

CARTON 2:32

THE BLACK SCHOLAR

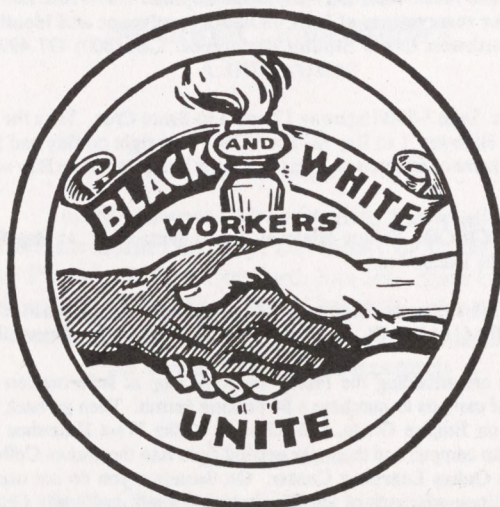
"RACE, ETHNICITY, AND THE AMERICAN  
LABOR MOVEMENT" (20TH: SOUTHWEST LABOR  
STUDIES CONFERENCE, UNIVERSITY OF SANTA CRUZ,  
SANTA CRUZ, CALIFORNIA)

1994

2017/193  
c



**RACE, ETHNICITY,  
&  
THE AMERICAN LABOR MOVEMENT**



**TWENTIETH ANNUAL  
SOUTHWEST  
LABOR STUDIES  
CONFERENCE**

**April 29-30, 1994**

**University of California, Santa Cruz**



## DIRECTIONS AND ACCOMMODATIONS

**BY AIR:** San Jose, 25 miles from Santa Cruz, is the closest airport, where all major rental cars are available. The **Santa Cruz Airporter** provides frequent limosine service between the airport and Santa Cruz and will charge a special conference rate of \$15 one way. **You must make reservations at least 48 hours in advance and identify yourself as attending the Southwest Labor Studies conference.** Call (800) 497-4997 for reservations.

**FROM SAN JOSE:** Take I-880/Highway 17 south to Santa Cruz. Take the Half Moon Bay exit and follow Highway 1 to Bay St. For UCSC, turn right on Bay and follow it up the hill to the main entrance of campus. For the Dream Inn, turn left on Bay and follow it to the water.

**FROM SAN FRANCISCO:** Follow Highway 1 into Santa Cruz. At Bay St., turn left for UCSC, right for the Dream Inn.

**FROM THE SOUTH:** Stay on Highway 1 past the Highway 17 junction, following signs to Half Moon Bay. At Bay St., turn right for UCSC, left for the Dream Inn.

**PARKING:** If you are attending the Friday sessions, stop at **Information Booth** just past main entrance of campus to purchase a \$4 parking permit. Then go back to the main entrance, turn right on Empire Grade, and follow it to the **West Entrance** of campus. Make a right turn onto campus and then take second right into the **Oakes College** parking lot. Follow signs to **Oakes Learning Center**. On Saturday, you do not need a permit. When you reach the main entrance of UCSC, simply turn left on Empire Grade and follow it to **West Entrance**.

**ACCOMMODATIONS:** The **Dream Inn**, 175 West Cliff Drive, Santa Cruz, will hold rooms until **April 9**. Special conference rates are \$84 single to quadruple occupancy for Thursday and Friday nights, \$99 for Saturday night. The Dream Inn is a union establishment and the only beachfront resort in Santa Cruz. Amenities include pool, sauna, jacuzzi, and beach access. Across the street and under same ownership is the **Seaway Motel**, with a special conference rate of \$69 single to quadruple occupancy. All Dream Inn facilities are available to Seaway Motel guests. For reservations at either establishment, call (800) 662-3838 (if within California), or (408) 426-4330 (if out of state). **Ask for Group Reservations and identify yourself as attending the Southwest Labor Studies Conference when you make reservations.** For additional accommodation choices, contact the **Santa Cruz County Conference and Visitors Council**, (800) 833-3494, ext. 71. However, please avoid the Holiday Inn, which is currently under a labor boycott.

Cover logo adapted from the *Southern Worker*, 1930s



**Race, Ethnicity,  
&  
the American Labor Movement**

**Twentieth Annual  
Southwest Labor Studies  
Conference**

sponsored by:

**The Southwest Labor Studies Association**

**President:** Lorin Lee Cary, University of Toledo, retired

**Vice President:** Dan Cornford, San Jose State University

**Secretary:** Sally M. Miller, University of the Pacific

**Treasurer:** Mary Tyler, Southern California Library  
for Social Studies and Research

Co-Sponsors:

Santa Cruz County Central Labor Council

UCSC Division of Social Sciences

UCSC Division of Humanities

UCSC Center for Cultural Studies

UCSC Chicano/Latino Research Center

UCSC Center for the Study of Global Transformations

Oakes College and College Eight, UCSC

Boards of Studies in American Studies,

Community Studies, History, and Politics

**CONFERENCE PLANNING COMMITTEE**

**Conference Coordinator:** David Brundage

**Committee Co-Chairs:** Pedro Castillo and Dana Frank

Sandy Alprecht, Karla Alvarado, Barbara Bair, Javiera Benavente,  
Brian Bothun, Chuck Carlson, Yonah Diamond, Kati Dinneen, Kristal  
Edwards, David Goldberg, Kathleen Hylan, Megan Matthew, Jeff  
McCusker, Beth Nelson, Mary Beth Pudup, Michael Rotkin, Theresa  
Ceñidoza, David Williams, Eesha Williams, David Winters, and  
Patricia Zavella

Special Thanks to Melessa Hemler



## **FRIDAY, APRIL 29**

**8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.**

### **REGISTRATION - Oakes Learning Center**

*Book Exhibit*

*Coffee and Donuts*

**9:00 - 10:30 a.m.**

### **Oakes Learning Center**

#### **WORKSHOP: THE INFLUENCE OF 1960S SOCIAL MOVEMENTS ON WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN THE LABOR MOVEMENT**

**Chair:** Marge Frantz, UCSC

**Presenter:** Julie Kettler, Oregon Public Employees Union, SEIU, Local 503

### **College Eight 002**

#### **ETHNIC LABOR ON THE RAILROADS**

**Chair:** Jeff Garcilazo, University of Utah

**Presenter:** Colin J. Davis, University of Alabama at Birmingham: "The  
Contours of Race and Ethnicity: The 1922 National Railroad Strike"

**Presenter:** Kurt M. Peters, UC Berkeley: "Watering the Flower: The  
Laguna Pueblo and the Santa Fe Railroad, 1880-1943"

**Comment:** Jeff Garcilazo

### **Oakes 104**

#### **CLASS, LABOR LAW, AND THE STATE**

**Chair:** Darryl Holter, Center for Labor Education and Research, UCLA

**Presenter:** Wythe W. Holt, Jr., University of Alabama Law School:

"At the Center of Things? Recent Developments in Labor Law History"

**Presenter:** Seth Wigderson, University of Maine at Augusta: "Les

Demoiselles Grevistes: The Failed 1937 Lewiston-Auburn (Me.)

Shoeworkers Strike and the Reconstruction of the State"

**Comment:** Darryl Holter

### **Oakes Mural Room**

#### **NEW PERSPECTIVES ON THE GREAT UPHEAVAL: ETHNICITY, GENDER, AND RACE**

**Chair:** Steven Leikin, UCLA

**Presenter:** Dorothee Schneider, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign:

"Standing at the Crossroads of Class and Ethnicity: Labor Mobilization and  
the Henry George Campaign of 1886"

**Presenter:** Theresa Ann Case, University of Texas, Austin: "Class as

Culture: Gender and Race in the 1886 Southwest Strike"

**Comment:** Steven Leikin



10:45 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

**Oakes Learning Center**

**PANEL DISCUSSION: MAKING LABOR FILMS AND VIDEOS**

**Chair:** **Geoffrey Dunn**, writer and filmmaker, Santa Cruz

**Panelists:** **Robert L. Allen**, author, *The Port Chicago Mutiny* and consultant for *The Port Chicago Mutiny* video (KRON-TV);

**Dianne R. Layden**, University of Redlands; **Jon Silver**, Migrant Media Productions; **Steve Zeltzer**, Labor Video Project

**Oakes Mural Room**

**AGRICULTURE: LABOR, ETHNICITY AND THE ENVIRONMENT**

**Chair:** **David Montejano**, University of Texas, Austin

**Presenter:** **Ed Beechert**, University of Hawaii: "Class and Ethnicity in Plantation Labor Systems"

**Presenter:** **Alan P. Rudy**, UCSC: "The Conditions of, and for, Labor: Imperial Valley, California, 1900-1942"

**Presenter:** **Gilbert G. Gonzalez**, UC Irvine: "The Interventions of the Mexican Government in California Agricultural Strikes of the 1930s"

**Presenter:** **Father Victor Salandini**, San Diego: "Agribusiness in the Imperial Valley: A Potent Force That Impedes Farm Labor Organizing"

**Discussion:** The audience

**College Eight Multipurpose Room**

**PANEL DISCUSSION: GLOBAL RESTRUCTURING, IMMIGRANT LABOR IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA, AND CROSS-BORDER SOLIDARITY**

**Chair:** **Susanne Jonas**, UCSC

**Panelists:** **Ralph Armbruster**, UC Riverside; **Edna Bonacich**, UC Riverside; **Kim Geron**, UC Riverside; **Michael Mclean**, UC Riverside

**Oakes 104**

**RACE, STRIKES, AND RADICALS IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY**

**Chair:** **Sally M. Miller**, University of the Pacific

**Presenter:** **Roxanne Dunbar Ortiz**, CSU Hayward: "White Supremacy and Southwestern Populism in the Early Twentieth Century"

**Presenter:** **Gregg Andrews**, Southwest Texas State University: "Immigrant Cement Mill Workers in Rural Missouri: The Strike of 1910 in Ilasco"

**Presenter:** **Cliff Hawkins**, UC Davis: "The Industrial Workers of the World: A Revolutionary Counterculture"

**Comment:** **Sally M. Miller**

12:30 - 1:45 p.m.

**LUNCH ON YOUR OWN:** Cafe Oakes, College Eight Cafe, and College Eight Dining Hall will all be open.



1:45 - 3:15 p.m.

**Oakes Learning Center**

**GENERAL SESSION: ORGANIZED LABOR AND BLACK FREEDOM**

**Presiding:** David Brundage, Conference Coordinator

**Welcome:** Karl S. Pister, Chancellor, UCSC

**Welcome:** Zoe Sodja, President, Santa Cruz AFSCME Clerical Local 3223

**Keynote Speaker:** Michael K. Honey, University of Washington, Tacoma:

"Organized Labor and Black Freedom: The View from Memphis"

**Comment:** Clayborne Carson, Stanford University

3:30 - 5:15 p.m.

