the gubernatorial and senatorial levels pivoted on the Klan issue.

homa probably exceeded one hundred thousand.<sup>1</sup> Political fortunes, at all governmental levels, revolved around the "issue of the Klan."<sup>2</sup> In Oklahoma City numerous Klan parades were held, their placards reading "We Are Men From Every Walk of Life."<sup>3</sup> The Klan was so influential in the Oklahoma City area that it was able to recruit Oklahoma City high school students for membership. Its influence and power permeated law enforcement and the highest political levels of the city and state government.<sup>4</sup> Its strength in Oklahoma City and throughout the state during the 1920s cannot be minimized.

In the post World War I years there was considerable concern in Oklahoma over the radical left generated by the

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<sup>1</sup>Arrell Gibson, Oklahoma: A History of Five Centuries (Norman, Oklahoma: Harlow Publishing Co., 1965), p. 359.

<sup>2</sup>"The Klan-Walton Issue," The Daily Oklahoman, September 10, 1967, p. 19.

<sup>3</sup>Edwin McReynolds, Alice Marriott, and Estelle Faulconer, Oklahoma: The Story of Its Past and Present (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1967), p. 297. For further materials on Klan activities and influence in Oklahoma City consult Ernest T. Bynum, Personal Recollections of Ex-Governor Walton (Oklahoma City, 1924); Marlon Monteval, The Klan Inside Out (Claremore, 1924); and Howard Tucker, His<sup>1</sup> tory of Governor Walton's War on the Ku Klux Klan, the Invisible Empire (Oklahoma City, 1923).

<sup>4</sup>Interview with George Fagin, District Director, Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith (1947-1958), September 10, 1967. And "The Klan-Walton Issue," The Daily Oklahoman, September 10, 1967, p. 19. Also see, Kenneth T. Jackson, The Ku Klux Klan in the City, 1915-1930 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968).

"red scare" of the 1920s in various states. The Ku Klux Klan reached its peak during these years by capitalizing on patriotic sentiment and by focusing attention on the Negro. During these years, some of the most violent in the state's history, beatings, mutilations, and murders were frequent occurrences utilized to control the Negro.<sup>1</sup> Several counties, at various intervals were placed under martial law by state authorities.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, Oklahoma City was placed under "absolute martial law" to thwart "the enemies of the Sovereign State of Oklahoma--the deadly Invisible Empire."<sup>3</sup>

Moreover, Negroes were constantly harassed by local law enforcement officers as well as the local citizenry. For example, many individual Negroes were arrested several times in a single day for attempting to occupy their property outside of the established residential pattern. Bombings and other violent reprisals were frequently uti-

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<sup>1</sup>Arrell Gibson, Oklahoma: A History of Five Centuries (Norman, Oklahoma: Harlow Publishing Co., 1965), p. 359. And interview with John Dunjee, Editor of The Black Dispatch, September 9, 1967. Also, interview with Jimmy Stewart, National Board of Directors, NAACP, and former President of the Oklahoma City Branch of NAACP, June 29, 1967.

<sup>2</sup>Arrell Gibson, Op. Cit., p. 360.

<sup>3</sup>Arrell Gibson, Op. Cit., p. 364. Governor Jack Walton, on September 15, 1923 placed many counties in Oklahoma under martial law because of Klan activities, but he placed special emphasis upon the Oklahoma City community.

lized by local white inhabitants to maintain the segregation pattern.<sup>1</sup> When early Negro protesters urged Negroes to defend their civil rights they were often violently attacked. For instance, Roscoe Dunjee, editor of The Black Dispatch, was attacked and his offices pillaged after writing editorials urging all Negroes to vote and participate actively in politics.<sup>2</sup> The techniques and practices employed during this era placed Oklahoma City in a posture reminiscent of deep southern communities.

The posturings of the state guided and permeated the capitol city's behavior patterns. The state's general approach to race relations would therefore be crucial to Oklahoma City.

Processes and Techniques of Control:  
The Community--A Caste Society

Oklahoma City, for many years, following the state's general approach, experienced a rigid division between Negroes and whites resembling what is often referred to as a "Color caste" system. The social relationships in this community, designed by custom and law, accorded the white population certain rights and privileges which were deliberately withheld from the Negro.

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<sup>1</sup>Interview with Jimmy Stewart, National Board of Directors, NAACP, and former President of the Oklahoma City branch of NAACP, June 29, 1967.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

This community, like many southern communities, maintained, for the greater part of its history, a system of strict social and political controls governing Negro-white relations. These controls remained immune from any economic or political considerations. The division between Negro and white was so complete so as to be labeled a caste system.<sup>1</sup>

The entire community atmosphere of Oklahoma City made it difficult, if not impossible, for the Negro to

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<sup>1</sup>The concept of a caste system has been frequently used to describe Negro groupings within white societies in America. Gunnar Myrdal implies that the Negro American resided within a caste system. See: Gunnar Myrdal, with the assistance of Richard Sterner and Arnold Rose, An American Dilemma (New York: Harper & Row, 1944), pp. 975-996. Other scholars, in studying Negro areas of various American cities, have utilized caste society as a descriptive device. See: James West, Plainville, U.S.A. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1945), p. 117.

However, some social scientists question the use of the concept "color caste" as an accurate or legitimate description of the social status of Negroes in America. They argue that this concept implies a far more static arrangement of social relationships than is characteristic of the biracial system in the U.S. Furthermore, they argue that this concept is borrowed from the Indian caste system which is bolstered by stable theological and moral precepts. However, use of the term "color caste" seems applicable in this paper on a general basis because of the rigid race relations pattern maintained by the community under consideration. In this period a Negro was barred from white society no matter how high he might rise in his own community.

For a discussion of this topic consult Oliver C. Cox, Caste, Class, and Race (Garden City, N.J.: Doubleday, 1948), pp. 65-66; Gunnar Myrdal, with Richard Sterner and Arnold Rose, An American Dilemma (New York: Harper & Row, 1944), pp. 642-643; and Gerald D. Berreman, "Caste in India and the United States," The American Journal of Sociology, LXVI, (September, 1960), 120-127.

respond in any way other than passively. His reactions to environmental conditions were weak and sporadic, having little permanent effect in altering the prevailing system. The principal concern was survival.<sup>1</sup> "The Negro possessed little job security, little money, and an inferior education."<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, the politics and life of this community were not responsive to Negro needs. Awareness on the part of the Negro citizen was limited. As the Director of the Southern Regional Council noted, "For years, whites have decreed that Negroes must think of themselves as the whites thought of them."<sup>3</sup> Accordingly, the white community was generally apathetic or hostile to any change.<sup>4</sup>

### Community Politics

The more violent forms of control gradually diminished in the late 1930s and during the opening of the Second World War as the city turned its attention to war mobilization;

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<sup>1</sup>Interview with John Dunjee, Editor of The Black Dispatch, September 9, 1967.

<sup>2</sup>Interview with Henry Floyd, President of the Oklahoma City Branch, NAACP, September 7, 1967.

<sup>3</sup>Leslie W. Dunbar, "The Changing Mind of the South: The Exposed Nerve," The American South in the 1960s, ed. by Avery Leiserson (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1964), p. 11.

<sup>4</sup>For an account of similar reactions in other communities see: Harry Golden, Mr. Kennedy and the Negroes (Cleveland and New York: World, 1964), p. 108.

ity life. The Negro population of Oklahoma City was still isolated from the larger community by law and tradition.

Gradually, in addition to this pattern, a type of metropolitan politics arose in the late 1930s that also helped to isolate the Negro from community politics. No secret blueprint existed. Tactics were dictated by expediency. A pattern did emerge that had, as its political characteristics, decentralization and nonpartisanship, neither of which appealed to Negro participation.<sup>1</sup> Further, with abundant room to grow and a benign natural environment, Oklahoma City has not suffered from the more obvious problems of urban density.<sup>2</sup> Accordingly, the decentralized and nonpartisan politics of the city, together with its demographic and geographic diversity, have resulted in low political participation for the Negro citizen. And the

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<sup>1</sup>For a discussion of some of the consequences of decentralized politics see: Robert A. Dahl, "A Critique of the Ruling Elite Model," The American Political Science Review, LII, No. 2 (June, 1958), 463-469.

<sup>2</sup>Interview with Robert Tintsman, Oklahoma City Manager (1963-1967), October 5, 1967. See also: U. S. Department of Commerce, Statistical Abstract, 1967 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1967). U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Census, City and County Data Book, 1962 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1962), Tables 3 and 6. And Victor Jones, "Metropolitan and Urbanized Areas," The Municipal Yearbook, 1962 (Chicago: International City Managers Assoc., 1962), Table 2. Oklahoma City has consistently annexed territory for many reasons, and this has occasionally placed the city among the top several American cities on a land area basis. Its population per square mile has consistently been one of the lowest in the nation.



political visibility of the community's politics in general was low due to these same factors.

Generally, the low visibility of the community's politics made it difficult to take concerted action against a problem. In Oklahoma City's politics there has been no apparent party, slate, or overt group activity.<sup>1</sup> Charles Adrian has devised a typology by which to measure the activity of groups and states in nonpartisan elections. His Group I typology, reflecting intense group activity, is the category reserved for major political parties which integrate and control the political process. The decreasing levels of activity reflected in subsequent groupings down through Group IV, the last type, applies where there is no apparent party activity. This group seems appropriate, because of its lack of organized party activity, to describe the politics of Oklahoma City.<sup>2</sup> It also reflects an important factor contributing to the low visibility of the community's politics. Similarly, if one were to take Robert A. Dahl's five point scale of patterns of community leadership, which range from the traditional "power elite" at the top of the scale to a

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<sup>1</sup>Such groups have arisen in recent years and will be discussed in subsequent chapters.

<sup>2</sup>Charles Adrian, "A Typology for Nonpartisan Elections," The Western Political Quarterly, XII, No. 2 (June, 1959), 449-458.

genuine diffusion of power at the bottom, one would have to place Oklahoma City on a point near the "power diffused" end of the scale.<sup>1</sup>

Further, Oklahoma City has functioned through a ward system with a popularly elected mayor and an appointed city manager. The city was divided into four wards, with the second ward, until recently, the ward containing most Negro inhabitants. Each ward elected its own city councilman.<sup>2</sup> However, until the mid-1960s, no Negro had ever occupied a city council seat; the second ward lines were drawn in a manner that shifted the balance of voting power in favor of whites living in other parts of the same ward. This created an effective political barrier to any potential Negro voting power.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Robert A. Dahl, Who Governs? (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961), pp. 184-189. In Oklahoma City, during the time period under consideration, these measurements only covered those participating in the political process. This excluded Negroes.

<sup>2</sup>City ward lines were redrawn in 1967 to bring the total to eight, with the seventh ward containing the majority of the Negro electorate. Interview with Dr. Charles Atkins, first Negro to serve on the Oklahoma City Council, June 2, 1968.

<sup>3</sup>School board and high citywide school administrative posts have also been totally devoid of Negro representation. School board elections were conducted on an at-large basis with most candidates required to live in the district they wished to represent. Negro voting was usually overwhelmed by the at-large voting power of whites, and this discouraged Negro candidates for these positions until the late 1960s.

The ward system of electing the city council has been instrumental in preventing the growth of any political machine or other overt, organized forms of political activity. Most literature on the question of at-large versus district election of city councils reveals that district or ward elections tend toward diffusion of power under nonpartisanship.<sup>1</sup>

The "boss potential" of the mayoral office is slight because he is elected citywide, but must face eight different ward elected councilmen. Moreover, the mayor's office is of the "weak" variety with real power located in the council itself. However, powerful administrative authority rests with the heads of the city departments and the city manager.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, even if a popularly elected mayor or city councilman strongly favored more Negro political participation, his wishes easily could have been blocked. It is clear that the political organization of the city did not enable the Negro to fully participate politically.

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<sup>1</sup>See: Eugene C. Lee, The Politics of Nonpartisanship (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1960). And Fred I. Greenstein, The American Party System and the American People (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1963).

<sup>2</sup>This will prove of some importance in subsequent chapters when political changes were effected. Also, until the early 1960s, most of the city managers had no formal or professional training; and many appointees were local citizens.

Even though Negroes were largely isolated and their potential political strength diluted, Negro voting, according to the best estimates, gradually increased through the years following the "grandfather" clause ruling in 1915. According to the best estimates, from the 1920s to World War II about fifteen to twenty percent of eligible Negroes registered. Of those registered, rarely more than twenty to twenty-five percent voted.<sup>1</sup> Voting was heaviest and most consistent in local elections but became sporadic and lighter in state and national elections until a later period. In partisan elections, Negroes were normally associated with the Democrats. Because this party was the state's largest and most powerful, and because the Republicans made no effort to recruit Negro voters, Negro citizens gravitated toward the Democrats.<sup>2</sup>

White politicians, further precluded full participation by maintaining an alliance with some Negro activists in order to win votes in the wards that contained large Negro groupings. Negro registration and voting were usually

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<sup>1</sup>The 1961 Civil Rights Commission reported that Negro voting registration was unavailable for Oklahoma. U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, "Voting," 1961 Report, Vol. 1 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1961), p. 216. Local Negro leaders interviewed were only able to give estimates of Negro registration and voting, usually in percentage fluctuations, throughout the years.

<sup>2</sup>Interview with John Dunjee, Editor of The Black Dispatch, September 9, 1967.

initiated by the white political structure. Both subtle and not-so-subtle traditional measures to block Negro entrance into local politics were effective. White local politicians often rewarded Negro agents with money and extended them preferential treatment when they sought public jobs for themselves or friends. The Negro activists responded by trying to direct Negro voting toward favored white politicians. This was done, depending upon political competition, by a variety of means ranging from pamphlet distribution and speech-making to modest material rewards.<sup>1</sup> This was the closest Oklahoma City has ever come to traditional bossism.

The white politician in this setting was usually a man of many parts and interests. He was skilled in manipulation, systematic in eliminating competition, generous in his rewards--usually of a monetary nature, and fiercely demanding insofar as personal and organizational loyalty was concerned.

The white politician was probably concerned only with gathering substantial Negro votes, but nevertheless his actions contributed to Negro political impotence. A ward with a substantial Negro electorate for many years was con-

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<sup>1</sup>Interview with Dr. Aubrey Cooper, member of the Executive Board, Oklahoma City Urban League, September 11, 1967. And interview with Henry Floyd, President, Oklahoma City Branch, NAACP, September 7, 1967. Also interview with Arnold Fagin, Chairman, Oklahoma City Community Relations Commission, March 10, 1968.

tinuously represented by whites without any attempt to draw new ward lines or to elect a Negro to office. Moreover, Negro leadership ranks were further depleted with the siphoning off of politically sophisticated Negroes into white political organizations.<sup>1</sup>

Potential Negro leaders were controlled by employment practices that were consciously or unconsciously aiding the old race relations pattern. The best educated Negro men and women were employed as school teachers in segregated schools by a completely white controlled school administration. Dissent and independent political action were precluded for fear of losing a respectable and remunerative position.<sup>2</sup> Although no exact figures are available, many close relatives of Negro leaders, such as clergymen, were similarly employed. This had the dual effect of controlling the Negro leader and his close relationships with those who were so employed.<sup>3</sup>

The Negro community of Oklahoma City, at this point, exhibited characteristics similar to those designated as

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<sup>1</sup>See Paul Lewinson, Race, Class, and Party (New York: Russell & Russell, Inc., 1963), pp. 127-131.

<sup>2</sup>Interview with Henry Floyd, President of the Oklahoma City Branch, NAACP, September 7, 1967.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

"manipulative towns."

Towns in which the Negro community has been politically organized and controlled to a large degree by white political leadership we conceive of as Manipulative towns. In the Manipulative town the electoral activists--those responsible for turning out the Negro vote--are primarily the agents of members of the white political structure, and the preponderance of voting Negroes are responsive to the activists as agents of the whites. <sup>1</sup>

Far from seeking to undermine community government, traditional Negro leadership in Oklahoma City became its agent. Much Negro leadership existed largely by the grace of white institutions, white political organizations, and government agencies, white school boards, and white businesses and professions. Any potential protest from this sector was muted. Everything in the environment of the Negro politician, civil servant, or professional made him attentive to white interests and perspectives.

Paradoxically, although Negroes were thoroughly manipulated politically at this time, a political base for independent action was being formed. For instance, the fact that Negroes could register and vote, even if manipulated, provided a base, however small, upon which to build as the climate of opinion changed locally and nationally. Furthermore, some young Negroes, later to become leaders of their

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<sup>1</sup>Alfred B. Clubok, John M. DeGrove, and Charles D. Ferris, "The Manipulated Negro Vote: Some Preconditions and Consequences," The Journal of Politics, XXVI, No. 1, (February, 1964), 114.

community, were fully conscious of the prevailing political pattern and would be stimulated in their desire for independent political action at a later time.

### Mass Communications

Oklahoma City's major news media did little, until recently, to effectively change political controls that would assist the Negro politically. Nonpartisan electoral practices coupled with the political framework indigenous to Oklahoma City increased the influence of the mass media on voters. The absence of highly organized campaigning, party canvassing, and party labels placed the mass media in an important political position. The voters were highly dependent for information as well as advice on the press, radio and television. Normally, mass communications have rather limited effects on people's behavior compared with face-to-face communication, such as canvassing by party workers.<sup>1</sup> However, under nonpartisan circumstances those who control the press are likely to have a more substantial effect on the public.

Oklahoma City, over many years supported only one major newspaper, The Daily Oklahoman and Oklahoma City Times.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Joseph T. Klapper, The Effects of Mass Communication (New York, 1960).

<sup>2</sup>The Daily Oklahoman and Oklahoma City Times, the morning and evening newspapers respectively, are controlled and owned by the same organization, the Oklahoma Publishing Company. The morning Daily Oklahoman has a circulation of 190,000 and the afternoon Times has a circulation of 118,000.



There was little effective opposition to its policies and procedures. This newspaper was controlled by the Oklahoma Publishing Company; the latter owned and controlled the city's major television and radio stations, the state's largest trucking express service, and the Farmer-Stockman, a large circulation monthly publication for southwest farmers, plus several other specialized publications. The newspaper generally spoke for the preservation of real estate values, low taxes, balanced municipal budgets; and it opposed organized labor and deficit financing.<sup>1</sup> Throughout the years it never championed Negro causes but did speak out against the Klan when it was active and influential in the 1920s.<sup>2</sup> Mainly, it passively accepted Negro advances in the community. There was not any evidence at all that the paper's positions were opposed by the majority of the people who voted in Oklahoma City's municipal elections. The most that can be said is that this newspaper and the local business interests for which it spoke enjoyed a disproportionate influence over the municipal government and over the electorate, but that they did not control either the government or the electorate. Yet, a kind of "inside dopesterish" legend persisted--and commanded particular credibility among liberals and Negroes--

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<sup>1</sup>Time Magazine, May 3, 1968, pp. 53-54.

<sup>2</sup>"The Klan-Walton Issue," The Daily Oklahoman, September 10, 1967, p. 19.

that the newspaper commanded an extraordinary manipulative power over City Hall.

However, over a long period of time, the Oklahoma Advertiser, a paper of nominal circulation and appeal, opposed the policies of the predominant newspaper and the decisions of city administrations at different intervals. In the early 1960s, a new newspaper, The Oklahoma Journal, was established to counter the editorial policies of the Oklahoma Publishing Company and has achieved a substantial circulation. Because of its recent founding, its impact on the community cannot yet be fully evaluated. The only white owned and controlled newspaper actively championing Negro causes was the Oklahoma Courier, the organ of the Roman Catholic diocese. It often supported specific Negro causes until it ceased to publish in 1969.<sup>1</sup> In 1915, The Black Dispatch, a Negro newspaper, was founded and has often sharply differed with various city administrations and the content of the major city newspapers.

Still, if there was no machine in the Tammany Hall sense and no all-powerful newspaper, Oklahoma City's experience with race relations is proof that its governmental arrangements did not allow for full political participation.

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<sup>1</sup>Oklahoma City Times, February 24, 1969, p. 22.

An influential newspaper not initially responsive to Negro interests coupled with the political characteristics of non-partisanship, ward elections, a weak executive, appointed city manager, and decentralization were barriers to the Negro citizen.

Overall, it is evident that the processes and techniques of control ran the gamut from the most overt to the most subtle forms of action. They consisted of subtle, informal, and noninstitutionalized pressures as well as formal and institutionalized controls, all serving to isolate the Negro community within a larger white community.

### The Negro Community and Its Response

#### Population

A few years after the city's establishment in 1889, Negroes were an integral part of the community. After the turn of the century there were sixty-seven hundred and twelve non-white persons residing in the community.<sup>1</sup> The percentage of

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<sup>1</sup>U.S. Census of Population: 1910, Statistical Abstract of the U.S., 1923, No. 46, Table 38. In this census, the term non-white included Indians, Chinese, Japanese, and other non-whites. Therefore, the total number of Negroes was somewhat less than the non-white totals. The earlier compilations made frequent use of the term non-white. By far the largest group in this category were Negro. The other non-whites (total) rarely, if ever, exceeded 0.9% of the total population. Many of the non-white groupings throughout the state, such as Indians, resided in rural and semi-

non-whites to the total population of the community at that date bears remarkable resemblance to the percentage of Negroes recorded in 1960.<sup>1</sup> The percentage of non-whites (mostly Negro) to the total population of the city remained relatively constant as did the ratio of Negro to white throughout the entire state.<sup>2</sup> Surprisingly, the percentage of Negroes to the entire state population declined between 1890 and 1960.<sup>3</sup> The relatively constant ratio of non-whites to the total city population, throughout the community's history, is significant in the light of rural to urban migration and the massive immigration of Negroes into the core of America's greatest cities.<sup>4</sup>

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rural areas. Indeed, Indians often comprised the total population of some small Oklahoma towns. Interview with M. Jeltz, Minority Group Representative, Oklahoma State Employment Commission, September 8, 1967.

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., and U.S. Census of Population: 1960, Oklahoma PC (1)--38B, Table 21. In 1910, the Oklahoma City community contained sixty-seven hundred and twelve non-whites which was 9.6% of the total population. In 1960, the Oklahoma City SMSA contained forty-one thousand and seventy-one Negroes, which was 8.1% of the total population.

<sup>2</sup>See Table 1 and Figure 1, pp. 43 and 44, and U.S. Census of Population: 1960, Oklahoma PC (1)--38B, Table 15.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., in 1890 the Negro population of Oklahoma was 21,609 out of a total population of 258,657 or 8.4%. In 1960 the Negro population was 153,084 out of a total population of 2,328,284 or 6.6%.

<sup>4</sup>The importance of this constant ratio in the Oklahoma City community and the state as a whole will be examined in subsequent chapters.

TABLE 1  
POPULATION BY RACE  
OKLAHOMA'S STANDARD METROPOLITAN STATISTICAL AREAS  
April 1960 <sup>1/</sup>

SMSA	Total Population	White	Negro	Indian	All Other <sup>2/</sup>
Lawton	90,803	80,121	7,609	2,522	551
OKLAHOMA CITY	511,833	463,689	41,071	6,453	620
Tulsa	418,974	380,474	30,551	7,608	341
PERCENT DISTRIBUTION					
Lawton	100.00	88.2	8.4	2.8	0.6
OKLAHOMA CITY	100.00	90.6	8.1	1.2	0.1
Tulsa	100.00	90.8	7.3	1.8	0.1

<sup>1/</sup> U.S. Census of Population: 1960, Oklahoma PC (1)-38B, Table 21.

<sup>2/</sup> The "All Other" group includes Japanese, Chinese, Filipino, Korean,, Asian Indian, and Malayan races.

POPULATION BY RACE  
OKLAHOMA CITY

Year	Total Population	Non-White Population	Non-White Percentage <sup>1/</sup>
1910	64,205	6,712	9.6
1920	91,295	8,424	9.2
1930	185,389	16,356	8.8
1940	204,424	19,709	10.4
1950	243,504	22,665	9.3
1960	511,833	41,071	8.1 (Negro)

<sup>1/</sup> All percentages are for non-white except for 1960 which was calculated for Negroes only.

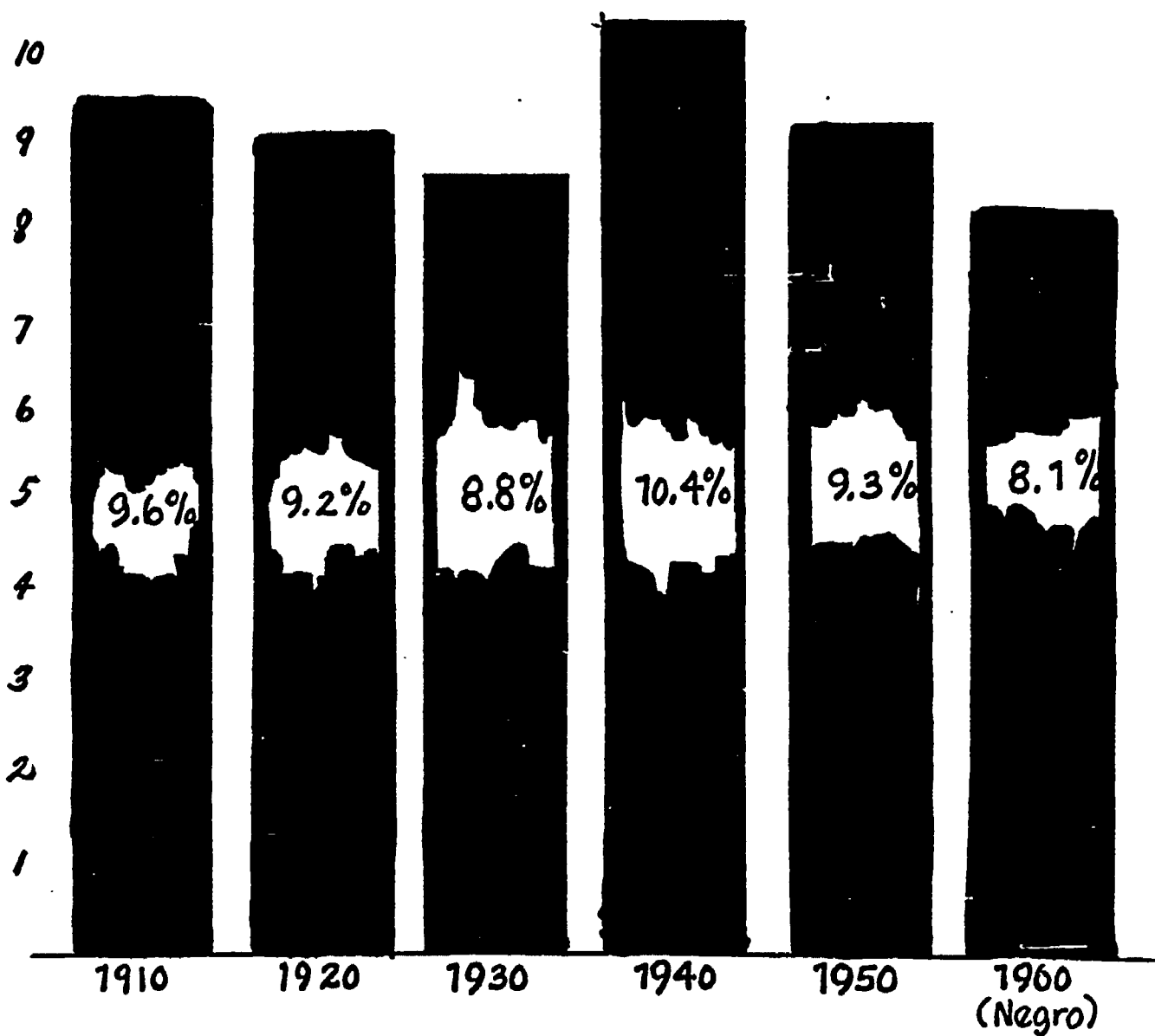
1910 and 1920 population figures are drawn from the 1923 Statistical Abstract of the U.S., U.S. Department of Commerce, No. 46, 1924, Table 38.

1930 figures from 1937 Statistical Abstract of the U.S., U.S. Department of Commerce, No. 59, Table 20, 1938.

1940 and 1950 figures from U.S. Census of Population: 1950, Vol. II, Part 36, Oklahoma Chapter B.

1960 figures from U.S. Census of Population: 1960, Oklahoma PC (1)-38B, Table 21.

FIGURE 1  
PERCENT DISTRIBUTION BY RACE (NON-WHITE)  
OKLAHOMA CITY  
1910-1960



### Daily Living Conditions

In addition to the characteristics of Negro life in this community previously mentioned, the Negro citizen was subjected to daily harassment and often violence.<sup>1</sup> Some white Oklahoma Cityans, especially those aligned with the Ku Klux Klan, were just as hostile toward the Negro, symbolically and physically, as in any southern state.<sup>2</sup> Abuses were common and examples of personal abuse and hardship may easily be found between World War I and World War II.

During these years, roving bands of whites would occasionally travel through Negro areas molesting Negro women.<sup>4</sup> Further, "During World War I, Negro recruits for the armed services (in Oklahoma City) were forced to eat outside cafes on the ground while whites were dining inside on linen-covered tables."<sup>5</sup> Negroes were threatened with lynchings, both by law enforcement officials and the local citizenry. Indeed, in some parts of Oklahoma, if not in Oklahoma City

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<sup>1</sup>Interview with Jimmy Stewart, National Board of Directors, and former President of the Oklahoma City Branch, NAACP, June 29, 1967.

<sup>2</sup>The Black Dispatch, editorial, April 9, 1965, p. 28.

<sup>3</sup>Apart from the examples that follow in the text, the author heard examples of daily abuse from many of those interviewed.

<sup>4</sup>Precise incidents and dates could not be ascertained, but many of those interviewed had vivid impressions of this situation.

<sup>5</sup>The Black Dispatch, Op. Cit.

itself, Negroes were molested and killed by white mobs. For example, in the early 1920s, a Negro male was arrested on a downtown Oklahoma City street for insulting a white man and woman. Immediately after the arrest there were rumors of semi-vigilante action by the white community to hang the accused Negro. The semi-vigilante action was forestalled, but the incident was not uncommon.<sup>1</sup>

More subtle forms of abuse and degradation were common. Domestic workers in white areas were ridiculed while waiting for transportation back to the Negro portion of the city. White school children would insult and create hazards for Negro men and women riding in the rear sections of city transportation facilities. The situations created were degrading and often agonizing, but were routinely condoned by the white community and endured by Negroes.<sup>2</sup> "It was hard for a Negro to live in Oklahoma City at that time; the main thing was simply to exist from day-to-day as best as possible."<sup>3</sup> At this time, given such conditions of daily

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<sup>1</sup>Interview with John Dunjee, Editor of The Black Dispatch, September 9, 1967. Also, interview with Wesley Edmond, President of the Oklahoma City Chapter of CORE, September 9, 1967.

<sup>2</sup>Interview with John Dunjee, Ibid.. Also, interview with Jimmy Stewart, National Board of Directors, NAACP, and former President of the Oklahoma City Branch, NAACP, June 29, 1967. And interview with Major William Rose, Chairman, Oklahoma Human Rights Commission, July 6, 1967.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., John Dunjee interview.



existence, it is hard to visualize the Negro participating actively and meaningfully in political affairs.

### Residential Patterns

From the turn of the century Negroes in Oklahoma City were segregated residentially like Negroes in most southern and border state communities. They were thoroughly isolated from the white residential community except when working conditions required their passage into white neighborhoods.

The Negro community was isolated legally, socially, and economically in the northeastern section of the city. Newspaper sections advertising property "For Colored" were commonly seen. Negroes who purchased or leased property beyond established "zones" were often arrested and harassed by local law enforcement officials when occupation was attempted.

It was difficult, if not impossible, to remedy these actions legally or through accepted political processes. Indeed, one of Oklahoma's most famous political personalities, Governor William "Alfalfa Bill" Murray, personally intervened in the early 1930s while governor, to proclaim that an imaginary line be drawn through a portion of eastern Oklahoma City that allowed Negro occupancy only south of the boundary.<sup>1</sup> The general unavailability of mortgage money

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<sup>1</sup>The Black Dispatch, April 9, 1965, p. 5. This imaginary line was drawn on Northeast 8th Street with all pro-

for Negro housing outside of the segregated areas cemented the residential pattern. Moreover, restrictive covenants which were agreements between real estate brokers not to sell to Negroes, and plat restrictions, had always supported residential segregation.<sup>1</sup>

Living conditions in the Negro community were substandard. Multi-family units were not uncommon and housing was congested and often hazardous. Streets were in poor condition and often were unpaved. During heavy rains, which were common in the community, a river (the North Canadian) which flowed through portions of this area continually overflowed and flooded this section.

From the early 1900s to the post World War II years, Negro migration to the city settled into this general pattern. During this time span, the area began to resemble a ghetto with no apparent outlet for Negro expansion. The segregation pattern was so firmly established that in later years, when government supported residential segregation would be nullified by federal and state courts, this pattern

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perty south of this street allowed for Negro occupancy and all property north of this street for white occupancy only. There was also a traditional boundary line that prevented Negro residential settlement in western portions of the city. Also see footnote 1 on the following page.

<sup>1</sup>Interview with George Fagin, District Director, Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith (1947-1958), September 10, 1967.

still could not be easily or quickly dissolved.<sup>1</sup>

### Public Accommodations

During this same time period all public accommodations outside of the Negro community were completely closed to Negroes.<sup>2</sup> This included all amusement places, barber and beauty shops, and restaurant facilities. Additionally, city transportation facilities maintained separate sections for white and Negro, with Negroes being isolated in the rear sections under the sign "For Colored Only." Separate Negro restrooms were maintained in all public buildings, including the state capitol. Also, white community hospitals set aside separate floors, usually the basement or lower levels, for Negro patients.

Public accommodations within the Negro area were few in number and inferior to the white community's facilities. Most were substandard in appearance and offered modest services in comparison to other sections of the city. The

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<sup>1</sup>For nullification of restrictive covenants see *Shelley v. Kraemer*, 334 US 1 (1948). In 1936, the Oklahoma Supreme Court invalidated a segregation ordinance in Oklahoma City which prevented the occupancy of a lot by a colored person in a block where the majority of the residences were occupied by white persons. It was held to violate the Fourteenth Amendment of the United States Constitution. The ordinance was also nullified by the Court because of an executive order by the Governor declaring martial law and directing the City of Oklahoma City to enact such as ordinance. See *Allen v. Oklahoma City*, 52 P 2d. 1954, 175 Okl. 421, followed in *Scott v. Watt*, 52 P 2d. 1059, 175 Okl. 426, *Ex parte Lee*, 52 P 2d. 1059, 175 Okl. 426, and *Ex parte Hawkins*, 52 P 2d. 1059, 175 Okl. 425 (1936).

<sup>2</sup>If custom was breached and Negro entrance attempted, trespass laws were utilized to bar Negro entrance.

Negro community functioned as a self-contained unit supporting barber and beauty shops, theaters, funeral parlors, and restaurant facilities. Most were owned and operated by Negroes exclusively for the Negro clientele. These establishments were created when the Negro community was of such size as to warrant them.<sup>1</sup> These Negro establishments met only the demands of the Negro society and not that of the total city. This resulted in the lack of an entrepreneurial heritage.<sup>2</sup> Many of the same facilities operated exclusively for the Negro community for many years and were still maintained in the mid-1960s.<sup>3</sup>

Similar to most other southern communities with segregated public accommodations, many Negro public activities centered around religious institutions. The Negro community from its very inception supported separate church groups centered on southern oriented fundamentalist beliefs and practices. Furthermore, dinners, meetings, and socials were held in church buildings. This church-oriented activity partially eliminated the need for additional Negro accommodations.