**College Eight Multipurpose Room**

**WORK, FAMILY AND LABOR ACTIVISM AMONG WOMEN WORKERS**

**Chair:** Patricia Zavella, UCSC

**Presenter:** Judy Yung, UCSC: "The 1938 National Dollar Store Strike Revisited"

**Presenter:** Emily Honig, UCSC: "Women at Farah Revisited: Social Networks and Political Activism among Chicana Workers in El Paso, Texas"

**Presenter:** Nathaniel Santa Maria, UCLA: "The Double Life of Filipina Housekeepers: The Intersections Between Low-Wage Labor and Family Life"

**Comment:** Patricia Zavella

**Oakes 102**

**LABOR, RACE, AND GENDER IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY EUROPE**

**Chair:** Edmund Burke III, UCSC

**Presenter:** Tyler Stovall, UCSC: "Colonial Labor in Metropolitan France during the First World War"

**Presenter:** Laura Tabili, University of Arizona: "'True and Loyal Sons of Great Britain': Race, Gender and the State in the Contestation of Britishness"

**Comment:** Patty Seleski, CSU San Marcos

**Oakes Mural Room**

**IMMIGRANT MINERS AND THEIR UNION ACTIVITIES IN THE SOUTHWEST, 1896-1920**

**Chair:** A. Yvette Huginnie, University of Colorado

**Presenter:** James D. McBride, Arizona State University: "The Western Federation of Miners: Racists or Realists?"

**Presenter:** Philip Mellinger, University of Texas, El Paso: "Minorities in Bingham County and Their Labor Union Activities"

**Presenter:** Christine Marin, Arizona State University: "Abran Salcido and His Labor Activities with Mexican Miners"

**Comment:** A. Yvette Huginnie



**Oakes Learning Center**

**FILM: THE 1968 MEMPHIS SANITATION WORKERS STRIKE**

**Chair: Paul Worthman**, SEIU, Local 399, Los Angeles

**Film:** *At the River I Stand*

**Discussion:** The audience

**Oakes 104**

**SURVEILLANCE AND TERROR: THE REPRESSION OF ORGANIZED LABOR**

**Chair: David Anthony**, UCSC

**Presenter: Frank Wilkinson**, Director, First Amendment Foundation,  
Plaintiff, *Wilkinson (NCARL) v. FBI*: "Attacks on Organized Labor,  
1928-1965: The FBI and the House Un-American Activities Committee"

**Presenter: Alan Stein**, Wayne State University: "Killing the Union:  
The Black Legion and Organized Labor, 1933-1939"

**Comment: Tony Platt**, CSU Sacramento

**5:30 - 6:30 p.m.**

**RECEPTION AND REFRESHMENTS - Oakes Provost's House**

*Presentation of the Annual Southwest Labor Studies Award  
for Distinguished Service to the Labor Movement and  
the 1994 Elaine Black Yoneda Memorial Award*

**6:30 - 8:30 p.m.**

**DINNER ON YOUR OWN:** Conference participants will receive  
a list of area restaurants.

**8:30 - 12:00 p.m.**

**MUSIC AND DANCING - College Eight Dining Hall**

**Music: Dr. Loco's Rockin' Jalapeño Band**

*Co-sponsored by Oakes College and College Eight*

**IMPORTANT NOTE: KEEP YOUR CONFERENCE BADGE.** It will  
admit you back on to campus in the evening and to the dance.

---

**SATURDAY, APRIL 30, 1994**

**8:00 - 3:00 p.m.**

**REGISTRATION - Oakes Learning Center**

*Book Exhibit*

*Coffee and Donuts*



9:00 - 10:45 a.m.

**Oakes 105**

**PANEL DISCUSSION: THE LEGACY OF CESAR CHAVEZ**

**Chair:** William H. Friedland, UCSC

**Panelists:** Richard A. Garcia, CSU Hayward; Frank Bardacke, Watsonville

**Oakes 102**

**AMERICAN DOCKWORKERS IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY**

**Chair:** David Wellman, UCSC

**Presenter:** Calvin Winslow, Queens College, CUNY: "The 1907 New York Longshoremen's Strike"

**Presenter:** Sandra Polishuk, Portland, Oregon: "The Struggle to Admit African Americans into Local 8, ILWU: An Oral History"

**Presenter:** Myrna Cherkoss Donahoe, CSU Dominguez Hills: "'Dotty the Docker,' or Women Entering the Maritime Industry, 1965-Present"

**Comment:** David Wellman

**Oakes Learning Center**

**GENDERED IMAGES AND PERCEPTIONS OF WOMEN WORKERS**

**Chair:** Lisbeth Haas, UCSC

**Presenters:** John F. Potter and Michelle Reidell, Clark University:

"'Suppose It Were Your Daughter': Gender, Class and Work as Perceived by Women Factory Inspectors in Gilded Age Massachusetts"

**Presenter:** Toni Nelson Herrera, University of Texas, Austin: "Mother Is On Strike: Historical Images of Chicanas in the Tex-Son Strike"

**Comment:** Lisbeth Haas

**Oakes 106**

**POVERTY, LABOR, AND CIVIL RIGHTS**

**Chair:** Michael Brown, UCSC

**Presenter:** Frank Stricker, CSU Dominguez Hills: "The Underside of the 1950s: Poverty in War and Peace"

**Presenter:** Paul Moreno, University of Maryland: "Organized Labor and the Problem of Fair Employment, 1933-1972"

**Presenter:** Alan Draper, St. Lawrence University: "Passive Resistance to Massive Resistance: Labor and the *Brown* Decision"

**Comment:** Michael Brown

11:00 a.m. - 12:15 p.m.

**Oakes 105**

**GENERAL SESSION: THE FAULTLINE OF INEQUALITY**

**Presiding:** Dana Frank, UCSC

**Welcome:** Tim McCormick, President, Santa Cruz County Labor Council

**Welcome:** Lorin Lee Cary, President, SWLSA

**Keynote Speaker:** María Elena Durazo, President, HERE, Local 11:

"Economic Inequality: L.A.'s Other Faultline. A Union Perspective"



**12:15 - 1:30 p.m.**

**LUNCH ON YOUR OWN:** The College Eight Cafe will be open from 12:00 to 1:30 today for sandwiches.

**SWLS BUSINESS MEETING:** 12:45 - 1:30, Oakes Learning Center

**1:30 - 3:15 p.m.**

**Oakes 105**

**PANEL DISCUSSION: ALEXANDER SAXTON'S WORK ON AMERICAN WORKING-CLASS RACISM**

**Chair:** John Laslett, UCLA

**Panelists:** Gwendolyn Mink, UCSC; Sean Wilentz, Princeton University; Alexander Saxton, UCLA

**Oakes Learning Center**

**PANEL DISCUSSION: STRENGTH IN UNITY: ETHNIC COALITIONS AND ORGANIZING IMMIGRANT WORKERS IN THE 1990s**

**Chair:** Wendy L. Ng, San Jose State University

**Panelists:** Helen Kim, Community Organizer, Asian Immigrant Women Advocates (AIWA); Lisa Hoyos, Community Organizer, Campaign for Justice; Jorge Lopez, Community Organizer, Justice for Janitors; Rose Zimmerman, Oakland Construction Opportunity Project; Catha Worthman, Researcher, Campaign for Justice

**Oakes 102**

**RETREAT FROM RACISM? THE CIO AND THE COMMUNIST PARTY IN THE 1930s AND 1940s**

**Chair:** David A. Williams, CSU Long Beach

**Presenter:** Kevin Allen Leonard, University of New Mexico: "Retreat from Racism: California Unions in the 1930s and 1940s"

**Presenter:** David Oberweiser, Jr., United Educators of San Francisco: "The CIO: A Vanguard for Civil Rights in California, 1940-46"

**Comment:** Robert W. Cherny, San Francisco State University

**Oakes 106**

**WORKSHOP: TECHNOLOGY AND LABOR COMMUNICATION: THE NEW MIX**

**Chair:** Steve Zeltzer, Producer, Labor Video Project and LaborTech

**Panelists:** David Bacon, Host, *Labor and the Global Economy*, KPFA Radio; Hillary Diamond, Holt Labor Library, LaborNet; Richard Taliaferro, Host, *Profiles in Labor*, the Sacramento Labor Council's cable show; Seth Wigderson, Moderator, H-Labor



3:30 - 5:15 p.m.

**Oakes 105**

**FILM: THE 1985-87 WATSONVILLE CANNERY STRIKE**

**Chair:** Pedro Castillo, UCSC

**Film:** *Watsonville on Strike*

**Discussion:** Esperanza Torres, rank-and-file strike leader;

Jon Silver, filmmaker, *Watsonville on Strike*

**Oakes 106**

**AFRICAN AMERICAN WORKERS IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY**

**Chair:** Robert L. Allen, Senior Editor, *The Black Scholar*

**Presenter:** James M. SoRelle, Baylor University: "Black Workers in 'Heaven': African Americans and Organized Labor in Houston, Texas, 1914-1945"

**Presenter:** Barbara Bair, Virginia Center for the Humanities: "Frances Mary Albrier: Garveyism and African American Labor in the East Bay"

**Presenter:** Gretchen Lemke-Santangelo, Saint Mary's College: "'I Always Desired Independence, Never Wealth': African American Migrant Women in the Wartime East Bay"

**Presenters:** Neshtey Crudup, IBEW, Local 11, Los Angeles and Vivian Price, IBEW, Local 11 and UC Irvine: *In My Own Words: Against All Odds* (video)

**Discussion:** The audience

**Oakes 102**

**AN INJURY TO ONE IS AN INJURY TO ALL: CLASS, RACE, AND HEALTH**

**Chair:** James Cohn, M.D., Berkeley

**Presenter:** Jeff Quam-Wickham, ILWU Inlandboatmen's Union: "Labor, Science and Politics in Occupational Health and Safety"

**Presenters:** Andrew Szasz and Michael Meuser, UCSC: "The Demographics of Proximity to Toxic Releases: The Case of Los Angeles County"

**Comment:** James Cohn

**Oakes Learning Center**

**ARTISTS AND WORKERS OF THE WORLD UNITING:  
CONTEMPORARY LABOR MURALS**

**Chair:** David Winters, Western Workers Labor Heritage Festival

**Panelists:** Mike Alewitz, Labor Art & Mural Project, Rutgers

University; Timothy W. Drescher, San Francisco State University

**Discussion:** The audience



**Advance registration will save you time when you arrive.**

Name\_\_\_\_\_

Address\_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip\_\_\_\_\_

Affiliation\_\_\_\_\_

Please enclose payment as follows:

Registration Fees:

☐ \$ 25.00 Friday and Saturday sessions

☐ \$ 5.00 Retired, Unemployed

☐ FREE Students

Membership Dues:

☐ \$ 20.00 Annual Dues

☐ \$ 7.50 Students, Retired, Unemployed

☐ \$100.00 Lifetime Dues

TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED: \$\_\_\_\_\_

Make checks payable to **Southwest Labor Studies Association.**

Send registration form and checks to:

David Brundage

Community Studies Board

College Eight

University of California

Santa Cruz, CA 95064

Membership in the Association is not required to attend the conference.