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<sup>1</sup>Most newspapers, especially The Black Dispatch, present evidence that during and immediately after World War I the Negro community could sustain a representative number of public accommodations. See The Black Dispatch, May 8, 1924, announcing the first state-wide Negro Funeral Directors Convention.

<sup>2</sup>"The Negro Businessman," Newsweek, March 4, 1968, 72.

<sup>3</sup>The author has surveyed and toured many of the facilities mentioned, and was presented background information by the operators of the establishments in addition to comments by Negro leaders on environmental conditions peculiar to Negro accommodations.

### Employment

Negroes were systematically denied access to the better jobs in the Oklahoma City labor force. This exclusion was fostered by: (1) the employment practices of the white community in recruiting, hiring, training, and promotion; (2) lack of qualified applicants; (3) community attitudes which sustained discriminatory policies.<sup>1</sup> Negroes were perennially channeled into unskilled and semi-skilled positions.<sup>2</sup> In the early 1930s, this employment pattern was firmly established. At that time, out of a total of ninety-one hundred and twenty-three Negroes employed, the vast majority were in agriculture or related fields, building, slaughter house and packing, railroads, street maintenance, and domestic and personal service.<sup>3</sup>

Negro unemployment was consistently higher than white unemployment from the early 1900s to the immediate post World War II years.<sup>4</sup> Negro employment in this city,

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<sup>1</sup>"Job Development and Employment Program," Report of the Oklahoma City Urban League, 1967, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>Interview with Frank Cowan, Director, Oklahoma City Urban League Employment Center, September 4, 1967.

<sup>3</sup>U.S. Census of Population: Employment in 1930, 20th Census of the U.S., Vol. III, Part 2, Table 20.

<sup>4</sup>Frank Cowan interview, Op. Cit., and interview with W. J. Bowman, Research Director, Oklahoma Employment Security Commission, September 8, 1967.

as in most communities, traditionally has been in areas susceptible to instability. Depressions in Oklahoma and throughout the nation generated labor surpluses that thrust Negroes out of their jobs under the familiar principle of "last hired, first fired." During recessions, unemployment rates among Negroes typically increased more than twice as much as among the whites.<sup>1</sup>

Accordingly, Negro expectations for employment were considerably lower than among whites. Negro leaders familiar with this time span have observed that one of the most respected employment positions for males in the Negro community was that of a railroad conductor. "Most Negroes never expected to reach into other job fields. They were content, for the most part, just to have a job."<sup>2</sup> This pattern of unskilled jobs, relatively high unemployment, and low job expectations combined with restrictive employment policies was sustained until the post World War II years. Most importantly, it prevented Negroes from mounting effective protests that would assist their entrance into the broader community. "Men with empty stomachs rarely rebel;

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<sup>1</sup>Calculated from U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Employment and Earnings," Vol. VIII, (Washington, D.C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, November, 1961), pp. 72-73. And Ibid., W. J. Bowman interview. Also interview with M. Jeltz, Minority Group Representative, Oklahoma State Employment Commission, September 8, 1967.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., M. Jeltz interview.

people without purchasing power do not launch boycotts of business establishments."<sup>1</sup>

### Educational Facilities

The Oklahoma City school system, from 1907 to 1955, was entirely southern.<sup>2</sup> It was sustained, nourished, and influenced by the State of Oklahoma's administrative, statutory, and constitutional directives which demanded compulsory separation of the races for educational purposes.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, Oklahoma City maintained a completely segregated school system involving teachers, students, and administrative personnel. Public schools for Negro children were maintained in the Negro community and public schools for white children in the white areas of the community. This design was strictly enforced.<sup>4</sup> Before 1955, it was supported

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<sup>1</sup>Donald R. Matthews and James W. Prothro, Negroes and the New Southern Politics (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1966), p. 410.

<sup>2</sup>Southern School News, Vol. I, No. 1, September 3, 1954, p. 11.

<sup>3</sup>See Ollie Everett Hatcher, The Development of Legal Controls in Racial Segregation in the Public Schools of Oklahoma--1865-1962 (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Oklahoma, 1954).

<sup>4</sup>Interview with F.D. Moon, Executive Secretary, Oklahoma Association of Teachers, and former principal of Oklahoma City's Douglas High School, February 7, 1963, and July 6, 1967. See memorandum of Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, October, 1961, on the State of Oklahoma and desegregation policies. Throughout the years, Oklahoma City's Negro population was about 8% of the total school population. Traditionally, one all Negro high school,

by state law in compliance with the "separate but equal" doctrine.<sup>1</sup> After this date, it was indirectly kept intact by the "neighborhood school philosophy" and a transfer policy, one phase of which was the minority to majority transfer.<sup>2</sup> Generally, the physical plant and the materials utilized by Negro children were markedly inferior to that of whites.

### The Negro Response

The factors that bolstered the biracial system placed limitations upon the type of response. But the race relations pattern could not be effectively maintained without reciprocity between white and Negro. The Negro has to cooperate with the white if the system is to be preserved. Thus, in addition to the factors and techniques of control previously described, an important role in the maintenance of the segregation pattern was played by Negroes themselves. Sometimes the Negro was manipulated politically by whites

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several Negro junior high schools, and numerous elementary schools were maintained.

<sup>1</sup>Plessy v. Ferguson, 163 U.S. 537 (1896).

<sup>2</sup>See: Brown v. Topeka Board of Education, 347 U.S. 483 (1954). Also, interview with Henry Floyd, President, Oklahoma City Branch, NAACP, September 7, 1967. The minority to majority transfer policy augmented segregation because a student whose race was in the minority could transfer to any school which had room for him where he would be in the majority.



and was consciously aware of the involvement.<sup>1</sup> Negro leaders, for example, were cognizant of their role in perpetuating the status quo by working for and voting for white politicians, but they had neither the economic nor the political power to do otherwise. "The Negro leader tried to make the best choice possible. He attempted to make the best possible use of whatever little power he had at his disposal."<sup>2</sup> At other times, the Negro was not consciously aware of this manipulation, but was nevertheless contributing to the perpetuation of the status quo by voting and occasionally working for white politicians who would offer no real alternative to their present condition.<sup>3</sup> Regardless of the motives for these reactions, this type of response would not challenge the established patterns.

Frequently, there was a calculated attempt on the part of the Negro citizen to have as little as possible to do with the white community and to remain in his own community and environment. The vast majority of the Negro

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<sup>1</sup>See section on "Processes and Techniques of Control" for a more complete discussion of this subject.

<sup>2</sup>Interview with John Dunjee, Editor of The Black Dispatch, September 9, 1967.

<sup>3</sup>This does not underestimate the vast economic, political, and social isolation of the Negro from the white community and thus the limitations on his freedom of action.

community tended to live the way the white community expected. Myrdal concludes that Negroes were "pressed into one single narrow furrow of human interests by the tyrannic expectancy of society."<sup>1</sup> Indeed, when some Negro leaders began to speak out in the early years against abuses, legal and otherwise, the Negro community often objected as vehemently as whites to the "outburst." They feared physical abuse, loss of jobs, and a feeling that any kind of direct protest would hinder rather than assist them.<sup>2</sup>

Many in the Negro community argued that Negroes could progress more effectively and easily by not moving too swiftly or alienating white leadership. Consequently, rather than fighting against this segregated society as one alternative or giving in to discrimination altogether, some Negroes left town entirely at various times. This resulted in the most talented and aware Negro citizens leaving the community and this left the local race relations pattern comparatively undisturbed.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, talented Negro

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<sup>1</sup>Gunnar Myrdal, with the assistance of Richard Sterner and Arnold Rose, An American Dilemma (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1944), p. 28.

<sup>2</sup>Interview with Henry Floyd, President, Oklahoma City Branch, NAACP, September 7, 1967. Only portions of the Negro community were hostile to the initial protests, the vast majority were simply apathetic or unaware of the occasion.

<sup>3</sup>Interview with M. Jeltz, Minority Group Representative, Oklahoma State Employment Commission, September 8, 1967.

students who were unable to attend major state universities, often left the state, many never to return. The Negro community thus lost at least some of its potential leaders. With potential Negro leaders leaving the community and Negro activists assisting white politicians it was difficult to visualize, at this point, how the stringent laws and traditions of the biracial society could be successfully attacked.

The Negro community like the white community previously described, suffered from inertia. The Negro was so totally divorced from the larger community that an awareness of contemporary issues affecting him was nonexistent, except for the educated and politically conscious few. Habit and tradition cemented the Negro community to the status quo. The Negro in the Oklahoma City environment was not given much hope. There were few Negro leaders willing to speak and act against the status quo and white civil rights leadership was virtually nonexistent. "There could be no effective protest because few knew what issues to raise. The average Negro in Oklahoma City was not even aware of what was in his best interest."<sup>1</sup> Thus, from the early 1920s to the immediate post World War II years with the exception of

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<sup>1</sup>Interview with Jimmy Stewart, National Board of Directors, NAACP, and former President of the Oklahoma City Branch, NAACP, June 29, 1967.

a few courageous, isolated protestors, there was no effective Negro response. A separate caste community of Negro citizens was maintained intact within a larger white community.

But the factors sustaining the isolation of the Negro community from the larger white community weakened in time and ushered in a new era. The years following World War II would be epochal for Oklahoma City. Industries expanded. The urban population increased sharply. Education progressed. Technology and research increased. World War II thrust Negroes and whites into immediate contact with one another and new relationships were established. Hopes soared. The Negro became more active and restive. Negro leaders who had been working for years for better living conditions and treatment were given added encouragement.

The ensuing years would see new and unique conditions that would loosen the strict segregation of earlier years while simultaneously creating a disposition on the part of the white community to accept desegregation advances.

## CHAPTER III

### READINESS FOR DESEGREGATION--THE ROOTS OF CONFLICT

The caste-like subordination to which the Negro had been subject began to weaken after World War II. By the early 1950s a more direct, sustained, and articulate protest from the Negro community had been initiated. This section will analyze the weakening of the controls and the growth of articulate opposition to segregation by both white and Negro.

The major forces analyzed include those great social forces arising outside the local system of race relations--industrialization, urbanization, economic influence, the impact of World War II, and the rising influence of the federal government embodied in court decisions, legislative action, and administrative fiat. Other contributing elements are the various actions taken, by both whites and Negroes, which created an atmosphere conducive to more direct forms of protest. At this stage, the Oklahoma City Negro protest movement began to evolve its leaders, define its goals, shape its tactics and strategy, and become a recognizable force in the total community. Accordingly, analysis will

be given to growing awareness by Negroes of a larger universe of values and authoritative opinions. Increasingly, from the end of World War II, Negroes tended to disregard local and traditional definitions in preference for more national cosmopolitan judgments of their worth. An environment potentially vulnerable to Negro demands was being established.

It must be emphasized that during this preparatory stage most actions taken were well within the framework of conventional behavior. There was an absence of confrontation politics with revolutionary implications.

The early period was all the more meaningful because Oklahoma City, unlike many other southern communities, had always contained, at least since the early 1920s, an embryonic spirit of Negro protest. This protest was stimulated by Roscoe Dunjee, editor of The Black Dispatch. His influence on later Negro protest leaders and their followers was immense. He was able to show the Negro community, as well as the white society, that Negroes could protest with some effectiveness and success in the community.

Dunjee surrounded himself with Negro lawyers and ministers who were able to provide him with legal and tactical advice. The impact of these protest leaders on the

local and national scene can be illustrated by observing that one of their first tasks, in 1915, was to fight against Oklahoma's infamous "grandfather" clause. He and his supporters were successful in having this clause declared unconstitutional.<sup>1</sup> "It was probably this initial victory which spurred the new editor-publisher (Dunjee) to go for broke in the crusade for Negro rights and privileges during the balance of his active lifetime as a newspaperman."<sup>2</sup> This early struggle led by Dunjee was channeled through a formal group known as the Oklahoma Constitutional League.

Later, in the late 1930s, this group moved to take action against other discriminatory state acts. However, some of their legal suits were not successful in the federal courts. Ironically, this failure had the desirable effect of making the Negro leaders more sophisticated and skilled in the planning of future litigation. From this point, the Negro leadership, as Dunjee's protege Jimmy Stewart explained, "...never started any litigation in civil rights... without first securing a person to bring the action and instruct-

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<sup>1</sup>Guinn v. the United States, 238 U.S. 347 (1915).

<sup>2</sup>Interview with Jimmy Stewart, National Board of Directors, NAACP, and former President of the Oklahoma City Branch, NAACP, June 29, 1967.

ing the lawyers to bring up all possible constitutional questions as the case progressed."<sup>1</sup> As they improved their skill in legal practices, Dunjee and others assisted in the protest against the exclusion of Negroes from Oklahoma juries<sup>2</sup> and Oklahoma City ordinances designed to frustrate Negro occupancy in other than the traditional Negro ghetto areas.<sup>3</sup> In these cases, Dunjee was able to excite the Negro community and thereby obtained a small, but enthusiastic following. Oklahoma City Negro leaders attacked statewide discriminatory practices initially because of a belief that these practices should be eliminated before Oklahoma City Negroes could concentrate on more specific local grievances. A small group in the Negro community at the onset of World War II possessed the courage and enthusiasm to press on with the protest. Perhaps more importantly, these early successes, even though limited, renewed faith in American legal processes and reinforced the desire to work within this framework.

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<sup>1</sup>Interview with Jimmy Stewart, National Board of Directors, NAACP, and former President of the Oklahoma City Branch, NAACP, June 29, 1967.

<sup>2</sup>Hollins v. the State of Oklahoma, 295 U.S. 394, and 55 S. Ct. 784, 79 L. Ed. 1500 (1941).

<sup>3</sup>See Chapter Two, p. 49.



Dunjee himself was quite far advanced in his attitudes about the course of the Negro protest in Oklahoma City and even for the nation. He combined legal protest with a militant protest posture. This also had the desired effect of directing the white community's attention to injustices that the Negro community had long patiently endured but were no longer so patiently willing to accept. Dunjee acquired a spirit of protest from his father, an ex-slave who protested against slavery and escaped by way of the Underground Railway. In addition to this legacy, Dunjee also acquired a substantial and varied personal library collection from his father, who later became a Baptist minister. This stimulated his intellectual development. His formal education consisted of one year at Langston University, then an all-Negro institution. Dunjee, before establishing The Black Dispatch, had written extensively for various newspapers and displayed an early interest in Negro problems.<sup>1</sup>

Thurgood Marshall, in a funeral oration for Dunjee in 1965, summarized his early protest activities: "We talk about sit-ins, lay-ins, and such. Why Roscoe Dunjee has

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<sup>1</sup>"In Memory of Roscoe Dunjee," The Black Dispatch, April 9, 1965, p. 24.

been sitting-in for the past forty years. He sat where he pleased in buses, trains, and any other public place and when asked to move he would say, 'I won't move,' and he didn't."<sup>1</sup>

Thus, Negro leadership in the community was influenced in some degree from the early 1900s to the World War II years by Dunjee and his small, but able group of followers. Further, they provided the impetus for subsequent leadership, the framework for its endeavors, and the definition of its goals. This early challenge to the caste system by a cadre of Negro leaders led the way to the greater changes to come after World War II.

### Forces Serving the Ends of the Negro Protest

#### Economic and Social

The major causes of change since World War II were no different in Oklahoma City than in most cities of her size or larger in the nation. However, Oklahoma City was subjected to economic and social forces in amounts which permitted considerable absorption and change without major disruption. Curiously, it seems that Oklahoma City and other sections of the country that underwent moderate econ-

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<sup>1</sup>Thurgood Marshall, "Funeral Oration," The Black Dispatch, p. 1.

omic and social change were best able to adapt to later Negro demands. "...The shift in national attitudes (toward desegregation) occurred in areas seemingly least affected by economic and geographic changes."<sup>1</sup> This pattern of moderate economic and social change, allowing for easy absorption, proved workable and helpful to the Oklahoma City Negro protest movement and will be referred to often in this study.

World War II released economic and social forces which enhanced job mobility, novel migration patterns, and residential changes. All proving eventually favorable to the Negro protest movement in Oklahoma City. A static, semi-rural society was transformed by a constant movement of people from one type of occupation to another while both the white and Negro communities were being subjected to constant in-and-out migrations. As students of this process have observed, "(Southern) blacks have become an urban people in just two or three decades and this has set them loose from existing structures of social control."<sup>2</sup> By 1950, Oklahoma City had reached a transition point at which

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<sup>1</sup>Robert L. Brandfon, editor, "The American South In the Twentieth Century," Crowell Source Readers in American History (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1967), p. 6.

<sup>2</sup>Frances Fox Piven and Richard A. Cloward, "The City Is Its Main Hope: What Chance for Black Power?" New Republic, March 30, 1968, p. 20.

distinctively "metropolitan" characteristics began to first appear.<sup>1</sup> Urbanization had been taking place for many years and urbanization has long been associated with the weakening of traditional social structures.<sup>2</sup> Urbanization effected institutions by "...weakening their capacity to regulate sentiments and behavior...."<sup>3</sup> Likewise, "Cities are focal points of change. Most social and economic change begins... and then spreads...outward to the countryside. The cultural innovations of urban areas have prestige attached to them."<sup>4</sup> This ongoing urbanization process, coupled with emerging "metropolitan" characteristics apparent after World War II made Oklahoma City similar to other major metropolitan areas.

As for Oklahoma specifically since statehood it had been considered an agrarian state and many Negroes were directly

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<sup>1</sup>It is suggested that a community cannot properly be called "metropolitan" until it has at least 300,000 inhabitants. It is at this point, that a community will usually undergo governmental, social, and economic changes that can be called "metropolitan" oriented. Robert H. Connery and Richard H. Leach, "Southern Metropolis: Challenge to Government" Journal of Politics, February, 1964, No. 1, Vol. 26, 63.

<sup>2</sup>See: Arnold Rose, The Negro in America (New York: Harper & Row, 1964).

<sup>3</sup>Frances Fox Piven and Richard A. Cloward, "The City Is Its Main Hope: What Chance for Black Power?" New Republic, March 30, 1968, p. 20.

<sup>4</sup>George M. Foster, Traditional Cultures, and the Impact of Technological Change (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), p. 28.

connected with agricultural pursuits.<sup>1</sup> However, in the late 1930s, during the Depression, many Negroes were forced to change jobs for the first time. This was sustained by World War II and its aftermath. During the Depression, Negro jobs were usually not permanent, with Negroes often forced to change jobs frequently. However, during and immediately after World War II, jobs acquired by Negroes were of a more permanent nature. A sizable number of Negroes within Oklahoma City, during and immediately after World War II, changed jobs and a much larger number from rural areas moved into the community where they found factory jobs and entered service occupations.<sup>2</sup> At this time, the first Negro employment center was established in the Negro east-side to assist Negro workers in job selection. The center was established by the State of Oklahoma at the insistence of Negro leaders and was an early example of a growing awareness on the part of Negro leaders about the need for improved economic conditions.

Simultaneously, many Negro families, uprooted by the

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<sup>1</sup>Calvin Hoover and B.U. Ratchford, Economic Resources and Policies of the South (New York: McMillan, 1951), pp. 23-24. And U.S. Census of Population: 1960, Oklahoma PC (1)--38B, Table 21.

<sup>2</sup>Interview with M. Jeltz, Minority Group Representative, Oklahoma State Employment Commission, September 8, 1967. And interview with W.J. Bowman, Research Director, Oklahoma Employment Security Commission, September 8, 1967.

War and the preceding Depression, moved from Oklahoma City to northern and western states. This migration pattern was such that the percentage of Negroes in the total population remained relatively constant.<sup>1</sup> Further, Oklahoma City was not subjected to the radical population shifts peculiar to many cities that were to experience severe racial conflict in later years. Oklahoma City's total population, after the trauma of the Depression years and the transformation by World War II, expanded; but it did not do so at as great a rate as some of the cities located in western and north-eastern portions of the United States.

Because of the outmigration caused by the War and the Depression, the Negro area was not forced to become densely congested.<sup>2</sup> In fact, after World War II, the Negro ghetto expanded rapidly northward as whites moved to the suburbs. Negro home purchases and rentals became possible in other than the older and established ghetto section because of a surplus of housing in the Oklahoma City area several years

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<sup>1</sup>See Population Charts in Chapter II, pp. 43-44.

<sup>2</sup>Everett S. Lee, et. al., Population Redistribution and Economic Growth, Vol. I (Philadelphia, 1957); and U.S. Bureau of Census, Current Population Reports, No. 247 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, April, 1963).

after World War II.<sup>1</sup> Negroes were also encouraged by their leaders and Negro newspapers to buy homes after the nullification of restrictive covenants.<sup>2</sup> Negroes were not only encouraged to search for different homes; they were actually tutored regarding the importance of the elimination of restrictive covenants. Simultaneously, in Oklahoma City a group of white homeowners, many arriving during the War years, began legal actions to remove minority restrictions from plat arrangements.<sup>3</sup> Their efforts were well publicized and helped to discourage this practice, which was very common in the area, from being continued. Whatever the beneficial

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<sup>1</sup>Oklahoma City also had large amounts of available land for residential use and this allowed for both white and Negro expansion. Indeed, Oklahoma City, not long after World War II, began a series of annexations that would, by the early 1960s, enable it to become the largest city in the nation in square miles. See: J.C. Bollens, "Metropolitan and Fringe Area Developments," Municipal Yearbook (Chicago, 1961), Vols. XXV-XXX.

<sup>2</sup>*Shelley v. Kraemer*, 334 U.S. 1 (1948). Mildly stimulating to Negro home ownership was the FHA and VA announcement in 1949 that they would not insure or guarantee loans for housing construction on land upon which racial restrictive covenants were imposed after February 15, 1960. This policy did not really become effective until President Kennedy's Executive Order on the subject in the fall of 1962.

<sup>3</sup>Most of these legal actions were settled "out of court" and were initiated by homeowners of the Jewish faith who objected to property restrictions directed mainly at Jews and Negroes. Some property developers agreed to drop the restrictions, after wide publication of their acts, but the general unavailability of mortgage money for Negroes made it impossible for the Negro ghetto to be substantially

effect of these shifts in alleviating the worst congestion, most of the Negro ghetto remained as it had been, and the prices paid by those who could move was often exorbitant.

Also for the first time in the city's history, large groups of people from other regions, Negro and white, moved into the Oklahoma City area. As they moved into the community from various geographical sections the traditional racial etiquette became increasingly difficult to maintain. Furthermore, the prosperity of the period and the almost full employment associated with it (1940-1954) were especially beneficial to Negroes.<sup>1</sup> "It was really the first time in the city's history when appreciable numbers of Negroes were working steadily and acquiring even modest amounts of money."<sup>2</sup> While the Negro, for the first time, was acquiring modest amounts of money and new jobs never before available to him; significantly,

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weakened. Interview with Henry Floyd, President, Oklahoma City Branch, NAACP, September 7, 1967. And interview with George Fagin, District Director, Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith (1947-1958), September 10, 1967.

<sup>1</sup>Measurements vary, but it has been estimated that the rise of average real income among Negroes in the nation from 1940 to 1955 was two to three times that among whites. This was also true of Oklahoma City during the period. For a summary of the relative economic status of Negroes see: The Journal of Negro Education, XXXII, No. 4, Sec. 3, pp. 349-401. Also note the nondiscriminatory federal and state hiring and nondiscriminatory practices in employment by industries holding contracts with the federal government abetted the breakdown of a caste system. These nondiscriminatory practices were strictly adhered to in Oklahoma City, as the state's capitol.

<sup>2</sup>Interview with M. Jeltz, Minority Group Representative, Oklahoma State Employment Commission, September 8, 1967.



there was no overt action by whites to counter this trend. As a state official at the time observed, "Oklahoma City during the period was active and too preoccupied with World War II, with making money, and establishing new family structures than to worry about the Negro."<sup>1</sup>

Because of the prosperity of the times casual social relationships became apparent between Negroes and whites for the first time in a manner not known in earlier days. Segregation in Oklahoma City was losing some of its former strength as Negroes and whites increasingly were seen together, without the Negro no longer necessarily in a subordinate position.<sup>2</sup> From these relations, Negro leaders became increasingly politically aware of the possibilities of changing race relations.

Also contributing to such relationships were the major United States defense installations constructed in the state and locally during and after World War II.<sup>3</sup> This was

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., M. Jeltz interview.

<sup>2</sup>This is based partly upon personal examination of Negro leaders' personal files which revealed communications with prominent white personalities in the community as well as photographs taken with white civic leaders at citywide gatherings.

<sup>3</sup>Some of these military installations were: a large Naval base at Norman, Oklahoma; an Army facility (Ft. Sill) at Lawton, Oklahoma; and Tinker Air Force Base in Oklahoma City which subsequently spawned a separate governmental subdivision known as the Midwest City-Del City area.

one of the early ways in which the federal government became a major innovating influence in this community and the South generally.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, whole new communities surrounding Oklahoma City were established. Oklahoma City, because of its central geographic location, became a crossroads for temporary residents connected with the military or otherwise affected by World War II. This constant interaction aided in lowering the level of prejudice between Negroes and whites. A sociologist who has studied attitude formation states that,

The more an individual engages in personal interaction with persons on different race, religion, or nationality background, the lower is his general level of prejudice. This result holds not only for majority group prejudices but also for minority prejudices against the majority group and other minorities. It is true of youths as well as their elders. It has been confirmed in 14 different samples, involving 6000 persons. We find in the communities studied that the more possibilities of cross-group interaction there are, the more interaction actually occurs; the more actual contact there is, the higher the frequency of intergroup friendships, the more intergroup friendships, the less the incidence of stereotyping and categorical antipathy. 2

During this same period the state's two largest universities, Oklahoma State University and the University

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<sup>1</sup>This will be referred to in specific ways in succeeding chapters.

<sup>2</sup>Robin Williams, Jr., "Review and Assessment of Research on Race and Culture Conflict," unpublished paper presented to the Conference on Research in Human Relations, Rockefeller Foundation, February-March, 1953, p. 54.

of Oklahoma, both in close proximity to Oklahoma City, began to grow enormously, swelled by returning veterans; and contact between the university inhabitants and the Oklahoma City community was closer than ever before, allowing for an exchange of ideas and opinions. This stimulated communication and personal contact between white and Negro intellectual circles. This contact was to prove very helpful to the Negro protest movement in later desegregation actions; for white professors and students were then to serve as advisors and participants.

Negro and white could now compare new ideas, personalities, and events with older established patterns of living.<sup>1</sup> Clearly, the activation of various economic and social forces in the post World War II years had created a lasting impact upon race relations. A more modern base was being laid for a change in racial views.

#### Ideological Forces: The Impact of Church Doctrine

Sociologists have said that social movements require explicit or implicit ideological justification and a group of intellectuals to provide its rationale. "The minimum function of an ideology...is to provide a rationale not only

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<sup>1</sup>Interview with Jimmy Stewart, National Board of Directors, NAACP, and former President of the Oklahoma City Branch, NAACP, June 29, 1967.

for the objectives but for the tactical and organizational means to these objectives--it must make a good case for what the movement is trying to do and how it is trying to do it."<sup>1</sup>

The Oklahoma City protest movement, from its very beginning, had its intellectuals<sup>2</sup> who interpreted goals, explained tactics, created symbols, and answered the segregationists. The movement was dramatically reinforced by World War II and the tenets of the American Creed which were invoked at most Negro gatherings. During and after World War II an ideological base was being strengthened, which would aid immeasurably in preparing both the white and Negro communities for a more direct form of Negro protest that was to appear in the early 1950s. Here their presence need only be noted. They will be examined more closely elsewhere in analyzing the rise of Negro leadership.

Thomas Pettigrew advances the hypothesis that the success of the civil rights movement in the South does not depend on changing the deeply ingrained orientations of prejudice-prone personalities; rather its progress depends on the restructuring of the mores to which so many culturally intolerant people conform. Church doctrine substantially assisted in altering community mores in the post World War II years and was a major lever in opening the community to

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<sup>1</sup>Wendell King, Social Movements in the United States (New York: Random House, 1956), p. 70.

<sup>2</sup>These intellectuals will be referred to later in the section pertaining to the rise of Negro leadership.

further desegregation attempts.<sup>1</sup> Oklahoma City, since its inception in 1889, has been subjected to many ideological forces that were rooted in the mood and doctrine of the church. Oklahoma City has prided itself on its "boom town" heritage and gloried in the realization that it literally was one of the few communities in the United States to become a "city" instantaneously after the "Run of '89." This type of atmosphere was conducive to the evangelical-revivalist Christianity common throughout the South. Initially, both Negroes and whites were sustained in these feelings by church-nurtured ideology. The white racist in a segregated congregation found in it a justification of segregation, and the Negroes a rationale for forbearance.

In the late 1940s in some white churches this primitive evangelism began to give way to a more sophisticated social consciousness. This was a period in the history of Oklahoma City when a group of prominent clergymen active in community affairs stimulated the community with new ideas. A distinct humanist strain was incorporated into some of the city's most prominent congregations by the entrance of these new ministers from other communities. Many left older and larger midwestern and northeastern communities to come to Oklahoma City, which they viewed as younger and smaller in population. They left

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<sup>1</sup>See Thomas Pettigrew, "Personality and Sociocultural Factors in Intergroup Attitudes: A Cross-National Comparison," Conflict Resolution (March, 1958).

that they could thus participate more actively in community affairs. In sum, this was the beginning in this community of the "brotherhood" phase.

White ministers began to seek out Negro leaders and invite them to community gatherings sponsored by their churches. An informal alliance was formed among some of the leaders of the city's major religious denominations to promote understanding among the city's diverse religious faiths and ethnic groups. The Oklahoma City Council of Churches, an interdenominational and interracial group, condemned segregation as immoral in 1948 in a number of public statements. Not many years later, it forcefully reaffirmed its position and further argued that segregation "based upon race is inhuman."<sup>1</sup> Additionally, white minorities, such as the city's Jewish population, became active in brotherhood activities.

From the 1940s on, white Christian ministers and Jewish rabbis began to exhort their congregations in the ways of brotherhood. Christian ministers who were active in this phase invoked the simple teachings of Jesus: humanistic recognition of the worth and dignity of every man, tolerance of diversity, and compassion for the oppressed. The younger ministers and those recently settled in the community were particularly vocal and active.

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<sup>1</sup>The Black Dispatch, April 9, 1965, p. 34.

Jewish congregations at this time were led by a notable Rabbi, Israel Chodos, also newly settled in the community, who had recently finished graduate work at Harvard College. For over a decade this Rabbi was a religious leader in the community who was able to gather support and confidence regardless of ethnic or religious affiliations. His speeches to congregations, his own and others, Jewish and non-Jewish, were full of passionate indignation at the condition of Negroes in the Oklahoma City area. Frequently mentioned in his numerous speeches were these phrases: "We are all children of God. What does it matter if we are made from black marble or white ivory? The worth of the human individual is what is priceless."<sup>1</sup> Specifically, he repeatedly urged Negroes to register and to vote for candidates sympathetic to their plight and to concern themselves with community affairs.

This Rabbi, by virtue of his prestige, scholarship, and speaking ability served on many civic and cultural organizations. Further, he appeared frequently on television discussions of the Bible with clergymen from all faiths. He

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<sup>1</sup>These were the core words from sermons delivered in Oklahoma City congregations during this time span as recalled by members of various congregations who were present at this time. This Rabbi, Israel Chodos, served at Oklahoma City's Emanuel Synagogue.

even acquired his own local television program where he reviewed books and articles, both secular and religious. These programs, initiated in the early 1950s, were frequently forums for his and for others' ideas on race relations. Their views, which favored rapid advancement of the Negro and a understanding by whites of the Negro's plight, was clearly advanced.

Many of these early religious leaders were also secular leaders who participated in political affairs and encouraged Negro participation.<sup>1</sup> Thus, some of them were able to achieve influence in both political and religious groups. Indeed, one religious leader who often spoke out against race prejudice became a candidate, although unsuccessful, for the United States Senate.<sup>2</sup>

The impact of these clergymen upon race relations cannot be clearly measured, but their ideas, opinions, and prestige have had a lasting effect on the community. Group photographs taken at civic functions were on display in offices of some Negro leaders years after the event in tribute to this "brotherhood" era. Additionally, these clergy-

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<sup>1</sup>Some of these leaders were more active and vocal than others, in accord with the intensity of their own feelings and their congregations attitudes. Even those less vocal were often able to work indirectly for the betterment of race relations.

<sup>2</sup>Reverend William "Bill" Alexander, formerly of Oklahoma City's First Christian Church.



men stimulated the formation of several organizations. These organizations were composed of both civic and religious leaders and were formed specifically for the advancement of race relations.<sup>1</sup> The influence of clergymen, who have the responsibility for shaping and sometimes even for creating values, cannot be underestimated in the study of race relations.

Increasingly, their actions attracted the attention of white liberals in their congregations who began to assist in this "brotherhood" phase. They created an atmosphere that must have encouraged the more militant white ministers who were to later emerge in a more direct action stage of the Negro protest. The white clergymen encouraged Negro ministers and civic leaders to speak more freely. Further, they contributed prestige, religious persuasion, and intellectual flavor to a cause that had no previous spokesmen of such stature in the white community. There arose a growing awareness, even though focused in a small and select portion of the white community, that a new kind of community ought to emerge that would include Negro values and desires.

During this same period, the Negro churches in the community served many important functions. Negro churches have always been of special importance in the Negro community.

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<sup>1</sup>The author has assisted one of these interdenominational groups, the Conference on Religion and Race, in studying and analyzing discriminatory state legislation that was later purged from the state's legal documents.

Immediately after World War II they served as a nucleus of the Negro protest.

The Negro church in this community was not unlike those in other southern towns. For years, it was the only public gathering place for Negroes. Whites utilized it in some ways to control Negro life. Through church services and other religious functions potential Negro hostility was defused. Political support for white candidates representing areas with many Negro inhabitants was launched in the church. Negro agents for white candidates gained Negro votes here. The community's Negro churches rarely, if ever, especially before 1940, directly protested unjust treatment on the part of the white majority. They were only too well aware of the possibilities of retaliation.

Nonetheless, Negro churches in this city always found some way to express their dissatisfaction with their social status. Symbolic protest was skillfully employed. Spirituals which embodied an eloquent protest against indignities and oppressions were well known in the Negro community. The famous spirituals with titles such as: "Nobody Knows the Trouble I've Seen," "Go Down Moses--Tell Ole Pharoah to Let My People Go," and "I'm Gonna Tell God All My Troubles," were regularly sung in the community. It is

hardly surprising when Negro protest in Oklahoma City and elsewhere reached a more militant stage that the old Negro spiritual, "We Shall Overcome," became the accepted official theme song of the protest movement.