339

David Brundage  
Community Studies Board  
College Eight  
University of California  
Santa Cruz, CA 95064





Labo historian / tww

Dave ~~Banducci~~  
Bundage

UC Santa Cruz

Southwest Labn Study

488 459-4645 (10 am)

423-2169

Saturday  
afternoon  
1:45 min

1 in Lab Bys 29-30 in Houston

1 pgn 2 912 Walker 1914-45

2 914  
3. Women in East Bay  
4. Female Campsite in portory  
1200 of 1800

4. Video on first woman  
to be Admin. to I & W in  
LA

Chair + comment

Also panel in  
making Labn  
video 1/29



panel on Lahn videos

Friday 10:45 - 12:30

Jeff Dunn: chair

film on Filipinos by women

Keaton Diana Layton: General  
wks,  
LA

John Silver

Wetsonville strikes

Steve Zelzer: Lahn  
video project

RA - PCM

5 min  
clip  
discuss  
process

David Anthony  
David Wallman  
at USC  
history of  
ILWU



UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SANTA CRUZ

BERKELEY • DAVIS • IRVINE • LOS ANGELES • RIVERSIDE • SAN DIEGO • SAN FRANCISCO



SANTA BARBARA • SANTA CRUZ

COLLEGE EIGHT

SANTA CRUZ, CALIFORNIA 95064

March 16, 1994

*Robert*  
Dear Colleague:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the Twentieth Annual Southwest Labor Studies Conference at UC Santa Cruz, April 29-30. You will be receiving the program in a few days. As you will see, this is going to be a very exciting conference.

I am enclosing information on your panel and addresses of its participants. If you are presenting a paper, please be certain to send a copy to the commentator by Monday, April 4. In addition, please send to the session chair (along with a copy of the paper) a brief biographical statement to help them prepare introductory remarks. Presenters should plan to speak about 20-25 minutes.

I am also enclosing information on travel and accommodation arrangements. **If you plan to stay at the Dream Inn or Seaway Motel, it is extremely important that you make your reservations as soon you receive this letter.** A limited number of rooms are being held at these rates and I advise you to make your own reservations before the program is sent out to our larger mailing list. I also encourage you to pre-register for the conference when you receive your program.

Thank you again for your participation in the conference. I look forward to seeing you in April.

Sincerely,

*David*

David Brundage  
Associate Professor  
of Community Studies

enc.

*P.S. I'll send you info. on the  
film session in the next day or  
so.  
David*



FRIDAY, APRIL 29

10:45 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

Oakes Learning Center

PANEL DISCUSSION: MAKING LABOR FILMS AND VIDEOS

Chair: Geoffrey Dunn, writer and filmmaker, Santa Cruz

Panelists: Robert L. Allen, author, *The Port Chicago Mutiny* and consultant for *The Port Chicago Mutiny* video (KRON-TV);

Dianne R. Layden, University of Redlands; Jon Silver, Migrant Media Productions; Steve Zeltzer, Labor Video Project

Geoffrey Dunn  
Community Studies  
College Eight  
UCSC  
Santa Cruz, CA 95064  
(408) 684-2159

or 2828 Casa de Vida  
Aptos, CA 95003

Robert Allen  
389 Belmont  
Oakland, CA 94610  
h: (510) 893-7914  
w: (510) 547-6633  
fax: (510) 547-6679

Show 5-6 min  
10<sup>min</sup> discussion

Dianne Layden  
Alfred North Whitehead Center  
for Lifelong Learning  
Department of Management and Business  
University of Redlands  
1200 East Colton Ave.  
P.O. Box 3080  
Redlands, CA 92373-0999  
w: (909) 335-4068  
h: (909) 793-4133

Jon Silver  
P.O. Box 2048  
Freedom, CA 95019  
(408) 728-8949

Steve Zeltzer  
Labor Video Project  
P.O. Box 425584  
San Francisco, CA 94142  
(415) 255-8689

e-mail: ~~lvpsf~~ lvpsf@igc.apc.org

Robert:

Here is info on  
the film panel.

Geoff Dunn  
should be  
in touch

soon on  
details,

Best,

Dunn

note 17 - (May 1)  
Half moon by exit  
to UC mission st.  
right / left / high entrance  
the Empire State

right mission st  
right Highland Ave  
Left onto High st  
to UC  
at Bay/High main  
through High  
Empire State  
To west Entrance  
2<sup>nd</sup> right - Oakes



SATURDAY, APRIL 30, 1994

3:30 - 5:15 p.m.

Oakes 106

**AFRICAN AMERICAN WORKERS IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY**

**Chair:** Robert L. Allen, Senior Editor, *The Black Scholar*

**Presenter:** James M. SoRelle, Baylor University: "Black Workers in 'Heaven': African Americans and Organized Labor in Houston, Texas, 1914-1945"

**Presenter:** Barbara Bair, Virginia Center for the Humanities: "Frances Mary Alberier: Garveyism and African American Labor in the East Bay"

**Presenter:** Gretchen Lemke-Santangelo, Saint Mary's College: "'I Always Desired Independence, Never Wealth': African American Migrant Women in the Wartime East Bay"

**Presenters:** Neshtey Crudup, IBEW, Local 11, Los Angeles and Vivian Price, IBEW, Local 11 and UC Irvine: *In My Own Words: Against All Odds* (video)

**Discussion:** The audience

I asked them  
to send you a  
copy.

Robert Allen  
389 Belmont  
Oakland, CA 94610  
h: (510) 893-7914  
w: (510) 547-6633  
fax: (510) 547-6679

James SoRelle  
Department of History  
Baylor University  
P.o. Box 97306  
Waco, Texas 76798-7306  
(817) 755-2667

Barbara Bair  
Santa Cruz  
(408) 429-6450

Gretchen Lemke-Santangelo  
1466 Hopkins St. #5  
Berkeley, CA 94702  
(510) 527-2420

Neshtey Crudup and Vivian Price  
c/o Vivian Price  
2223A East Ocean Blvd.  
Long Beach, CA 90803  
(310) 438-9493



## DIRECTIONS AND ACCOMODATIONS

**BY AIR:** San Jose, 25 miles from Santa Cruz, is the closest airport, where all major rental cars are available. The **Santa Cruz Airporter** provides frequent limosine service between the airport and Santa Cruz and will charge a special conference rate of \$15 one way. **You must make reservations at least 48 hours in advance and identify yourself as attending the Southwest Labor Studies conference.** Call (800) 497-4997 for reservations.

**FROM SAN JOSE:** Take I-880/Highway 17 south to Santa Cruz. Take the Half Moon Bay exit and follow Highway 1 to Bay St. For UCSC, turn right on Bay and follow it up the hill to the main entrance of campus. For the Dream Inn, turn left on Bay and follow it to the water.

**FROM SAN FRANCISCO:** Follow Highway 1 into Santa Cruz. At Bay St., turn left for UCSC, right for the Dream Inn.

**FROM THE SOUTH:** Stay on Highway 1 past the Highway 17 junction, following signs to Half Moon Bay. At Bay St., turn right for UCSC, left for the Dream Inn.

**PARKING:** If you are attending the Friday sessions, stop at **Information Booth** just past main entrance of campus to purchase a \$4 parking permit. Then go back to the main entrance, turn right on Empire Grade, and follow it to the **West Entrance** of campus. Make a right turn onto campus and then take second right into the **Oakes College** parking lot. Follow signs to **Oakes Learning Center**. On Saturday, you do not need a permit. When you reach the main entrance of UCSC, simply turn left on Empire Grade and follow it to **West Entrance**.

**ACCOMODATIONS:** The **Dream Inn**, 175 West Cliff Drive, Santa Cruz, will hold rooms until **April 9**. Special conference rates are \$84 single to quadruple occupancy for Thursday and Friday nights, \$99 for Saturday night. The Dream Inn is a union establishment and the only beachfront resort in Santa Cruz. Amenities include pool, sauna, jacuzzi, and beach access. Across the street and under same ownership is the **Seaway Motel**, with a special conference rate of \$69 single to quadruple occupancy. All Dream Inn facilities are available to Seaway Motel guests. For reservations at either establishment, call (800) 662-3838 (if within California), or (408) 426-4330 (if out of state). **Ask for Group Reservations and identify yourself as attending the Southwest Labor Studies Conference when you make reservations.** For additional accomodation choices, contact the **Santa Cruz County Conference and Visitors Council**, (800) 833-3494, ext. 71. However, please avoid the Holiday Inn, which is currently under a labor boycott.

Cover logo adapted from the *Southern Worker*, 1930s



Attn: Robert Allen

# SOUTHWEST LABOR STUDIES ASSOCIATION

Twentieth Annual Conference

April 29-30, 1994

University of California, Santa Cruz

## THEME: RACE, ETHNICITY, AND THE AMERICAN LABOR MOVEMENT

The Southwest Labor Studies Association is an organization made up of labor activists and labor scholars and sponsors one of the oldest labor conferences in the United States. The theme for the 1994 conference is "Race, Ethnicity, and the American Labor Movement." A wide variety of panels, workshops, and video presentations will focus on topics such as labor struggles by immigrant workers and workers of color, efforts to build interracial and multi-ethnic unions, and exclusionary practices by white unions. A number of sessions focus on questions of gender and the roles of women workers.

### AMONG THE HIGHLIGHTS OF THE CONFERENCE:

—a keynote address by María Elena Durazo, President of the Hotel Employees & Restaurant Employees International Union, Local 11, Los Angeles, a union actively organizing immigrant workers in L.A.

—a keynote address on "Organized Labor and Black Freedom," by Michael Honey, author of the recent book on the Memphis labor and civil rights movements, with a comment by Clayborne Carson, editor of the Martin Luther King Papers

—a panel devoted to assessing the work of Alexander Saxton on white working-class racism, featuring comments from Gwendolyn Mink, Sean Wilentz, and Alexander Saxton

For more information, contact:

David Brundage  
Community Studies Board  
College Eight  
University of California, Santa Cruz,  
Santa Cruz, CA 95064  
(408) 459-4645

Labor Donated

\$25 - 27 fee  
2 Corp tax \$50  
a union of BLK  
Labor and Hist

Dr. Saxton  
\$84 / night

150-200  
members

Doyle



BAYLOR  
U N I V E R S I T Y

April 21, 1994

Mr. Robert Allen  
389 Belmont  
Oakland, CA 94610

Dear Mr. Allen:

I regret that I have been unable to forward this paper to you any sooner. Nevertheless, I hope that you will have an opportunity to read it prior to the upcoming session of the Southwest Labor Studies Conference. I will welcome your comments.

I look forward to meeting you on the 30th. Again, apologies for the lateness of this submission.