During these years a few Negro ministers even began to sermonize against segregation both generally and on specific incidents. The protest motif was present in speeches made both on religious and social occasions, but retaliation from the white majority was avoided because of the numerically small number of ministers involved. Some Negro churches became the accepted meeting place in the late 1940s for a newly invigorated NAACP chapter and offered their facilities for discussions and forums on segregation. Leaflets distributed were headlined with, "NAACP Membership Kick-Off Meeting at Bethany Presbyterian Church," and

**Can the Leopard Change His Spots?**

**Elmer Thomas**

**Oklahoma's Senior Senator**

**And His Mississippi Friend, The Race Baiter**

**'The Man' Bilbo**

**Worst Man North of Mississippi and South of Hell**

**Ever in the Senate**

**Versus**

**The People of Oklahoma**

In a Panel Discussion  
St. John Baptist Church  
Northeast Second and Phillips Street  
Sunday, January 12--3:00 p.m.  
This Program Sponsored by the NAACP

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No Negro minister emerged as a leader of the civil rights movement in Oklahoma City, but indirect and veiled protest was always present and church facilities were freely given to those Negroes who wished to protest against segregation more directly. Especially after World War II, Negro churches were stimulated by the addition of young Negroes who had recently moved to the community or returned from the Armed Forces. It is difficult to measure their impact, but there is no doubt that Negro churches since World War II have been an important adjunct of the formal Negro protest movement.

#### Increase in Political and Social Activity

These developments in the community at large and within the Negro community as well contributed to the growth of political activity. As some authors have argued, a psychological factor, a sense of civic competence, is extremely important in stimulating political and social activity.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>See Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba, The Civic Culture (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1963).

Negroes in Oklahoma City in the post World War II years began to perceive of themselves as able to alter local governmental decisions, however significant this alteration might have been in reality. This rising civic competence can be seen in many areas as the protest activities increased in number and variety.

### The Impact of Legal Decisions

Legal struggles over a period of some fifty years have had an affect on both the Negro and white communities in Oklahoma City. The impact of these legal assaults was more than simply the eventual application of constitutional guarantees to Negroes. The Oklahoma City area was the focal point of landmark litigation and this helped to alter significantly not only the formal political and social structure of the white community; it also deeply affected Negro attitudes toward, and participation in, community politics. The legal struggle perhaps more than any other single factor, readied both the Negro and white communities for eventual desegregation. For the first time, large numbers of Negroes and whites became cognizant of racial questions never before brought to their attention. The white community was in particular confronted with a direct assault upon previously untouched legal and social assumptions.

The Negro leaders involved in these legal assaults

were headed by Roscoe Dunjee in the formative stages and by Jimmy Stewart, a returning Negro veteran, in later years. They became skilled legal practitioners even though neither had a formal legal education. Assistance to their efforts was provided by the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund. Close liaison was maintained before, during, and after litigation with NAACP attorneys, such as U. Simpson Tate, himself a long familiar courtroom figure.<sup>1</sup>

In the late 1940s, bolstered by some past successes, Roscoe Dunjee, then President of the Oklahoma Conference of NAACP Branches, and Jimmy Stewart, then President, of the NAACP Oklahoma City Branch, launched a broad attack upon Oklahoma's segregation laws and practices. They believed that these practices should be eliminated before city Negroes could concentrate on more specific local grievances.

Assisted by regional and national NAACP attorneys,<sup>2</sup> the attack upon segregation centered initially around gaining admission for qualified Negroes to the University of Oklahoma. From 1946-1950, these legal struggles significantly altered

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<sup>1</sup>The Southwest Regional Counsel for the NAACP Legal Defense Fund for many years was U. Simpson Tate, who worked closely with Oklahoma City's Negro leaders for many years.

<sup>2</sup>The regional attorney was Amos Hall and the attorney from the national office was Thurgood Marshall.

the political, social, and legal basis for segregation in Oklahoma City and throughout the state and nation. At the termination of these cases<sup>1</sup> an ideological and political base more amenable to desegregation was established. Oklahoma City, although not the locale of the University of Oklahoma, was especially affected for four reasons: (1) its proximity to the University of Oklahoma, where the legal battles were joined; (2) the Negro protest leaders and the principal parties to the legal actions were all from Oklahoma City; (3) the attorneys for the State of Oklahoma, upholding state law, issued most of their statements and formed their strategy in Oklahoma City, the state capitol; (4) the mass media, including both Negro and white newspapers in Oklahoma City, gave detailed coverage to the ensuing events. To trace these factors and their very considerable ramifications, it is necessary to give more than casual reference to these legal battles.

These legal struggles were preceded by meticulous legal planning and the establishment of public support both in Oklahoma City and at Norman, Oklahoma, the site of the University. Even before the cases were filed, Negro leaders from Oklahoma City were in Norman meeting to plan strategy for the coming confrontations. The Negro leaders initially

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<sup>1</sup>Sipuel v. Board of Regents of the University of Oklahoma, 332 U.S. 631, 93 L. Ed. 247 (1948) and McLaurin v. Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education et. al., 339 U.S. 637, 94 L. Ed. 1149 (1950).

could not even find a facility to house their meetings; a policy of strict segregation prevailed in the college town and on the campus. Finally, a local religious organization, the Hillel Foundation, consented to lend them their facility; in addition they volunteered to make a survey of all area eating establishments and possible meeting places for Negroes. Negro leaders eventually acquired adequate facilities in which to plan for the eventual confrontation. The difficulty in obtaining facilities incidentally helped stimulate campus support for the Negro protest prior to the legal confrontation.

On January 14, 1946, a Negro woman, Ada Lois Sipuel, applied in person for admission to the School of Law at the University of Oklahoma. The petitioner was qualified to receive professional legal education as offered by the state. The School of Law of the University of Oklahoma was the only institution for legal education supported by the taxpayers of Oklahoma. Her petition was denied solely because of her color. On January 12, 1948, the United States Supreme Court reversed the Supreme Court of Oklahoma and held that Sipuel:

...is entitled to secure legal education afforded by a state institution. To this time it has been denied her although during the same period many whites applicants have been afforded legal education by the State. The State must provide for it for her in conformity with the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment and provide it as soon as it does for applicants of any other group. <sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Sipuel v. Board of Regents of the University of Oklahoma, 332 U.S. 631, 93 L. Ed. 247 (1948).



After this order by the Supreme Court, a novel scheme to avoid integration and yet comply with the "separate but equal" doctrine was effected. The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education established in the State Capitol Building at Oklahoma City, the "Langston University School of Law";<sup>1</sup> it was essentially established to accommodate Sipuel and other Negroes demanding a legal education. It became known as the "one-man law school" and attracted much publicity because of its peculiar origin and character. The "law school" was given a Dean and three prominent faculty members and an adequate library.

Shortly thereafter, on March 15, 1948, Sipuel filed a motion challenging the validity of this law school arrangement. Sipuel contended that the school was not equal to the School of Law at the University of Oklahoma.<sup>2</sup> She wanted the court to order her immediate admission to the University of Oklahoma Law School.

Much publicity and attention was directed to the court hearing in a District Court in Cleveland County, Oklahoma on her motion.<sup>3</sup> Prominent law school professors from

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<sup>1</sup>Named after the all-Negro higher educational institution located near Oklahoma City, in Langston, Oklahoma.

<sup>2</sup>This was motion number 14,807, District Court of Cleveland County, Oklahoma.

<sup>3</sup>The extent of this publicity was worldwide, as attested to by translations of foreign newspapers on the Sipuel affair. These are on file at the State Capitol Library in Oklahoma City.

many parts of the nation testified on the pivotal question of whether the "Langston University School of Law" met the requirements of the "separate but equal" doctrine when compared to the educational opportunities offered by the University of Oklahoma School of Law.

The Dean of the "Langston University School of Law," its faculty members, and former Deans Harvey and McClain of the Law Schools of the University of Oklahoma and Washington University, respectively, testified that the two law schools were substantially equal. However, Deans Griswold and Harrison of the Law Schools of Harvard University and the University of Pennsylvania, and Professors Radin, Helhorn, and Bunn of the Law Schools of the University of California, Columbia University, and the University of Wisconsin, respectively, testified to the contrary.<sup>1</sup>

Because of the peculiar nature of the proceeding, and the personalities involved in the testimony, extensive news coverage was provided. Oklahoma Cityans and interested parties throughout the nation were well aware of this interesting case. The public, both Negro and white, was made cognizant of the issues and the legal arguments. Thurgood Marshall, one of the attorneys for Sipuel made constant statements regarding strategy and constitutional requirements in Oklahoma City, often from the offices of The Black Dispatch.

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<sup>1</sup>Interview with Fred Hansen, First Assistant Oklahoma Attorney General at that time, January 31, 1963.

The District Court, however, denied Sipuel's motion. Immediately, again after much publicity, she gave notice that she would file an appeal. Before the appeal could be filed, the "one-man law school" was abolished by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education and Sipuel was permitted to enroll in the University of Oklahoma School of Law for the term beginning in the fall of 1949. Thus, a unique epoch in Oklahoma's segregation-desegregation struggle had passed. A prominent state educational official later said that, "From this case and its attendant publicity the white citizens of Oklahoma City and throughout the state were slowly being conditioned to an understanding that the trend would offer no alternative to desegregation."<sup>1</sup>

The Sipuel decision, from its inception in early 1946 to the Law School admittance in 1949, generated emotionalism and much public discussion in the Oklahoma City area. For instance, the first demonstration by Negroes in Oklahoma City on behalf of a distinctly Negro cause was held in 1948 in front of the State Capitol Building protesting the "one-man law school."<sup>2</sup> This was an early indication of Negro

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<sup>1</sup>Interview with Dr. E.T. Dunlap, Chancellor of State Regents for Higher Education, April 26, 1963.

<sup>2</sup>Interview with Henry Floyd, President, Oklahoma City Branch, NAACP, September 7, 1967. In 1948, Negroes in Oklahoma City requested a demonstration permit from the Oklahoma City Police Department. At first this permit was denied. Attorneys for the Negro protestors said they would

militancy in the area and the forms it might take. Further, many student gatherings, often attended by the public, were held on the campus of the University of Oklahoma either to support or to argue against Negro admission. Most of these meetings, attended by large numbers of interested people, students and non-students, were in favor of Negro admission; but some campaigns were directed against admission and Negro leaders, like Roscoe Dunjee, were often accused of being influenced by the Communist Party in their protest activities.

The gatherings in favor of Negro admission were often very large, some with over one thousand in attendance. Many of the leaders and speakers at these pro-admission gatherings were World War II veterans. The meetings held to protest Negro admissions were smaller and not well organized and their speakers were often heckled as being bigots and racists. These meetings, both for and against admissions, were covered extensively by the white and Negro news media, usually with great detail and clarity.

It is likely that this emotionalism from both sides, and the channeling of it by university officials and Negro protest leaders alike through discussions and debates, served as a "safety valve." Emotionalism in the Oklahoma City area

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file suit to place the Police Department in "receivership" if the permit was not granted. Finally, the Police Department issued the permit for the demonstration, perhaps the first of its kind ever issued in the city area.

ran high during this period. Hundreds of letters and telegrams were received by public officials protesting Negro activities in the area. Slowly, after Sipuel was admitted, these counter-protest activities appreciably diminished.<sup>1</sup>

The second major court test that helped prepare the white community for desegregation while instilling confidence and pride in the Negro community, arose when a Negro male from Oklahoma City requested admission to pursue a doctorate in Oklahoma University's Graduate School of Education. This Negro, G.W. McLaurin, was allowed to enter after some court litigation. However, immediately prior to his admission in October, 1948, "the State Legislature hurriedly passed a law providing that instruction for him and other services should be provided on a segregated basis, namely that separate classroom, restrooms, eating facilities, library facilities, etc., should be established. The Legislature was in earnest about this."<sup>2</sup>

The University meticulously moved to carry out the Legislature's instructions. In being careful to follow

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<sup>1</sup>These statements are gleaned from letters and telegrams on file at the State Library of Oklahoma--"Sipuel Case" (1948).

<sup>2</sup>Letter from former President George L. Cross, President of the University of Oklahoma, October 19, 1967.

the segregationist directives, there is a suspicion that university officials sought to create a "backlash" effect against segregation, both on the campus and in the Oklahoma City area. The controversial student was required to attend classrooms which were roped off for only his occupancy. A separate table was set aside for his use in the cafeteria and a special desk in the library was designated exclusively for his use. Pictures of these separate facilities were shown in Oklahoma City newspapers; they helped generate feelings of absurdity and disgust against the University and all who would enforce such ridiculous conditions in order to maintain strict segregation. Whites attending classes with the Negro student voiced similar sentiments. "The students recognized the absurdity of it all and in many instances took the ropes down and cut them up to be distributed as souvenirs."<sup>1</sup>

The University officials were in effect saying to the white community, "If you want segregation, we will really give it to you;" the desired "backlash" was thereby created.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., George L. Cross letter.

<sup>2</sup>It is possible that University officials were directing their actions also to judicial personnel who might be influenced by this highly unusual situation.

The President of the University at the time declared, "I will admit that in complying with the law the University did attempt to show the absurdity of it all by roping off sections of classrooms and designating the roped off section as another room."<sup>1</sup> Segregationist practices on the campus and in the Oklahoma City community were so portrayed as to create their own intellectual and emotional opposition. Change was stage-managed to appear inevitable and to be respectable, and this confused and disarmed critics of desegregation. Segregation was so applied as to "wear away protective strate, to break down its own defenses, to disperse the garrisons of its entrenchment."<sup>2</sup>

The Negro student, at the center of this absurd situation, finally was granted admission to Graduate School on an equal basis with whites after the Supreme Court of the United States ruled that;

The equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment was violated where a state, after admitting a Negro to graduate instruction in a state university, afford him solely because of his race, different treatment from other students, as by requiring him to occupy a seat in a row in the classroom specified for colored students

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<sup>1</sup>Letter from former President George L. Cross, President of the University of Oklahoma, October 19, 1967.

<sup>2</sup>The words are Schumpeter's and are taken from a context which, though not analogous, is suggestive. A. Schumpeter, Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy, Third Edition (New York, 1950), p. 143.

or at a designated table in the library or at a special table in the cafeteria. 1

Upon his admittance to the University on an equal basis, there were mass demonstrations and singing by both Negroes and whites in Oklahoma City streets.<sup>2</sup> Local newspapers forcefully stated to the white Oklahoma City community that the United States Supreme Court was now ordering Negro students into previously all-white universities. The advice and policies prepared by the State Attorney General's office supporting the decision, were highly publicized; often they were in front page Oklahoma City headlines. And there was comment such as the following regarding the McLaurin decision:

It is the first instance where a court has passed upon the precise question of a Negro plaintiff's admission to a state supported college, using the University of Oklahoma by name. Thus, we have a judicial decree, a voicing--a striking down--of the state's traditional policy of scholastic segregation in higher education, directly applied to entrance of plaintiff, McLaurin, to the University of Oklahoma. 3

Such sentiments, voiced by high public officials who had previously argued against a desegregated university, contributed to conditioning the minds of the people to the inevitability of desegregation and not only in education but

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<sup>1</sup>McLaurin v. Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education et. al., 399 U.S. 637, 94 L. Ed. 1149 (1950).

<sup>2</sup>The Black Dispatch, April 9, 1965, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup>The Daily Oklahoman, October 7, 1948, p. 1.



in most public sectors.<sup>1</sup> Significantly, as if understanding the inevitability of desegregation at this point, white political leaders at the local and state levels began to support the recent decisions in behalf of the Negro; they spoke of such concepts as the national and the community interest.<sup>2</sup> Statements like, "We must support the law of the land" were heard frequently.<sup>3</sup> "Administrators, more than they realize, have the power to establish desirable changes...."<sup>4</sup>

Also in the aftermath, Oklahoma City's Negro leaders, who had gained added optimism and confidence from their victories, forcefully pointed out what these decisions would mean for the future of Oklahoma City's desegregation progress. They anticipated that this was only the beginning of meaningful desegregation activity. Further, the Chancellor of State Regents for Higher Education in Oklahoma stated that the Sipuel and McLaurin decisions, coupled with the forcefulness of Negro leadership during this period, definitely set the stage for later desegregation activities, especially in Okla-

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<sup>1</sup>Interview with Dr. E.T. Dunlap, Chancellor of State Regents for Higher Education, April 26, 1963.

<sup>2</sup>The use of concepts of community and national welfare in promoting Negro causes was forcefully set forth in 1947; it was echoed by local and state leaders when President Truman appointed the President's Committee on Civil Rights, and later espoused its recommendations.

<sup>3</sup>Interview with former Oklahoma Governor Johnston Murray, (January 1951-January, 1955), March 7, 1963.

<sup>4</sup>Gordon W. Allport, The Nature of Prejudice (New York: Doubleday, 1958), p. 471.

homa City's public schools.

They very definitely set the stage. The content of the cases indirectly suggested that integration in all public education was inevitable. A state of mind--a state of readiness was being implanted. <sup>1</sup>

These court decisions and their ramifications were highly dramatized events stretching over a period of several years. They helped channel the unstructured and diffuse pro-integration sentiments of the Negro society while preparing the white community for later desegregation activities.<sup>2</sup> "Official policies once established are hard to revoke. They set models that, once accepted, create habits and conditions favorable to their maintenance."<sup>3</sup> As for Negro leaders, these decisions were landmarks that resulted from many years of diligent work by these leaders, with Roscoe Dunjee in the forefront. The white community seemed to be disarmed legally and emotionally at this stage; very little effective

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<sup>1</sup>Interview with Dr. E.T. Dunlap, Chancellor of State Regents for Higher Education, April 26, 1963.

<sup>2</sup>Thomas Pettigrew advances the hypothesis that the success of the civil rights movement in the South does not depend on changing the deeply ingrained orientations of prejudice-prone personalities; rather its progress depends on the restructuring of the mores to which so many culturally intolerant people conform. See Thomas Pettigrew, "Personality and Sociocultural Factors in Intergroup Attitudes: A Cross-National Comparison," Conflict Resolution, March, 1958.

<sup>3</sup>Gordon W. Allport, The Nature of Prejudice (New York: Doubleday, 1958), p. 471.

opposition developed. Legally, the Negro community had made great strides, but the emotional dimension was equally important for sustained momentum. The Negro protest leadership had won, more than ever before, respect from fellow Negroes; internal opposition that had existed in previous years diminished significantly.

**Vehicles for Political Participation:  
Social and Civic Organizations**

Negroes, like their white counterparts, have formed many organizations; social, civic, historical, and professional to reflect their varied interests and desires. In the post World War II years, historical and professional Negro organizations were utilized in Oklahoma City in order to find some unified way of elevating the status of the Negro. These organizations provided an important platform for Negro protest along with a continuing reaffirmation of basic American beliefs.

When these organizations held their conventions, the biracial system was denounced through resolutions and speeches. Negroes were implored to unite in order to improve themselves and thus gain sufficient mobility for entrance into the broader society. The American Creed of Equality was fully utilized as a vehicle for their protests. Additionally, the

contributions of Negroes to American life were stressed and pernicious stereotypes perpetrated by whites were attacked. Negro organizations typically representing this theme were the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History and the National Negro Business League.

In addition to professional and historical associations, social and civic organizations for Negro men and women have been prominent in the community especially since World War II. Oklahoma City was the center, because of its geographical location and because of the state's capitol, for many Negro social fraternities and sororities and civic action groups. Strict segregation practices in most white social groups forced many of these organizations to develop as alternatives in performing charitable, religious, and community acts.<sup>1</sup> Their motif contained strong elements of the American Creed<sup>2</sup> and they implored their memberships to participate actively in the community's affairs, for both the Negro community and the broader society. These organizations grew in membership and activities following World War II and were able largely to maintain their level of activities from then on.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>These groups ranged from YMCA and Masonic groups to greek letter societies (both social and professional).

<sup>2</sup>Most meetings, for example, were opened and closed with prayers and patriotic practices.

<sup>3</sup>The Black Dispatch, "Fiftieth Anniversary Edition," April 9, 1965.

Thus within a three year period immediately following World War II a number of important Negro civic and protest organizations were either founded or rejuvenated. Many of these organizations recognized the need for a politically meaningful role for the Negro and worked to achieve it through their own group goals. In 1947, the Urban League was founded, followed by the establishment of the Urban Guild in 1950; the latter was composed initially of one hundred and fifty women drawn from all religions and races to promote cultural, social, and educational activities. This Urban League and its affiliate was one of the first to be established in any of the southern or border states and was the first local organization to combine white and Negro leadership in a continuing dialogue on interracial community problems. This initial contact between Negroes and whites in a single organization with permanent meeting facilities was a significant event. "It is difficult to overemphasize the importance of this initial contact between Negro and white leaders, all wishing to promote racial understanding, in the same formal organization."<sup>1</sup>

Negro political and civic energy combined in 1947 to establish an eastside (Negro section) branch of the YMCA which was preceded in 1945 by the acquiring of a permanent

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<sup>1</sup>Interview with Herbert Tyson, Director, Oklahoma City Urban League, February 7, 1963.

location for Negro women, the "Stiles YWCA." These two organizations helped stimulate Negro leadership and community spirit by fund raising and membership drives. Further, more permanent locations were being added to accommodate a variety of Negro organizations which would fully utilize these facilities. At this same time, the local branch of the NAACP, founded many years earlier, was rejuvenated by new members and new legal projects, projects which would propel it into national headlines in a few short years. This activity confirms that at least some Negroes were, in increasing numbers, developing a different conception of themselves and their role in the political system. This development contributed importantly to the breakdown of the caste system and the modernizing of the locality.

The infusion of World War II veterans into these organizations provided great stimulation. Returning veterans were appalled at the living and working conditions that faced them upon their return. Their main theme was that they had fought for American ideals and beliefs only to find hypocritical attitudes and actions confronting them after their return home.

Even though separated from the larger community, these organizations came into contact with new ideas and alternative life patterns. White civic officials continuously addressed the memberships of these organizations and congratu-

lated them on past activities and urged them to become even more "civic minded." Further, these groups began to complain to the city authorities about conditions in the Negro community that they felt should be rectified. These complaints ranged from public school locations and street improvements to added job opportunities for individual Negroes.

The initial results arising from these complaints were sporadic and not great but a sense of competence about their ability to influence community affairs was added. In any case they were aware of the legal struggles at the University of Oklahoma and were proud of the Negro leaders who were involved. All of this is important in understanding the development of a framework that was to prepare the Negro community for a more direct form of protest. Even at this point they could be placed in Almond and Verba's category of "subjectively competent citizens."<sup>1</sup> This feeling of competence encouraged the Negro citizen to become increasingly active politically and socially in community affairs. Accordingly, these organizations, once begun, have tended to continue to engage in common activities; even, in some cases, they intensified their activities as the occasion arose. Donald Matthews and James Prothro have noted that, "Occasional rewards for political activity reinforced the individual's sense of

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<sup>1</sup>Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba, The Civic Culture (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1963), p. 215ff.

of competence, which helped to stimulate his activity in the first place. This sense of civic competence or incompetence tends to become self-fulfilling."<sup>1</sup> The psychological factor of subjective civic competence is likely to be self-reinforcing as long as some rewards occur. Subjectively competent citizens who hold attitudes about their ability to alter politics, can have far-reaching affects on governmental policy-making. Their demands and activity can intensify as past rewards are evaluated. This cycle was crucial to the Negro in Oklahoma City as it created and reinforced a mood of activism; "...and government is far more likely to respond to the wants and needs of activists."<sup>2</sup>

Further, Matthews and Prothro, have concluded that "...the southern Negro's evaluation of the worth of his own race may not only affect the goals he seeks through politics; it may also affect the level of his participation. Racial pride and confidence--especially when combined with a high level of cognitive sophistication--lead to high levels of

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<sup>1</sup>Donald R. Matthews and James W. Prothro, Negroes and the New Southern Politics (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1966), pp. 276-277.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 276.



participation by Negroes in the South...a sense of racial inferiority is largely incompatible with high levels of political activism."<sup>1</sup>

It is quite natural to assume that in Oklahoma City's earlier years the Negro felt racially inferior and personally insecure. This limited his participation potential in economic and political affairs. This is characterized by the job positions they respected and sought and their "hopes for the future" which were economically and socially inferior to those held by the white community.<sup>2</sup>

Significantly, Negroes now demanded more jobs and entrance into occupations formerly reserved for whites.<sup>3</sup> Many enrolled at the state's Negro university, close to Oklahoma City, while others were desirous of enrolling in the state's largest white universities and colleges. Some were even planning future political careers and hoped to participate fully in all community affairs.

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<sup>1</sup>Donald R. Matthews and James W. Prothro, Negroes and the New Southern Politics (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1966), p. 298. See also S.M. Elkins, Slavery: A Problem in American Institutional and Intellectual Life (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959).

<sup>2</sup>See Chapter Two on job positions respected by the Negro community.

<sup>3</sup>Interview with M. Jeltz, Minority Group Representative, Oklahoma State Employment Commission, September 8, 1967.

The Negro in Oklahoma City was re-evaluating his earlier attitudes and emerging with a sounder psychological perspective of his own worth; hence, he became a more active participant in the political process. "The Negro in Oklahoma City, no longer considered himself totally inferior to whites after World War II, and probably for the first time he actually began to acquire pride in his own race."<sup>1</sup>

#### Mass Media

A major element in the evolution of an ideology of protest was a local Negro newspaper. In Oklahoma City the very existence of a Negro newspaper was a form of protest. It was founded because of the general feeling among Negroes in the community that they were systematically ignored by white newspapers for their noteworthy deeds and that their negative behavior was too greatly emphasized.

This newspaper, The Black Dispatch, may be described as Gunnar Myrdal has described individual Negro leaders; it is "imprisoned in the Negro problem"<sup>2</sup> From its inception in 1915, The Black Dispatch, while performing all of the usual tasks expected of this kind of media enterprise, had a singular dedication to Negro advancement in Oklahoma City and the state.

<sup>1</sup>Interview with Wesley Edmond, President, Oklahoma City Chapter, CORE, September 9, 1967.

<sup>2</sup>Gunnar Myrdal; with the assistance of Richard Sterner and Arnold Rose, An American Dilemma (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1944), p. 28.

Under the guidance of a man whose father was a slave, this newspaper was a moving force in the effective organization of Negro protest in this city.

Roscoe Dunjee founded and directed this publication for forty years. In its early years it was simply a five-column folio but gradually expanded to a twelve page publication with a nationwide circulation. The circulation of this newspaper was consistently maintained at a high level under the editorship of Roscoe Dunjee. It circulated statewide to subscribers and was given without cost to prominent white and Negro leaders throughout the city and state. This form of distribution provided a means by which white community leaders were informed of Negro aspirations over the years.

From its inception this newspaper was an effective organ of Negro protest; much of the time it was the only such organ. Its protest became more vehement and direct in the mid-1940s. Dunjee, through scholarly wit and allusion, was able to communicate with both the white and Negro communities simultaneously on Negro problems and desires. The following editorial exemplifies the many columns published near the close of World War II and is indicative of the mood established by The Black Dispatch. The editorial was prompted by the remarks of a pastor of a white church in

Oklahoma City who remarked to Dunjee that Negroes in Oklahoma City were beginning to complain too much and that they should count their blessings and opportunities. Dunjee replied in a front page editorial:

I do not agree with you that the Negro has made this great progress you tell about. If I were running at the rate of 200 miles per hour, I'd be running pretty fast; but if the man I was trying to catch was organized to make 300 miles per hour, my fantastic gait would not be closing the distance between us. The white man has been making some speed in this country right along with other folk and I'm not going to be misled respecting the respective speeds of the two groups.

We remain static because you force us to. In your unions and your industrial establishments you deny us opportunities for upgrading and advancement, and then deliver addresses over the radio, when we complain, that we are asking too much. We're like the drunken man who wrote back home that he could not see the forest for the trees. It would be hard for a Negro to look past his grievances here in America to the blessings you seem to know about.

...Most people just read the Preamble to that document (the Declaration of Independence) but I think you ought to read it in its entirety. The Declaration was written by Thomas Jefferson...at a time when most white people were suffering punishment from the English Crown similar to the treatment received today by Negroes in this country.

The indictment of the English Crown in the Declaration of Independence reads strikingly as though it were written by Negroes. There is not a single word of praise for the blessings the English Crown bestowed upon the colonists. We are sure the English Crown bestowed at least as many blessings upon the white people in this country as white people today cast into the environment of black life...Read the negative statements that white people penned about white people in Thomas Jefferson's day and perhaps he (the white pastor) could then adjust himself better to the attitude of the

American Negro who today is jim crowed (sic), segregated, disfranchised, denied labor opportunities, and despised. <sup>1</sup>

This kind of comment by Dunjee in public gatherings excited both the white and Negro communities. Moderate and liberal whites understood the comparisons he made between the Negro's protestations and white American's grievances earlier in American history. Negroes, on the other hand, were encouraged by his intellectual vigor and his forcefulness in countering the arguments put forth by some Oklahoma Cityans in defense of the status quo.<sup>2</sup>

Furthermore, in assessing The Black Dispatch's great impact it should be noted that it served as a "communications center" for all civil rights activities in the immediate area and throughout the entire state. Negroes were constantly informed about activities of various civil rights groups in behalf of the Oklahoma City Negro. Court litigation initiated during this period, such as that which attempted to gain the admittance of Negroes to institutions of higher learning, was minutely reported and commented upon. Further-

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<sup>1</sup>The Black Dispatch, August, 1944. Reprinted in The Black Dispatch, April 9, 1965, p. 24.

<sup>2</sup>Other Negro civil rights leaders also contributed columns to the newspaper at various intervals and thus aided the thrust of this publication in the Negro protest movement. Roscoe Dunjee's importance to the early Negro protest in Oklahoma City cannot be overemphasized. His contributions will be further assessed in later sections.

more, the newspaper immediately recognized, in the post World War II years, the importance of voting and political participation for the Negro, especially among returning veterans and their families.

Political activity in the Negro community was sustained and broadened by The Black Dispatch in their coverage of sporadic episodes of racial turmoil.<sup>1</sup> "Negroes who are aware of local racial incidents...are much more politically active than those who have heard about other types of incidents or who are unaware of them altogether."<sup>2</sup> From the mid-1940s to the early 1960s, there were racial incidents, ranging from charges of police brutality to legal actions brought by Negro organizations in protest against objectionable white practices.<sup>3</sup> These were well publicized, both by the white and Negro press, with the Negro publications portraying the incidents in a bolder fashion. The Black Dispatch would focus on some of these incidents and give them complete coverage until final action had been taken. Roscoe Dunjee and other Negro leaders pursued these incidents personally by contacting local authorities and reported back on their

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<sup>1</sup>Donald R. Matthews and James W. Prothro, Negroes and the New Southern Politics (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1966), pp. 302, 307, Tables 10-15.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 306.

<sup>3</sup>Interview with Clara Luper Clark, Sponsor, NAACP Youth Council of Oklahoma City, July 14, 1967.

findings to the Negro public, both in newspaper columns and orally. The Black Dispatch's editor convinced that unity, bloc voting, and increased political activity was essential for Negro improvement promoted membership drives for protest organizations, such as the NAACP, by focusing on these events. Editorials in The Black Dispatch are indicative of this line of thought.

During...thirty years the NAACP has been on the firing line in Oklahoma City dealing with police protection and a general program of racial uplift. It has also been joined with the national office in its militant efforts, international in its sweep and scope.

If you live in Oklahoma City, ask yourselves these questions: Have I contributed as I should to the NAACP? Do I have membership in it? Have I renewed my membership this year? Think of it! The State Conference of Branches of the NAACP in Oklahoma has been to the Supreme Court of the United States six times in the past fifteen years with important issues and has won four of these cases. Thousands of dollars were raised in Oklahoma for these legal actions. Have you contributed to these righteous struggles for justice and fair play? Are you expecting your rights to fall like manna from heaven, or do you feel accountability in the adjudication of those rights?

If you own a home and are rearing a family in Oklahoma City you owe it to your home and children to renew your membership in the local branch. 1

According to initial studies on the role of the Negro press it is reported that "Southern Negroes who read the Negro press are more active than those who do not."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The Black Dispatch, Editorial, September 11, 1948.

<sup>2</sup>Donald R. Matthews and James W. Prothro, Negroes and the New Southern Politics (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1966), p. 258.

Additionally, this same survey found that, "The readers of the Negro press are more politically interested and informed than are those Negroes who read only the 'white' press."<sup>1</sup> Because of The Black Dispatch's long history, sustained circulation, and respected editorial comment it must be ranked as one of the major factors in contributing to racial change.

Another form of media that contributed to protest after World War II was a radio station oriented and programmed for the Negro community. The radio station, KBYE, has been cited by many Negro organizations in the city and state for its public service and assistance to the Negro community. This radio station was formed because of the need to focus attention on local Negro entertainment, athletics, politics, and other community activities, as well as meeting the demands of an expanding Negro economic market. The station, though owned by whites, was operated and programmed by Negroes. Its announcers have been cited by national magazines for their activities, often in connection with civil rights functions. Fifteen national advertisers have consistently utilized this radio station for their products, a fact indicative of the station's strength.

For many years this radio station worked closely

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.



with The Black Dispatch to bring national, state, and local events of interest to Oklahoma City Negroes.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, the station as part of its regular programming included a variety of programs ranging from political commentaries to "cooking tips" and "rhythm and blues." It is difficult to measure accurately the impact of this radio station on the Negro community. However, studies have generally revealed that, "Exposure to the mass media (including radio) increases both political motivation and politically unmotivated activity in politics."<sup>2</sup> Similar empirical surveys suggest that "...mass communications are contributing to the 'modernization' of the South...and that the acceptance of the modern ethos implies political participation whether one is politically motivated and knowledgeable or not."<sup>3</sup> Even "the most hackneyed situation comedy or detective story... paints a glamorized picture of a way of life quite different from that known by the tradition-bound southern Negro."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Consistently over the years a daily program entitled "From the Desk of The Black Dispatch," has been offered.

<sup>2</sup>Donald R. Matthews and James W. Prothro, Negroes and the New Southern Politics (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1966), p. 261.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., also, for an interesting discussion of the effect of mass media on the white community see Melvin Tumin, Segregation: Resistance and Readiness (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1958), p. 196.

<sup>4</sup>Donald R. Matthews and James W. Prothro, Negroes and the New Southern Politics (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1966), p. 262.

This radio station, coupled with the crusading Negro newspaper, The Black Dispatch, provided an important additional influence in overturning old perspectives and ideologies. Both the white and Negro communities were affected in some degree. But the Negro community particularly was through these media presented with alternatives most had hardly known before. "Thus, once an awareness of alternatives develops, once tradition-bound people develop the ability to visualize themselves living in a different society, the process of modernization has begun."<sup>1</sup>

#### Negro Political Response

From the World War II years on, participation in political affairs became increasingly apparent and followed upon increased civic participation, enhanced racial pride, and stimulation by the local Negro news media. Thus, Matthews and Prothro, along with others, have found a direct correlation between increased subjective civic competence and the political participation of southern Negroes encompassing voting and other forms of political expression.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Donald R. Matthews and James W. Prothro, Negroes and the New Southern Politics (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1966), p. 263.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 279, Figure 10-4.

Negro political participation manifested itself initially in identification with political parties and involvement in officially nonpartisan local elections. Negro registration and voting began a gradual rise after World War II from an earlier base of fifteen to twenty percent of the eligible Negro electorate and of this registration rarely twenty to twenty-five percent voted.<sup>1</sup> From this base in the early 1950s registration of those eligible rose to approach forty percent; of this registration nearly thirty percent voted in all elections.<sup>2</sup>

During this period after World War II both major parties and local factions in Oklahoma City increased their appeal to the Negro vote. Nor could white politicians depend upon manipulated agents to secure votes. White party leaders and political candidates sought out the support of leaders identified with protest. They had to get the votes. The offices at issue ranged from minor elected judicial positions and city council offices to gubernatorial and United States senatorial positions.