Cordially,

*James M. SoRelle*

James M. SoRelle  
Associate Professor of History



## VITA

JAMES MARTIN SORELLE

Department of History  
Baylor University

### AREAS OF SPECIALIZATION

African-American History, American Urban History, 19th and 20th Century U.S. History

### EDUCATION

University of Houston, B.A. (1972), M.A. (1974)  
Kent State University, Ph.D. (1980)

### TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Ball State University, Visiting Assistant Professor (1979-80)  
Baylor University, Lecturer (1980-85), Assistant Professor (1985-92),  
Associate Professor (1992- )

### PUBLICATIONS

#### Books

*Taking Sides: Clashing Views on Controversial Issues in American History.* 2 vols.  
(5th ed.; Guilford, Connecticut: Dushkin Publishing Group, 1993). Co-edited  
with Larry Madaras.

*The Darker Side of "Heaven": The Black Community in Houston, Texas, 1917-1945*  
(work in progress)

#### Articles

"The Emergence of Black Business in Houston, Texas: A Study of Race and  
Ideology, 1919-1945" in Howard Beeth and Cary Wintz, eds., *Black Dixie:  
Essays in Afro-Texan History* (College Station: Texas A & M University  
Press, 1992), pp. 103-15.

"Race Relations in 'Heavenly Houston,' 1917-1945" in *ibid.*, pp. 175-91.

"The 'Waco Horror': The Lynching of Jesse Washington," *Southwestern Historical  
Quarterly*, 85 (April 1983): 517-36.

"'An De Po Cullud Man Is In De Wuss Fix Uv Awl': Black Occupational Status in  
Houston, Texas, 1910-1940," *Houston Review*, 1 (Spring 1979): 15-26.

### PROFESSIONAL PRESENTATIONS

"Organizing for Change: Richard Randolph Grovey and Black Community Leadership in  
Depression-Era Houston," Organization of American Historians, Washington, D.C.,  
March 23, 1990.

"The Crime of Lynching in Two Texas Cities: An Ecological Comparison of Mob Violence  
in Waco and Houston, 1900-1930," Texas State Historical Association, Galveston,  
Texas, March 5, 1987.

"The Emergence of Black Business in Houston, Texas: A Study of Race and Ideology,  
1919-1945," Southern Historical Association, Memphis, Tennessee, November 4,  
1982.

### HONORS AND AWARDS

University Fellow (Kent State University), 1978-79  
Summer Sabbatical (Baylor University), 1984 and 1988  
Mellon Faculty Summer Workshop Fellow (Rice University), 1988  
University Sabbatical (Baylor University), 1993



"Black Workers in 'Heaven': African Americans and Organized Labor in  
Houston, Texas, 1914-1945"

James M. SoRelle

Department of History

Baylor University

This paper was presented at the Twentieth Annual Southwest Labor  
Studies Association Conference, April 30, 1994, at the University of  
California, Santa Cruz. Please do not quote or reproduce any portion of  
this manuscript without prior approval of the author.



"Black Workers in 'Heaven': African Americans and Organized Labor in Houston, Texas, 1914-1945"

On June 14, 1919, the *Houston Informer*, the Bayou City's black weekly newspaper, carried a half-page advertisement from the local Chamber of Commerce trumpeting the numerous opportunities available to local African Americans. Calculated to draw black support to the Chamber's recently unveiled booster motto of "Heavenly Houston," the ad gave considerable attention to the many benefits derived from the city's rapidly expanding economy. Black readers learned that the New South "heaven" in which they resided presented "unexcelled industrial opportunities to the colored man" not the least of which were the many jobs for African-American longshoremen loading the region's cotton crop onto vessels docked at the recently opened Houston Ship Channel or for oil field workers in the state's young oil industry--black laborers handling the state's white and black gold. In fact, "Heavenly Houston," the *Informer's* readers discovered, "Gives all kinds of employment to colored men and women and has one of the greatest colored citizenry to be found anywhere in the world. . . ." <sup>1</sup> While the "Heavenly Houston" campaign was the creation of whites within the Chamber of Commerce, local African-American leaders echoed these views. In 1925, in a speech to members of the National Negro Business League, Clifton F. Richardson, the frequently fiery editor of the *Informer*, asserted that Houston was the only city in Texas where blacks could obtain jobs in practically all occupational fields. <sup>2</sup>

On the other hand, despite these glowing portraits of opportunity, relatively few Bayou City blacks could escape the actuality of their subordinate economic position. To be sure, as Henry Bullock has



suggested, urbanization in the South furnished African Americans access to a far wider range of job opportunities than they had enjoyed in rural areas, but even then blacks remained in an inferior economic status.<sup>3</sup>

According to Gunnar Myrdal in his classic study, *The American Dilemma*,

Except for a small minority enjoying upper or middle class status, the masses of American Negroes . . . are destitute. They own little property; even their household goods are mostly inadequate and dilapidated. Their incomes are not only low but irregular. They thus live from day to day and have scant security for the future.<sup>4</sup>

The economic position of black Houstonians in the years between the world wars closely corresponded to this description and analysis. As had been the case in the latter nineteenth century, local blacks found themselves relegated to the least prestigious jobs; their employers rarely paid them a wage equal to that of a white laborer in the same occupation; and (to state a well-worn cliché) black workers in the Bayou City were usually the last hired and the first fired during periods of economic crisis. Although the city's economy rapidly expanded after 1900 as a result of the Texas oil boom, black Houstonians discovered that the best jobs created by this industrial growth were "for whites only."<sup>5</sup> White employers often expressed a reluctance to hire large numbers of black laborers for varying reasons. One explained his position with the vague comment that black workers "do not fit into our scheme . . . ." Another was more precise. "It has been our experience," he reported on an Urban League questionnaire, "that it is very hard to arouse any enthusiasm or pride of accomplishment in Negro workmen. They will not assume even minor responsibilities, resulting in shiftlessness and lack of thrift." That this did not represent a unanimous attitude, however, became clear when still another Houston employer said of his black workers: "I have found them loyal and



anxious to please as a rule."<sup>6</sup> In addition to losing many job opportunities to whites, Houston blacks also faced stiff competition for lower status occupations from another minority group--Mexicans--who had begun to migrate to the city in larger numbers in the early decades of the twentieth century.<sup>7</sup> All of these factors worked to the disadvantage of Houston's black labor pool and retarded its upward economic mobility. So too did the activities and attitudes of local labor unions.

The uneasy relationship between black Houstonians and organized labor was apparent in the years immediately following emancipation.<sup>8</sup> Following the war, white Houstonians, alarmed by the sight of hundreds of idle freedmen in their city, attempted to force blacks to obtain employment as soon as possible. A few planters encouraged blacks in the city to assume the status of sharecroppers on nearby farmlands, and military authorities supported these efforts by threatening to work without pay any blacks found loitering within the city limits. Some freedmen were arrested as vagrants and shipped to West Texas or were forced into military duty. Most of the African Americans who moved to the Bayou City after the war, however, settled into jobs as common laborers and became part of the town's urban poor.<sup>9</sup>

A profile of occupations in postbellum Houston clearly reveals the subordinate economic status of the city's black inhabitants.<sup>10</sup> In 1870, 37.35 percent of Houston's black work force labored in unskilled or semiskilled occupations. If the substantial number of black women employed in domestic service (44.64 percent of all black workers) is included, we see that almost 82 percent of all black Houstonians in the labor pool worked in these three lowest-status occupational groups. In



contrast, only 33.05 percent of the white work force held jobs in these occupational categories. Clearly, then, relatively few African Americans were engaged in the higher-status jobs. Only 9.54 percent of Houston's black workers were classified as skilled laborers, and a mere 1.68 percent were employed in "white-collar" jobs. Among white Houstonians in the work force, 47.33 percent and 16.25 percent, respectively, were engaged in these two occupational classifications. The statistics for 1880 reveal even greater disparities. The proportion of African Americans engaged in domestic work, unskilled, and semiskilled occupations climbed to almost 84 percent, while only 30 percent of all white workers held jobs in these categories. Meanwhile, the proportion of black workers in skilled jobs declined slightly to 9.14 percent, and less than 1 percent worked in white-collar occupations. Conversely, 47.06 percent of all white workers in the Bayou City were skilled laborers, and almost 20.77 percent enjoyed white-collar employment. As these figures demonstrate, black Houstonians dominated those occupations requiring few trained skills but found themselves largely overlooked by employers in the skilled trades and professional and clerical positions. Moreover, relegation to low-status occupations was accompanied by lower wages and even within individual unskilled jobs African Americans received less pay than their white counterparts. In addition, as low-status laborers, blacks in Houston, as elsewhere in the United States, endured more physically demanding and personally demeaning jobs than did white Houstonians as a group.<sup>11</sup>

The inferior status of black workers in the Bayou City carried over into the labor union movement where whites either excluded blacks from union membership or forced them into Jim-Crow locals with few ties to



the corresponding white organizations. Houston blacks did receive authorization in 1871 to establish a local of the National Labor Union, but little is known of the activities of this body. In the early 1880s, attempts by black workers to join Knights of Labor assemblies in Houston met constant resistance from white workers, and even when African Americans successfully organized two segregated assemblies in 1885, local white Knights continued to ignore their black counterparts. Similarly, the Houston Labor Council, whose organization in 1889 marked the triumph of trade unionism in the Bayou City, excluded black skilled workers from membership. This exclusionary policy in the trade union movement was amended slightly in 1899 when Samuel Gompers urged an American Federation of Labor organizer in Houston to unionize black workers. Three years later, however, Gompers demonstrated his reluctance toward racially integrated locals when he ordered the secretary of the Houston Labor Council to establish only Jim-Crow locals in the Bayou City.<sup>12</sup>

Lack of cooperation between the black and white workers in a wide range of activities further revealed the barriers erected along racial lines in the city's labor movement. For example, Houston's Knights of Labor not only organized Jim-Crow assemblies, but also conducted separate Labor Day celebrations and picnics. Similarly, Houston's streetcar operators, all of whom were white, voted unanimously to bar black unionists from the 1900 Labor Day parade. Nor did black strikers receive much sympathy or cooperation from the white work force. In October 1880, black workers walked off the job at the Direct Navigation Company wharves and demanded a wage hike to two dollars a day. When the company brought in seventy-five Mexican strikbreakers, the



black longshoremen gained a few converts among the scabs, but white workers viewed the strike as a "Negro problem" and refused to support the wage demand. With little support for their cause from the ranks of labor and continued obduracy on the part of management, the strikers ended their walkout after two weeks. At other times, white unionists actually obstructed the employment of black workers in Houston. On one such occasion in 1912, city officials hired a group of African Americans to paint light poles in the city, but members of the Houston local of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers objected and succeeded in having the black painters dismissed.<sup>13</sup>

Without the support of white workers, black laborers in Houston, whether unionized or not, operated from a position of powerlessness.<sup>14</sup> Black workers who made demands for better wages or improved working conditions faced the possibility of losing their jobs altogether. On several occasions Bayou City employers dismissed black workers rather than listen to their demands. In 1896, when 140 black wood choppers demanded a fifteen cent-per-cord raise, their employer obtained his wood supply elsewhere. In 1900, black bellhops at the Capital Hotel initiated a strike when their manager refused to fire a hotel watchman who had killed a local black man. Ignoring the complaints of the bellhops, the manager hired a new crew, and business continued as usual.<sup>15</sup>

But surely this situation was about to change. After all, it was a new century, a new South; this was "Heavenly Houston." Between 1910 and 1950 Houston's black population increased in size from 23,929 to 125,400 inhabitants. Despite this substantial increase, the proportion of African Americans in the total population declined as the result of the more rapid growth rate of the city's white residents. Within the labor



force, however, blacks represented a larger proportion than their numbers in the entire population warranted; this fact derived mainly from the high frequency of black female workers. Black males, on the other hand, held jobs in numbers roughly equivalent to their proportion of the total population.<sup>16</sup>

Previous research has demonstrated that black Houstonians of both sexes confronted limited occupational opportunities in the years between the two world wars.<sup>17</sup> Much of this inferior status could be attributed directly to racial prejudice and discrimination. As Myrdal noted in his study of race relations in the United States, African Americans faced numerous barriers in their struggle to attain economic security. They were denied access to some industries or occupations strictly on the basis of race or confined to a handful of factories hiring only blacks; and, as the census data indicate, white employers frequently relegated black workers to unskilled and service jobs or, perhaps, a few semiskilled occupations considered unacceptable to white workers. Many of these employers undoubtedly questioned the abilities of African Americans to carry out certain tasks adequately, but while many black Houstonians did lack skills necessary to perform some of the jobs created in the wake of industrial expansion in the Bayou City, local authorities proved reluctant to sponsor vocational and industrial training for the town's African-American inhabitants.<sup>18</sup> Even when properly educated, not all blacks succeeded in locating work commensurate with their training and ability. For example, one young black woman, Earlene Denman, successfully completed her nursing training but could find a job only as a maid at Jefferson Davis Hospital.<sup>19</sup> Confronted by such obstacles, black Houstonians nevertheless experienced slight



improvements in their occupational status during the 1920s. These gains, however, proved to be transitory. With the arrival of the economic crisis of the 1930s, Bayou City blacks suffered high rates of unemployment which not only negated their occupational advances of the previous decade but also plunged them into an even lower occupational status than they had held in the immediate post World War I period.

Economic dislocations adversely affected black Houstonians far more than their white counterparts, and evidence of this fact appeared in the Bayou City even before the stock market crash symbolized the onset of the Great Depression. In March 1928, for example, the *Informer* reported that local citizens were in the midst of a severe economic crisis that had produced a critical employment decline among African-American workers. Black leaders expressed particular concern that this crisis had led several employers to replace black laborers with Mexicans because this latter group would work for lower wages. Even when the employment situation improved slightly and new jobs became available to blacks, they continued to face competition from Mexican migrants.<sup>20</sup>

Despite apparent benefits and even more obvious shortcomings, the efforts of the federal government to treat the immediate problems of the Great Depression did not alter the basic fact of black economic status in the Bayou City. By the end of the New Deal and the World War II era, black Houstonians, like blacks throughout the state and around the nation generally remained on the lowest rungs of the economic ladder. A partial explanation for the limited effectiveness of New Deal programs in directly improving the position of blacks in the economic sector lay in the tendency of the federal government to entrust



the smooth operation of the myriad New Deal agencies to local officials, often with little direction from above. In the South, particularly, this tendency almost guaranteed unequal application of funds and employment for blacks and whites. In Houston, no incident validates this point any better than the controversy over the use of black skilled laborers on the city's federal housing projects.

When the city initiated its federally funded public housing program in 1939, it did so under an agreement with the United States Housing Administration that blacks would constitute no less than 5 percent of the skilled workers and approximately 50 percent of the unskilled laborers employed on the Cuney Homes housing project in the Third Ward, since the local Housing Authority had designated this site for African-American occupancy. Unfortunately, the contracting firm for the Third Ward project, the Ball Construction Company, had entered an agreement with representatives of the city's building trades unions not to employ any workers unacceptable to the unions. Since none of these unions accepted blacks as members, they exerted pressure upon Ball Construction to ignore the federal requirement of skilled blacks on the job. The resistance to the use of skilled black laborers in the city's first housing project centered in the Houston Labor Council, an organization of American Federation of Labor (AFL) affiliates, one of whose leading spokesmen, A. S. McBride, represented labor on the Houston Housing Authority.<sup>21</sup>

Possessing little leverage with organized labor or the local housing commission, black Houstonians nevertheless organized a committee to protest the exclusion of skilled blacks. Led by their chairman, C. A. Shaw, this Negro Advisory Committee, consisting of representatives from



all the major black organizations in the city, brought its complaint before the Houston Housing Authority. The black complainants received a less than enthusiastic welcome. Some members of the Housing Authority suggested a compromise solution whereby additional black unskilled laborers would be hired for the Third Ward project to make up for the absence of skilled blacks, but the Negro Advisory Committee rejected this offer and demanded that the local housing officials follow the specifications established by the USHA. Brady Steele told the protestors that they should cease their insistence upon skilled blacks on the project site and issued a thinly veiled threat that compliance with government requirements might produce labor strikes that would impede the construction of the Cuney Homes project. Moreover, Steele argued, the Houston Housing Authority had done a great deal to secure the initial housing project for the benefit of black Houstonians, so blacks in the city should be satisfied with the actions already taken in their favor. As might be expected, A. S. McBride expressed his hostility toward black labor in general. In their deliberations following the meeting with the Negro Advisory Committee, the members of the Housing Authority concluded that resolution of the matter should lay with the Houston Labor Council and the contractor for the project and refused to enforce the black skilled labor clause of the federal government's public housing specifications. This decision convinced many local African Americans that white administrators of the New Deal's housing program were ignoring the best interests of blacks in order to abet white job opportunities in the city. Some blacks vowed to carry the matter into the courts, but no such proceedings developed. Embittered by the unwillingness of the Houston Housing Authority to support the



arguments of the Negro Advisory Committee and the recalcitrance of white representatives of the building trades unions, the *Informer* remarked that this controversy had focused a spotlight upon Houston as "the national sore-spot in the housing project movement."<sup>22</sup>

The controversy over the exclusion of black skilled laborers from the city's initial public housing project reveals the discriminatory attitudes of members of the building trades unions in Houston and suggests another reason for the continued economic subordination of Bayou City blacks in the years between the two world wars. For without widespread associations with organized labor, black workers possessed very little bargaining power in disputes with their employers. With a few exceptions, efforts to organize workers, white or black, remained extremely weak in Houston, as well as the rest of the South, until the 1930s when both the American Federation of Labor and the Congress of Industrial Organizations initiated general campaigns in Dixie.<sup>23</sup> In Houston, these activities yielded thousands of new members, including many African Americans who generally were relegated to Jim-Crow locals so as not to bruise the sensibilities of white union members. At the same time, however, national organizers confronted stiff resistance from some blacks who questioned the value of union membership in a region where management often frowned upon such organizations. Throughout the period under consideration, then, organized labor made headway among black Houstonians, but these advances represented incomplete victories marred by jurisdictional disputes, continued racial discrimination within the workers' ranks, and charges by the opponents of organized labor that union activities in the Bayou City represented the work of Communists.



All of these factors worked a hardship on labor organizers among black Houstonians.

As indicated above, the American Federation of Labor's building trade unions adopted an exclusionary policy with regard to black workers in the Bayou City, but not all AFL affiliates employed similar rules. During the late 1930s, for example, the AFL launched a campaign in the city to organize black truck drivers. By 1939 Charles M. Pendergast, the recording secretary of the Joint Council of Teamsters, emphasized that the organized truck drivers did not observe a color bar in the city and listed various teamsters' locals with black members, including the Beer and Soft Drink City Sales Drivers' Local 976 (10 blacks), the Milk Drivers and Dairy Employees' Local 133 (35 blacks), the Ice Handlers' Local 509 (30 blacks), the Bread Drivers' Local 949 (5 blacks), and the Truck Drivers' Local 367 (100 blacks). In addition to the teamsters' locals, black Houstonians also joined AFL Local 124 at the Hartwell Iron Works. But the most significant AFL union involving black Houstonians was the International Longshoremen's Association.<sup>24</sup>

The organization of black longshoremen in the Bayou City coincided with the opening of the Port of Houston in 1914 following the completion of the Ship Channel connecting the city with the Gulf of Mexico. From the outset, black stevedores dominated freight handling at the port, and the initial longshoremen's union organized by the American Federation of Labor was an all-black local. Chartered in 1914 as International Longshoremen's Association Local 872, this union remained relatively inactive until August 1915, when the ILA chartered a white longshoremen's organization (Local 896). Though occasional conflicts arose between these two groups, interracial harmony prevailed



as the locals split the available work on a fifty-fifty basis. Much of the lack of tension, however, stemmed from the policy of working black and white longshoremen in separate hatches or at opposite ends of the vessel. Despite this practice, white longshoremen complained that some steamship lines, such as the Morgan Line and the Southern Steamship Company, gave all their business to the black stevedores, and this situation produced ill will within the white local. These complaints spurred the City Council to urge agents for the shipowners to provide white longshoremen at least half of the work at the Port of Houston. As business at the port expanded, the ILA chartered additional unions but always on a Jim-Crow basis. The associations chartered for black longshoremen after World War I included: Local 1271, organized in 1919; Local 1331, organized in November 1933; Local 1409, which grew out of the Lone Star Colored Longshoremen's Benevolent Association, an independent union of approximately three hundred members, which received an ILA charter in February 1936; and Local 1512, about which little is known.<sup>25</sup>

The International Longshoremen's Association carried out the most extensive labor organization among black Houstonians during the early years of the period under consideration, but following its emergence in 1935, the Congress of Industrial Organizations exhibited the most union activity among Bayou City blacks. Between 1935 and 1945, the CIO was responsible for organizing blacks in several industries, including workers in oil refineries, fruit and tobacco industries, sugar refineries, and steel mills. CIO field workers proved especially effective in organizing black steelworkers at the Hughes Tool Company, Sheffield Steel Company, and Dedman Foundry where almost two thousand Negroes had joined United



Steelworkers of America locals by 1945.<sup>26</sup> While CIO campaigns attracted many formerly unorganized black workers, some Houstonians expressed dismay at this success. Many whites objected to the interracial character of the CIO locals, while other citizens, black and white, were concerned about the apparent "radical" nature of the CIO with its alleged Communist ties. The CIO also confronted competition in some industries from the American Federation of Labor. Jurisdictional conflict abounded with each side charging the other with attempting to impede its organizational efforts among local blacks.<sup>27</sup> These disputes not only divided local Negroes on the question of which of the national labor organizations best suited black needs but also raised the issue of whether the AFL and CIO were not subordinating the best interests of black workers in Houston to their own efforts to achieve predominant authority and power in the city in the field of union organization. As a result, a few black spokesmen determined that the best opportunities for black workers in Houston lay outside the national unions.