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<sup>1</sup>Interview with John Dunjee, Editor of The Black Dispatch, September 9, 1967.

<sup>2</sup>Interview with E. Melvin Porter, State Senator, Oklahoma County, October 30, 1967, and interview with Tex Newman, Secretary, Oklahoma County Election Board, April 9, 1969.

During this period there emerged the group that formed the core of leadership for Negro protest activities from the mid-1940s to the early 1950s. As previously noted, an older, established group was active in the community for many years, under the leadership of Roscoe Dunjee. After World War II, this leadership group remained essentially the same with the addition of several active members, some of whom had returned from serving in World War II. They helped to attract younger leaders who were to carry on the struggle in later stages. These leaders worked entirely within the legal and political framework of American life. However, within these boundaries they vigorously asserted their views. Their main vehicles of protest were legal actions instituted to redress what they regarded as unconstitutional and unjust infringements on Negro rights. They were able to construct a legal and political framework for further and more direct protest activities, which were to come at later stages of the struggle. Their impact on Oklahoma City's racial patterns was immense. Simultaneously, the results of their activities affected even the national civil rights scene and was acknowledged many times by national leaders, such as Roy Wilkins and Thurgood Marshall. Their prominence in the Negro community gave them the political leverage to accomplish singly and often surprisingly effectively

what otherwise might have been only accomplished by a bitter and protracted struggle.<sup>1</sup>

Because of their legal victories and the attendant publicity these leaders had acquired valuable experience and personal relations with national leaders. They had actively worked with these national leaders and had mastered their style and strategy, while adding their unique individual flourishes. During this period, Negro protest leadership was becoming a center of political power in the community at large.

These leaders, who had labored in past years for Negro causes, had also come to personally know and understand influential members of the white community. They had argued and pleaded with them informally; failing to gain satisfaction, they had at times filed lawsuits. Through this process, Negro and white leaders in Oklahoma City had begun to understand the problems, desires, and frustrations of each side. A "working relationship" between the two community's leaders was instituted, with each side maintaining separate bases of support.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Two of these leaders, Roscoe Dunjee and Jimmy Stewart, were on the National Board of the NAACP and had been state leaders for many years.

<sup>2</sup>Interview with Jimmy Stewart, National Board of Directors, NAACP, and former President of the Oklahoma City Branch, NAACP, June 29, 1967.

The increased involvement of Negroes, with political factions, with traditional political parties, and with protest groups heightened their overall political activity. "After the War (World War II) there is no doubt that Negroes at all levels became more politically conscious."<sup>1</sup> Identification with political parties and political factions<sup>2</sup> "...does more than increase political activity by heightening individual interests, competence, and information. It has a rather sizable independent influence on Negro political participation."<sup>3</sup> The manipulation of Negro voting, so prevalent in early years, was slowly disintegrated during this period.

Overall, the economic, social, and ideological changes of the post World War II years, coupled with specific protests undertaken by the Negro community, had helped to fashion an atmosphere conducive to desegregation.

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<sup>1</sup>Interview with William Rose, Chairman, Oklahoma Human Rights Commission, July 6, 1967.

<sup>2</sup>Local politics in Oklahoma City's Council elections were conducted on a nonpartisan basis, but naturally this did not exclude the formation of interest groups and factions competing for influence. On the other hand, county and state elections were conducted on a partisan basis.

<sup>3</sup>See Donald R. Matthews and James W. Prothro, Negroes and the New Southern Politics (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1966), p. 283, Table 10-7.

The Negro protest movement in Oklahoma City would from this time on be able to focus attention and direct activities toward specific segregated patterns of life that they desired to alter or eliminate.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE POLITICS OF DESEGREGATION

The Negro protest movement in Oklahoma City, encouraged by its victories and by an emerging civic pride, moved in the early 1950s to take full advantage of the newly created mood for desegregation. As an officer of the United States Community Relations Service said about this period in Oklahoma City's racial history, "This was really the end of the so-called 'brotherhood' phase in the civil rights struggle. From this point on, there was (in Oklahoma City) a new mood of urgency and determination on the part of Oklahoma City Negroes and their leaders to achieve broad, tangible, and immediate results."<sup>1</sup>

A new and more direct form of protest, gathering momentum in the early 1950s and for a decade thereafter, would come to bear on a still largely segregated society. "The Politics of Desegregation" will be an attempt to define and analyze this emerging protest style. The chapter will

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<sup>1</sup>Interview with Mrs. Velma Strode, Director of Legal Government Liaison, United States Community Relations Service of Washington, D.C., June 27, 1967.



analyze the protest and how it affected a change toward desegregation. The succeeding chapter will deal with the aftermath of this protest and where desegregation was effected. It will also evaluate the protest in terms of its results.

The protest movement focused on a set of objectives which coalesced into one overall goal--the total desegregation of major facets of Oklahoma City society, economic, educational, and political. Accordingly, it was extending basic values of the white community to the Negro segment of the population. Stress was placed upon the maintenance of the traditional value system, and a desire to play a meaningful role in it. It became, at this point, a reform social movement.<sup>1</sup>

In past years, Oklahoma City Negroes, still not prepared to overtly challenge the white society and its values, employed either subtle protest tactics or confined their protest activities to legal exercises. Laws were tested against the constitutional provisions of Oklahoma and of the United States. But after many years of successful legal battles and protest activities which culminated in the creation

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<sup>1</sup>Morris Abram, "The Challenges of the Courtroom: Reflections on the Adversary System," The Law School Record, Vol. II, No. 2, (Autumn, 1963), 6-7. Abram explains that a reform type social movement is one which is designed to extend basic values to other segments of the population without overthrowing the basic value system of a society.

of an atmosphere receptive to desegregation the community was still, in everyday life for most Negroes, as segregated as it was in the earlier years of the city's history.

Without totally casting aside past tactics and strategy, useful to them in past years, a transition period had been reached where emphasis would be placed more upon the immediately achievement of results rather than the slow, gradualist tactics utilized in past years.

It was also during this period that Oklahoma City's Negro protest developed many tactics such as mass meetings, nonviolent direct action, and the employment of court tests, which have become "standard operating procedures" of the Negro protest movement throughout America.<sup>1</sup> There was no grand strategy of action to guide the protest. Tactics and strategy were guided by expediency, with the overall goal of desegregation as an end. In this framework it is possible to present the sequence of events, continually building momentum, that illustrate the protest as it entered a more militant phase.

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<sup>1</sup>Jacqueline J. Clark, "Standard Operational Procedures in Tragic Situations," Phylon, XXII, No. 4, (Winter, 1961), 318-328.

Public School Desegregation: The Initial Thrust

Shortly after the legal victories achieved in higher education by Oklahoma City's Negro leadership, attention was directed toward desegregating the lower educational levels throughout the city school system. The initial thrust in the direction of more militant techniques by the Negro protest movement was provided by the efforts to desegregate the public schools. The importance of such efforts for the desegregation struggle was threefold: (1) It would directly challenge the public school segregation laws of Oklahoma and provide an opening for later attacks upon all of the state's segregation statutes; (2) It would challenge the traditional patterns of living in the Oklahoma City community and thereby involved white citizens directly with the desegregation movement. Before the 1950s, Negro action protest was usually that of individuals. Most of it was intended to test laws regarded as unconstitutional. But the challenge to school segregation was the first mass challenge to a segregated community as it affected many white citizens directly; (3) It would sustain and excite Negro leadership in this broad objective and involve the Negro community more deeply in the general desegregation effort.

By 1952, Negro leaders were well underway in planning

tactical moves toward public school desegregation. The close liaison that had been formed between local leaders working through the Oklahoma City branch of the NAACP and national NAACP personalities in earlier legal struggles proved most helpful. A communications network was soon established between NAACP offices, beginning in Oklahoma City and extending through the Southwest Regional Counsel in Dallas to the national New York office. Through this network legal-judicial tactics were shaped and the first steps to be taken were outlined in detail.<sup>1</sup> Oklahoma City Negro leaders had learned from past experience that any confrontation, legal or otherwise, must be scrupulously planned to avoid legal defeat and/or subsequent loss of community interest among both Negroes and whites. Abundant correspondence flowed between the various offices in planning the confrontation. An examination of the correspondence reveals that Oklahoma City was extremely close to being brought into the initial challenge to the "separate but equal" doctrine. Time limitations alone probably forestalled this occurrence.<sup>2</sup>

For nearly two years, between 1952 and 1954, Negro leaders assisted by sympathetic whites, surveyed the entire Oklahoma City school district in preparation for filing a

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<sup>1</sup>See page 122.

<sup>2</sup>See page 123.

**N. A. A. C. P. LEGAL DEFENSE AND EDUCATIONAL FUND, INC.**

**20 West 40th Street, New York 18, N. Y.**

LONEARS 3-6884

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Please direct reply to:

**U. SIMPSON TATE**  
*Southern Regional Counsel*  
1718 Jackson Street  
Dallas, Texas

**November 4, 1952**

**Mr. Jimmy Stewart**  
**548 N. E. Fourth Street**  
**Oklahoma City, Oklahoma**

**Dear Jimmy:**

Thurgood was in town last weekend and I talked with him about the petition to the Board of Education.

It would be better if we can speak for school age children or parents of school age children. But if we cannot get any parents to act in that capacity, we will file the petition anyhow. I will have it ready in a few days.

Sincerely yours,

  
U. Simpson Tate

UST:hg

## NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF COLORED PEOPLE

20 WEST 40th STREET, NEW YORK 18, N. Y.

September 25, 1952

Mr. James Stewart, President  
Oklahoma City Branch  
548 N. E. Fourth Street  
Oklahoma City, Okla.

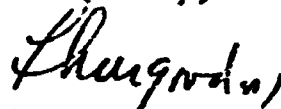
Dear Jimmy:

This will acknowledge your letter of September 17th concerning the school situation. It seems to me that the first thing to do is to present a petition to the local school board demanding the end of segregation in public schools in Oklahoma City. This petition is to be similar to those filed in the cases now pending before the Supreme Court.

Under the ruling of our conventions and the Board of Directors our branches are required to take a direct stand against segregation and not to tolerate anything that even resembles asking for "separate but equal."

Enclosed please find copy of self-explanatory letter to Tate. I hope that matters will work out and we will, of course, be happy to help although we will be tied up with the pending cases until the end of October. As you know the Topeka case is set for argument on October 14th in the Supreme Court to be followed by the Clarendon County case.

Sincerely,



Thurgood Marshall  
Special Counsel

legal suit to achieve desegregation. They would not tolerate anything even resembling "separate but equal" and took a direct stand against all forms of school segregation.<sup>1</sup>

Accordingly, Negroes and whites had individual meetings with school officials to protest existing arrangements, but to no avail. Petitions were presented and mass meetings were held to protest state enforced segregation. By 1954, it was evident that the Negro community was beginning to marshal its forces for a major desegregation effort--the first such major effort of its kind in the community's history.

Before Oklahoma City was confronted with a direct legal challenge the United States Supreme Court in 1954 reversed its former doctrine of "separate but equal."<sup>2</sup> This decision did not take the Oklahoma City community by surprise, as most Negroes and whites were aware of the controversy from their own local experience. During a year interim, before the Supreme Court had decided how their desegregation decision would be implemented throughout the nation, the local protest against segregated schools gained momentum. Many Negroes and whites supported some form of school desegregation. The

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<sup>1</sup>Interview with Jimmy Stewart, President, Oklahoma Branch, NAACP, and member of National Board of Directors, NAACP, June 29, 1967.

<sup>2</sup>Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas, 347 U.S. 483, 98 L Ed. 873 (1954).

school desegregation conflict was of such a nature that pressure from both Negroes and whites arose for an accommodating solution. Significant areas of the population, especially many Negro and white leaders, did not want to live indefinitely with recrimination and dispute and in a state of uncertainty. "Everyone (leadership) was striving for a solution so as not to disrupt educational processes and to be prepared for future federal guidelines."<sup>1</sup> At this point, the community can be characterized by what William Graham Sumner called the "strain toward consistency." The move toward a solution was intensified by state and local officials sanctioning what the Supreme Court had decreed and promising that the city and state would cooperate in effectuating prior and subsequent court decisions on segregation.<sup>2</sup> Negro leaders had previously cautioned prominent state and local authorities to uphold the laws of the nation, or at a minimum, to modify any negative reactions they might have to Supreme Court rulings. Further, white political figures were informed by Negro leaders that Negro political support would now be directed toward those favoring school desegregation. Even the old Negro agents of white politicians, who had been

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<sup>1</sup>Interview with Dr. Oliver Hodge, former Oklahoma Superintendent of Public Instruction, February 4, 1963.

<sup>2</sup>Interview with former Oklahoma Governor Johnston Murray (January, 1951-January, 1955), March 7, 1963.



operative in the city for years, told white politicians that support had to be given to school desegregation. The importance of the issue and the momentum generated by more progressive Negro leaders made this posture an essential of their political environment.<sup>1</sup>

The Governor at the time, Johnston Murray, set the overall tone in declaring, "As Governor, I have sworn to uphold the Court and the laws of our state and nation. I intend to do so in this matter as in all others."<sup>2</sup> In all subsequent state and local elections, no candidate for office made the maintenance of segregation an issue or attempted to create a "backlash" in any way.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, the State Department of Public Instruction immediately issued a statement to all school boards declaring that changes in

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<sup>1</sup>Interview with John Dunjee, Editor, The Black Dispatch, September 9, 1967.

<sup>2</sup>Tulsa Tribune, May 8, 1954, p. 1. It is interesting to note that Governor Johnston Murray, Governor from 1951-1955, as Chairman of the Southern Governors Conference, refused subsequently to call a meeting, at the request of many southern governors, to take issue with the ruling of the Supreme Court on this matter. Further, Oklahoma was one of the few southern or border states that declined to sign the so-called "Southern Manifesto" which challenged any change in segregation patterns.

<sup>3</sup>Interview with State Representative Bill Metcalf, (Hobart, Oklahoma), May 1, 1963. See also, the statements of gubernatorial candidates on segregation, Tulsa Tribune, May 18, 1954.

former segregation policy would be forthcoming. Attached to this statement was a copy of pertinent sections from the famous school desegregation decision. State government exerted a great deal of influence, primarily because of a financial formula making continued segregation very costly to various school districts. The policy decided upon by state officials significantly affected the way local officials dealt with desegregation.

The Attorney General's Office skillfully created a picture through its public statements and legal opinions of responsible government flavored with a lack of zeal for segregationist policies. In presenting legal arguments before the Supreme Court on how desegregation was to proceed (for the second school segregation decision in 1955), Oklahoma officials did not argue against the previous school ruling as some states did; they merely requested time to work out financial affairs. Thurgood Marshall, then Chief Legal Counsel for the NAACP, repeatedly praised Oklahoma and its major cities for their overall conduct in reaction to the first desegregation decision.<sup>1</sup>

Local officials followed the lead of state leaders

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<sup>1</sup>Interview with Harry Johnson, former Assistant Attorney General and specialist on public school financing, February 11, 1963.

and stressed the theme of obedience to state and national law. The need for the community to be unified in solving a very complex and emotional problem was emphasized. Oklahoma City government, with the encouragement and backing of the state, moved to bolster the community and to prepare it for further changes brought on by the school ruling. This compliance with the school desegregation ruling made the effort to find a solution to possible future problems easier, while also checking and neutralizing possible outbursts from dissident elements of the white community.

There was very little opposition to these policies. "There were very few hostile reactions (letters, telegrams, newspaper advertisements or personal invectives) toward these steps."<sup>1</sup> It seems that white behavior patterns were now beginning to conform to the attitudes and actions evidenced by community leaders. As some students of the South have noted, "What is overlooked is that widespread anti-Negro reactions are not necessarily individual personality problems, but rather may be institutionalized and actually expected social patterns."<sup>2</sup> Other studies have revealed

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<sup>1</sup>Interview with former Governor Raymond Gary, Governor of Oklahoma from 1955-1959, March 13, 1963.

<sup>2</sup>Percy Black and Ruth Davidson Atkins, "Conformity Versus Prejudice In White-Negro Relations In the South: Some Methodological Considerations," Journal of Psychology, XXX, (1950), p. 111. In Bernard Berelson and Gary Sterner, Human Behavior: An Inventory of Scientific Findings (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1964 ), p. 508.

that "Generally speaking, a fait accompli that fits in with our democratic creed is accepted with little more than an initial flurry of protest...Official policies once established are hard to revoke. They set models that, once accepted, create habits and conditions favorable to their maintenance."<sup>1</sup> There was not the slightest hint that defiance of the law or an anti-Negro posture would be part of city policy, overt or by implication. Melvin Tumin's study of Greensboro is similar to Oklahoma City's experience. He concluded,

The decision to desegregate schools in Greensboro was not met with loud clamors of approval and great public enthusiasm. But the exemplary conduct of the legitimate leaders on both sides of the issue encouraged the majority of the residents of the community to follow suit. That this majority might also have been encouraged to resist desegregation by every technique is unquestionable. The community chose, instead, to follow the model set for them by their men of prominence, and to exhibit those qualities of character and conduct which insure peaceful change. 2

Supplementing these efforts by public officials were those by other community leaders and organizations who were already mobilizing public opinion in order to fashion a broad consensus in favor of desegregation. The NAACP and the Oklahoma City Urban League were instrumental in informing

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<sup>1</sup>Gordon W. Allport, The Nature of Prejudice (New York: Doubleday, 1958), p. 471.

<sup>2</sup>Melvin Tumin, Desegregation: Resistance and Readiness (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1958), pp. 203-204.

the public about the Supreme Court rulings and alerting them to future desegregation moves. Informational meetings, sponsored by these groups were well publicized and well attended. Further, civic groups of many varieties requested speakers who would inform their members more fully on the growing segregation-desegregation dilemma. Annual institutes, sponsored by the local chapter of the National Conference of Christians and Jews followed the theme--"Integration Is Everybody's Business."<sup>1</sup> Many other forums, meetings, and institutes, as well as weekly television programs sponsored by churches, schools, and civic organizations were conducted; from these generally emerged recommendations for more and wider interracial contacts at all levels in order to facilitate any future desegregation in the schools or elsewhere.<sup>2</sup> Most of these organizations had never before given anything like the attention to the solution of a community problem that they devoted to the pending desegregation decision.

Complementing these activities Negro leaders moved to alert Negro citizens of their individual rights and duties. There were numerous discussion groups and forums. Widespread

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<sup>1</sup>Interview with Herbert Tyson, Director, Oklahoma City Urban League, February 7, 1963.

<sup>2</sup>Southern School News, Vol. I, No. 4, December 1, 1954, p. 12.

Negro interest in the school desegregation issue was sustained and intensified in an effort to portray a united front to the white community. Negro parents of school age children were asked to sign petitions requesting immediate school desegregation and to declare their readiness for the process to begin. Many of the litigants and their attorneys in previous desegregation controversies, such as Ada Lois Sipuel, Roscoe Dunjee, and G.W. McLaurin, spoke out to encourage complete and immediate desegregation. Nationally known Negro protest leaders came to Oklahoma City to give their encouragement to this effort.<sup>1</sup> These included such well known people as: Thurgood Marshall; James Nabrit, Professor of Law, Howard University; Charles Thompson, Dean of the Graduate School, Howard University.

A significant move toward desegregation that gave encouragement to Negro protest leaders was the complete and abrupt abolition of segregation in Catholic schools throughout the state. This occurred nearly one year before the court was to announce the "how" and "when" of desegregation. Catholic schools had decided to desegregate rather than wait for further guidelines from the court.<sup>2</sup> Now, for the first

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<sup>1</sup>See page 132.

<sup>2</sup>"Catholics End Segregation In All Schools Within the State," Oklahoma City Times, August 24, 1954, p. 1. This would also affect the Negro parochial schools with an enrollment of close to four thousand.

# **CIVIL RIGHTS DISCUSSION**

**MONDAY NIGHT, MAY 24**

**8:00 p. m.**

**Tabernacle Baptist Church**

**Northeast Third and Byers—Sponsored by NAACP**

**HEAR.....**

**THURGOOD MARSHALL**

**Chief Counsel, NAACP, New York City, N. Y.**

**WILLIAM "BOB" MING**

**Professor of Law, Chicago University, Chicago, Ill.**

**JAMES A. NABRIT**

**Secretary of Howard University, Professor of Law, Washington, D. C.**

**DR. CHARLES H. THOMPSON**

**Dean of Graduate School, Howard University, Washington, D. C.**

**A. MACEO SMITH**

**Southwest Regional Housing Official, Dallas, Texas**

**Others on platform will include Mrs. Ada Lois Sipuel-Fisher, Dr. H. W. Williamson, Roscoe Dunjee, Donald Jones, Dr. W. S. Boyd.**

time in the city's school history, some Negro and white students were enrolling in and attending the same schools. Significantly, there was no overt negative reaction to this move by the white community. Negro leaders could point to desegregation within the total community and tell white citizens that such a process was not only desirable but was workable as well. Further, the white community sanctioned the decision of the Catholic schools, in effect, by not attempting to enforce relevant state laws. The desegregation of Catholic schools flatly defied Oklahoma state statutes that prohibited the comingling of Negro and white students and the maintenance, by public or private institutions, of integrated schools.<sup>1</sup> Apparently, Catholic officials did not believe that the prohibitory statutes would be enforced--and they were correct.

Catholic officials and Negro leaders spoke freely and enthusiastically of the new policy and its results in the months that followed.<sup>2</sup> For the first time in the city's history, newspaper accounts were continuously provided of Negro and white students studying, working, and playing together.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>See Oklahoma Statutes, 1951, Title 70, Articles 5-5, 5-6, and 5-7.

<sup>2</sup>See Southern School News, Vol. I, No. 2, October 1, 1954, p. 12.

<sup>3</sup>Oklahoma City Times, "Teen Page," February 15, 1955, p. 15.



It is known that during intensive political campaigns or when public crises arise in a community that exposure to communications media may increase public interest and also the relevance of certain issues. Additionally, this exposure may speed up the trend of opinion within groups; and it tends to create pressure to harmonize opinions and beliefs inconsistent with the opinions of community leaders.<sup>1</sup> It is therefore reasonable to assume that the massive publicity campaign mounted by community leaders, both Negro and white, to speed acceptance of eventual desegregation affected community attitudes in a positive fashion. This, coupled with the decision of Catholics to voluntarily end segregation, and the wide news coverage given to this event, contributed to the creation of a much larger consensus than had previously existed. At the very least, it heightened public attention to the desegregation issue in general and placed the topic at the forefront of public issues.

That a measure of consensus had been attained seemed to be demonstrated by the supplementary school decision on how and when desegregation was to proceed.<sup>2</sup> This decision

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<sup>1</sup>Bernard Berelson, Paul F. Lazarsfeld, and William N. McPhee, Voting: A Study of Opinion Formation in a Presidential Campaign (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1954), p. 145.

<sup>2</sup>Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas, 349 U.S. 294, 298 (1955).

made no mention of specific deadlines or other detailed requirements. Oklahoma City community leaders, however, pledged themselves ready to begin the transition to desegregation as soon as possible. Furthermore, there was no overt attempt to counter the court decision or the posture of community spokesmen, legally or otherwise.<sup>1</sup> Front page newspaper headlines boldly stated that the "City Won't Stall On Integration."<sup>2</sup>

School board officials voiced agreement with both school decisions and aligned themselves against those who might try to defy the edicts.<sup>3</sup> The Oklahoma City School Superintendent, whose school-age Negro population was the state's largest, concurred with the general sentiment and added, "We're not going to look for ways to evade the Supreme Court's decision. We will do this (desegregate) just as soon as we can plan the practical, physical details."<sup>4</sup>

Newspaper comment in Oklahoma City was favorably disposed toward the rulings and urged Negro and white leaders to build together a better community. They stressed commun-

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p. 5. <sup>1</sup>Southern School News, Vol. I, No. 10, June 8, 1955,

<sup>2</sup>Oklahoma City Times, May 31, 1955, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup>Southern School News, Op. Cit.

p. 5. <sup>4</sup>Southern School News, Vol. I, No. 10, June 8, 1955,

ity spirit and unity.<sup>1</sup> This attitude was in striking contrast to other southern and border states who echoed sentiments like, "When the court proposes that its social revolution be imposed upon the South 'as soon as practicable' there are those of us who would respond that 'as soon as practicable' means never at all."<sup>2</sup> No major Oklahoma City newspaper since the desegregation decision has ever editorialized in such an inflammatory fashion regarding race relations. The Negro newspaper, The Black Dispatch, was generally encouraged by the white reaction. It stressed to the Negro community the effectiveness of the Negro protest and urged that the struggle be continued.<sup>3</sup>

In the autumn of 1955, the Oklahoma City School Board, following the guidelines set down by the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, formally desegregated all public schools. Attendance areas were consolidated; new lines were drawn, and all grades were immediately integrated, not one grade at a time. These initial steps were repeatedly commended by national and local civil rights leaders.<sup>4</sup> Negro

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<sup>1</sup>Oklahoma City Times, September 16, 1955, and similar comments in The Tulsa Tribune, May 18, 1954.

<sup>2</sup>Richmond News Leader, as quoted in the Southern School News, June 8, 1955, Vol. I, No. 10, p. 5.

<sup>3</sup>Southern School News, Vol. I, No. 10, June 8, 1955, p. 5.

<sup>4</sup>Interview with Oliver Hodge, Oklahoma Superintendent of Public Instruction, February 4, 1963.

leaders then immediately began to encourage enrollment at previously all-white schools both to show their determination to the white community and demonstrate to the Negro community the tangible results of their endeavors. Before the actual school term was to commence posters were distributed in the Negro community announcing a series of meetings to acquaint Negro school patrons with their rights.<sup>1</sup> These meetings were useful in helping to create an atmosphere of confidence in meeting the new school conditions.

After the school term commenced more than three hundred Negroes were attending nine former all-white elementary and secondary schools.<sup>2</sup> There were some complaints to school authorities by Negro leaders; these ranged from complaints about the distribution on school grounds of handbills protesting desegregation to delaying tactics governing Negro enrollments;<sup>3</sup> but overall, the opening of desegregated schools passed quietly. It is apparent that the intensive preparation helped to facilitate this process and contribute to its initial success.

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<sup>1</sup>See page 138.

<sup>2</sup>Oklahoma City Times, September 16, 1955, p. 24.

<sup>3</sup>Interview with Jimmy Stewart, President, Oklahoma City Branch, NAACP, and member, National Board of Directors, NAACP, June 29, 1967.

# **INTERGRATION MEETING**

**In What School in Oklahoma City Will Your Child Enroll?**

**Three Public Meetings Will Be Held Under the  
Auspices of the**

**OKLAHOMA CITY BRANCH OF THE NAACP**

**Between Now and the Enrollment Period to Advise You Of  
Your Rights.**

**Thursday Night, August 18, 1955**

**The Mt. Pleasant Baptist Church**

**805 S. E. 5th Street**

**Rev. W. A. Evans, Pastor**

**Monday Night, August 22, 1955**

**Bethlehem Star Baptist Church**

**9 South Ellison Street**

**Rev. J. T. West, Pastor**

**Friday Night, August 26, 1955**

**Progressive Baptist Church**

**Garden Oaks Addition**

**Rev. W. H. Marshall, Pastor**

**THE POLICY OF THE OKLAHOMA CITY SCHOOL BOARD WILL  
BE DISCUSSED BY**

**J. E. STEWART, PRESIDENT OF THE BRANCH, AND ROSCOE DUNEE, REPRESENTING  
THE STATE CONFERENCE**

## **Parents Should Know This Before Enrolling**

**Students promoted from the 6th grade are eligible to enter the junior high school nearest  
his or her residence. Such students are new enrollees.**

**Students who were promoted from the 9th grade in the Moon Junior High School, should  
enroll in the high school nearest to their residence. (This information is especially directed  
to students who have been riding in buses.)**

**Students who have attended integrated schools will be present and tell their experiences.  
Every citizen in the city is invited to attend these meetings and join in the discussions.**

**ADMISSION FREE**

Generally, all daily school affairs in the integrated schools were handled successfully and initial friction between Negro and white students was minimal. White parents having children in integrated schools, if not completely satisfied with the school situation, displayed little or no hostile reactions.<sup>1</sup> For the first time in the city's history, significant numbers of Negroes and whites, even if only of school age, were working side-by-side under equal conditions. Moreover, some of the integrated schools were clearly visible to the entire community because of their geographical locations<sup>2</sup> and for the first time, Negroes and whites in great numbers, aside from daily laborers, could be seen in continuous activity together. No hostile reaction developed from the white community to this new arrangement and no breach of confidence with city government or with the community's leaders was apparent.<sup>3</sup> It is interesting to

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<sup>1</sup>Interview with J. Frank Malone, former Principal of Oklahoma City's Central High School, February 25, 1963.

<sup>2</sup>The largest integrated school at the time, Central High School, was located in mid-downtown Oklahoma City.

<sup>3</sup>For instance, the number of bond issues for school purposes that were either approved or disapproved did not fluctuate greatly in Oklahoma either before or after desegregation. Southern School News, Vol. IV, No. 9, March, 1958, p. 1. (Statistics compiled from data supplied by Investment Bankers Association of America, Washington, D.C.). Further, in city elections held after desegregation had begun, no candidate for a city office campaigned against the desegregation process or even hinted that the process should be reversed or delayed.

note that Little Rock, Arkansas, prior to the school turbulence that was later to occur there, sent a delegation to Oklahoma City to study its desegregation procedures. This delegation, among whom were Little Rock school officials, specifically requested visits to Oklahoma City's Central High School, the largest high school in Oklahoma that had desegregated to that time.<sup>1</sup>

As for the future the Negro protest movement was stimulated by the school desegregation effort in a number of ways. First, it put the community at large and many community leaders in particular in the position of favoring the principle of desegregation; in this sense, the community consensus was broadened. Second, it demonstrated forcefully, that new patterns of living could be effected fairly easily within the general community structure and that the dire predictions from some quarters about desegregation were groundless; "...we have learned that changes which people desire, radical or not, can be made swiftly, without great cost and that a society may nearly re-do itself--in a generation--if it wants to."<sup>2</sup> Other scholars have suggested that

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<sup>1</sup>Interview with J. Frank Malone, former Principal of Oklahoma City's Central High School, February 25, 1963.

<sup>2</sup>Manning Nash, "Applied and Action Anthropology in the Understanding of Man," Anthropological Quarterly, XXXII, (1959), 79; quoting Margaret Mead.

"...so long as the basic value system stands reasonably firm, selective change can proceed with minimum strain and stress."<sup>1</sup>

It is generally believed that prejudice toward minority groups is more effectively lessened by direct personal contact than in any other way. For instance, one author has said "It has been confirmed in fourteen different samples, involving about six thousand persons."<sup>2</sup> Not only did the desegregation of Oklahoma City's public schools place Negro and white students in direct contact with one another, but contact between adult Negroes and whites became more frequent through PTA and other school groups. In addition, Negro and white school personnel were allowed, indeed even encouraged, to increase their contact with one another.

The increased access to public educational facilities by all races tended to open up the social system and helped to weaken the old caste patterns. At this phase of school desegregation, however, there were limited numbers involved and complete access to schools by all races was not yet a reality. Significantly, the process had begun and signs for the future seemed optimistic. As one sociologist

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<sup>1</sup>Felix M. Keesing, Culture Change: An Analysis and Bibliography of Anthropological Sources to 1952 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1953), pp. 80, 85. From Bernard Berelson and Gary Steiner, Human Behavior: An Inventory of Scientific Findings (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968), pp. 614-615.

<sup>2</sup>Robin M. Williams, Jr., Review and Assessment of Research on Race and Culture Conflict, Report to the Conference on Research on Human Behavior, February-March, 1953 (New York: Rockefeller Foundation, 1953), p. 54.



has said, "The frequency of vertical mobility tends to vary with the degree to which access to educational facilities is equalized for all classes."<sup>1</sup> Further studies have shown that, "the more a society emphasizes education, without at the same time permitting the right to an education to become the prerogative of any special group, then the more likely it is that the interchange of ranks can go on."<sup>2</sup>

The then State Superintendent of Public Instruction perhaps summarized the protest movement's position at this point best when he stated, "The desegregation movement had taken a giant step toward the elimination of a segregated society that was not irreversible. Their (the protest movement) future actions would now be geared to consolidating and capitalizing on their gains."<sup>3</sup>

Negro leaders, like Roscoe Dunjee, editor of The Black Dispatch, stressed their satisfaction with general community sentiment at this point but felt that the struggle had a long way to go before the community would be effectively desegregated. Dunjee summarized his feelings by saying,

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<sup>1</sup>Ronald Freedman, et al., Principles of Sociology (revised edition, New York: Holt Rinehart, and Winston, 1956), p. 532.

<sup>2</sup>Edward Gross, Work and Society (New York: Crowell, 1958), p. 190.

<sup>3</sup>Interview with Oliver J. Hodge, Oklahoma Superintendent of Public Instruction, February 4, 1963.

"I am frankly disappointed that the Supreme Court did not set a definite date when the South should cease segregation. The (no-deadline order) will create endless litigation--a multiplicity of suits that could have been avoided--and will place an onerous burden upon the fifteen million Negroes of this nation."<sup>1</sup> In effect, in view of actions yet to come, it was a declaration that this phase of the desegregation struggle had just begun.

#### The Desegregation Movement Gains Momentum

The successful gains in school desegregation perhaps did more to initially stimulate the movement than any other factor. New leaders with novel tactics to broaden and strengthen the protest were added. The older leaders who had guided the movement utilizing mainly legal tools were now moving into less active and more advisory positions. Negro leadership fully appreciated the improvement gained in the past, but after surveying past accomplishments, they demanded greater improvements. This phenomenon is not unusual. Surprisingly, Negroes historically have participated more actively when only moderately satisfied after securing im-

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<sup>1</sup>Southern School News, Vol. I, No. 10, June 8, 1955, p. 5.

provements in past conditions. Matthews and Prothro have indicated that, "Participation is lowest at the two extremes--among these either highly dissatisfied or highly satisfied. It is significantly higher among those between the two extremes....,"<sup>1</sup> and "...the moderately satisfied Negro participates more than either the alienated or contented."<sup>2</sup> Not only had school desegregation begun to tear away at the fabric of a caste society, as previously indicated, but the Negro protest was being intensified simultaneously. This would be significant in the shaping of future protest tactics and strategy.

Thus, the protest movement in the mid-1950s was taking on an added dimension. In addition to gains in school desegregation, which provided reinvigoration, it was nurtured by: (1)the Montgomery Bus Boycott of 1955-1956; (2)passage of the 1957 Civil Rights Act; (3)additional membership and new leadership.

The Montgomery Bus Boycott of 1955-1956 presented the Negro protest in Oklahoma City witha philosophy and tactical approach that would be utilized in local efforts. Further, it would focus attention upon other areas of com-

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<sup>1</sup>Donald R. Matthews and James W. Prothro, Negroes and the New Southern Politics (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1966), p. 289.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 291-292.

munity life that were segregated, but had previously been immune from the protest. The Montgomery Boycott provided added momentum for the local protest. Negro leaders kept themselves informed on the day-to-day boycott actions and results, and this information in turn was communicated to the general Negro community.<sup>1</sup> "On the heels of school desegregation, Oklahoma City Negroes were searching for other areas to focus their attention upon. The movement was restless and something was needed to keep up the momentum. The Montgomery boycott was just what was needed."<sup>2</sup>

Local Negro leaders were quite inspired by the boycott, especially the philosophy of nonviolent direct action developed by Martin Luther King, Jr.<sup>3</sup> Oklahoma City protest leaders were especially stimulated by the boycott and foresaw possible further use of the techniques being utilized, especially non-cooperation with segregation as uniquely appropriate to the local desegregation struggle.<sup>4</sup> Other

<sup>1</sup>Interview with John Dunjee, Editor, The Black Dispatch, September 5, 1967. This was in addition to the general coverage given to the Montgomery Bus Boycott by the major Oklahoma City newspapers.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>See Martin Luther King, Jr., Stride Toward Freedom: The Montgomery Story (New York: Ballantine Books, 1958), pp. 80-86.

<sup>4</sup>Interview with Herbert Tyson, Director, Oklahoma City Urban League, February 7, 1963.

techniques like legal measures and mass meetings had been used before in Oklahoma City, but the Montgomery Boycott enabled local leaders to understand more fully their possible varied uses against segregation.

The passage in 1957 by Congress of a civil rights act dealing primarily with protecting the right to vote was important to the Oklahoma City Negro protest, both psychologically and practically. Psychologically, the Negro was encouraged to know that the federal government was willing to lend support to his political rights. Additionally, the Negro protest was bolstered by the knowledge that federal intervention and protection was now forthcoming and that an affirmative national public opinion was being aroused as evidenced by the passage of a civil rights act. In the mid-1950s, various surveys taken in several parts of the country revealed a positive shift in white attitudes toward Negroes in several areas of life.<sup>2</sup>

National law, following upon local successes, provided added evidence that the direction of public policy on the matter of basic political rights for the Negro was now clear and irreversible. Further, it gave the Negro leadership in this community the faith that the protest could be directed

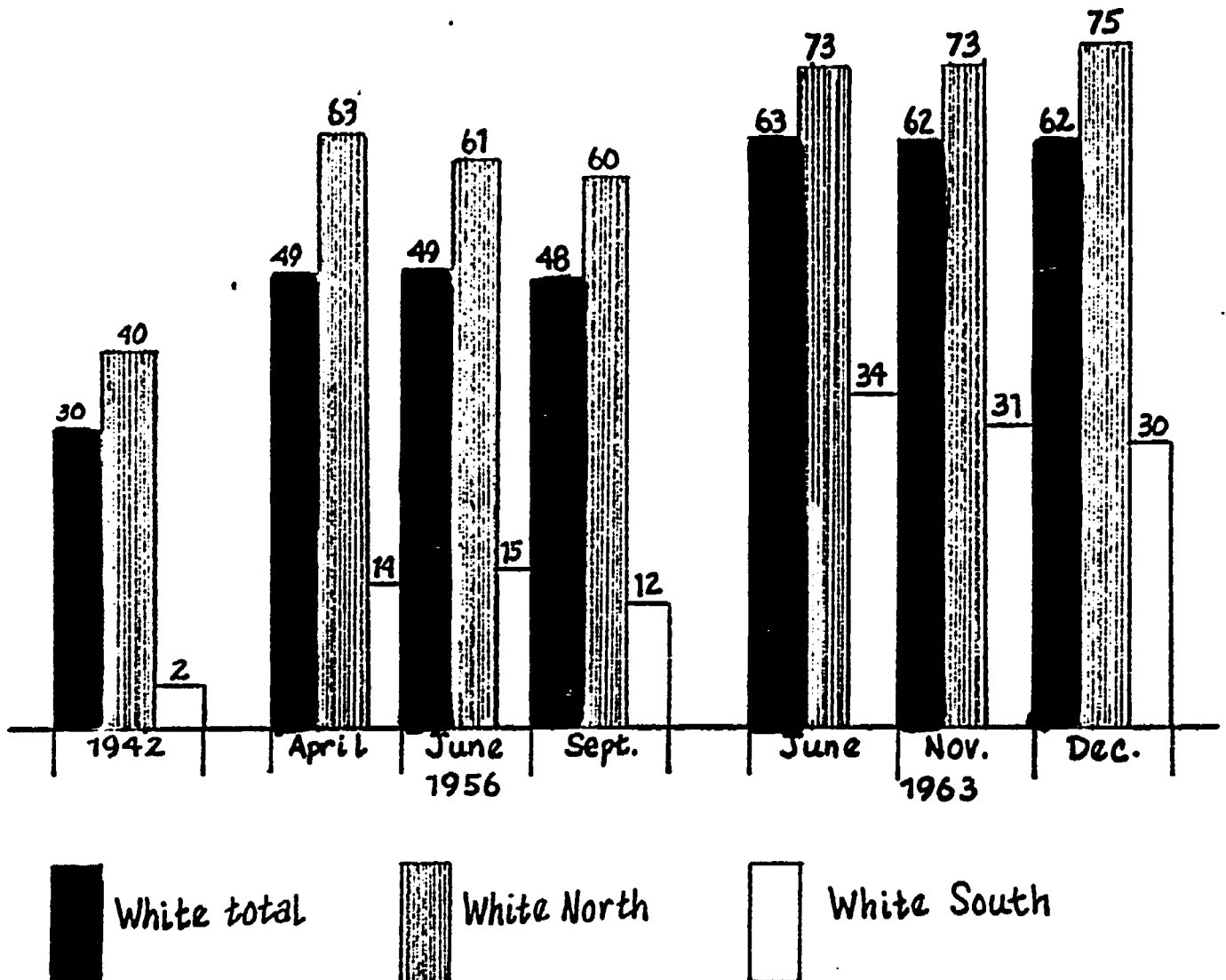
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<sup>1</sup>Interview with Herbert Tyson, Director, Oklahoma City Urban League, February 7, 1963.

<sup>2</sup>See pages 147, 148, and 149 of this study for representative national public opinion surveys on white attitudes toward Negroes on school desegregation, residential integration, and public transportation integration over a number of years.

FIGURE 2

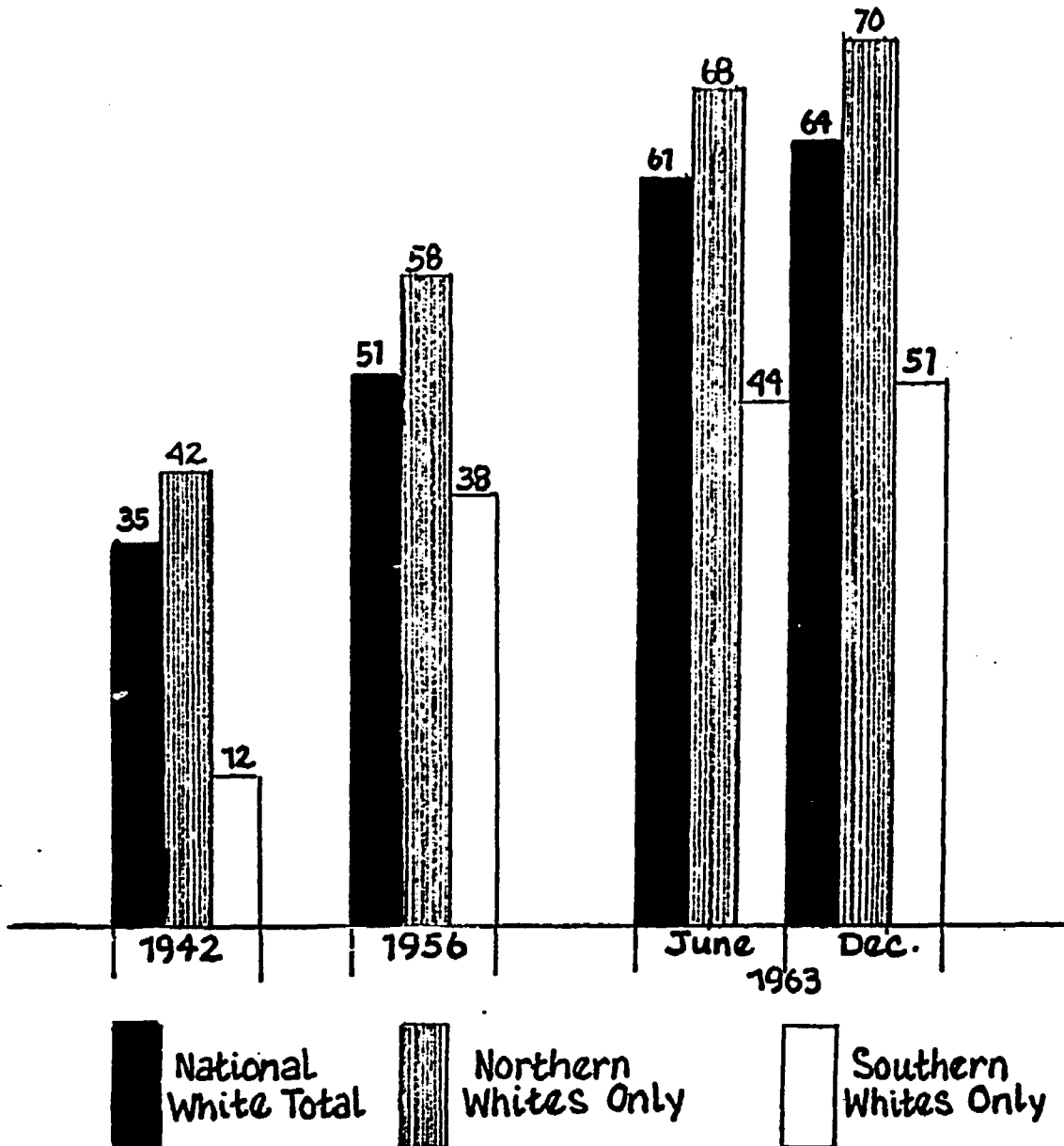
Per Cent Who Say White and Negro Students Should Go  
to the Same Schools in  
1942, April, June, and December 1956 and 1963



Question asked: "Do you think white students and Negro students should go to the same schools or to separate schools?" This is an adaptation of a chart which appeared in an article by H. H. Hyman and P. B. Sheatsley, "Attitudes Toward Desegregation," Scientific American, CCXI, (July, 1964).

FIGURE 3

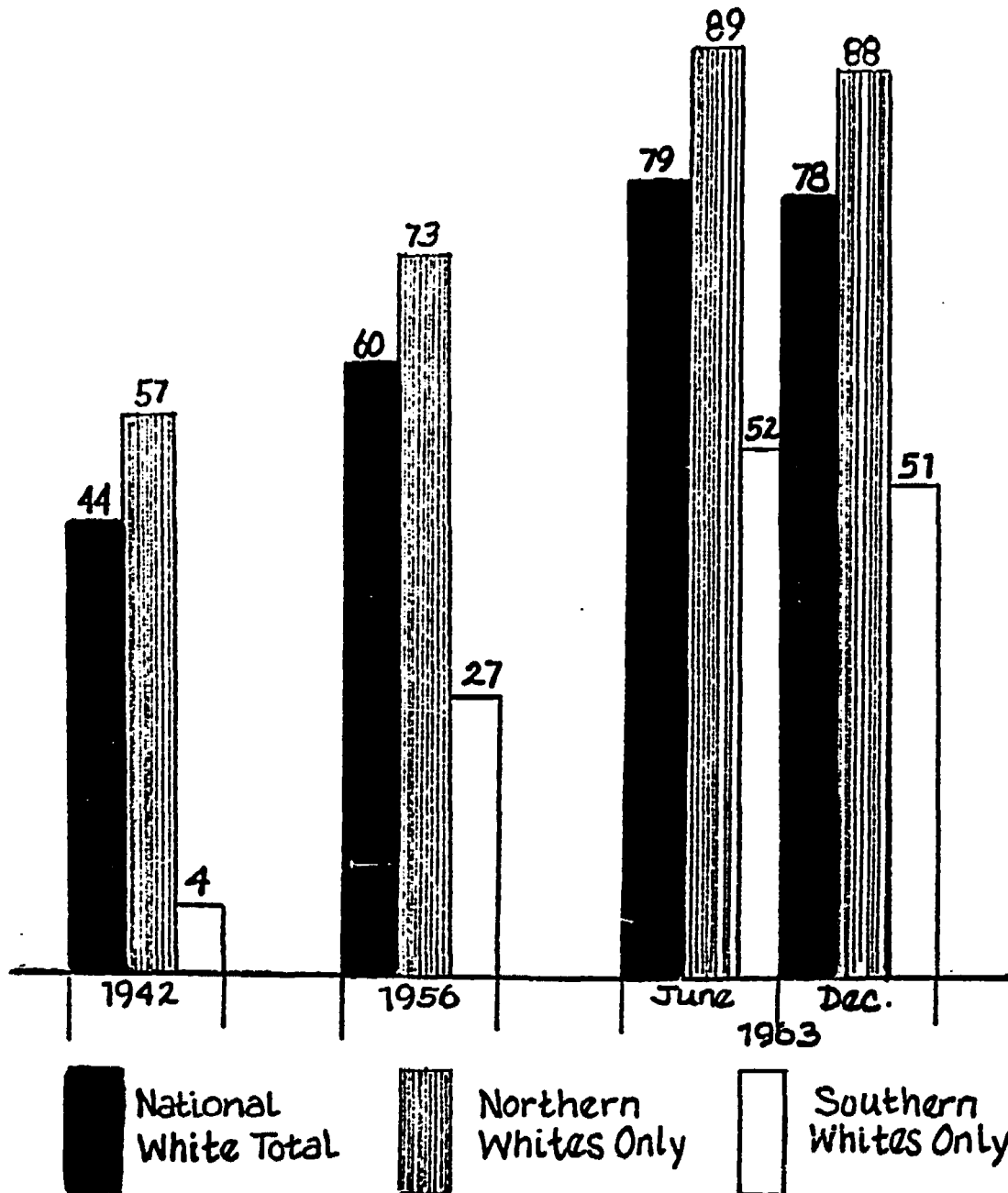
Per Cent Who Approve Residential Integration in  
1942, 1956, June and December, 1963



Question asked: "If a Negro with the same income and education as you have moved into your block, would it make any difference to you?" This is an adaptation of a chart which appeared in an article by Paul B. Sheatsley, "White Attitudes Toward the Negro," *Daedalus*, XCV, American Academy of Arts and Sciences, (Winter, 1966).

FIGURE 4

Per Cent Who Approve Public Transportation  
Integration in 1942, 1956, June and December, 1963



Question asked: "Generally speaking, do you think there should be separate sections for Negroes on streetcars and buses?" This is an adaptation of a chart which appeared in an article by Paul B. Sheatsley, "White Attitudes Toward the Negro," *Daedalus*, XCV, American Academy of Arts and Sciences, (Winter, 1966).



within the confines of traditional political life and not resort to extreme forms of militancy; thus, future tactics and strategy would continue to be formed within the broad political channels sanctioned by the community. But, also, Negro leaders enlarged upon them in some instances, especially in developing methods of direct action protest.

The practical dimension added by the civil rights act was equally, if not more, significant. In the late 1950s, as a direct result of the civil rights act, the NAACP and other organizations launched a drive to add Negroes to the voting rolls. This was the first concerted effort to stimulate Negro registration and voting in Oklahoma City and was to continue, in varying degrees, throughout the 1960s.<sup>1</sup> Estimates vary, but Negro leaders active in voting drives estimate that in 1955 about forty percent of those Negroes eligible to vote were registered. Out of those registered, about thirty percent actually voted. From this point, Negro registration and voting steadily increased and a decade later, an estimated sixty-five percent of those eligible to vote had registered and of those registered about seventy-five percent

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<sup>1</sup>For example, in the spring of 1962, a comprehensive all-out nationwide drive to increase Negro registration was initiated. Under the leadership of the Voter Education Project of the Southern Regional Council, several organizations participated: The NAACP, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, the Urban League, and the Congress of Racial Equality.

were voting.<sup>1</sup>

Participation in registration and voting drives was sustained by past desegregation successes and the knowledge that an enfranchised Negro population has greater self-protection and influence than an unenfranchised one. This would become especially evident to Negro leaders when the reapportionment decisions at the state level began to affect Oklahoma City politics directly.<sup>2</sup> The far-reaching importance of voter drives for Negroes is shown by Donald Matthews and James Prothro:

...voter registration seems to be a far more purposive and less routine act for (southern) Negroes than for whites. The two races give quite different reasons for trying to register. Most whites seem to have registered because it was expected of them when they became adults...For Negroes, on the other hand, registering seems to have been a much more meaningful act that required either strong personal motivation or direct external stimulus. <sup>3</sup>

The voting drives also brought additional elements of the Negro community into the desegregation struggle. The Negro newspaper and radio station consistently urged Negroes to participate in this drive. Door-to-door canvassing, personal appeals on the radio, and voter "clinics" were the

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<sup>1</sup>Interview with State Senator E. Melvin Porter, first Negro State Senator in the Oklahoma Legislature, December 3, 1968.

<sup>2</sup>This impact will be examined in a later portion of this chapter.

<sup>3</sup>Donald R. Matthews and James W. Prothro, Negroes and the New Southern Politics (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1966), p. 73.

principal instruments. The Negro community was told of their past successes in desegregating public schools and colleges and urged to ensure future successes by registering and voting. The Negro citizen was encouraged to take part by voting independently for candidates supporting Negro interests. Negroes were told that a continual increase in registration and voting would present the white community with a new political challenge never before encountered. Negroes would thus be in a position to further their interests like other segments of the community. Significantly, the voting campaigns by Negroes were not met by adverse white reactions. Indeed, white clergymen, students, and white civil rights advocates were drawn into the voting drives as active participants.<sup>1</sup>

Negro civil rights leaders were increasingly approached by state and local white politicians seeking votes. City councilmen representing largely Negro areas sought out protest leaders for support more than ever before. Their formerly heavy reliance upon paid Negro workers, far removed from Negro protests, was further fading. Furthermore, white candidates for state and national offices actively and consistently consulted with Negro protest leaders. For example, United States Senators went to Negro leaders often for consultation.

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<sup>1</sup>Interview with Henry Floyd, President, Oklahoma City Branch, NAACP, September 7, 1967.

on political issues and campaigns.<sup>1</sup> The Black Dispatch was also consulted by white candidates regarding political support; an increase in paid political advertisements by whites was noticeable.<sup>2</sup>

Negro protest leaders and the Negro newspaper increasingly injected issues important to the Negro community in their contacts with prominent white politicians. This opportunity was present previously, but was not sustained and was largely initiated by Negro leaders. By this time, consultation was becoming important both before and during political campaigns and was initiated by whites. In return for support, Negro leaders extracted assurances from white politicians on a variety of issues--jobs for Negroes, minimum wage legislation, increased workmen's compensation, and a variety of civil rights legislation. Some promises were kept while others were not, but Negro leaders were quick to confront white politicians with explanations of unexpected behavior. Increasingly, however, white politicians were alert to Negro desires and attempted to satisfy their demands. This was not usually stimulated by democratic theories or an attempt to correct past injustices;

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<sup>1</sup>Interview with Jimmy Stewart, President, Oklahoma City Branch, NAACP, and member, National Board of Directors, NAACP, June 29, 1967.

<sup>2</sup>Interview with John Dunjee, Editor, The Black Dispatch, September 9, 1967.



it was an attempt to gain political support from an increasingly significant political segment of the community. Cumulatively, this development strongly suggests that the Negro community was beginning to break the old and familiar political ties with the white political structure.

The traditional leadership, which had performed so adequately in past affairs by utilizing mainly legal techniques, was increasingly superseded by a somewhat younger group. The difference in the emerging group as contrasted with the more traditional leadership is not one solely of age or occupation.<sup>1</sup> Rather, it was one of tactics, strategy, and ideas about the length and direction of the total struggle. Some of the new leadership members were native Oklahomans and quite active in earlier years during the Sipuel and McLaurin protests; but further schooling, many at out-of-state colleges or service in the armed forces had altered their attitudes. Out of this group arose some of the more militant leaders who were to become well known for their flamboyant methods. Simultaneously, a group of Negro professionals, mostly reared and educated outside of the city and state, moved into the leadership ranks soon after their arrival in

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<sup>1</sup>See page 155 for diagram on Negro leadership.

### Extent of Participation →

### Extent of Participation

Protest leaders and groups were placed in respective categories based upon interviews made throughout this study. Active and Passive categories are based upon a description of leadership types by Bernard Berelson and Gary Steiner in Human Behavior: An Inventory of Scientific Findings (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1964), p. 344.

the community.<sup>1</sup> This was accomplished with the help and encouragement of the indigenous leadership.<sup>2</sup> These young Negro professionals who were medical doctors, lawyers, dentists, and psychiatrists were a unique addition to the protest. While they held similar views as to the desirability of continued desegregation activities in the city, their personal participation varied, often because of requirements imposed by their professions. But all participated actively in the protest, ranging from direct participation to a more scholarly and detached form of assistance.<sup>3</sup> Further, many served as "models" to the Negro and white communities by showing what Negroes could accomplish if only allowed access to the broader society. Accordingly, they gave hope and encouragement to the Negro community about the benefits of a desegregated society. Their continued upward mobility as professionals in the broader society was visible to both Negroes and whites; and the white community could understand

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<sup>1</sup>Interview with Dr. Charles Atkins, first Negro on the Oklahoma City Council, June 2, 1968.

<sup>2</sup>Interview with Clara Luper Clark, Sponsor, Oklahoma City NAACP Youth Council, July 7, 1967.

<sup>3</sup>Some would participate in sit-ins, some would run for elective offices at state and local levels, others would hold high offices in the NAACP and Urban League; others would assume prominent teaching positions at Oklahoma educational institutions.

more fully the feasibility of a desegregated society. These professionals were appointed to interracial community boards and commissions; some were allowed to join formerly all-white churches; and others began to fraternize socially with white professionals.

Overall, the caste system was rapidly deteriorating. School desegregation had provided the initial thrust. The Montgomery Bus Boycott and the rise of Martin Luther King furnished highly effective methods for attacking segregation. New hope and political strength were provided by voting drives and emphasis upon political participation. New leadership, composed uniquely of young Negro militants and professionals, provided the sinews for the continuing protest. The Negro community was strengthened while the white community was alerted to future challenges.

### The Politics of Confrontation

#### Non-Violent Direct Action

Even though the Negro protest in to this point had been broadened and intensified it had never created, or even attempted to create, a crisis situation that would directly and visibly threaten the system's equilibrium. In the late 1950s a new confrontation would be created demanding more flamboyant and challenging forms of protest; and in this it would markedly differ from past techniques.



Until the late 1950s Negroes were systematically excluded from access to most of the city's public accommodations--the theaters, restaurants, barber and beauty facilities, and amusement parks patronized by whites.<sup>1</sup> For the city's Negro leaders, the challenge was easily presented. Older protest leaders had persistently raised the question of opening all public accommodations to Negroes, but had failed to do much good.

At this stage, the challenge to the biracial system was especially dangerous to those who would maintain it. In the etiquette of race relations the Negro "...might protest; if he does it for the proper audience and in the proper forms..."<sup>2</sup> But direct action and the creation of a crisis situation was regarded as an act of defiance and hence a violation of the etiquette of race relations. Realizing the protest was leaving its older boundaries, Negro leaders accepted non-violent direct action for many reasons: (1)it would stress again Negro non-cooperation with segregation; (2)it had proven its effectiveness in the Montgomery Bus Boycott centered on the philosophy of Martin Luther King;<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>However, Negroes were often allowed to obtain food for white employers either by standing to the side of white patrons or by going to the rear of the restaurant.

<sup>2</sup>Gunnar Myrdal, with the assistance of Richard Sterner, and Arnold Rose, An American Dilemma (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1944), p. 28.

<sup>3</sup>Interview with Clara Luper Clark, Sponsor, Oklahoma City NAACP Youth Council, July 7, 1967.

(3)the realization that future progress must be made quickly on the heels of past successes--since both Negro and white communities could lose interest and enthusiasm for the protest;<sup>1</sup> (4)the understanding that if Negroes in Oklahoma City, or in any city, were not allowed into the broader society at this stage it might not be so beneficial at a later time because of the swiftly changing nature of American life;<sup>2</sup> (5)it would dramatize as clearly as possible the biracial society in Oklahoma City and draw vivid comparisons between Negro and white life in everyday affairs.<sup>3</sup>

In the late 1950s, the question of opening public facilities to Negroes was frequently discussed. Within the Negro community and the community at large it was a topic of increased interest. Negro enthusiasm for somekind of effort to desegregate these facilities grew and with it the belief

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<sup>1</sup>Interview with Clara Luper Clark, Sponsor, Oklahoma City NAACP Youth Council, July 7, 1967.

<sup>2</sup>See Martin Luther King, Why We Can't Wait (New York: Harper & Row, 1964). And "Direct Action in the South," New South, XVIII, Nos. 10 and 11, (October-November, 1963), p. 3. Oklahoma City Negro leaders, like Roscoe Dunjee, clearly understood this dilemma, especially after the close of World War II; they constantly pressed Negroes to protest segregation for this reason, even if for no other.

<sup>3</sup>Interview with Clara Luper Clark, Op. Cit.

that Negroes could be grouped in a manner that would enable them to effectively challenge the prevailing operating conditions of public facilities.<sup>1</sup>

The Black Dispatch, the Negro newspaper, joined in the mounting campaign with strident editorials to the white community demanding that public accommodations be open to all Oklahoma Cityans, regardless of race. This was accompanied by attempts on the part of Negro leaders, with the assistance of The Black Dispatch, to enlist additional members in the NAACP in order to protest segregated public accommodations more effectively. The newspaper repeatedly carried membership blanks for this purpose under the heading, "Oklahoma City Members of the Colored Community Are Asked To Think."<sup>2</sup> Membership in the NAACP and its potent affiliate, the NAACP Youth Council, began to grow as a direct result. Indeed, the Youth Council at this stage grew toward one of the largest memberships in the nation even in comparison with the chapters in the large eastern states. This size has been maintained with substantial increases in subsequent years.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>See Terry N. Clark, "The Concept of Power: Some Overemphasized and Underrecognized Dimensions--An Examination With Special Reference to the Local Community," Southwestern Social Science Quarterly, XLVIII, No. 3, (December, 1967), p. 281.

<sup>2</sup>From the files of the Oklahoma City NAACP Youth Council.

<sup>3</sup>Interview with Clara Luper Clark, Sponsor, Oklahoma City NAACP Youth Council, July 7, 1967. For instance, in

Simultaneously, young white liberals, mostly professionals and clergy, were also attracted to the protest movement. Many were already members of the more moderate Urban League; but at this time they began to participate actively and to sympathize with the new goals and the more militant tactics. The goal of desegregating public accommodations was one that could be easily understood. "Many whites could vividly picture themselves (especially those who were acquainted with Negro living conditions) being excluded from the restaurants, bars, and theaters they had frequently patronized most of their lives."<sup>2</sup>

Even with the growing protest against segregated public accommodations, white political leaders were completely unresponsive to Negro needs and desires. Affirmative political action from the white community was required, but there was not even a hint that it would be forthcoming at

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1964-1965 the Youth Council membership was over 3,000 and ranked second in the nation to the Detroit, Michigan chapter. In later years it would attain a membership approaching 11,000 and retain its high national ranking. See: Chester M. Pierce and Lois J. West, "Six Years in Sit-Ins: Psychodynamic Causes and Effects," The International Journal of Psychiatry, XII, No. 1, (1966), p. 32.

<sup>2</sup>Interview with Aubrey Cooper, member, Board of Directors, Oklahoma City Urban League from 1957-1961, July 1, 1967.

this time.<sup>1</sup> Negro leaders and white sympathizers spoke to white leaders, but their efforts were not successful. Some white politicians suggested that the general community would neither accept nor understand strong affirmative political action opening public facilities to Negroes. They suggested that Negroes must demonstrate clearly to the public that such a need existed. A confrontation seemed inevitable.

At this point, the NAACP Youth Council, advised and led by a unique woman leader, a local high school teacher by the name of Clara Luper, devised the sit-in.<sup>2</sup> Clara Luper, who derived from humble origins, was initially attracted to the movement at an early age because of the hardships experienced by her family and close acquaintances. Her attraction to the movement was reinforced when she was able to compare her own family's daily living patterns with that of white families she knew. Furthermore, the successes of older protest leaders, especially Roscoe Dunjee, encouraged her to seek active leadership positions.

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<sup>1</sup>There was no segregation ordinance in Oklahoma City demanding segregated public accommodations that could be tested legally. Simple trespass laws were used by most establishments in prohibiting Negro admission.

<sup>2</sup>The recent forerunners in America of the civil rights sit-ins in the late 1950s and early 1960s were the labor, pacifist, and student group sit-ins of the 1930s and 1940s. For instance, between 1940 and 1944, there were scores of planned non-violent sit-ins, swim-ins, and other similar demonstrations in northern cities directed against segregated restaurants, skating rinks, and theaters. Most

Clara Luper was instrumental in redirecting the protest into a more militant channel. She was able to sustain this direction for nearly a decade and attracted constant public attention for the protest movement. As a leader, she was skillful in organizing protesters and presenting a clear objective. She would inform protest members of the specific task, why it was important, and the plan of action.<sup>1</sup>

The targets selected were chosen because they were clearly visible to the general community and would make possible a direct confrontation. An important segment of traditional white living patterns was squarely challenged. The Negro protest as illustrated by the sit-in was not only challenging the goals defined by white society for Negroes but also the acceptable means for attaining goals. The white political structure would be required to respond in some way to this challenge. "Changes in the system occur as responses to changes in the environment on the boundary of the system, but the state of the system places limits on the kind of responses which can be made."<sup>2</sup>

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were successful. See George M. Hauser, Erasing the Color Line (Fellowship of Reconciliation, (Pamphlet), revised edition, 1947).

<sup>1</sup>The writer has observed Clara Luper speaking to the NAACP Youth Council and in various protest activities.

<sup>2</sup>Robert T. Holt, "A Proposed Structural-Functional Framework for Political Science," The American Academy of Political and Social Science, monograph 5 (Philadelphia, February, 1965), p. 92.

The sit-in was due to become a very useful tool in the local desegregation struggle. It was used to force the white community to change and adapt to a new environment to a degree never before effected. Robert Holt has stated that, "The contribution of government to pattern maintenance ...will increase as dissensus--lack of agreement on values--in the cultural system increases."<sup>1</sup> The aftermath of the sit-in spread to much of the social system that touched upon the Negro and regulated his life.

This sit-in movement was as crucial to Oklahoma City as it was to the rest of the South. Leslie Dunbar, of the Southern Regional Council, described its impact on North Carolina, an impact analogous to that in Oklahoma City:

In fact, not until the sit-in movement began in Greensboro in 1960 did the 'mind' of Negroes become of conscious interest to white Southerners, in the sense that an active awareness began that the southern consensus had to include Negro values and desires. Even in the titanic controversies after 1954, the actors--those who were conspicuously making history--were almost always white: Senator Byrd, Governor Faubus, and the other captains of massive resistance. Negroes appeared only as a shadowy mass, from whom now and then emerged an impersonal lawyer or a poker-faced school-child walking through white faces lit with expression. The state of North Carolina might well put one of its historical markers at that dime store in Greensboro; here is where

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<sup>1</sup>Robert T. Holt, "A Proposed Structural-Functional Framework for Political Science," The American Academy of Political and Social Science, monograph 5 (Philadelphia, February, 1965), p. 101.

after more than three centuries, the white and the Negro South were finally met. <sup>1</sup>

The first sit-in in Oklahoma City and the southern and border state area was undertaken August, 1958,<sup>2</sup> when Clara Luper and a representative group from the NAACP Youth Council requested service in a large downtown drugstore. The drugstore was one of the most prominent in the area at the time and was located in the center of the downtown section. The Youth Council representatives requesting service were eight Negro children ranging in age from five to fifteen. Despite their youthfulness, they were cursed, spat upon, reviled, handled roughly, jailed, and subjected to a variety of other abuses. For example, one white man brought a large chimpanzee to a sit-in to bite the demonstrators.

The activities of the first sit-in were fully publicized by all the news media.<sup>3</sup> Most local political leaders neither endorsed nor condemned the sit-in but did warn

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<sup>1</sup>Leslie W. Dunbar, "The Changing Mind of the South: The Exposed Nerve," The Journal of Politics, XXVI, No. 1, (February, 1964), p. 4.

<sup>2</sup>Oklahoma City and Greensboro, North Carolina both compete for the distinction of having undertaken the first sit-in in this part of the country. However, Greensboro's sit-in occurred February 1, 1960, one and one-half years after Oklahoma City's; it received more nationwide attention because of the number of demonstrators participating and the numbers arrested. See chart on Sit-In Demonstrations in Southern Cities, 1958-1961, p. 166.

<sup>3</sup>See Oklahoma City Times, August 19, 1958, and Daily Oklahoman, August 20, 1958.



TABLE 2  
SIT-IN DEMONSTRATIONS IN SOUTHERN CITIES,  
1958-1961

Date	State	Place Started <sup>1</sup>	Total Demonstrators for State
Aug., 1958	Oklahoma	Oklahoma City	8 <sup>2</sup>
Feb. 1, 1960	North Carolina	Greensboro	4,200
Feb. 11	Virginia	Hampton	11,000
Feb. 12	South Carolina	Rock Hill	4,000
Feb. 12	Florida	Deland	25,000
Feb. 13	Tennessee	Nashville	16,000
Feb. 25	Alabama	Montgomery	5,500
Feb. 27	Kentucky	Lexington	6,000
March 5	Texas	Houston	6,500
March 10	Arkansas	Little Rock	50
March 15	Georgia	Atlanta	7,000
March 28	Louisiana	Baton Rouge	10,000
March 27, 1961	Mississippi	Jackson	1,600
		Total	74,350

<sup>1</sup>First city in state to have demonstrations.

<sup>2</sup>Only for Oklahoma City in this instance.

From The Student Protest Movement: A Recapitulation (Atlanta: Southern Regional Council, September 29, 1961), a special report.

against violence and the preservation of the community's image. Soon, it appeared that a reaction against those denying Negroes service was developing. Letters appeared offering help to the demonstrators, from both whites and Negroes; monetary contributions and advice were given.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps, more importantly, city officials took no harsh steps to counter the demonstrators; the general public remained calm and restrained, displaying none of the violence seen in other parts of the country toward sit-in demonstrations. Soon, after several other demonstrations, the drugstore was open to Negroes, with very little overt opposition from the drugstore management. During the same year, utilizing similar tactics, Clara Luper and the Youth Council was able to desegregate two other public eating establishments.<sup>2</sup>

After these initial successes, the NAACP Youth Council was unsuccessful in obtaining the voluntary desegregation, without employing the sit-in, of no more than ten additional establishments.<sup>3</sup> The Youth Council then prepared to utilize

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<sup>1</sup>This is based upon an examination of the NAACP Youth Council's files which revealed many examples of this favorable reaction. See also: Chester M. Pierce and Louis J. West, "Six Years of Sit-Ins: Psychodynamic Causes and Effects," The International Journal of Social Psychiatry, XII, No. 1, (1966), p. 33.

<sup>2</sup>The other establishments opened were the central YWCA and the lunch counter at a prominent downtown variety store.

<sup>3</sup>See page 168 for table on desegregation of restaurants and other public facilities.

**TABLE 3**  
**DESEGREGATION OF OKLAHOMA CITY**  
**EATING ESTABLISHMENTS**

Date	Number
1889 to fall, 1958	3
December, 1958	10
December, 1959	52
December, 1960	110
December, 1961	115

Taken from the files of the NAACP Youth Council.

the sit-in on an even more massive scale; they concentrated on major city restaurants in the belief that if the most prominent restaurants were open, the others would follow suit.