The leading black critic of the activities of the American Federation of Labor and the Congress of Industrial Organizations in the Bayou City was C. W. Rice, president of the Texas Negro Business and Laboring Men's Association, editor of the *Negro Labor News*, and self-proclaimed spokesman for the independent union movement among local blacks. According to Rice, black workers suffered from their association with the national unions. He pointed to the segregation policies within the AFL locals and the refusal of building trades unions to accept African-American members. The CIO, on the other hand, suffered from a generally negative image in the South deriving from its apparent efforts to promote "social equality" through interracial locals and allegations



that the CIO was a Communist-front organization. Such connections, Rice argued, could only produce pernicious results for black workers associated with these unions. Moreover, white domination of these unions severely limited black participation in the decision-making process of the various locals to which African Americans belonged. Finally, Rice argued that the strike activities of the AFL and CIO locals during the 1930s removed black unionists from the ranks of the employed at a time when jobs were difficult to find. Based on these complaints with respect to the relationship between black Houstonians and the national unions, Rice urged blacks to organize separate, independent unions over which they would have unquestioned control.<sup>28</sup> "The Negro is only interested in economic justice and the right to work," he wrote, and the best way to realize these goals was through the independent action of black laborers.<sup>29</sup>

On the surface, Rice's support for independent unions of black workers seems to reflect the dual concepts of self-help and racial solidarity expressed by such prominent black spokesmen as Booker T. Washington and W. E. B. Du Bois, but in this instance, Rice's motives were somewhat deceptive. Since his arrival in the Bayou City in the mid-1920s, Rice had operated an employment bureau for African Americans, and in this position he had sought the favor of white employers who might best assure the success of his agency. By expressing his disapproval of labor unions and workers' strikes and stating his belief that Houston employers operated in the best interests of black laborers, Rice had endeared himself to many within the management ranks of business and industry in the city. "Houston Negroes," he once told the readers of his column in the *Negro Labor News*, "have been most



fortunate in having a class of employers who have been favorably disposed toward Negro workers . . . ."30 Such charitable opinions toward management irritated powerful black spokesmen, many of whom approved of the rising tide of unionism among local blacks, and set the stage for a battle between pro-labor and anti-labor forces within the black community.

The opposition to C. W. Rice and his labor philosophy emerged from the ranks of black unionists and a few community leaders, like Carter Wesley and Richard R. Grovey, who viewed the organization of black workers by the AFL and CIO as essential to the improvement of the economic status of African-American laborers. Since Wesley and Rice edited weekly newspapers, the debate, which often deteriorated to name calling and personal diatribes, took on the character of a press war with each side loading its editorial cannons and blasting away. Wesley seems to have fired the first shot in 1937 when he accused Rice of sponsoring a company union under the guise of an independent union at the Hughes Tool Company. Later Wesley criticized Rice for encouraging local black workers not to organize and generally working against the best interests of black labor.<sup>31</sup> "Mr. Rice has never attempted to help Negro workers better their conditions," the *Informer* editor charged, "but has always been on the side of the employer."<sup>32</sup> Similarly, Richard Grovey, who became a salaried agent for the CIO in 1941, attacked Rice for using the Texas Negro Business and Laboring Men's Association to exploit unemployed blacks and for accepting a low wage scale for his clients.<sup>33</sup> And finally, the voice of black organized labor also launched assaults against Rice's activities. One of the more indignant organizations was the Amalgamated Union League which consistently denounced Rice and



his newspaper as enemies of labor in Houston who encouraged blacks to act as strikebreakers in local disputes.<sup>34</sup> "It is our opinion," representatives of the AUL argued in the *Informer's* "Voice of Labor" column, "that Mr. Rice is not competent to represent labor anywhere, not even in a civic organization, because he generally takes advantage of every opportunity to mislead the public concerning labor."<sup>35</sup>

Rice stood firm against these attacks and replied in kind. He continued to argue that national unions offered no more security to black workers than company organizations and asserted that "petty jealousies and selfish interests" had motivated the various attacks against him. Rather than finding jobs for blacks, Rice contended that by supporting AFL and CIO strike activities in the city, his critics had worked greater hardships against African-American laborers who temporarily lost their jobs during these strikes. Finally, Rice sought to discredit his opponents, particularly Wesley and Grovey, by claiming that they had fallen under the influence of Communism as supporters of CIO activities in the Bayou City.<sup>36</sup>

Much of the attention in the dispute between C. W. Rice and the champions of national labor unions in Houston came to rest on the efforts to organize black workers at the Hughes Tool Company. Founded around 1913 by Howard Hughes, Sr., who was succeeded by his eccentric son, Hughes Tool had long been a leading industrial employer of black laborers in the Bayou City. In 1925 black Hughes employees, under the leadership of Joe Polk, formed a mutual benefit organization when AFL locals at the plant rejected their request for affiliation. Known as the Hughes Tool Club, this group cooperated with the lily-white Employee's Welfare Organization, and the two operated as bargaining



agents at the plant. In the late 1930s the Congress of Industrial Organizations sent representatives into Hughes Tool in an effort to organize the workers into a United Steelworkers of America local, but members of the Hughes Tool Club overwhelmingly rejected these overtures. This decision prompted Carter Wesley and R. R. Grovey, who favored CIO entrance into the Hughes plant, to argue that the Hughes Tool Club had resisted CIO affiliation because it was a company union under the domination of the Hughes management. Freeman Everett, president of ILA Local 872 and one of the city's leading black labor spokesmen, echoed these charges. Richard H. Guess, the Hughes Tool Club's president, and C. W. Rice scoffed at the accusations and repeatedly emphasized that the HTC represented a freely constituted independent union. They, along with other black club members, challenged their critics to prove the charges leveled at the Hughes labor organization. The CIO's Steel Workers' Organizing Committee picked up the gauntlet and in 1939 filed a complaint with the National Labor Relations Board alleging that company unions at Hughes Tool had restricted legitimate organizing activities among workers on the part of the CIO by threatening to dismiss employees supporting such activities.<sup>37</sup>

The following year, an NLRB examiner reported his conclusion that the Hughes Tool Club was a company union. The NLRB responded by ordering the organization to disband and refund membership dues collected since 1935. In addition, the club's right to act as a collective bargaining agent for black Hughes employees was revoked and new elections were held. These decisions created confusion among workers at the plant and produced factionalism among the former Hughes Tool



Club members. About two hundred blacks joined a new independent union, Local 2 of the Independent Metal Workers; several former HTC leaders, including E. M. Martin and George Duncan, threw their support to the CIO organizing efforts in the plant; and, finally, some recalcitrant elements, led by Richard Guess and receiving editorial support from C. W. Rice, sought to reorganize the Hughes Tool Club along lines acceptable to the NLRB. In 1941 CIO efforts to organize Hughes employees received a temporary setback when an election awarded bargaining authority to the Independent Metal Workers Union. This turn of events led the Steel Workers' Organizing Committee to recall NLRB officials to investigate charges that opponents of the CIO had employed coercion to defeat recognition of a CIO union. The ensuing inquiry resulted in a call for new elections, and in December 1942 Hughes Tool employees repudiated the independent union and recognized the CIO's United Steelworkers of America as their bargaining agent.<sup>38</sup>

Pro-union spokesmen in the black community expressed great pleasure in this final victory. In the first place, the CIO victory represented a vote by black laborers against the continued leadership of C. W. Rice and Richard Guess, whom many alleged had simply acted as Rice's puppet in the Hughes Tool Club. Secondly, although Rice continued to attack the CIO and urged the members of the Independent Metal Workers Union to remain unaligned with the new bargaining agent, most of the black and white employees joined the United Steelworkers' Local 2457. The *Informer* credited the activities of Richard Grovey for this success and labeled Grovey the "spearhead" of the CIO movement at Hughes Tool. Third, the CIO victory at the Hughes plant set the stage for new gains in the area of wages and working conditions



that many believed had been too long deferred. With the support of a strong bargaining agent at Hughes, as well as in other major industries, spokesmen like Carter Wesley believed that black workers would soon see vast improvements in working conditions in the Bayou City.<sup>39</sup>

The traditional means of improving the position of organized labor in the face of company intransigence was the strike, and in the years between the world wars, black unionists engaged in numerous strikes in Houston. The success of these activities, however, depended a great deal upon the size and strength of the union, the willingness of the individual employers to negotiate labor's demands, cooperation from white workers in similar occupations, and the availability to management of alternative labor supplies. The balance sheet for strike activities involving black workers in Houston suggests a few victories and numerous defeats. Throughout the 1920s, the labor scene in Houston remained fairly calm, but in the next decade and a half, the economic distress attendant to the Great Depression and growing organizing efforts on the part of the AFL and CIO, sparked strike activities that affected many black Houstonians, whether union members or not.

The first major strike of the Depression decade involving blacks occurred in 1931 when longshoremen walked off the job in protest against a series of wage cuts on the docks. This strike lasted several weeks, but like most of the strikes sponsored by the International Longshoremen's Association during the period, the full force of the intended action diminished when the various shipping lines hired independent longshoremen or brought in strikebreakers, most of whom were black.<sup>40</sup>



A more serious labor situation erupted in 1934 when the ILA called a strike on May 1 that resulted in several confrontations between black and white strikers and black strikebreakers, some of whom belonged to the Independent Lone Star Colored Longshoremen's Benevolent Association. In discussing the tension around the Port of Houston, the *Informer* observed the existence of "a virtual reign of terror in the Fifth Ward." On July 15, following weeks of bombings and shooting incidents, the most serious violence of the three-month-old strike occurred when five ILA members, including one African American, opened fire on two cars carrying sixteen members of the independent longshoremen's union. The gunfire left three men dead and four wounded, all but one of them black. Three ILA members, including the lone black assailant, were indicted for the murders, but there is no evidence that they came to trial. It is quite possible that, since all the dead were black, local authorities felt no urgency to prosecute the guilty parties.<sup>41</sup> Although passions cooled, and the strike was settled by the end of the summer, similar problems occurred the following year when the ILA called another walk-out over wages. This time, city police and Texas Rangers protected black strikebreakers at the Port of Houston, but even these precautions did not prevent fights from breaking out on the docks between strikers and scabs.<sup>42</sup>

While black longshoremen remained active in the strikes called by the ILA, they were not the only dissatisfied black laborers who attempted to employ this weapon to extract benefits from management. For instance, in 1937 the city's public laundry workers, most of whom were black, agreed to strike for higher wages and better working conditions, but when the black operatives walked off the job, their white



counterparts declined to follow. The management of the laundries affected filled the vacancies with black strikebreakers, leaving about seventy-five disillusioned black laundry workers without jobs and seriously questioning the value of labor strikes.<sup>43</sup>

The reluctance of white unionists to support protests initiated by black laborers also surfaced in July 1939, when a group of black truck drivers belonging to the black Teamsters' Local 367, AFL, began picketing the Henke and Pillot grocery stores in the city. Henke and Pillot had employed blacks as drivers, porters, and warehousemen for many years but had refused to negotiate a pay increase demanded by the black truckers. During the seven-month-long protest against the stores, white AFL union workers consistently crossed the picket lines and conducted business as usual. The *Informer*, which had supported the strike, expressed dismay that white unionists had ignored the actions of the African-American truck drivers and concluded that the incident "leaves the A.F. of L. with a black eye" in terms of its support of black workers.<sup>44</sup> Clearly, the philosophy of union brotherhood in the Bayou City stumbled occasionally when it attempted to step over the color line.