In order to speed the desegregation of restaurants, especially in the downtown area, a prolonged boycott stretching over a six month period directed at all downtown department stores through the fall season was initiated. The Negro community was alerted to the boycott through Negro radio and newspaper coverage and a wide distribution of leaflets requesting their cooperation with the protest action. Negro protest leaders went to great lengths, including the publicizing of pictures of boycott violators, to turn the boycott into an effective protest instrument. The downtown area boycott itself was not particularly effective. This area had traditionally catered to Negro consumers and there were no suitable replacements in the Negro area. But, coupled with the sit-in and the hint of different and perhaps a more widespread use of the boycott, downtown and suburban area merchants and restaurant owners began to give serious consideration to some form of accommodation with Negro demands.

Segments of the Negro community, near before actively interested in the protest movement, were brought into the movement when the boycott was instituted simply because

of their long patronage of the downtown stores.<sup>1</sup> They were, even if the boycott was not completely effective, made aware of the importance of Negro solidarity and economic power. Negro leaders repeatedly explained and emphasized the value of these factors for effective protest. Negro citizens became intensely interested in the Youth Council's actions, while the youth group itself continued to grow, both in numbers and experience.<sup>2</sup> Soon, the Youth Council began meeting in Negro churches rather than Clara Luper's home where they had previously met.

Future plans were carefully outlined, and specific restaurants and other establishments were designated as targets in the final push to eradicate segregated public eating facilities. A communications and advisory network was established between national, state, and local NAACP attorneys and the Youth Council on proper legal measures complementing the non-violent direct action tactics. Additionally, various university professors sympathetic to the Negro struggle, particularly some at the University of Oklahoma, significantly aided the Youth Council by giving advice on tactics and

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<sup>1</sup>Interview with Clara Luper Clark, Sponsor, NAACP Youth Council, July 7, 1967.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., and Chester M. Pierce and Louis J. West, "Six Years of Sit-Ins: Psychodynamic Causes and Effects," The International Journal of Social Psychiatry, XII, No. 1, (1966), p. 32.

strategy.<sup>1</sup> This advisory network, composed of the senior NAACP and its attorneys, university professors, and white monetary and psychological support,<sup>2</sup> remained intact throughout the duration of the direct action struggle.

The crucial factor accounting for the sustained protest and its eventual success was the Negro leadership itself--its experience, its timing on when to plan challenges, and its unique understanding of Oklahoma City's political and social climate. The City's Negro protest leadership had learned years before direct action confrontation that thorough preparation was essential. Further, they had acquired a knowledge of Oklahoma City's political patterns over forty years of working to gain admission to the broader society. This information was often communicated directly to the new leaders, who were guiding the direct action protests, by the older and more traditional leaders. The new protest leadership spent weeks, sometimes months, planning.

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<sup>1</sup>These university professors aided the protest movement in Oklahoma City for many years, but preferred to remain anonymous because of their positions. Clara Luper, the Youth Council sponsor has stated that their counsel was invaluable over the years as the protest developed. Youth Council leaders have consistently refrained from revealing their identities.

<sup>2</sup>Many whites throughout the direct action phase of the protest monetarily assisted the movement. Other whites gave their repeated encouragement, but almost all preferred to remain in the background because of their fear of losing jobs or other economic reprisals. Interview with Clara Luper Clark, Sponsor, NAACP Youth Council, July 7, 1967.

where and when to utilize the tactics of direct confrontation and the methods deemed most appropriate.<sup>1</sup> Often, a sit-in, or a variation thereof, was planned several weeks or months before Oklahoma City was to host a large national convention; they thus sought to press Oklahoma City when it could least afford it. This technique was extremely effective. Moreover, Negro leaders, especially Clara Luper, knew precisely how much pressure was to be applied. For instance, if there was any hope whatsoever that "negotiations" would open a public facility without staging a sit-in or other demonstration or in temporarily discontinuing one after it had begun--the negotiations or consultations would be held in lieu of the sit-in or demonstration. This moderated the direct action technique in the eyes of the white community and placed it more in the traditional American political pattern of moderation and compromise.

Importantly, Negro leaders before launching a direct confrontation would announce a specific set of grievances which they hoped would be redressed. They did not challenge the entire political system itself and the decision-makers never felt personally challenged. This approach was effective because it gave the political system the opportunity to rectify grievances--and even to take credit for the progress

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<sup>1</sup>The Youth Council files have revealed detailed maps and plans for various confrontations and instructions to participants.

"By an intriguing paradox, protest succeeds to the extent to which it is a broader challenge of the decision-makers."<sup>1</sup>

Negro protest leadership was thus able to administer non-violent direct action in what Arthur Waskow called a spirit of "creative disorder."<sup>2</sup>

From 1959 through 1963, the sit-in was utilized to successfully desegregate most of Oklahoma City's well-known eating establishments. Some of the confrontations, especially in the downtown area, attracted nationwide attention because of the tactics utilized, but not because of major disturbances. In several sit-ins, which often were coupled with street picketing in front of the segregated establishment, famous personalities like Charlton Heston were participants. They were brought to the city by local protest leaders. In addition, as the sit-in momentum increased throughout the city, a number of white professionals, college professors, students, and clergy were drawn increasingly into active participation along with the energetic and numerous NAACP Youth Council members.

Local news media covered these activities and the participants thoroughly, often devoting front page headlines to

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<sup>1</sup>Stanley Hoffman, "The French Psychodrama," New Republic, (August 31, 1968), p. 16.

<sup>2</sup>Arthur Waskow, From Race Riot to Sit-In: 1919 and the 1960s (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1966), p. 263.



the confrontation.<sup>1</sup> Pictures prominently displayed in newspapers frequently showed crying Negro children and white ministers being carried away by the police.<sup>2</sup> As the sit-ins progressed, state and national leaders applauded local restaurants that had opened their facilities to all persons. Governor Henry Bellmon and Senators J. Howard Edmondson and Mike Monroney and national NAACP officials all urged continued desegregation and praised past successes.<sup>3</sup> The major newspapers took no editorial position against the sit-in; but they continued to caution against the possibility of violence, as they had done from the beginning. In time, however, the newspapers began to put forth the proposition that if all local restaurants voluntarily desegregated there would be no need for fear of loss of revenue (if that would have indeed occurred).<sup>4</sup>

Non-violent direct action protest was effectively supplemented by federal enactments in effecting desegregation.

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<sup>1</sup>"Negro Pickets Tie Up City Cafe," Oklahoma City Times, May 31, 1963, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>Sunday Oklahoman, March 12, 1961, p. 1. After demonstration and sit-in at Oklahoma City's well-known downtown Anna Maude Cafeteria.

<sup>3</sup>Interview with Jimmy Stewart, President, Oklahoma City Branch, NAACP, and member, National Board of Directors, NAACP, June 29, 1967.

<sup>4</sup>Interview with Clara Luper Clark, Sponsor, NAACP Youth Council, September 7, 1967.

For a decade, beginning in the late 1950s, the federal government stimulated local action, directly and indirectly. Negroes in Oklahoma City, as elsewhere, derived encouragement from the knowledge that the federal government was generally in agreement with their desires, as evidenced by the many pieces of legislation and executive orders enacted during this time span. The enactments of this period reinforced local protest actions not only by encouraging the protest leadership, but also by enabling white leaders to repeatedly cite, as they often did, the fact that they had no other recourse but to obey national laws. Further, these desegregation laws, covering housing, federal disbursement of funds, voting, public accommodations and other areas created a standard of uniform desegregation that helped dissipate economic fears of desegregation. Overall, the pattern and pace of race relations changes was significantly affected by federal government action. However, the local protest movement fully understood that the moves toward desegregation generated by federal fiat could not be effectively utilized until Negroes possessed adequate schooling, jobs, money, and political power. The local Negro protest was encouraged by federal enactments and they utilized them fully; but they were aware that a locally segregated society could only be effectively dismantled at the local level. With this in mind, the local protest pursued its activities.

By the end of 1963 most of Oklahoma City's eating establishments had been desegregated or were in the process of doing so. The sit-in had been effectively utilized for over four years; the NAACP Youth Council had constructed untold variations upon the original sit-in theme. For the next few years, segregated laundries, amusement parks, swimming pools, and funeral homes operating in the public sector would be challenged by "look-ins," "walk-ins," "swim-ins," "wash-ins," and other novel forms of protest action. Usually, shortly after the initial confrontation, the segregated facility announced its willingness to admit Negro patrons.

An interesting adjunct to these novel challenges was the work of several white professionals. They acted independently of any formal protest organization without publicity and they tended to follow the initial Negro direct action. These white professionals attempted to persuade the remaining segregated establishments to quickly desegregate for the good of the community and their own establishments as well. No overt threats were made. These professionals were usually motivated by a combination of genuine sympathy with the Negro protest and a "community spirit" to see Oklahoma City progress without intense racial friction.<sup>1</sup> They

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<sup>1</sup>Interview with Dr. Aubrey Cooper, member, Board of Directors, Oklahoma City Urban League, 1956-1962, and also Board of Directors, Community Action Program of Oklahoma City in 1967, July 1, 1967.

believed that if especially respected professionals personally addressed the owners and managers of segregated facilities, they might have the effect of opening the facility quickly and thus forestall future sit-ins and other disturbances.

This technique was singularly effective. The success is partially due to the anticipation of massive demonstrations if desegregation was not swiftly effected. "Several believed that we (the white professionals) were really speaking for thousands of Negroes who would immediately march on their businesses if given the direction."<sup>1</sup> A change in attitudes or behavior in anticipation of future occurrences is not unusual. "The alteration in A's attitudes or behavior need not...be the consequence of any direct action on the part of B. A may anticipate B's probable reactions to a possible future action on his part and modify his initial reaction accordingly."<sup>2</sup> This phenomenon, labeled the "law of anticipated reactions"<sup>3</sup> was utilized by white professionals and significantly aided the Negro protest at crucial times.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Terry N. Clark, "The Concept of Power: Some Over-emphasized and underrecognized Dimensions--An Examination With Special Reference to the Local Community, Southwestern Social Science Quarterly, XLVIII, No. 3, (Dec., 1967), p. 272.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

### Evaluation of Technique

The sit-in movement and other forms of direct action vastly increased the rate of desegregation in all areas of public facilities formerly segregated. This contrasted sharply from the "readiness" period, when desegregation activities and results inched up from a small base. Direct action protest stimulated civic organizations, church groups, and similar organizations to pursue their activities in the field of civil rights more intensely than before, and their membership rolls increased. The sharp upward movement initiated by the sit-in and other related protest activities spread throughout the entire social system in a positive feedback fashion. The symbolic relics of segregation began to swiftly disappear, often unnoticed by the white community. Competition between area schools in sporting events was desegregated; Negro women entered formerly all-white beauty contests, Negro weddings were now prominently featured with whites in the daily newspapers, real estate advertisements were now listed only geographically, excluding the traditional "For Colored" or for "White Only" headings. Similarly, all public restrooms, drinking fountains, hospitals, and buses were desegregated and with this action the familiar white and Negro section designations were eliminated.

The success of the sit-in, and its variations, can be attributed to the lack of willingness on the part of the white political system to challenge Negro goals or techniques and

the expert handling of the protest by Negro leaders. Frequently, local political leaders, in order to maintain tranquility for the city, publically appealed to white public establishments to desegregate. These appeals were not couched chiefly in moral terms. They tended to council prudence in such forms as "desegregation is the law of the land now," "racial strife is bad for business," "discrimination, hurts our image abroad," "if this confrontation continues, violence will surely result."<sup>1</sup> These prudential invocations, embracing Negro demands, were substantially effective. Community leaders in the late 1950s and early 1960s had already discussed political reforms that would enlarge Negro political participation.<sup>2</sup> The major thrust of the white political leaders, almost immediately after the first sit-in had been staged, was to find some way to channel Negro desires through traditional political forms. No matter what the motivation on the part of the white community, whether for economic considerations or idealistic beliefs, the traditional consensus was being challenged and adapted in reaction to Negro demands.

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<sup>1</sup>Interview with Dr. Aubrey Cooper, member, Board of Directors, Oklahoma City Urban League, 1956-1962, and also Board of Directors, Community Action Program of Oklahoma City in 1967, July 1, 1967.

<sup>2</sup>Letter from Robert Tinstman, City Manager, Oklahoma City, October 5, 1967.

### Political Developments Affecting the Negro Protest

After the rapid succession of accomplishments of the direct action stage, Negro protest leaders again consolidated their gains while still focusing on their primary objective--the total desegregation of all areas of daily living. Some of their desires were, at this point, still related to political developments that were largely beyond their complete control.

### Reapportionment

Political representation in the state legislature for Negroes in Oklahoma City was stymied by vast distortions in apportionment that devalued the entire urban area vote. Negro voting strength could not be effectively utilized because Negro voters were engulfed by white voters in large legislative districts. Consequently, no Negro since statehood had ever been elected from the Oklahoma City area to the state legislature. Urban areas were denied adequate representation by law and tradition. Constitutional provisions effectively limited representation from urban areas to the House while the Senate had failed to reapportion for half a century.

After *Baker v. Carr* in 1962, the landmark reapportionment decision which effectively gave federal courts the power to adjudicate apportionment disputes Oklahoma City

Negroes became interested in the reapportionment debate. They believed that this decision offered a major opportunity to gain meaningful representation. "The Constitution has done its work, and the way is cleared to reach decisions through consensus. For the long run, *Baker v. Carr* may be the avenue through which Negroes, under the leadership and representation of new, political types, may bring racial issues finally into political settlement."<sup>1</sup>

Political interest was stimulated by the recognition that most Oklahoma City Negroes were concentrated in one section of the county and that Oklahoma traditionally utilized single-member districts for the larger counties.<sup>2</sup> This would give Oklahoma City Negroes the opportunity of concentrating their vote and maximizing its effectiveness. Further, Negro registration and voting have traditionally been highest in metropolitan counties and Negro leaders felt they could encourage registration, increase voting and accordingly stimulate political participation--all leading to Negro representation.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Leslie W. Dunbar, "The Changing Mind of the South: The Exposed Nerve," The Journal of Politics, XXVI, No. 1, (February, 1964), p.18.

<sup>2</sup>However, at-large elections are utilized in some two and three member House districts.

<sup>3</sup>Margaret Price, The Negro and the Ballot (Atlanta: Southern Regional Council, 1959). And "Voting," United States Commission on Civil Rights, 1961 Report (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1961), p. 22.



Negroes studied reapportionment controversies in other states and their hopes rose when a suit was filed to specifically protest Oklahoma's malapportioned legislature.<sup>1</sup> The major argument advanced by reapportionment proponents was that the urban areas were being denied adequate political participation in state affairs due to past constitutional provisions and legislative inaction. Negro leaders were always present at the court hearings and recognized the importance of the ruling for them politically.<sup>2</sup> The federal ruling in Oklahoma required that the two largest counties (including Oklahoma City) with one-third of the population be accorded equitable representation in both the House and the Senate. Oklahoma County would then be represented in the House by seventeen representatives and in the Senate by nine senators. Previously, the representation had been seven and one respectively. The court had rejected a legislative compromise and imposed its own plan based strictly on population standards. In 1965, new legislative district lines were drawn throughout Oklahoma County in a fashion that placed Negroes, because of their concentration in a single area, in a favorable political position.

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<sup>1</sup>Reynolds v. State Election Board, D.C. 233 F, Supp. 323, (1964).

<sup>2</sup>The author was present at much of the testimony in the federal court and observed the interest of Negro leaders in the proceedings.

**ARG: A Local Political Organization Emerges**

About the same time that state reapportionment was being debated, an independent political organization was formed as an alternative to the traditional representation in Oklahoma City public offices. This political group, known as the Association for Responsible Government (ARG), was formed in 1962. The nucleus of this new organization was composed initially of about twenty young professionals, both white and Negro; they believed that a more "professional type" of individual should stand for city elections and that a more professional city administration should be hired to manage daily administrative affairs. "The organization (ARG) was built upon men, not issues."<sup>1</sup> The idea for such an organization originated with several of the young professionals who had moved to Oklahoma City from other cities with similar organizations.

This group understood that in order to realize their goals they must have a strong and numerically large membership base, substantial sums of money, access to the mass media, and, finally, their own candidates for office. Adding political experience to this group were members of long-time politically influential families who felt that the goals of

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<sup>1</sup>Interview with Arnold Fagin, former Chairman, Oklahoma Community Relations Commission, and one of the ARG Founders, July 8, 1967.

the organization were worthy. Within a few short years this organization, after mounting successive membership drives, was a viable political organization. Their membership constantly increased and candidates running on ARG "slates" were offered to the city electorate. In 1963 ARG gained control of the city council, including the mayor's office.<sup>1</sup> The ARG dominated city council then began to implement their major goal of making city government more professionally oriented; their emphasis lay upon bringing in new, energetic, and well-trained individuals in administrative positions--especially the city manager's office. The change that ensued in the city's administrative staff was to have a great effect upon the Negro community.

A new city manager, young, well-trained, and thoroughly professional, was hired. The new manager brought with him ideas for new race relations policies in the city. These policies included the establishment of a human relations commission, better communication between the police and Negro citizens, and non-discrimination in city employment policies.<sup>2</sup> "The new city manager felt very deeply about minority groups. For a professional administrator, he was way ahead of his

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<sup>1</sup>Interview with State Senator E. Melvin Porter, first Negro Senator in the Oklahoma Legislature, December 13, 1968.

<sup>2</sup>Letter from Robert Tinstman, former City Manager, Oklahoma City, October 5, 1967.

time regarding race relations."<sup>1</sup> the ARG-controlled city council was generally favorably disposed to these recommendations.<sup>2</sup> It is doubtful if previous councils would have been this receptive. However, it was not apparent that the council at this time was overly concerned with furthering race relations. They simply wanted a more professional type of government and felt that these changes were necessary for the promotion and maintenance of good government. The ARG, by utilizing good government as a theme had, perhaps inadvertently, positioned the city government to accept future changes. These alterations would, in the future, significantly alter the political structure and make possible meaningful Negro participation. City Council positions and administrative posts all became accessible to Negroes for the first time. Negro registration and voting increased as did overall political participation in community affairs. These changes, in turn, brought about an increased awareness from the community at large of Negro problems and desires.<sup>3</sup>

#### Oklahoma Republicanism

Oklahoma, like most of the southern and border states,

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<sup>1</sup>Interview with Orra Compton, Executive Director, Oklahoma City Community Relations Commission, September 6, 1967.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Interview with A.L. Dowell, Oklahoma City Councilman, Ward 7, January 2, 1969. And see Chapter V, "Politics of Accommodation."

was traditionally considered a Democratic stronghold. Even though Republicans had been elected at various time to local, state, and national offices the Democrats were firmly and consistently in control of most of the governmental machinery. The Democrats thus felt no special need to appeal to Negro votes and had largely relied on traditional approaches that centered upon manipulative tactics.<sup>1</sup> The Republicans, having no consistent vote getting potential, were rarely able to fashion a viable political organization. However, Oklahoma was beginning to undergo, in the early 1960s, a political transformation brought on by a surge of Republicanism.

A political revolution is taking place in the South. The best evidence of the changing political mind of the South is the surge of Republicanism. Republican advancement constitutes, perhaps, the greatest innovation in southern politics since the establishment of the one-party system nearly a century ago--certainly since Populism. 2

During this time period, Republicans in Oklahoma after a great deal of organizational effort began to effectively challenge Democrats for major offices. In 1960, Richard Nixon defeated John Kennedy, giving Republicans added encouragement. In 1962 and 1966, Republicans defeated

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<sup>1</sup>See Chapter II for a description of this traditional approach.

<sup>2</sup>Samuel DuBois Cook, "Political Movements and Organizations," Journal of Politics, XXVI, No. 1, (February, 1964), p. 146.

Democratic candidates for Governor for the first time in the state's history. Both parties conducted well-financed, highly organized, and broadly based campaigns. In the Oklahoma Legislature, Democrats were still in complete control, but increasingly, Republicans began to challenge Democrats for legislative seats. For national offices, Republicans began to wage intensive campaigns against Democrats, especially for the United States Senate positions. In the 1968 elections a former Republican Governor, Henry Bellmon, defeated a prominent Democratic incumbent Senator, Mike Monroney. In the same elections, Richard Nixon defeated Hubert Humphrey.

A two-party state was taking shape. The state was becoming a two-party state in presidential elections, and on the congressional, state, and local levels, effective competitive party politics was emerging.<sup>1</sup> As a local newspaper commented, "This clearly is a two-party state now, and since both parties came out of this election (1968) with enough gains, it's obvious they're really in a horse race now."<sup>2</sup> It is assumed by many that Republican strength in the southern and border state area will increase, thus carrying Oklahoma further in this direction.

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<sup>1</sup>For city council elections, Oklahoma City used non-partisan balloting.

<sup>2</sup>"Parties in Oklahoma," Oklahoma City Times, November 8, 1968), p. 44.

For Negroes, two-party competition was likely to enhance their overall political effectiveness. Republicans were increasingly trying to attract Negro voters motivated by a desire to make Oklahoma a two-party state. Much of this effort was centered in the state's capitol, Oklahoma City. Accordingly, the Democratic party, which had held the allegiance of Negro support in the past, was forced to become more responsive to Negro desires. Thus, Negroes in Oklahoma City and throughout the state were made more conscious of their growing political importance, especially in the large urban areas such as Oklahoma City where heavy Negro concentrations appear.

Negro protest, beginning in the early 1950s and for a decade thereafter, had gone through a stage of militant confrontation. The protest movement challenged the white community and demanded changes in formerly segregated patterns of life. It was largely successful in this endeavor. This protest, coupled with certain external effects, had irrevocably altered the entire community structure in ways that would eventually be beneficial to the Negro population.

At this stage, the Negro community was reaching a point at which it could bargain independently. They could now issue further demands to the white community in order to complete the desegregation process and achieve satisfaction. This could be accomplished without resorting to the militant

confrontation tactics of the past. The subsequent chapter, "The Politics of Accommodation," will examine and assess the final stages of the desegregation process. It will focus on important specific areas which indicate the extent of desegregation. Of central concern is the fact that as the desegregation process was being completed, the traditional political consensus, from which Negroes had been excluded, was being expanded and modified.



## CHAPTER V

### THE POLITICS OF ACCOMMODATION

By the mid-1960s the old caste-like social system had been substantially weakened and many of the old patterns of living had changed. In its place a society based upon a broader political consensus had begun to emerge. This chapter will seek to demonstrate how the community's political and social system was re-oriented in relation to its Negro citizens and was strengthened in the process. Caste society was disappearing and a new, broader, more genuinely consensual system was emerging. The time span covered will be from the early 1960s, when some indication of change was becoming evident, to the late 1960s, when these shifts in the position of the Negro had become more manifest. Critics may argue that the change was insufficient. Yet it can be argued persuasively that some change had occurred.

The conduct of white leaders and the community in general illustrates that they recognized that continuation of the old caste order was a liability. The Negro community pressed for reforms that could be granted without altering the political and social system greatly. In words

applied originally to another system, this Oklahoma community was characterized by "...flexibility on top and acquiescence at the bottom...."<sup>1</sup> The political and social changes in the community not only signal the breakdown of an older caste system, but present us with an example of what Daniel P. Moynihan has labeled the "politics of stability."

The protest movement itself served as an instrument of stability. Negro protesters had largely operated within the accepted political framework. The Negro protest strengthened accepted political and social values by re-directing potential anti-social behavior into positive channels. Accordingly, while undertaking protest activities, stress was placed upon the desirability of adhering to accepted standards. Even the most militant of the protesters contributed to stability as they later became leaders in Negro and white society.

The completion of the desegregation process in the Oklahoma City community with little violence or prolonged disorder is testimony to a relatively stable and successful political and social order. "It may be, in fact, that the one absolute requirement of a stable and successful social order is that it must continually adapt itself to changing condi-

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<sup>1</sup>Stanley Hoffman, "The French Psychodrama," New Republic, August 31, 1968, p. 16.

tions--that it must preserve its values by reapplying them to new situations."<sup>1</sup>

As illustration of this process it is now possible to examine with some care those areas where significant changes were effected and substantial desegregation achieved. The topics covered reflect the improved condition of the Negro in the community in many areas: the political climate, education, employment, housing, law enforcement relations, and daily living conditions. The areas so described may be labeled "indicators of change." In general, it will be argued that the Negro community by 1968 had fought their way to a position of significant political leverage in the city's political system and that the community had been strengthened by this addition.

### Indicators of Change

#### Altered Political Climate

From the early 1960s on, the political climate in Oklahoma City became less hostile, even in some respects hospitable, to Negro desires. By the mid-1960s, Negroes in Oklahoma City had acquired a substantial degree of political leverage. This influence, in turn, helped bring improvements

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<sup>1</sup>Tom Wicker, "Which Law, Whose Order?" Oklahoma City Times, October 16, 1967, p. 20.

to other areas of community living crucial to Negro advancement. This section will begin by an examination of the developments in state politics that affected the Oklahoma City Negro and proceed to examine the City and demonstrate the changes that have occurred.

State political developments affecting the Oklahoma City Negro. Throughout the state, the political environment gradually became more favorable to Negro participation. All impediments to voting were eliminated by 1961. Thus at this time the United States Civil Rights Commission summarized the situation by reporting that of twelve southern states surveyed they found "...no significant racially motivated impediments to voting in four of the twelve states: Arkansas, Oklahoma, Texas, and Virginia."<sup>1</sup> By 1965, in Oklahoma City about sixty-five percent of eligible Negroes had registered to vote; and of those registered, about seventy-five percent were regularly voting.<sup>2</sup> Of psychological importance to Negroes was the fact that the state legislature began to eliminate old and essentially unconstitutional statutes dealing with schools, marriage, transportation, and other

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<sup>1</sup>"Voting," United States Commission on Civil Rights, 1961 Report, Vol. I (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1961), p. 22.

<sup>2</sup>Interview with E. Melvin Porter, State Senator, Oklahoma County, October 30, 1967 and December 13, 1968.

areas formerly segregated by law. In the mid-1960s, the State of Oklahoma created a statewide Human Rights Commission, an investigating and advisory body, and appointed a Negro as its head. Simultaneously, increasing numbers of Negro citizens were being appointed by respective governors to serve on various agencies, advisory and regulatory. By 1968, Negroes from the Oklahoma City area were serving as delegates and alternates to the Democratic National Convention. Also, at this time, for the first time in the state's history a Negro assumed a high judicial post in the city area, upon appointment by the Governor.<sup>1</sup> This action was hailed as a milestone by the local news media.<sup>2</sup>

Reapportionment directives, as expected, allowed Negroes to win office in the state legislature. Three Negro Representatives and one Negro Senator were elected in 1965. All were from the two major urban areas, Oklahoma City and Tulsa.<sup>3</sup> This number remained constant until 1968, when the

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<sup>1</sup>"First Negro Jurist Chosen," Oklahoma City Times, November 19, 1968, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>"First Negro Judge," Oklahoma City Times, November 20, 1968, p. 46.

<sup>3</sup>(1965-1966) House of Representatives: Archibald Hill, District 99, Oklahoma County; John B. White, District 98, Oklahoma County; Curtis Lawson, District 73, Tulsa County. Senate: E. Melvin Porter, District 48, Oklahoma County. In 1967-1968, Visanio Johnson defeated White for the District 98 House seat. The others remain the same to this writing.

first Negro woman was elected to the House from Oklahoma City.<sup>1</sup> All of these Negro legislators were active participants in introducing legislation to promote Negro advancement and headed numerous committees centered on race relations. Their activities, especially in the Oklahoma City area, were comprehensively covered by the Negro press. The Negro legislators from the Oklahoma City area also participated actively in local affairs affecting Negro citizens.<sup>2</sup> They testified before the city council on matters reflecting Negro citizens and spoke out to local news media on matters of interest to the Negro community. Moreover, several actively campaigned for local politicians sympathetic to Negro desires. For the first time in the city's political history, local Negro interests were actively and vigorously promoted by officials elected from the group itself.

Political changes in the City. At the city level itself, there were early indications that the political climate toward the Negro was changing. Churches, newspapers (Negro and white), and interested white professionals and Negro leaders early in the 1960s pressed for a citywide Community Relations Commission. Indeed, the new City Manager, prior to his formal assumption of office in the summer of

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<sup>1</sup>This Legislator, Hannah Atkins, is the wife of Dr. Charles Atkins, Oklahoma City's first Negro City Councilman.

<sup>2</sup>Letter from State Senator E. Melvin Porter, October 30, 1967.

1963, encouraged the newly elected mayor to establish such a commission to investigate and report upon any complaints in matters of race relations. In the words of the then City Manager, "In an informal discussion with Mayor Wilkes prior to my assuming office in Oklahoma City, I did encourage him in the establishment by the City Council of a Community Relations Commission. My suggestion reflected to some degree my familiarity with the Human Relations Commission in Kansas City, Missouri."<sup>1</sup>

In the early summer of 1963, the Oklahoma City Council, established a Community Relations Committee composed of members from all religious faiths from both Negro and white communities. The new committee was hailed as a great step forward in community relations and Oklahoma City was cited as one of the first cities in the southern and border area to establish such a committee. The Oklahoma City Times declared in a prominent editorial entitled, "The Time Has Come" that:

The time has come for Oklahoma City to take its place among the cities actively moving toward greater justice for all of its citizens in the area of human relations. With a tradition of tolerance here in Oklahoma, Oklahoma City is in an ideal position. Just this past week new ground was broken here with the establishment of a Community Relations Committee by the Mayor and City Council.

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<sup>1</sup>Letter from Robert M. Tinstman, former Oklahoma City Manager, October 5, 1967.

Now is the ideal time for Oklahoma City to move decisively forward...If we act now (to better race relations in all areas), we will escape bitterness and violence. If we act in keeping with our democracy's high ideals of justice and opportunity for every man, Oklahoma City will have leaped a roadblock to a bright future. The time is now to make this an 'open city' which can forge to the front in the field of human relations as it has in economic affairs. <sup>1</sup>

Shortly after its establishment, this Community Relations Committee was changed to a formal commission, with operating funds and a full-time executive director as well as a chairman.<sup>2</sup> The Executive Director was a Protestant clergyman, and the first chairman of the Commission was of the Jewish faith, with a prominent Negro physician succeeding him to the position in 1968. Thus, the Commission was presented to the community as a broadly based agency concerned with all types of minority problems. This helped to generate support from various sections of the community.

According to Orra Compton, Executive Director in 1967, the Commission served as a "...catalyst for extensive studies and programs for community improvement."<sup>3</sup> Many recommendations were submitted to the City Council in the form of proposed ordinances or resolutions. Of great importance is the fact that

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<sup>1</sup>Oklahoma City Times, June 4, 1963, p. 26.

<sup>2</sup>In addition to a Chairman and Executive Director, the commission was composed of 20 members appointed by the Mayor and City Council. The membership, in turn, was divided up into various committees dealing with subjects pertinent to improved community relations.

<sup>3</sup>Interview with Orra Compton, Executive Director, Oklahoma City Community Relations Commission, Sept. 6, 1967.



the Commission served as a "safety valve" in preventing violence or other disturbances. Again, in the words of Mr. Compton, "The Community Relations Commission definitely has relieved community tensions by investigating complaints and serving as a mediating agency when necessary."<sup>1</sup> The Commission by focusing on minority problems was able to direct the attention and interest of minority groups to the entire community.<sup>2</sup> Minority groups were given to understand that efforts would be made to adjust grievances. The creation of the Commission is especially important because it was the first major effort by white leaders, in the absence of court orders or direct action protest, to meet Negro demands. The formation of this Commission was therefore an important indication by city leaders that the discriminatory practices long established and sanctioned by the community, should be attacked and a more egalitarian form of race relations be created.

Dramatic changes in the political make-up of Oklahoma City also occurred during the 1960s. Because of the impact of new political groups like the Association for Responsible Government, the Oklahoma City Council moved to redraw its ward lines. Additionally, Negro leaders who were well aware of their newly acquired power at the state

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Interview with Arnold Fagin, Chairman, Oklahoma City Community Relations Commission, July 7, 1967. Other formal community-wide organizations, like the Community Action Program, were subsequently formed in the mid-1960s, often

level through reapportionment, generated political pressure for this change locally. It was generally recognized that Negro representation would be almost continually assured if ward lines were redrawn to concentrate the majority of the Negro population within a particular ward. According to the city manager at that time, "The new ward lines were deliberately and openly drawn in such a manner as to assure the election of a Negro Councilman, which later took place."<sup>1</sup>

Both before and after this redistricting there was little antagonism or opposition mounted openly. Churches, newspapers, and prominent white and Negro professionals spoke favorably of the redistricting plan. And the city population seemed willing to follow the direction indicated by these community leaders. The explanation may lie in the kind of relationship suggested by Matthews and Prothro at one point in their analysis of Southern politics:

On most issues, most of the time, this is the case--the rank-and-file citizens accept the decisions arrived at by their leaders without even trying to render an independent judgment on them, or even being aware that decisions had been made. Thus, the lack of political concern of most citizens provides an element of 'slack' within which leaders are relatively free to make decisions and to adjust conflicts. 2

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headed by Negroes. Additionally, they included large Negro staffs and memberships.

<sup>1</sup>Letter from Robert M. Tinstman, former Oklahoma City Manager, October 5, 1967.

<sup>2</sup>Donald R. Matthews and James W. Prothro, Negroes and the New Southern Politics (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1966), p. 364.

While the redistricting plan was being discussed, aspiring Negro candidates avidly tested community reaction to their potential candidacies. The prospect of holding elective city office was no longer a dream. They made speeches, sounded out various community leaders, both white and black and also consulted with newspaper editors. Even before formal redistricting in early 1967, Negro leaders entered City Council elections for the first time in the city's history. in 1965. A prominent Negro optometrist, Dr. A.L. Dowell was narrowly defeated by a city industrialist, Guy James. The vote was eight-thousand eight-hundred and ninety-four to seven-thousand seven-hundred and ninety-six.<sup>1</sup> Following this early defeat Negroes mounted drives to increase voter registration and stressed the importance of gaining a seat on the City Council. Then, after the death of the white councilman in 1966 who happened to represent the predominantly Negro ward, another Negro physician, Dr. Charles Atkins, was appointed to serve out the term. He became the first Negro on the City Council. After his term expired in 1967 he stood for re-election; he was defeated by a former candidate, Dr. A. L. Dowell, in another close and hard-fought election. But for the first time in the city's history, two prominent Negroes campaigned against one another in order to represent a predominantly Negro ward. From 1966 to 1969, this ward

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<sup>1</sup>Figures taken from the files of the Oklahoma County Election Board.

was represented by a Negro; the prospects for continued Negro representation seemed promising. For Negro influence in city politics thus seems assured. According to students of Negro politics "...greater black influence in...politics depends on strong local organization capable of promoting electoral participation and assuring discipline. To build organization, black leaders need the platform of municipal office to articulate black interests and the resources of public office to reward their followers."<sup>1</sup> Oklahoma City Negroes seemed to have established such a base by 1968.

Negro entrance into formerly all-white elections stimulated Negro political participation in general and especially voting. Studies of ethnic politics have revealed that where there is ethnic conflict in a community, the participation rates of conflicting groups will increase.<sup>2</sup> According to the Democratic County Chairman in 1968, "...the Negro vote in Oklahoma City has been definitely increasing including an increase in the percentage of eligible Negroes voting. It is especially noticeable when a Negro runs for an office against white candidates."<sup>3</sup> For example, in the

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<sup>1</sup>Frances Fox Piven and Richard A. Cloward, "What Chance For Black Power?" New Republic, March 29, 1968, p. 23.

<sup>2</sup>Robert E. Lane, Political Life (New York: The Free Press, 1959), p. 243.

<sup>3</sup>Letter from Jerry Gilbert, County Chairman, Democratic Central Committee of Oklahoma County, January 31, 1967. No Negro voter registration statistics are available for Oklahoma. See: "Voting," U.S. Civil Rights Commission,

first city council election between a white candidate and a Negro candidate in 1965, the total vote was sixteen-thousand seven-hundred and nine. A subsequent election in 1967 for the same position saw the total vote drop considerably to five-thousand six-hundred and forty votes. In this election, there was no white candidate campaigning against a Negro.<sup>1</sup>

Negro voting at all levels dramatically increased in the early 1960s and all the indications are that there have been further increases.<sup>2</sup> In 1955, forty percent of those eligible registered to vote and of those registered about thirty percent voted. In 1965, 65 percent of those eligible registered and of those registered, about 75 percent voted in local and state and national elections.<sup>3</sup>

Expectedly, Negro voters identified their interests with Negro candidates. Jerry Gilbert, Democratic County Chairman, remarked on a 1968 school board election that, "The school board race this spring (1968) would furnish an interesting study. When the Negro candidate did not quite make the run-off you saw a marked drop-off in Negro votes in the run-off election."<sup>4</sup>

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1961 Report, Part Two, Voter Registration Statistics (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1961), p. 251.

<sup>1</sup>From the files of the Oklahoma County Election Board.

<sup>2</sup>Interview with Tex Newman, Secretary, Oklahoma County Election Board, April 9, 1969.

<sup>3</sup>Interview with E. Melvin Porter, State Senator, Oklahoma County, December 13, 1968.

<sup>4</sup>Interview with Jerry Gilbert, Democratic Chairman, Oklahoma County, January 31, 1967.

The winning of local office on the city council also seemed to heighten Negro political sophistication. Issues became clearly drawn between those helping the white community and the black community; voting drives were developed year around; and the white community and its leaders were openly attacked by Negro leaders when they felt policies were advocated that were contrary to best interests of the Negro community. Another effect was that Negro protest organizations increased their memberships above previous levels. The NAACP Youth Council, that had been instrumental in the direct action phase of the movement increased its own membership to eleven thousand in the process. They also moved to help adult Negroes and those espousing Negro causes to gain political power through voting drives and campaigns. The Oklahoma City NAACP Youth Council was awarded first place in the nation in 1968 by the NAACP in the Youth and College Division for "distinguished service in the fight for freedom."<sup>1</sup>

Demonstrations of political strength. This enhanced political power can best be illustrated by examining examples of its exercise. In the spring of 1968, the Oklahoma City Council discussed and finally submitted to the electorate a multi-million dollar bond proposal; this package included

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<sup>1</sup>"NAACP Wins Honors," editorial, Oklahoma City Times, July 6, 1968.

new city projects to enable the city to move ahead with a long delayed downtown urban renewal project. The bond proposal was to be submitted in a package of twelve proposals in late spring. White city leaders, including the Mayor and City Council, the Chamber of Commerce, and the city's major newspapers and white civic organizations all mobilized to support the proposal. In past years, their combined strength on issues of this nature was virtually unbeatable.

Many Negro leaders felt that the bond issue did not contain adequate provisions for dealing with certain problems in the Negro community; these included inadequate sanitary sewer facilities. So they began to mobilize their own community to oppose all of the bond proposals.<sup>1</sup> The Negro community not only challenged white community leaders on these specific proposals; they also accused them of years of dilatory action in meeting Negro grievances. The bond issue provided a convenient vehicle for mobilizing Negro political strength and for the expression of grievances for wrongs long uncorrected. The President of the local branch of the NAACP explained, "But it is not just a matter of the sewage plant. There have been a number of unkept promises."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The major Negro grievance was that the proposals did not cover adequately the elimination of odors from an east-side sewage treatment facility which had been annoying east-side residents for a number of years.

<sup>2</sup>Henry Floyd, Oklahoma City Times, July 15, 1968.

The Negro newspaper, The Black Dispatch, clearly aired the issues and reflected the views of most Negro leaders in advocating that all of the bond proposals should be defeated. Accordingly, Negroes were told by their leaders that Negro political strength was now a decisive factor in close and controversial citywide elections--if they remained politically united. The NAACP leadership not only strongly denounced the bond issues; they also helped distribute handbills urging the Negro community to "Vote No." These handbills were signed by most of the prominent Negro leaders. These included the Negro City Councilman, the President of the local CORE Chapter, the President of the local NAACP Chapter, and others whose names would be easily recognized by most Negro citizens. The widely circulated handbill stated,

Vote NO! Against CIP Bond Tuesday..." "Promises!  
Promises! Unkept!" "It Stinks." "Do Not Be Misled By  
The Power Structure's Selected Leaders! We are being  
denied our fair share.

On election day, all of the twelve issues were defeated. The Negro ward voted decisively against all proposals and contributed heavily to the citywide defeat. Many of the white wards returned majorities against these bond issues also, but not nearly so decisively as the Negro ward. Ward 7, predominately Negro, voted around three to one against all of the proposals. The sanitary sewer issue which provided the original cause for Negro opposition drew more negative



vote than any other in Ward 7.<sup>1</sup> White leadership, alarmed but not daunted by their defeat, immediately decided to call for another election. The City Council responded and issued the call for the new vote formid-summer.

Negro leaders were overjoyed at the display of political solidarity exhibited by the Negro community and they moved to counter the white leadership in the second election as well. White proponents of the bond issues both intensified their campaign for ratification and also attempted to mollify Negro grievances to win their support in this second contest. The City Council pledged to Negro voters that, if the steps provided in the mid-summer election were not satisfactory, then additional bond issues would be submitted for the specific benefit of the Negro community. However, most of the Negro leaders still were not satisfied with white pledges and again criticized them for unkept past promises.

White leaders, by this time convinced that reconciliation with the Negro leadership on these issues was nearly impossible, openly attacked them for the first time in decades. Civic leaders and newspaper editorials attacked Negro leaders with charges that they were injuring the entire community by their negative posture. For example, a front page editorial in the afternoon paper, declared:

...the leaders of the NAACP organization advocated a 'No' vote against each and every one of the twelve bond issues in tomorrows election. They believe that Negro

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<sup>1</sup>See following page for sample vote tabulations.

TABLE 4  
Oklahoma City Bond Election, May 28, 1968,  
Representative Issues

	Transit		Fairgrounds	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Ward 1	2,780	2,470	2,742	2,505
Ward 2	1,983	1,821	1,879	1,877
Ward 3	1,554	2,351	1,954	2,350
Ward 4	1,811	2,002	1,764	2,025
Ward 5	1,291	2,654	1,323	2,611
Ward 6	1,306	1,232	1,255	1,276
Ward 7	583	1,626	560	1,588
Ward 8	2,511	1,806	2,401	1,893
Out of County	90	169	93	165
Total	13,909	16,131	13,871	16,290

	Airports		Sanitary Sewer	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Ward 1	2,804	2,453	3,396	2,384
Ward 2	1,915	1,856	2,342	1,819
Ward 3	1,584	2,313	1,899	2,322
Ward 4	1,787	2,004	1,993	2,148
Ward 5	1,376	2,571	1,641	2,629
Ward 6	1,266	1,271	1,517	1,308
Ward 7	558	1,581	636	1,803
Ward 8	2,442	1,787	2,896	1,822
Out of County	100	160	119	137
Total	13,832	15,996	16,439	16,372

Source: Oklahoma City Times, May 29, 1968, p. 12.  
Some of the bond proposals required 60% margins for passage.

voters hold the balance of power in Oklahoma City and that their opposition will again defeat the twelve bond issues which failed to pass May 28.

Apparently, many Negroes realized that they would injure themselves in defeating many of the bond issues, but the influence of the NAACP group is so strong that a heavy 'No' vote can be expected.

We doubt if the Negro vote is strong enough to sabotage the progress of Oklahoma City and defeat every measure for the betterment of the population as a whole.

It is disturbing to see the do-nothing attitude of the Negro leadership....<sup>1</sup>

This front page editorial demonstrated that Negro political solidarity had indeed been achieved. Negro political power was now so potent that white leaders could no longer ignore their protests. They would have to bargain and, if necessary, openly attack them. But they could not ignore them.

Despite the intense attacks, whites and Negroes alike refrained from interjecting purely racial issues into the campaign or of accusing anyone of intolerance. The white leadership, including the major city newspapers, could openly attack Negro leaders without raising cries of "racism" on all sides. Whatever racist sentiment was involved it seemed to be a distinctly secondary factor.

The second election did, however, see ten of the twelve proposals pass; but most carried by extremely narrow margins. The Negro ward again voted down all of the issues,

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<sup>1</sup>Oklahoma City Times, July 15, 1968, p. 1.

but not as greatly as before.<sup>1</sup> Again, the sanitary sewer proposal drew more negative votes in this ward than other issues. After the election, white leaders immediately moved to reconcile the Negro community. These overtures, it is safe to assume, were not completely altruistic; they were a recognition that a new, independent, and significant political force was present.

Editorials in the local press following the election consistently echoed the theme of reconciliation, open discussion of issues, and continued work for the common good. In the words of one, "One of the healthy outcomes of the current city bond election campaign has been the opening up of discussion between the eastside and the rest of the community, and equally important, within the Negro community itself."<sup>2</sup>

Other editorials from the same papers that previously had attacked Negro leaders for their opposition, stated:

So it is essential now that we concentrate on speedy action to remove the stach factor from the 4th and Bryant sewage plant (one of the Negro grievances). We need too, to think ahead so that no segment of the city develops a continuing grievance so deep that it endangers a community-wide effort such as a bond issue as vital as last Tuesday's. <sup>3</sup>

Even though Negro leaders had narrowly failed in their stated mission, it was evident that white leaders

<sup>1</sup>See following page for sample vote tabulations.

<sup>2</sup>"Affirmative Voice," editorial, Oklahoma City Times, July 13, 1968, p. 18.

<sup>3</sup>Oklahoma City Times, July 23, 1968, p. 22.

TABLE 5

**Oklahoma City Bond Election, July 16, 1968,  
Representative Issues**

	Pcts. Rptg.	Transit		Fairgrounds	
		Yes	No	Yes	No
Ward 1 (27)	27	4,026	2,748	3,873	2,863
Ward 2 (31)	31	2,779	2,090	2,644	2,187
Ward 3 (26)	26	2,302	2,768	2,231	2,812
Ward 4 (36)	36	1,450	2,236	1,398	2,261
Ward 5 (30)	30	1,956	3,246	1,952	3,239
Ward 6 (34)	34	1,795	1,232	1,675	1,318
Ward 7 (31)	31	859	1,473	826	1,488
Ward 8 (28)	28	3,446	1,938	3,287	2,053
Out of County (17)	17	169	261	171	254
Total (260)	260	18,782	17,992	18,057	18,475

		Airports		Sanitary Sewer	
		Yes	No	Yes	No
Ward 1 (27)	27	4,047	2,733	5,040	2,660
Ward 2 (31)	31	2,726	2,119	3,461	2,072
Ward 3 (26)	26	2,240	2,722	2,898	2,773
Ward 4 (36)	36	1,440	2,217	1,855	2,333
Ward 5 (30)	30	2,088	3,115	2,601	3,055
Ward 6 (34)	34	1,701	1,299	2,161	1,308
Ward 7 (31)	31	825	1,488	1,007	1,653
Ward 8 (28)	28	3,380	1,973	4,444	1,971
Out of County (17)	17	185	247	197	233
Total (260)	260	18,632	17,913	23,464	18,058

Source: The Daily Oklahoman, July 17, 1968, p. 4.

recognized the difficulty of governing effectively without meeting the demands of the Negro. Rarely, if ever before, had the white community moved so speedily to try to mollify the Negro community with promises of remedial action. After the bond fight the City's first elected Negro councilman said, "It was evident to white city leaders that many Negro leaders could now mobilize the Negro community to block or at least impede citywide proposals that overlooked their interests."<sup>1</sup> The outcome of this issue demonstrated that Negroes would no longer be content with traditional ways of governing the community.

Negro political power revealed itself when in the late summer of 1968, Negroes and their allies among sympathetic whites moved to block a proposed twenty-six million dollar low-rent housing project. Their objections centered on the high concentration of low-rent units in one locality. Negro leaders voiced strong protest through their respective organizations. They and their supporters believed that this project would inhibit the dispersal of the Negro ghetto and reinforce school segregation. Attacks against both were being launched on a substantial basis.

City newspapers cited this protest as yet another example of effective Negro leadership where their community interests were involved. Negro protest on this issue, the

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<sup>1</sup>Interview with A.L. Dowell, Oklahoma City Councilman representing Ward 7, January 2, 1969. Councilman Dowell also headed the Negro community's anti-bond campaign.

newspapers declared, was particularly effective. "Here was a common cause in which many obviously felt a stake...and in this political effort they had a particularly telling effect."<sup>1</sup> In the outcome the FHA denied federal aid for the project and thereby effectively cancelled the proposal.

Negroes from the Oklahoma City area were represented in the state legislature due to reapportionment and Negro political unity. City ward lines had been purposefully redrawn to allow for Negro representation, which later occurred. State and local boards, agencies, and commissions now commonly included Negroes as part of their membership. An interfaith and interracial Community Relations Commission had been established, encouraged by the new City Manager, Mayor, and Councilmen, eventually to be headed by a Negro. Simultaneously, as these events were occurring, Negro political strength, illustrated by bloc voting and mass political participation was becoming increasingly potent. The Negro community, through its leadership, was now able to bargain effectively with white leaders over issues involving millions of dollars--issues and proposals which would have been previously decided without Negro approval or discussion.

Overall, because of the widespread recognition that the Negro community was now an active and independent force in the community it was evident that the community had

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<sup>1</sup>Oklahoma City Times, August 12, 1968, p. 22.

undergone a transformation. In the words of one study of Negro politics in the South, there had been a change from what was described as a "Manipulative" town to one more closely resembling an "Independent Bargaining" and "Office Holding" town.

In the Manipulative town the electoral activists--those responsible for turning out the Negro vote--are primarily the agents of members of the white political structure, and the preponderance of voting Negroes are responsive to the activists as agents of the whites.

In the Independent Bargaining town electoral activists in the Negro community tend to be independent of the white political structure and bargain with white politicians for gains, either for the Negro activists or for the Negro community as a whole. The Negro voter tends to respond either to the activists as an individual or to the activist as a representative of the Negro community interests.

...the Office Holding town is similar to the Independent Bargaining town in all respects except that Negro gains through independent organization and bargaining have resulted in Negroes' appointment or election to public offices. <sup>1</sup>

This conclusion is reinforced by the statements of some notable civil rights leaders. Their conclusion was that there had been a noticeable positive shift in behavior patterns toward the Negro community from white leaders.<sup>2</sup> The latter, they felt, corresponded with the advent of the Negro community as a significant political force in city politics. By

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<sup>1</sup>Alfred B. Clubok, John M. DeGrove, and Charles D. Farris, "The Manipulative Negro Vote: Some Pre-Conditions and Consequences," Journal of Politics, XXVI, No. 1, (February, 1964), p. 114.

<sup>2</sup>Interview with Jimmy Stewart, President, Oklahoma City Branch, NAACP, and member, National Board of Directors, NAACP, July 14, 1967. Interview with Arnold Fagin, Chairman, Oklahoma City Community Relations Commission, July 7, 1967.



this they did not mean that most white political leaders were strong integrationists or were otherwise avid proponents of Negro causes. Rather, they had moderated earlier racial attitudes and had become able to operate in relation to Negro demands much as political leaders were doing in other sections of the country when faced with group interest demands. Indeed, one survey, commissioned by a prominent Negro legislator to assess the chances of a Negro in running for statewide office, found that the race issue itself had significantly diminished in the Oklahoma City area as a factor in public attitudes toward political candidates. Further, this survey found that there was no longer overt racism in the community's politics. This conclusion did not mean the elimination of race as a determining factor in local political elections. However, the overt emphasis upon race, characteristic of past campaigns in speeches, newspaper advertisements and other public forms of campaigning had significantly altered. There was, instead, simply a tendency to divide politically along either conservative or liberal ideological lines or along partisan lines reflecting ties to the major parties.<sup>1</sup> The race issue, long the fundamental issue under-

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Interview with Dr. Aubrey Cooper, Member, Board of Directors, Oklahoma City Urban League, September 11, 1967.

<sup>1</sup>Interview with State Representative Curtis Lawson, May 28, 1968. The complete results of this survey were not made public.

girding Southern politics,<sup>1</sup> had diminished. Race as an issue was still present but was not the major issue. For a community once so deeply Southern this was a historic transformation. The community apparently reflected nationwide trends. For by 1969, surveys revealed that a new high (67%) in the proportion of people who would vote for a Negro for President had been reached.<sup>2</sup>

Because of this change both local and state leaders indicated both by word and deed that they recognized that desegregation was now a reality and that the Negro had the opportunity to enter the broader society in a meaningful way. Many white leaders joined integrated churches,<sup>3</sup> toured slum areas,<sup>4</sup> attended interracial conferences,<sup>5</sup> endorsed general Negro goals,<sup>6</sup> hired Negroes for job openings, and publicly praised the desegregation that had been accomplished.<sup>7</sup> Pro-

<sup>1</sup>See V.O. Key, Southern Politics in State and Nation, (New York: Random House, 1949).

<sup>2</sup>CBS News, quoting Gallup Poll Report, April 3, 1969.

<sup>3</sup>Interview with Arnold Fagin, Chairman, Oklahoma City Community Relations Commission, July 7, 1967.

<sup>4</sup>"A Governor's Tour," editorial, Oklahoma City Times, May 18, 1967.

<sup>5</sup>Oklahoma City Times, July 10, 1968, p. 29.

<sup>6</sup>"Firms on Eastside Will Close," Oklahoma City Times, April 8, 1968, p. 3. An endorsement of Negro leader's plea that white and Negro businessmen in Oklahoma City's Negro area close in observance of the funeral of Martin Luther King, Jr. See also: "Freedom Center's Dream Boosted," Oklahoma City Times, October 11, 1968, p. 8.

<sup>7</sup>"Integrated Youth Groups Hear Speakers," Oklahoma City Times, June 6, 1968.

minent city newspapers gave continuous and intensive coverage to interracial activities, reviewed past protest episodes, and inclined to point with pride to their community as one that was able to change.<sup>1</sup>

At last, there were definite political signs in the mid and late 1960s that a new political structure was being constructed in the community--based upon a political consensus shared by both Negroes and whites. Furthermore, it reveals the destruction of an important facet of the former caste society--the exclusion of Negroes from the political life of the community, operative until this period.

#### School Desegregation

Public school desegregation, as already noted, had always been considered of prime importance to Negro protesters. It was the first area broadly and thoroughly attacked. Public schools had to be completely desegregated, in the eyes of Negro leaders, in order to make possible further advances in eliminating the caste structure that persisted in residential patterns of Negro isolation in the ghetto. Major headway was made initially in desegregating Oklahoma City's public schools after the school desegregation decisions; but in the years that followed leaders realized thorough desegregation had not become a reality. Negro leaders therefore decided in the

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<sup>1</sup>"How Far We've Come," Oklahoma City Times, September 7, 1968, p. 18.

early 1960s to mount a major effort against persisting patterns of school desegregation.

They resolved to press their demands through the courts. In mid-1961 a prominent Negro optometrist filed suit in a federal court on behalf of his son against the Oklahoma City Board of Education. The Board was charged with using such means as quotas, double-admittance standards, and buffer zones to limit the number of Negroes in some city high schools. Eventually, the case went to trial to decide whether the School Board was guilty or not of discriminatory practices. In July, 1963 a federal judge decided that only token integration had taken place and ordered the full integration of all city schools.

In order to implement his order effectively, an independent panel of experts was appointed by the Court to study the Oklahoma City public school system. The panel recommendations to the Court stated that only token integration had previously been effected and outlined a plan which, if followed, would fully integrate the school system. The Court accepted the recommendations and after legal appeals and other delays, it was fully implemented by the Oklahoma City School Board in the fall of 1968.

The panel that compiled the integration report in 1966 stressed in public hearings that they felt that Oklahoma City was, at this time, ripe for such a plan; and they thought that it could be easily implemented because of prior

successful desegregation efforts in many other areas. Testimony from one of the panel members, Bill Carmack, at the time Director of the Oklahoma Center for Continuing Education, is indicative of the mood regarding Oklahoma City:

Carmack felt leadership was available for such an effort. He said they had never had a workshop at Norman which did not include a sizable number of faculty from the Oklahoma City schools. He said there was a rather large reservoir of experts in this area.

Oklahoma City is a surprisingly open city, Carmack declared. It ought not (at this time) to be thought of sociologically as a southern city. It has a Community Relations Commission with funds for a director. At the capitol, it has a State Human Rights Commission. It has laws against discrimination in public employment.

The typical southern city has none of these. Every major and responsible inter-group relations agency has staffed offices in Oklahoma City.

Carmack felt he could safely say that there is an acceptance for change in Oklahoma City. There is pride in pluralism. Given affirmative aggressive leadership, careful preparation, and adequate communication for handling complaints, he believed there would be no reason why one would predict anything but success with a plan like the panel suggested. <sup>1</sup>

Community leaders resolved to implement the report with as little educational disruption as possible. There was some outcry from white patrons in non-integrated sections of the city, but their opposition was largely ineffective. The School Board, administrators, church groups, and the affected schools prepared for total integration months in advance. In early 1968 there were seminars, counseling sessions, and

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<sup>1</sup>Testimony from the public hearing on the "Desegregation Report." Civil Case #9542, Robert L. Dowell, et al, Plaintiffs v. Oklahoma City Board of Education, et al, Defendants. U.S. District Court. Compiled by Oklahoma City League of Women Voters, "Report On the Hearing of the Spal-

institutes to prepare both Negroes and whites for the transition.<sup>1</sup> Prominent editorials praised the plan and declared it was a positive and progressive step for the community.

Although operating under a court order, the Oklahoma City school system seems to be using its good offices to make for smooth desegregation transition. With changes on the board and within the administration, the attitude has shifted to a positive one, aimed at accepting the major challenge of our age and achieving the best results in terms of education for all children concerned.

This seemingly has been met in (the affected) areas with a calm, stabilized reception on the part of most patrons, with a willingness to give it a try. These days we are becoming increasingly aware of the dangers of a fragmented, disharmonious society. School boards in Oklahoma seeking to turn stumbling blocks into stepping stones deserve sympathy and support. 2

In the fall of 1968, the Oklahoma City school system opened on a thoroughly desegregated basis. The Superintendent of Oklahoma City Public Schools stated, "...all schools in the Oklahoma City system--ninety elementary and twenty-two secondary--will have integrated classes when school begins..."<sup>3</sup> As if to signal the complete downfall of former school policies, one of Oklahoma City's most dynamic Negro protest leaders Clara Luper, who had organized sit-ins throughout the city was assigned to teach at one of the City's most prominent

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ding Report and Bohanon Decision." (in regard to integration of public schools of Oklahoma City), February, 1966, p. 10.

<sup>1</sup>Oklahoma City Times, August 29, 1968, p. 12. And Oklahoma City Times, February 23, 1963, p. 16.

<sup>2</sup>"Desegregation Trends" Oklahoma City Times, June 13, 1968, p. 28.

<sup>3</sup>Oklahoma City Times, August 26, 1968, p. 12.

white high schools. The school was mostly white and was located in a section of town far removed from the Negro ghetto. Most whites in this part of the city had seen only Negro domestics or daily laborers in their section of town. From this point on a Negro protest leader, along with several other Negro teachers, was to teach their children full time.<sup>1</sup>

The acceptance of complete school desegregation by both white and Negro students and their faculty as the process was brought to bear on the entire school system seemed almost routine. White students accepted Negro teachers throughout the system and no significant racial friction between pupils and teachers was reported. At most integrated schools, a positive attitude toward integration was taken by the principals and this filtered down to the staff and faculty. Surveys taken by local newspapers and school officials indicated favorable attitudes toward the court ordered integration plan were generally held by students in the affected schools.<sup>2</sup> Full scale integration throughout the school sys-

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<sup>1</sup>"City Rights Leader to Teach at Northwest Classes," The Daily Oklahoman, August 14, 1968, pp. 1-2.

<sup>2</sup>Oklahoma City Times, August 30, 1968, p. 6; and August 26, 1968, p. 1; October 21, 1968, p. 1 for the school surveys conducted by this newspaper. Oklahoma City Times, August 27, 1968, p. 7 for survey conducted by Dr. Jesse Lindley, Director of Secondary Education, Oklahoma City School System.

tem, fourteen years after the school desegregation decisions, had not only been effected; evidently it was now accepted by the majority of the students and teachers.<sup>1</sup> There was opposition and some parents and students complained bitterly about the new school policies, but their complaints had little effect.

Scholars have explored the reasons why some communities are able to totally desegregate schools. Some point to parental willingness as a vital factor. Two sociologists, John Scott and Louis Scott have said that, "...we lack the means to produce widespread school integration so long as white parents do not favor it."<sup>2</sup> In Oklahoma City, most white parents surveyed by local papers either favored the desegregation plan or were only mildly opposed.<sup>3</sup> Some who were strongly opposed to total desegregation moved to areas least affected by the plan or left the community for neighboring towns.

Other scholars have stated that total school desegregation in communities similar to Oklahoma City was accomp-

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<sup>1</sup>Bernard Berelson and Gary Steiner state that the dispersal of Negroes throughout the community so that they come into personal contact with whites can soften prejudices and lessen discriminatory practices. From this a wider community consensus may emerge. See: Bernard Berelson and Gary A. Steiner, Human Behavior: An Inventory of Scientific Findings (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1966, pp. 512-513.

<sup>2</sup>John Finley Scott and Louis Heyman Scott, both members of the Department of Sociology and of Urban Planning, University of Washington. As quoted in The Wall Street Journal, editorial, May 21, 1968.

<sup>3</sup>"Concern and Hope--This Is City School Integration,"



lished because, "In the current situation of educational desegregation in the American South, for example, the process of desegregation has gone furthest where they are the fewest Negroes, proportionately."<sup>1</sup> Certainly, this factor could apply to Oklahoma City where the percentage of Negroes to the total population has been, throughout the years, about ten percent. Naturally, federal court orders were of major importance in effecting school changes. In any case, total school desegregation never could have been brought about without the determination and growing power displayed by the Negro community. Negro leaders had effectively attacked public school segregation and partial desegregation for over a decade and this attack was a sustained one. Every action, legal or otherwise, to effect desegregation was initiated by Negro leaders. School administrators, school board members, local news media (Negro and white), city council members, and community leaders were under constant pressure to complete the desegregation process.<sup>2</sup> By the time Negroes were demanding complete school desegregation, the Negro community had become a powerful political force in the community. White community leaders needed Negro support for further city progress

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Oklahoma City Times, October 21, 1968, p. 1; and also see Oklahoma City Times, October 23, 1968, p. 1; October 25, 1968, p. 16; and April 19, 1968, p. 25.

<sup>1</sup>Bernard Berelson and Gary Steiner, Human Behavior: An Inventory of Scientific Findings (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1966), p. 515.

<sup>2</sup>Interview with Jimmy Stewart, President, Oklahoma City Branch, NAACP, and member, National Board of Directors, NAACP, June 29, 1967.

and did not want to alienate Negro leaders further. In spite of past conflicts over some city problems, such as the bond issues of 1968,<sup>1</sup> white community leaders seemed resolved to heal the breach.

All during the court hearings on how to effect school desegregation, no white leaders openly attacked the principle of desegregation; only a few differed with the court's final order and they differed mainly on the issue of implementation. Indeed, as implementation approached, white and Negro leaders combined to render the transformation as painless as possible. Oklahoma City leaders seemed desirous of creating a new and wider consensus that stressed quality education for all, mutual community benefit, and the workability of a thoroughly desegregated school system.<sup>2</sup>

#### Employment

By the middle and late 1960s it was becoming increasingly evident that Negroes were entering into the economic life of the community to a degree never before experienced. Negro protest from earlier years contributed to this shift and, in turn, it enabled Negro citizens to participate more actively than before. For the added purchasing power could itself be useful used as a weapon to obtain further gains.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>See previous section on "Altered Political Climate."

<sup>2</sup>"Quality Education," Oklahoma City Times, April 18, 1968, p. 30.

<sup>3</sup>"Urban League Job Hunt Paying Off In Millions," Oklahoma City Times, September 14, 1968, p. 7.

F. D. Moon, one of the City's oldest Negro civic leaders has said, "In the community's earliest days most Negroes had trouble literally surviving--they had neither the time nor the effort nor the capability to participate independently in community affairs."<sup>1</sup> But by the mid-1960s this picture was changing. A true Negro middle class was emerging. By 1966 about twenty percent of Negro families were earning six-thousand dollars or more per year.<sup>2</sup> Negro entrepreneurs were increasing both in numbers and in variety of business activity.<sup>3</sup> More Negro professionals were present in the community than ever before.<sup>4</sup> Negro unemployment, while still double that of whites, was much less than in many of the nation's larger cities.<sup>5</sup> In fact, during some periods of the mid and late 1960s, total unemployment was down to two

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<sup>1</sup>Interview with F.D. Moon, Executive Secretary of Oklahoma Association of Teachers, and former principal of Oklahoma City's Douglas High School, February 7, 1963.

<sup>2</sup>Oklahoma City Chamber of Commerce Report, June, 1967.

<sup>3</sup>"Negro Business Hopes Grow," The Sunday Oklahoman, December 22, 1968, p. 9.

<sup>4</sup>Interview with Frank Cowan, Director, Oklahoma City Urban League Employment Center, September 4, 1967. The 1960 census shows nearly 1,000 Negroes engaged in professional or technical occupations, and there is general agreement by the Urban League that this figure has increased.

<sup>5</sup>Interview with W.J. Bowman, Research Director, Oklahoma State Employment Commission, September 8, 1967. According to the Oklahoma State Employment Commission Negro unemployment throughout the 1960s has remained between 6.5% to 7%. In some of the large cities of the nation with heavy Negro concentrations, Negro unemployment has ranged as high as 30% during this same period.

and nine-tenths percent of the total job force.<sup>1</sup>

Of course many Negroes had not emerged from poverty. About thirty-five percent of the city's Negro families were in poverty in 1966.<sup>2</sup>

In spite of this poverty, gains were being made. These improvements were in part the product of efforts by city leaders who set an example by moving first to open employment opportunities. For instance, when Robert Tinstman first became city manager in 1963 he worked to remove disabilities encumbering economic opportunities for minorities:

Shortly after assuming office, I did prepare and recommend for adoption a policy resolution with respect to equal opportunity and non-discrimination in city employment. Upon adoption, this was distributed to all department heads and emphasized at a subsequent staff meeting. We undertook an analysis as to employment of minority group individuals in the various departments and offices and also correlated wage level to educational attainment. This analysis was updated and reviewed periodically and the results made known publicly to the Mayor and the Council, the department heads, and interested groups. 3

This policy was the first of its kind for city employment.

Negroes then began moving into positions never before occupied;<sup>4</sup> still, some leaders remained critical of city employ-

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<sup>1</sup>Oklahoma City Times, February 15, 1968; based on Oklahoma City Chamber of Commerce's industrial division's annual economic development report.

<sup>2</sup>Oklahoma City Chamber of Commerce Report, June, 1967. Federal agencies define poverty for families (four or more members) as \$3,000 or less.

<sup>3</sup>Letter from Robert Tinstman, former City Manager, Oklahoma City, October 5, 1967.

<sup>4</sup>Oklahoma City Times, August 15, 1967, p. 7.

ment opportunities. They claimed that some city departments were not hiring Negroes in line with official policy.<sup>1</sup>

The Community Relations Commission, formed in 1963, also acted to break down employment barriers. For example, early in 1965 the Community Relations Commission conducted a concerted drive. At the urging of Negro leaders and in part to forestall possible demonstrations, they acted to open up banking positions to Negroes. Negro leaders also threatened to boycott certain businesses and to withdraw their bank deposits in an early exhibition of growing economic strength.<sup>2</sup> The Commission finally resolved the problem by a face-to-face meeting with the presidents and chairmen of the boards of all major downtown Oklahoma City banks. During the same week this meeting was held, all downtown Oklahoma City banks hired Negro employees.<sup>3</sup>

From this beginning other organizations, both private and public, began to assist Negroes in joining the broader society's economic life. Many different vehicles were utilized in this process. From 1962 to 1968 Manpower and Development Training Act programs trained eight-thousand in Oklahoma--a good portion being Oklahoma City Negroes. In recent years, defense contracts to Oklahoma have increased

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<sup>1</sup>Interview with Henry Floyd, President, Oklahoma City Branch, NAACP, June 20, 1967.

<sup>2</sup>Interview with Arnold Fagin, Chairman, Oklahoma City Community Relations Commission, July 8, 1967.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

appreciably; and corporations with government contracts have been obliged to hire Negroes.<sup>1</sup> Since 1966, each federal agency has had to hire some "disadvantaged" youths for every one-hundred employed; many of course were Negro. Many others both youths and adults, were able to find work at Tinker Air Force Base in Oklahoma City due to a combination of aggressive hiring practices and continued Negro demands. Many Negroes entered Job Corps training. One Labor Department official said in 1967 that, "In my sincere opinion, in Oklahoma the Negro has far greater opportunities than in ninety-eight percent of the states."<sup>2</sup>

At the state level in 1968 the Governor established a Commission for Full Employment which extended most of its efforts in Oklahoma's larger cities and towns; Oklahoma City itself was of major concern. This commission was engaged in a job referral system; efforts reported to have enjoyed some success.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, state employment itself provided jobs for many Negroes in the city area. A local newspaper survey stated that, "In state government, Negro employment under the merit system has gained about one-hundred and forty percent in the past four years (since 1964)."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>"White Man Responding to Negro's Cry For Jobs," Oklahoma City Times, August 16, 1967, p. 27.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Oklahoma City Times, October 16, 1967, p. 20.

<sup>4</sup>Oklahoma City Times, August 15, 1967, p. 7.

At the local level there were many programs. Most prominent has been the Community Action Program, which served as a central agency directing many diverse programs aimed at employment opportunities. Also at the local level, the Mayor's Youth Opportunity Council functioned, especially during certain difficult periods, such as the summer months when many youths were apt to be unemployed. Local protest organizations have also added their vigor to this activity, including such groups as the Urban League's Job Development and Employment Program and other programs sponsored by the NAACP.<sup>1</sup>

Some corporations in the city area developed their own programs designed to hire Negroes; many operated through the National Alliance of Businessmen in hiring unemployed and underemployed Negroes. Other corporations have assisted Negro-owned enterprises in providing technical, managerial, and financial advice.<sup>2</sup> Church groups have been actively engaged in helping to further Negro employment. Indeed, the Oklahoma Conference on Religion and Race, composed of all denominations with headquarters in Oklahoma City, proposed Project Equality. The purpose was to encourage churches on an individual basis to make decisions on selective buying from firms which engaged in fair employment practices.

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<sup>1</sup>Job Development and Employment Program, CAP 66-294 CCA (Oklahoma City, Oklahoma: The Urban League of Oklahoma City, January, 1967).