The problems black unionists confronted in Houston reveals but one example of the subordinate economic status of the city's black work force. Since 1865, Negroes had been attracted to the Bayou City as to a great urban magnet, and at least one of the sources of this attraction was the dream of greater economic opportunity. To be sure, these migrants found employment in a wider range of jobs than would have been available to them on the farm or in smaller towns and cities, but occupational limitations persisted. Despite the obvious economic expansion of "Heavenly Houston" since the early 1900s, the jobs



available to African Americans remained restricted largely to unskilled and domestic service positions. Furthermore, black Houstonians, both male and female, were concentrated in a handful of jobs within each occupational category, thus validating the conclusion offered by the National Urban League in 1945 that "occupationally the Negro was not in the main stream of jobs held by the general population" in the Bayou City.<sup>45</sup> Frequently, racism prevented local blacks from advancing in the economic sector. Robert C. Weaver revealed the severity of the discrimination against certain groups of black workers when he reported that skilled blacks continued to walk the streets in search of employment while white community leaders complained about extreme shortages of skilled workers.<sup>46</sup> This prejudice pervaded some corners of the labor union movement, especially the American Federation of Labor, which maintained separate locals for its black members. The *Informer* announced that the negative attitude among many white unionists toward their black counterparts "seems to be prompted by sheer cussedness," but, in truth, such prejudices were reflective of the white population in general.<sup>47</sup> All of these characteristics combined to guarantee the future subordination of black Houstonians in the economic sector and justified Richard Grovey's argument that economic status remained the most serious problem confronting Bayou City blacks.<sup>48</sup> Thus, despite the rhetoric of boosterism employed in the interwar years by the Chamber of Commerce and echoed by many black leaders, economic opportunities for most black Houstonians, including African-American trade unionists remained a good deal less than "heavenly."



## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>*Houston Informer*, June 14, 1919.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, August 29, 1925.

<sup>3</sup>Henry Allen Bullock, "Urbanism and Race Relations," in *The Urban South*, eds. Rupert B. Vance and Nicholas J. Demerath (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1954), pp. 215-216.

<sup>4</sup>Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* (New York: Harper and Row, 1944), p. 205.

<sup>5</sup>George Brown Tindall, *The Emergence of the New South, 1913-1945* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1967), pp. 161-162 applies this argument of occupational exclusion to the South as a whole.

<sup>6</sup>Jesse O. Thomas, *A Study of the Social Welfare Status of the Negroes in Houston, Texas* (Houston: Webster-Richardson Publishing Co., Inc., 1929), p. 14.

<sup>7</sup>The policy of grouping Mexicans with whites for census purposes prevents an accurate assessment of this flow of immigrants across the Rio Grande and into the Bayou City. Thomas's survey, however, estimated an increase in the number of Mexican residents from 3,946 in 1920 to approximately 20,000 by 1929. Of course, these migrants also confronted discriminatory hiring practices. Among the twenty-four industries that responded to a poll of Houston businesses employing black workers, only nine also hired Mexican laborers. Of these employers who evaluated the work of their African-American and Mexican employees, four rated the black workers as more dependable and productive, three stated that their foreign workers exhibited these



qualities more than blacks, and one said that both groups of workers were similar in these respects. See *ibid.*, pp. 8, 12-13.

<sup>8</sup>For previous examinations of the relationship between working-class blacks and organized labor, see W. E. B. Du Bois, ed., *The Negro Artisan* (Atlanta: Atlanta University Publications, 1902); Sterling D. Spero and Abram L. Harris, *The Black Worker: The Negro and the Labor Movement* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1931); Sidney H. Kesler, "The Organization of Negroes in the Knights of Labor," *Journal of Negro History*, 37 (July 1952): 248-276; Bernard Mandel, "Samuel Gompers and the Negro Workers, 1886-1914," *Journal of Negro History*, 40 (January 1955): 34-60; and Julius Jacobson, ed., *The Negro and the American Labor Movement* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1968).

<sup>9</sup>Work Projects Administration of Texas, Writers' Program, comp., *Houston: A History and Guide* (Houston: Anson Jones Press, 1942), p. 82; David G. McComb, *Houston: The Bayou City* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1969), p. 84; Winston Lee Kinsey, "Negro Labor in Texas, 1865-1876" (M.A. thesis, Baylor University, 1965), pp. 11, 97.

<sup>10</sup>Robert Zeigler, "The Workingman in Houston, Texas, 1865-1914" (Ph.D. dissertation, Texas Tech University, 1972).

<sup>11</sup>My impressions of the early occupational status of black Houstonians have been influenced also by Howard Rabinowitz, *Race Relations in the Urban South, 1865-1890* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press).

<sup>12</sup>Zeigler, *The Workingman in Houston*, pp. 76, 83-86, 96-97, 158-159, 185.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 83-84, 124-127, 161.



<sup>14</sup>Actually, unionization has had a rocky road in the South, whether organizers were black or white. See, for example, C. Vann Woodward, *The Origins of the New South, 1877-1913* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1951), ch. 8.

<sup>15</sup>Zeigler, "The Workingman in Houston," pp. 201-203.

<sup>16</sup>In 1920, 1930, and 1940, black males in Houston accounted for 25.7, 21.6, and 21.4 percent, respectively, of the male work force in the city. In contrast, black women constituted 45.0, 38.2, and 36.9 percent, respectively, of all female workers in the same three years. U.S.

Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Fourteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1920*, vol. 4: *Population: Occupations* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1923), p. 1577; U.S.

Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940*, vol. 3: *Population: The Labor Force* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1943), p. 463; U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Census of Population: 1950*, vol. 2: *Character of the Population: Part 1* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1953), p. 140.

<sup>17</sup>See James M. SoRelle, "'An De Po Cullud Man Is In De Wuss Fix Uv Awl': Black Occupational Status in Houston, Texas, 1920-1940," *Houston Review*, 1 (Spring 1979): 14-26.

<sup>18</sup>Racial discrimination in hiring for industrial occupations in the South is discussed in Myrdal, *An American Dilemma*, pp. 279-291, 380-381. Complaints concerning the absence of black vocational education classes in Houston appear in Thomas, *Social Welfare Status of the Negroes in Houston*, p. 18; and *Houston Informer*, November 9, 1935, June 27, 1936.



<sup>19</sup>Interview with Dr. H. E. Lee, Houston, Texas, n.d., in Charles S. Johnson, "Patterns of Segregation and Discrimination: Houston, Texas," in Johnson, "Source Material for *Patterns of Negro Segregation*: Houston, Texas" (Research memoranda for use in the preparation of Dr. Gunnar Myrdal's *An American Dilemma*, New York, 1940), p. 8.

<sup>20</sup>*Houston Informer*, March 24, 31, 1928, February 16, March 30, September 21, November 2, 1929.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, October 7, 1939, May 18, 1940; *Negro Labor News*, October 28, 1939.

<sup>22</sup>*Houston Informer*, October 14, December 2, 1939, March 16, 23, 1940; *Negro Labor News*, December 9, 1939, May 11, 1940.

<sup>23</sup>Tindall, *The Emergence of the New South*, pp. 331, 353.

<sup>24</sup>Robert Eli Teel, "Discrimination Against Negro Workers in Texas: Extent and Effects" (M.A. thesis, University of Texas, 1947), pp. 15, 17-18; *Negro Labor News*, November 20, 1937; *Houston Informer*, June 10, December 2, 1939, November 15, 1941. Still, in 1945 the Urban League reported that black Houstonians were not scattered widely through AFL affiliates. See National Urban League, *A Review of the Economic and Cultural Problems of Houston, Texas, As They Relate to Conditions in the Negro Population* (n.p., 1945), p. 54.

<sup>25</sup>Interviews with [?] Rodgers, June 18, 1936; Ralph Landgrebe, June 30, 1936; [?] Nelson, [?] Curtis, G. H. Chambers, July 1, 1936; and F. N. Hunter, July 4, 1936, in Labor Movement in Texas Papers, Box 2E304, University of Texas Archives, Austin, Texas (hereafter cited as LMIT Papers); *Houston Informer*, June 30, 1934, November 12, 1938, January 18, 1941; *Houston Chronicle*, April 25, 1939; Wendell Phillips



Terrell, "A Short History of the Negro Longshoreman" (B.S. essay, Houston College of Negroes, 1936), pp. 26-28.

<sup>26</sup>Urban League, *Review of the Economic and Cultural Problems of Houston*, p. 54; *Houston Informer*, June 27, 1942.

<sup>27</sup>*Houston Informer*, September 4, 1937, March 8, 1941.

<sup>28</sup>*Negro Labor News*, June 26, October 9, 1937, April 23, 1938, June 10, September 2, 1939, April 27, 1940.

<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*, April 29, 1939.

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*, November 25, 1939.

<sup>31</sup>*Houston Informer*, May 15, 1937, August 12, 1939. Wesley did not object to the formation of independent unions; he simply doubted that these organizations could produce as many benefits as the stronger national unions. What Wesley resented was Rice's advocacy of "independent unions" that the companies really controlled. See *ibid.*, June 3, 1939, July 5, October 4, 1941.

<sup>32</sup>*Ibid.*, August 9, 1941.

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*, October 3, 1942.

<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*, March 4, 1939, January 6, February 24, 1940.

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*, March 2, 1940.

<sup>36</sup>*Negro Labor News*, October 28, 1939, March 2, April 6, May 11, June 22, 1940; *Houston Informer*, August 2, 1941, May 27, 1944.

<sup>37</sup>*Houston Informer*, May 12, 1928; Thomas, *Social Welfare Status of the Negroes in Houston*, p. 14; *Negro Labor News*, January 15, September 3, 1938, February 18, 1939, March 2, 1940.

<sup>38</sup>*Houston Informer*, March 2, April 20, October 19, November 16, 1940, May 3, September 6, October 18, 1941, November 21, 1942; *Negro Labor News*, April 13, May 18, October 19, 1940.



<sup>39</sup>*Houston Informer*, April 20, 1940, December 19, 1942.