<sup>2</sup>"Negro Business Hopes Grow," Sunday Oklahoman, December 22, 1968, p. 9.

Churches were also provided with information on qualified minority group employees. Overall, the number of organizations promoting Negro employment became so numerous and varied that local newspapers periodically listed all of them under the heading, "Need a Job? Here's Help."<sup>1</sup> As for their political and social effect, many programs emphasized that in entering jobs once reserved for whites, Negroes had to adopt commonly accepted standards of behavior for employment. Negroes were gaining enlarged opportunities for advancement and they were also learning skills and standards of behavior that contributed to their gradual integration in the system.

An example of the stabilizing effects on the political and social system of these employment programs was the Urban League's Development and Employment Project. In order to make Negro job applicants more "acceptable" for placement or referral, Negroes were informed of the need to conform to employer standards. In addition to being thoroughly tested regarding their economic status, skills, education, and other factors necessary for placement, these potential workers were given personal self-improvement courses. With the help of Negro professionals, they were urged to adopt weight reduction programs, to improve their dress and their appearance generally. In some instances, psychiatric assistance was provided. They were even instructed on how to greet white

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<sup>1</sup>Oklahoma City Times, August 15, 1967, p. 7.



employers and how to take written and oral examinations and fill out application forms. Citizenship programs were conducted as a standard part of the curriculum along with refresher and remedial courses in various subject areas in which applicants were deficient.<sup>1</sup> Overall, it was a process by which Negroes gained an enlarged awareness of the standards of the broader society and gained decent jobs as well.<sup>2</sup>

The white community, while not uniformly enthusiastic, at least took formal steps to include the Negro in all areas of economic life. An Urban League official stated, "There is, very definitely, a commitment (by Oklahoma City's white leadership) to equal employment opportunities. This was brought about largely by Negro determination."<sup>3</sup>

Negroes, like many other interest groups used their mounting economic power for political advantage. The various programs for job procurement added millions of dollars to Negro paychecks. One job program report alone claimed that after job placement, those placed increased their income twelve-hundred and seventy-six dollars per person yearly.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Interview with Frank Cowan, Director, Urban League's Development and Employment Center, September 4, 1967.

<sup>2</sup>Oklahoma City's Youth Counseling and Child Development Center and the city school system have sponsored a successful similar program--a project to encourage young underprivileged children, many being Negro, to continue their education and seek decent jobs by talking to successful minority group persons who had succeeded in the broader society.

<sup>3</sup>Interview with Frank Cowan, Director, Urban League's Development and Employment Center, September 4, 1967.

<sup>4</sup>Oklahoma City Times, September 14, 1968, p. 7.

A credit union for poor Negroes and whites was funded by the Community Action Program.<sup>1</sup> Negro protest leaders, businessmen, and professionals discussed plans for a Negro-owned bank or savings and loan association. In mid-1968, prominent Negro leaders announced plans to construct and operate an FM radio station. It was planned to be one of only seven Negro-owned radio stations in the nation. The station was to serve the Negro community with public affairs programming, news, and music.

Further, Negro entrance into the community's economic life brought a degree of social acceptance for the Negro that was far removed from the old caste system. Negro and white professionals had been in social contact for over a decade. This social contact was extended to many other areas as Negroes gained employment in diverse fields. In these instances, the class system seemed clearly to be superseding old caste requirements. Negroes and whites were able to work together in department stores, banks, insurance and oil companies, and in city, state, and federal offices. Labor unions were also on the way to reforming their practices so as to include more Negro members in selected positions.<sup>2</sup> Many of these situations, common to the city's

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<sup>1</sup>"CAP Program Aims At More Power For Poor," Oklahoma City Times, December 6, 1968, p. 5.

<sup>2</sup>This was discussed at a meeting of Oklahomans For Progress, a statewide organization of Negro leaders, Langston University, July 7, 1967. The author was in attendance at this meeting.

economic life of the late 1960s, would have been unheard of a decade ago.

The Negro, in gaining entrance to the economic life of the city, was effectively altering a basic aspect of the old caste system. In turn, the Negro increased his community's political potential. The political system itself was, in the long run, reinforced by this spreading of economic benefits as more persons entered the broad economic life of the community and began to share common community standards and living patterns. Although many Negroes were still excluded from better jobs and much poverty remained, there had been change and there was a prospect of more to come.

#### Desegregated Housing

The general rush of events stimulated by the protest movement had little effect upon segregated housing patterns until the mid-1960s. Past protest activities against segregated housing centered around the elimination of restrictive covenants and the utilization of federal housing orders. Negro leaders were generally fearful of launching any real test similar to sit-ins of segregated neighborhoods because they felt that they might thereby exacerbate white feelings. Instead it was felt that a more gradual approach was required. Protests directed against segregated schools, they believed, would gradually affect segregated neighborhoods and permit the development of a more favorable climate.

In earlier years, some Negro ghetto inhabitants had begun a gradual movement into areas formerly occupied by whites who had moved on to suburban areas. This shift alleviated ghetto congestion and even created a measure of neighborhood integration as some whites remained behind in mixed neighborhoods. A very few Negroes actually moved into completely all-white areas.<sup>1</sup> These movements, however minor, were brought about partially because the large geographical area encompassed by the city allowed whites to move to other areas while Negroes moved out of their traditional areas.<sup>2</sup>

Realizing that desegregated neighborhoods throughout the city area were essential for an overall desegregated picture and that this had been neglected in the protest movement's previous agenda, strong pressures for desegregated neighborhoods emerged in the mid-1960s. Three major factors helped to create the environment necessary for desegregated housing in this period. First, there were the efforts of the Community Relations Commission in stimulating open-housing and in maintaining lists of available housing for Negroes in other than all-Negro neighborhoods.<sup>3</sup> This program

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<sup>1</sup>See: "Move to North Town No Trouble," The Black Dispatch, September 11, 1964, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>As noted previously, Oklahoma City, through the 1960s, has ranked as one of the largest geographical units in the country. See Journal of Politics, XXVI, No. 11, (February, 1964), 71, Table 4. Table derived from J.C. Bollens, "Metropolitan and Fringe Area Developments," Municipal Yearbook, Vols. XXV-XXX.

<sup>3</sup>Oklahoma City Times, June 2, 1967, p. 5.

both encouraged Negroes to move out of the ghetto area if they possessed sufficient funds and assisted them in locating housing. Second, there was stimulation provided by the federal government through its executive orders and, eventually, the open-housing section of the 1968 Civil Rights Bill.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, defense establishments in the area required desegregated housing; national corporations that encouraged their Negro employees to move from other areas of the state and nation to Oklahoma City were concerned about proper housing facilities for their Negro employees.<sup>2</sup> Third, there were the efforts of local Negro leaders and white sympathizers to achieve open-housing. For many white leaders by this time realized that Negroes were a strong political and economic force in the community and their demands for open-housing had to be met to avoid community turmoil.

The goals of those desiring open-housing were formally satisfied with the appearance of integrated neighborhoods by early 1968; without the major confrontations reminiscent of earlier years and other areas. To stimulate the process several dozen white families had begun moving into middle-class all-

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<sup>1</sup>The impact of the 1968 Act cannot yet be fully evaluated.

<sup>2</sup>Interview with Jack W. Byler, Director of Industrial Development, Oklahoma City Chamber of Commerce, Sept. 6, 1967.

Negro neighborhoods to demonstrate the desirability and workability of open-housing. This move helped stabilize market values, encouraged whites to adjust when Negroes moved into white neighborhoods, and removed the sole burden of desegregation from Negroes.<sup>1</sup> As one white participant later stated, "...the whole burden of integration has always been put on the Negro family--the burden of moving into a white neighborhood...."<sup>2</sup> Over a decade ago this movement probably would hardly have been considered. By 1968, this integration plan was working and was repeatedly praised by local and national news media.<sup>3</sup> Negro families who were encouraged by these white actions in turn increasingly moved away from the traditional ghetto area; several middle-income neighborhoods were thereby slowly integrated.

In order to formalize open-housing and further accelerate the process, Negro leaders urged, in 1967, an open-housing ordinance; it had been discussed and even introduced in previous city councils but was never ratified. In late 1967, this demand reached its peak. Because of some delay and the opposition of various city councilmen, Negro leaders moved to force the issue. Peaceful marches were planned and were led by some of the same protest leaders who were already

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<sup>1</sup>"Cityans Push Reverse Integration," Oklahoma City Times, July 14, 1967, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>"Integration Goal in Reverse Planned," New York Times, July 23, 1967, p. 39.

well-known for their earlier activities. The marches were carefully planned for all-white sections of the community and were widely publicized.<sup>1</sup> These marches were successful in drawing large numbers of Negro participants and white observers.

Negroes and sympathetic whites were mobilized for city council hearings and large numbers actually attended. The Council's lone Negro councilman stood during the entire time in the council chambers while the ordinance was being debated; the debate lasted through several council meetings. Negro leaders threatened to damage the city economically by demanding that the federal government withhold funds to city agencies and hinted at other reprisals if the ordinance was defeated. The local news media then began to encourage the city council to pass the ordinance; they wanted to avoid a direct confrontation between Negroes and whites. As one local newspaper editorial stated, "...the city council now would seem to have a proper climate in which to find an acceptable answer here, with which each race can live. This is vital for community progress...."<sup>2</sup> On January 9, 1968, only several months after Negro leaders openly demanded an open-housing ordinance, the city council passed such an enactment.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The Daily Oklahoman, December 11, 1967, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>Oklahoma City Times, January 4, 1968, p. 22.

<sup>3</sup>Oklahoma City Times, January 9, 1968, p. 1. The ordinance passed 5 to 3, and was not as potent as Negro leaders had originally desired; but it was agreed upon as a satisfactory compromise.

It was apparent that white political leaders appreciated the political effectiveness of Negro unity at this stage.

After passage of the ordinance, those neighborhoods affected by integration prepared the way for neighborhood stability and encouraged open-housing.<sup>1</sup> No violence whatsoever was reported at any time. Indeed, many of these neighborhoods created discussion groups and interracial social events in an effort to promote a sense of neighborliness. As the chairman of one neighborhood association stated, "We want to welcome all our new neighbors and to invite other interested people--white and Negro--who wish to live in an

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<sup>1</sup>The groups promoting open-housing and neighborhood stability are numerous. Examples are: Neighbors Now, which works through the Community of John XXIII Catholic Church. Its aim is to make an extended invitation to the Negro community to live in integrated neighborhoods. Thirty Families, whose purpose is to develop a stable and integrated area in a major neighborhood. Major efforts are taken to interest white families to move into the area and to offer information on houses available for sale. East-West Neighbors, which grew out of school integration and is primarily a discussion group. Rush, which is a study-meeting primarily. It was formed when a Negro family moved into a distinctly all-white section of the town. The residents adopted as a theme "Do Unto Others" and have held study meetings and discussion groups regularly. Wildewood Hills Homeowners Association, is an integrated middle-class neighborhood association that has stabilized the area by intensive and frank discussions. The group has met regularly on various problems as they arise in the area. This information is from an interview with Leon Galoob, Co-Chairman, Oklahoma City's Wildewood Hills Homeowners Association, September 3, 1968.



integrated area to become part of the neighborhood."<sup>1</sup> Organizations of this type have also striven, in the words of another neighborhood association leader, "...to make people realize the value of their homes have not changed just because their neighbors have. We want to get to know our neighbors and help them know one another, because through knowledge prejudice is overcome."<sup>2</sup>

Many mortgage bankers who had been worried since the mid-1950s about desegregated housing values and had required more stringent loan qualifications than prevailed in all-white areas, seemed to be taking a second look at desegregated housing. They met with groups formed in the desegregated sections, discussing real estate values and problems of mutual concern--with the aim being to eliminate higher financial qualifications for desegregated neighborhoods.<sup>3</sup>

The community seemed ready to accept the concept of interracial neighborhoods.<sup>4</sup> The acceptance of integrated housing at this time was shown in a survey conducted by a

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<sup>1</sup>Oklahoma City Times, July 30, 1968, p. 8.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Oklahoma City Times, July 14, 1967, p. 1.

<sup>4</sup>Bernard Berelson and Gary Steiner state the dispersal of Negroes throughout the community so that they come into contact with whites can soften prejudice and lessen discriminatory practices. From this a wider consensus can emerge. See Bernard Berelson and Gary A. Steiner, Human Behavior: An Inventory of Scientific Findings (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1966), pp. 512-513.

major defense installation in the city area. Local news media reported that, "Tinker Air Force Base spokesmen said that operators of only eight percent of housing establishments surveyed said that they would not consider an integrated rental policy."<sup>1</sup> Further, in 1968 the President of the Oklahoma City Metropolitan Board of Realtors stated that sales to Negroes in formerly all-white areas, some quite far removed from the traditional Negro ghetto, were accepted routinely.<sup>2</sup> "Most of the calls were to say 'good' the quicker we get it done, and get a good family living in every neighborhood, the quicker this racial problem will be over."<sup>3</sup>

Completely integrated neighborhoods and housing facilities were still not a reality, but the move was certainly in this direction. Negroes were armed with governmental enactments and growing prosperity; and the backing of a politically alert and unified Negro community enhanced their movement toward integrated housing. Though complete equality was far from realized, one of the most visible symbols of caste society, long sanctioned by law and custom was by late 1968 much eroded.

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<sup>1</sup>"City Area Survey Favorable," Oklahoma City Times, July 19, 1967, p. 7. The survey was taken at the request of the Defense Department on the availability of housing for all servicemen. The survey was made by personally contacting owners and/or managers of all apartment houses, housing projects, and mobile home courts listed in the city's phone directory.

<sup>2</sup>The Sunday Oklahoman, July 28, 1968, p. 20.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

### Public Accommodations

By the mid-1960s, Oklahoma City's public accommodations, the early focal point of Negro protest, had all been opened to Negroes. Some white establishments did attempt to maintain their former segregated status by claiming that they were not catering to the public and were instead in the private club category.<sup>1</sup> However, these last attempts at segregation did not halt the overall trend to integrated accommodations.

In any case, Negroes could be frequently seen eating in public restaurants with whites. Major downtown lunch counters and restaurants which had been the major and initial targets of the protest were often patronized by Negroes without any discrimination or special attention. Further, prominent white businessmen who were the targets of the sit-in movement later became friendly with the same Negro protest leaders they had previously attacked.<sup>2</sup>

In order to formally ratify this new status and insure its future maintenance, the Oklahoma City Council passed a public accommodations ordinance in 1964 with the assis-

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<sup>1</sup>Usually this would be accomplished by having a private club as a separate part of a public restaurant.

<sup>2</sup>Correspondence from Clara Luper, Negro protest leader, to Mrs. John A. Brown, owner of one of Oklahoma City's largest department stores and one of the main targets of the protest movement. (Letter dated June 11, 1961, files, NAACP Youth Council office.)

tance of the former segregated establishments.<sup>1</sup> This was several months before the federal 1964 Civil Rights Act was passed. Complaints to the Community Relations Commission about ordinance violations since its passage have been negligible.<sup>2</sup>

The relative ease with which Oklahoma City Negroes achieved access to public accommodations has been constantly praised by Negro and white leaders. Roy Wilkins, long-time head of the NAACP, has said of this phase in Oklahoma City's desegregation struggle that, "The city's example...in acting (successfully) on a phase of the problem should guide other urban centers to take bold and forward steps..."<sup>3</sup> Local Negro leaders have commemorated the start of Oklahoma City's protest movement against public accommodations and its success annually by staging a "Freedom Fiesta." Often, national Negro leaders have joined in the local commemoration to one of the most successful and publicized aspects of the entire protest movement.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Interview with George Fagin, District Chairman, Anti-Defamation League (1953-1957), September 10, 1967.

<sup>2</sup>Interview with Arnold Fagin, Chairman, Oklahoma City Community Relations Commission, July 8, 1967. The few complaints that have been filed dealt mainly with bowling alleys, barber shops and motels. Satisfactory solutions were found in all these cases with Negroes finally gaining admittance.

<sup>3</sup>The Black Dispatch, June 14, 1967.

<sup>4</sup>Interview with Clara Luper Clark, Sponsor, NAACP Youth Council, June 14, 1963.

### Law Enforcement

Police attitudes and actions have often been significant factors in the occurrence of major racial disturbances. Good relations can give the Negro community confidence in white authorities and proclude the possibility of incidents that could ignite a disturbance.<sup>1</sup> The Lemberg Center for the Study of Violence has found that:

Riots tend to break out as a result of the interaction of two factors--the 'grievance level' of people in the ghetto and the inflammatory nature of the event which precipitates the initial disturbance. These two factors are in a reciprocal relation with each other; the higher the grievance level, the slighter the event required to trigger the riot. 2

The report of the Commission on Civil Disorders revealed similar findings:

Virtually every major episode of urban violence in the summer of 1967 was foreshadowed by an accumulation of unresolved grievances by ghetto residents against local authorities (often, but not always, the police). So high was the resulting underlying tension that routine and random events, tolerated or ignored under most circumstances...became the triggers of sudden violence.

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<sup>1</sup>See: Raymond Galvin and Louis Radelet, "A National Survey of Police and Community Relations," (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1967), p. 341. And William M. Kephart, "Racial Factors and Urban Law Enforcement" (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1957), p. 25. This is a study of the Philadelphia police department. Oklahoma City Times, "Ours A Violent Country," which quotes John Spiegel, Director, Lemberg Center for the Study of Violence, Brandeis University, November 23, 1968, p. 20. Report of the National Advisory Committee on Civil Disorders, (March 1, 1968), p. 157.

<sup>2</sup>Six-City Study: A Survey of Racial Attitudes in Six Northern Cities, (preliminary findings), Report of the Lem-

Coinciding with this high level of dissatisfaction, confidence in the willingness and ability of local government to respond to Negro grievances was low. <sup>1</sup>

Negroes for many years had criticized the Oklahoma City Police Department. Periodic accusations of police brutality were heard.<sup>2</sup> The police department was also accused of discriminatory hiring practices. Negroes were long unable to change the department's traditional policies and procedures. During the sit-ins directed against segregated public accommodations, Negro leaders took a renewed interest in the actions of the police department. Even though there had been no harsh incidents involving police and demonstrators at any phase of the movement, the close and constant contact with the police stimulated Negro interest.

As a result of pressures from the City Manager's office reinforced by Negro leaders and sympathetic whites, the police department began in the early 1960s to undergo considerable internal realignment. First, the top staff positions of the police department were informed that a strict and unequivocal policy of equal treatment for Negroes and whites coming into contact with police was to be instituted. This policy was to be sustained at all police levels

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berg Center for the Study of Violence, Brandeis University, (June, 1967), pp. 6-7.

<sup>1</sup>Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, March 1, 1968), p. 147.

<sup>2</sup>The Black Dispatch, April 9, 1965, p. 1. And interview with Robert Tinstman, former City Manager, Oklahoma City, October 5, 1967.

with rigorous enforcement procedures. Accordingly, in 1963, for the first time in the city's history, the Oklahoma City Police Department brought about full-scale police integration with Negro and white officers riding and working together in every division and in every area of town.<sup>1</sup> Several years later the police department created, within its own structure, a Community Relations Division to handle complaints against the police department and maintain good relations between Negroes and police officers. This division was headed by a police officer with the rank of captain who was permanently assigned to the Office of the Chief of Police. This particular unit was one of the first of its kind in any southern or border state area. Also, a committee focused on police and community relations was established within the city's Community Relations Commission itself. There was constant communication between these two units. The Chairman of the Community Relations Commission's committee has stated that, "If any problems arise we can go directly to the police department and talk over the situation. There is excellent communication between the Community Relations Commission's committee, the police department's Community Relations Division, and the Negro community."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Letter from Captain S.D. Watson, Community Relations Division, Oklahoma City Police Department, October 25, 1967.

<sup>2</sup>Interview with Albert Janco, Chairman, Oklahoma City Community Relations Commission's Police-Community Relations Committee, September 5, 1968.

New programs to better race relations were instituted. New police recruits participated, as part of their police academy training, in seminars and discussion groups held with prominent city politicians, clergymen, psychiatrists, and Community Relations Commission officials. Additionally, many police officers were engaged at the encouragement of the police department in helping underprivileged youths, many of whom were Negro. These officers spent their off-duty time helping in athletics, in school projects and in encouraging these youths to stay in school. In general, they hoped to promote a sense of citizenship responsibility.<sup>1</sup>

The internal changes within the police department proved beneficial to the community. After the reforms were instituted, there were no major racial incidents involving police and Negroes; a few minor incidents seemed to be resolved to the satisfaction of all parties. The police department was cited in 1968 for utilizing proper procedures in dealing with Negro citizens.<sup>2</sup> As of the late 1960s, there seems to be a fairly satisfactory working relationship between Negro leaders and the police department.

Illustrations of this improvement in police practices can be cited. For example, in early 1968, there were rumors of possible reserve troop mobilizations throughout the nation

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<sup>1</sup>Interview with Captain S.D. Watson, Community Relations Division, Oklahoma City Police Department, September 1, 1967. And Oklahoma City Times, July 3, 1967, p. 11.

<sup>2</sup>Oklahoma City Times, November 12, 1968, p. 12.



because of international crises. One of the brigades most prominently mentioned for mobilization was Oklahoma's 45th Infantry Brigade; the reason was the Oklahoma's fairly serene racial picture in the words of a local newspaper "would mean the state could more readily provide troops than more racially tense states."<sup>1</sup> Further, when insurance companies requested an increase in riot insurance rates in 1968 from the State Board for Property and Casualty Rates, it was quickly rejected. The Board concluded that the insurance companies could not demonstrate by past experience that they needed higher premiums because of racial disturbances in Oklahoma's urban centers.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, major national insurance companies, in the aftermath of the 1967 summer riots, massively cancelled insurance policies in central cities for those experiencing or likely to experience racial disorders. This insurance cancellation did not affect the Oklahoma City area.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, the Negro community itself acted to prevent major disturbances by controlling rumors and by organizing their own summer patrols.<sup>4</sup>

The Chairman of the Community Relations Commission

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<sup>1</sup>Oklahoma City Times, March 5, 1968, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>Oklahoma City Times, May 27, 1968, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup>"CBS Reports," July 4, 1967.

<sup>4</sup>Interview with Clara Luper Clark, Sponsor, NAACP Youth Council, July 7, 1967.

stated in 1967 that, "One of the basic changes in Oklahoma City toward improved race relations has been the attitude of the Oklahoma City Police Department."<sup>1</sup>

### Adaptation and Protest

The protest movement had a significant adaptive effect upon the Negro community--thus widening the consensus and strengthening the major political patterns. Negroes were, in effect, assimilated into the broader society in some degree by means of their own protest activities. Fundamentally, the protest worked toward integration, not disintegration and separatism.

The entire Negro protest was directed toward producing some changes in the community that allowed for greater equality. Negro protesters utilized many methods to effect these changes. Some methods, such as the direct action techniques, went beyond the usually accepted means of political expression.

Basically, however, the protesters wanted to become a part of the broader community modified so as to include the Negro as an equal in accord with America's professed values. For instance, Oklahoma City's Negro leaders never stressed hatred for the system, even when they were vigorously attacking some part of it; in the main they made clear their acceptance of major American tenets and their desire to participate

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<sup>1</sup>Interview with Arnold Fagin, Chairman, Oklahoma City Community Relations Commission, July 8, 1967.

fully in the political system. Citizenship courses and political responsibility to the community were continuously taught, along with protest activities. This had an integrative effect.

Several studies have commented on some integrative aspects of the Negro protest. For instance, Donald Matthews and James Prothro in a study of Negro protesters have revealed that protesters later were likely to become interested in and take an active part in community affairs. They state that,

Today's Negro college students (past protesters) possess in abundance what may be the most important single prerequisite--as a group they are very much interested in politics and public affairs...Compared to Negro adults, they are far more likely to have talked to others about public affairs..., to have taken at least a small part in political campaigning..., and to belong to a political or racial organization. <sup>1</sup>

Further, Matthews and Prothro have found that the protest can often alleviate stress on the community by channeling aggressive impulses into positive channels. They state that "...there are significant gratifications related to the channeling of hostile and aggressive impulses into an acceptable outlet. This outlet, both for the normal feelings of adolescent rebelliousness and the socioculturally-engendered antagonisms of the Negro revolt, undoubtedly contributes in an important way to the record of good behavior in other aspects of these children's lives."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Donald R. Matthews and James W. Prothro, Negroes and the New Southern Politics (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1966), pp. 444-445.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

Overall, the desegregation process had integrative effects. A sociologist stated that, "When the families from the subculture...have been distributed and increasingly absorbed by the surrounding middle-class milieu, they will become conditioned to the behavioral expectations around them."<sup>1</sup>

These findings have been confirmed by a study based exclusively on Oklahoma City's experience. This study, conducted by two psychiatrists, examined three-hundred Negro protesters of the Oklahoma City NAACP Youth Council.<sup>2</sup> The protest group at issue led by Clara Luper, was very active and visible in the protest movement for many years. Of some interest is the fact that many of the protesters studied had been in jail previous to their protest participation. For local Negro leaders, especially those with the NAACP Youth Council, regularly toured the city jail, bailed out young Negroes, and used them in the protest movement. This procedure alone alleviated stress on the community while increasing the potential of these youths to be responsible citizens.<sup>3</sup>

Specifically, this study revealed that the sit-in demonstrators actually have become better citizens of the community

<sup>1</sup>Marvin E. Wolfegang, Dallas Morning News, November 1, 1968, p. 3D.

<sup>2</sup>Chester M. Pierce and Louis J. West, "Six Years of Sit-Ins: Psychodynamic Causes and Effects," International Journal of Social Psychiatry, XII, No. 1, (1966). This article contains a specific study of the Oklahoma City sit-in demonstrations over a six year period.

<sup>3</sup>The author has spoken about prior desegregation activities to the NAACP Youth Council, and many in attendance had been in jail or similar juvenile detention facilities earlier in the year. The group previously had been given citizenship lessons and were courteous and attentive.

than nonparticipating individuals of similar socio-economic, racial, and educational background. The study found that, "Among approximately three-hundred 'regular' sit-in demonstrators, there have been virtually no manifestations of delinquency or anti-social behavior, no school drop-outs, and no known illegitimate pregnancies. This is a remarkable record for any group of teenaged children of any color in any community."<sup>1</sup>

The active protest participants have also had a significant positive effect upon the entire Negro community. Many became active leaders in the Negro community. As this study has revealed, "Subsequently, considerable leadership is exercised by those older children who acquire high status in the Negro community by their regular participation in demonstrations, and with whom the younger ones identify."<sup>2</sup> This leadership pattern has contributed to Negro solidarity and an acceptance of leadership standards common to whites. "The influence of the entire group of young sit-in demonstrators upon the adults in their own families and upon the community at large has been extraordinary. Because they were able to maintain self-control through the bitterest days of the demonstrations, a growing degree of admiration toward them evolved."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Chester M. Pierce and Louis J. West, "Six Years of Sit-Ins: Psychodynamic Causes and Effects," International Journal of Social Psychiatry, XII, No. 1, (1966), p. 32.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

All throughout the protest in this city a unique mixture of conflict and integration was present. And after more than a decade of protest activities Oklahoma City had become something of a model for racial integration. In 1967, at the national NAACP Convention, Oklahoma City was a featured topic as an integration model. The NAACP Youth Council leader declared at the time, "We want to be able to show people what has happened in Oklahoma City. How many cities can say they've had the type of (race) relations we have?"<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>"City Will Be NAACP Model," Oklahoma City Times, July 6, 1967. And interview with Clara Luper Clark, Sponsor, NAACP Youth Council, July 7, 1967.

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION

By the late 1960s the oppressive subordination of the city's caste system of earlier years had been largely done away with; and much of the change occurred in a relatively short period of time, especially the period from 1960 on. Out of this transition emerged a system much more nearly consensual than in the past. Negroes had come quite a ways toward equality; and they had acquired power of their own to further advance their quest.

In contrast to the basic clash of values that characterized caste society, racial disagreement in the latter part of the 1960s centered chiefly on the pace of change and the methods by which they were achieved. And it is also true that Negroes were not fully accepted as equals by many whites. In this sense, too, there was disagreement over goals. And a disproportionate number of Negroes were still poor and lacking in education, decent jobs, and adequate housing. In these important ways a consensual, egalitarian society certainly had not been achieved. And perhaps it would not evolve.

Yet, by the late 1960s many Oklahoma City white and

Negro leaders were hopeful their racial problems could be resolved. Furthermore, they felt the foundations for peaceful, orderly change had been laid in the changes, including the struggles, of earlier years.

Initially, the city responded to basic changes brought about by industrialization and urbanization. Added to these were the flexibility of local attitudes, and the skill and persistence of the protest movement and its leaders.

Industrialization and urbanization, stimulated by World War II, loosened old bonds which had subordinated and isolated the Negro. These forces affected Oklahoma City in a manner not unlike other cities as novel social and economic patterns began to appear in the mid-1940s. New persons, Negro and white, entered the city; industries grew; some prosperity developed; and the city expanded. The Negro became aware that local traditional definitions of his worth were not universal. Increasingly, in the post World War II era these evaluations were rejected and more egalitarian standards of self-esteem were accepted. Some whites spoke out against the plight of the local Negro and on behalf of equality.

The influences set in motion by these national social and economic currents did not touch all Negroes evenly. A great number remained poor, uneducated, and apathetic for some time. And most whites refused to recognize the deprivations to which the Negro was subject. Still, the industrialization



and urbanization of the community provided a significant base for the rise of protest action as the old caste system began to falter.

Changes in the community also occurred in part because local attitudes were basically flexible. Traditional racial attitudes in this once Southern community proved to be less strongly rooted than many other border and southern communities were to experience. Local and state white leaders were not prone to protest publicly and repeatedly against federal court orders or legislation designed to further the Negro cause. In the earlier years this flexibility was exemplified by their behavior during the desegregation of universities in the late 1940s and later, the opening of public schools to Negroes in 1954-1955. Even during the more tense period of the sit-ins in the latter part of the 1950s, white spokesmen did not regularly and openly oppose Negro claims. And the bulk of the community in the main followed their leaders in their response.

Usually, too, the conflict was carried out in the pragmatic American political style. The community was often directly under attack by the protests, mounted, and it did not give way easily. But, gradually, workable accommodations were hammered out and a modicum of community peace was maintained. Nor were scars of bitter feeling created to become barriers to future accommodation.

Without the skill and persistence of the Negro protest

leaders, changes would hardly have been possible. Negro leaders realized, especially from the mid-1940s on, that gains could only be achieved by mounting a strong local protest. They welcomed national pressures that helped their cause but did not rely heavily upon them. They focused on local grievances and persisted until they had gained a measure of satisfaction.

Negro protest leadership, though somewhat small in early years, had a long history in the community dating from the early 1900s when Roscoe Dunjee protested in the courts and through his newspaper against city and state discrimination. His skill, persistence, and courage throughout the years served as a model for subsequent leaders. More recent leaders, such as Jimmy Stewart and Clara Luper took up the fight against segregated schools and public facilities. They could look back to Dunjee's courageous deeds, as could more recent leaders who gained office as city councilmen and state legislators.

The ability of local leaders in guiding the protest movement over some forty years was recognized repeatedly by national civil rights organizations. Local leaders served as national directors of the NAACP and similar groups while various phases of the protest were hailed as models for other cities.

As to the protest itself and its affect upon the community certain principles are especially worth emphasizing.

Such success as it enjoyed was the result of a number of factors.

In the first place, the Negro protest leaders did not write off the use of traditional politics in achieving their aims. Even during the most militant phases there was little thought of overturning normal political processes. There was not an "anti-political" posture. Protests were combined with conventional politics. Protesters gave the system an opportunity to function. Had it been impossible to cope with the old caste system by relatively conventional protest techniques, the movement might well have found expression in protests which lacked political relevance. But in this community politics was not a futile game.

Secondly, the basic policy that resulted from years of Negro protest has been one of preserving the political system. As Negroes were allowed entrance to the broader society they acquired the values of the political and social system. The protest had the effect of pushing the traditional consensus, though somewhat modified, outward to embrace the Negro community. Even if Negroes did not benefit evenly, as compared to whites, they still became adherents to a political and social system which exhibited some vitality and flexibility.

In the third place, the protest movement served to bring the local community more in line with the national trends toward racial equality. Even though its programs were mostly

improvisations, it gave the local community a comprehensive critique, comparing the community to national standards. From the early writings and speeches of Roscoe Dunjee in the 1920s to the sit-ins and boycotts of Clara Luper four decades later, the protest repeatedly questioned the community's values, direction, and performance. Over several decades, the white community responded in a positive fashion.

After mounting a sustained and successful protest for many years, Oklahoma City's Negro leadership could well look back and draw some conclusions from their experience. These conclusions are worth noticing for their possible application, at least in part, to other communities.

In the first place, competent Negro leadership can mount an effective protest against segregated forms of life without rejecting the traditional instruments of politics. Discussion, debate, nonviolent and direct action may still be effective tools of protest. There are more extreme forms of action that are not desirable.

Secondly, segregated societies must be attacked on many fronts, simultaneously if possible. It is difficult to single out a specific area for attack. As the Negro protest in this community revealed, there was no carefully thought-out set of priorities for desegregation. Attacks on different fronts were used. Its targets were mostly improvised at the opportune moment. This had a significant cumulative effect and was

successful in effecting change.

Further, many different forms of protest may well be employed. Again, there was no completely thought-out plan of methods to be used. And it is difficult to determine exactly the impact of each form of protest and its effectiveness. Sometimes legal action was impressively effective. But on other occasions direct action was seemingly the only effective method available. And at other times negotiations and bloc voting were impressively effective. Certainly Negro protest leaders deserve credit for their ability to devise and apply a variety of methods suited to the objectives of the time.

In the third place, specific issues must be attacked. This alerts the white community to grievances and supplies a visible goal for Negroes. The behavior of whites relating to such visible, specific grievances can be and often was successfully changed, whether attitudes changed or not. And such successes act as morale boosters. Unquestionably it is of value to change broad community attitudes centered on race. But protest is apt to function most successfully when it focuses on specific grievances that can be clearly perceived and for which there is an attainable remedy that can be spelled out.

Additionally, Negro leaders need to direct their attentions to white community leaders in attempts to gain some manner of firm commitments no matter how seemingly vague and general. This study revealed, as have others, that the general population

will usually follow or at least not actively oppose official decisions of community leaders. Certainly in Oklahoma City it was usually true that a commitment obtained from the leaders was likely, when applied, to be accepted by the community at large.

Finally, Negro protest movements that are not in conflict with the democratic creed can serve as instruments of stability and can assist in preserving values. This survey revealed that potential anti-social behavior can be channeled in positive directions toward typical American ideals of accepted behavior. The protest movement utilized conflict but basically it was directed toward entrance into the system so as to share its values, both material and non-material. Basically the conflict was over the creation of an enlarged sense of community in which the Negro could function as an equal alongside of white Americans.

This community study has demonstrated that much of the old caste society of this broader state has been dismantled. The process was at times both erratic and unsettling. And although the process is continuing, Negroes have not entered the broader society fully or uniformly. But significant breakthroughs have occurred that portend the possible formation of a pluralistic and egalitarian society some day. No one can be sure what will eventually evolve. Yet this border state city has already displayed impressive flexibility and

adaptibility. And there is every reason to suppose that the protest movement that has already achieved so much will continue in years to come in its quest for genuine equality.

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