<sup>40</sup>Interviews with Rodgers and Landgrebe, LMIT Papers, Box 2E304; *Houston Informer*, October 24, 1931; Terrell, "A Short History of the Negro Longshoreman," p. 29.

<sup>41</sup>*Houston Informer*, May 12, June 9, 16, 30, July 21, August 4, 1934.

<sup>42</sup>*Ibid.*, October 26, 1935; Terrell, "A Short History of the Negro Longshoreman," pp. 30-31.

<sup>43</sup>C. W. Rice reported that white and Mexican scabs, not blacks, replaced the laundry strikers. The events surrounding this unsuccessful strike are described in *Negro Labor News*, July 31, August 28, September 25, 1937, April 1, 1939; and *Houston Informer*, September 4, 1937.

<sup>44</sup>*Houston Informer*, March 9, 1940. See also *Negro Labor News*, July 22, August 19, September 2, October 28, 1939.

<sup>45</sup>Urban League, *Review of the Economic and Cultural Problems of Houston*, p. 35.

<sup>46</sup>Robert C. Weaver, *Negro Labor: A National Problem* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1946), p. 19.

<sup>47</sup>*Houston Informer*, May 30, 1942.

<sup>48</sup>*Ibid.*, April 6, 1940.





SAINT  
MARY'S  
COLLEGE  
OF CALIFORNIA

4-6-94

Moraga, California 94575 • 510-631-4000

History

Dear Robert,

Again, I'm sorry about the delay. Enclosed please find a copy of my paper and a biographical statement. The paper is based on my dissertation, *A Long Road to Freedom: African American Migrant Women and Social Change in the San Francisco East Bay Area 1940-1950*. I just received word from University of N. Carolina Press that I have an advance contract for its publication. This is not in the biographical statement.

Sincerely,  
Gretchen Lemke-Santarsa



## BIOGRAPHY

Gretchen Lemke-Santangelo was born in Redwood City, California on January 12, 1956. She received a B.A. (1986) and M.A. (1988) in history from San Francisco State University. After receiving the Graduate Student Award for Distinguished Achievement at San Francisco State University, she entered the doctoral program in history at Duke University. There she received the Sydnor Fellowship (1988-1991); the Anne Firor Scott Research Award (1990); an American Dissertation Fellowship from the American Association of University Women (1991-1992); and an Andrew Mellon Dissertation Fellowship (1992-1993). Her publications include "Radical Conscientious Objectors of World War II: Wartime Experience and Postwar Activism," Radical History Review 45 (Fall 1989); and "Conscientious Objection," in the Readers' Companion to American History, Eric Foner and John A. Garraty, eds. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1991). She has taught at California State University, Hayward (1992), and is currently an assistant professor at Saint Mary's College in Moraga, California.



"I Always Desired Independence, Never Wealth": African American  
Migrant Women and Work in the Wartime East Bay

Gretchen Lemke-Santangelo  
Saint Mary's College

During World War II thousands of African Americans migrated from the South to the San Francisco Bay Area in search of social and economic mobility associated with the region's expanding defense industry and reputation for greater racial tolerance.<sup>1</sup> Roughly half of these newcomers were women who made the transition from domestic and field work to jobs in an industrial economy, while simultaneously struggling to keep their families together, establish new households, and create community sustaining institutions and networks. Thus, while white women negotiated the double burden of wage labor and housework, African American migrant women shouldered substantially more. White migrant women, although facing similar challenges, did not have to contend with racial discrimination, a burden that forced many black migrant women to create new institutions and multiplied their employment and housing difficulties.<sup>2</sup>

This paper examines the migration, community building, and employment experience of African American migrant women who moved from the South to the San Francisco East Bay Area during World War II. Drawing upon the life stories of two migrant women—stories which I interweave with forty-eight additional oral interviews that I conducted with former migrants—I will describe who these women were, how they experienced the migration, and how they used their southern cultural traditions to help keep their families together and establish new communities in the East Bay area. I will also examine migrant women's wartime and postwar employment, emphasizing their efforts to define "work" and assign value to their own labor. Filling the least desirable, lowest paying jobs in the labor force, migrant women created an alternate source of status and identity as homemakers, church women, and community workers. Defining



their labor on behalf of family and community as "real" work, migrant women resisted efforts to categorize them as marginal or menial laborers. At the same time, however, much of their community work directly challenged employment discrimination, complimenting their workplace resistance and suggesting that their labor force participation was, in fact, an important source of identity and self-esteem.

During World War II, the East Bay's black population grew significantly. African Americans in the South, hearing about defense jobs from labor recruiters, employment bureaus, railroad workers, newspapers, fellow workers, friends, and family, joined white workers in a westward exodus. In Richmond, the black population grew from 270 in 1940 to 10,000 in 1945. Similarly, Oakland's black population grew from 8,462 to over 37,000 during the same period. Of the African Americans who joined the migration to the East Bay, most came from Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Arkansas, and Oklahoma.<sup>3</sup>

The stories of Olive Blue and Ethel Tillman illustrate the similarities and differences among the African American migrant women who participated in this exodus. They and the majority of women in my sample came from deeply religious, two-parent, working-class families. Only thirty percent were raised on farms and of this number most had parents who owned or rented their land. A majority of rural-born women also reported that family members regularly worked for wages to supplement farm income. Most women in my sample, however, were raised in towns or cities. Among the fathers of this group, thirty percent worked as skilled craftsmen, a disproportionately high percentage when compared with the South's black population as a whole. Almost seventy percent of non-farm mothers also worked for wages as domestic servants, cooks, seamstresses, cateresses, and less frequently in southern industrial occupations. These findings are consistent with several wartime surveys that characterized migrants



3

as predominantly urban, relatively skilled members of an expanding black, southern working-class.<sup>4</sup>

Ethel Tillman, born in rural Mississippi in 1900, is about ten years older than the average migrant woman in my sample. Raised on a farm which her family initially rented and then purchased in 1915, Ethel remembers a girlhood of hard work, but relative freedom from grinding poverty. Her father supplemented farm income by working as a carpenter in neighboring black communities. Her mother, in addition to performing the tasks of a farm wife, worked as a seamstress, domestic servant, and cateress. Ethel and her six siblings helped on the farm and when old enough also went out to work.<sup>5</sup>

Olive Blue, in contrast, was raised in an urban environment and is closer in age to the average of my sample. Born in 1918 in New Orleans, Olive remembers a sheltered childhood. Her father, a cotton compress worker, and her mother, a seamstress, made enough income to keep their three daughters at home. "My parents kept me at home until I married . . . didn't want me to work." Their protectiveness was not uncommon. If at all possible, parents attempted to protect their daughters from the harsh and often demeaning world of domestic service.<sup>6</sup>

Church and family formed the center of migrant women's girlhoods. Ethel and Olive, like other women in my sample, experienced a life-altering conversion in early adolescence and remained deeply religious throughout their lives. Church, which families attended all day Sunday and several weekday evenings, reinforced values acquired from parents: the virtues of hard work, loyalty to family, respect for elders, and concern for a wider community.<sup>7</sup>

In the home and the church, migrant women learned that their survival was linked to the well-being of friends and neighbors. Ethel's mother regularly quilted with neighbor women, donating quilts to poorer community members. In addition, Ethel's mother



4

liberally shared her garden produce with needy families, and served as a community medical practitioner, using folk remedies derived from roots, herbs, and barks. This ethic of care was different from black middle-class notions of racial uplift—institutional forms of giving that often reinforced class distinctions. Rather, the type of giving that Ethel learned was based on the idea that little separated her family from those they helped. And indeed, little did.<sup>8</sup>

This ethic of care coexisted with a fierce desire for economic independence from white people. Migrant women recalled how their parents counselled them to "own your own." Many, like Olive, went on to reflect that it was their churches, schools, and businesses that insulated them from the hardships and humiliations of Jim Crow. Olive learned at an early age that the church was more than a spiritual institution, providing fellowship, personal affirmation, and essential social services. Sustained by women like Olive's mother, the church taught Olive organizing skills that she later used to establish new institutions in California. While both men and women learned about the virtues of self-help and economic independence, women prided themselves on their ability to create and sustain reciprocal relationships in formal and informal settings. Olive and Ethel learned, through watching their mothers, to create the networks that were central to the emotional and physical well-being of their families.<sup>9</sup>

In their late teens and early twenties, most migrant women married men, who, like their fathers, worked in skilled or semi-skilled trades and industries. For this generation, marriage and young adulthood coincided with the wartime economic boom on the West Coast. For young adults starting new families, the Bay Area was particularly attractive, holding the promise of economic opportunity and relative freedom from the harsh realities of Jim Crow. Not surprisingly, most of the women in my sample were neither bitterly poor nor members of the black middle-class. Unlike their poorer neighbors, they



5

had the resources to leave. And unlike the middle-class, they had less economic stake in their communities of origin.<sup>10</sup>

Had Ethel, Olive, and other working-class migrant women remained in the South, few could have expected more than a domestic service job paying two dollars or less per week. But this particular generation reached young adulthood at an extraordinary time. By 1940, almost two thousand miles from their homes, defense industries were transforming the East Bay into a virtual Canaan for both skilled and unskilled workers. Migrant women, confronting futures limited by Jim Crow, seized this rare historical advantage. They would soon learn, however, that the promise was imperfect, raising new and equally painful barriers in place of the old.

Ethel Tillman married a man who worked on his family's farm while supplementing farm income with seasonal work in nearby industry. After six years of marriage, the couple abandoned farming and moved to Vicksburg. There Ethel did domestic work and cared for their growing family, while her husband worked as a skilled tradesman. When the war began, Ethel's husband left Vicksburg to find defense work in southern Mississippi, sending money home to his family. It was there that he learned of employment opportunities in the East Bay. By the time Ethel and her husband decided to move to the Bay Area—a decision that they made jointly—they had been married fifteen years and had ten children. For the Tillmans, migration held the promise of family reunification, economic mobility, social freedom, and better educational opportunities for their children.<sup>11</sup>

Olive Blue married in 1936 at the age of eighteen. Just after her first child was born her husband enlisted in the military and was sent overseas. Reeling from their separation, Olive suffered a second loss, the death of her father. A female cousin who



had moved to the Bay Area earlier in the War, urged Olive to join her. To Olive, migration was a way to escape her pain and grief—"to get away from where my father had died."<sup>12</sup>

Following a typical pattern among married couples, Ethel's husband moved to the East Bay first, finding a job at Mare Island while Ethel remained behind to sell the family's belongings and prepare her children for the move. Like other women in my sample, Ethel was concerned with preserving her cultural and familial history. She was proud of her southern cultural heritage, viewing it as a source of strength—something that she wanted to pass onto her children. Thus, she packed practical items as well as her grandmother's Wedgewood serving platter and cast iron washpot. She also packed a trunk with canned fruit and vegetables, unwilling to part with such a tangible reminder of home and her own labor.<sup>13</sup>

Most women made the trip across country by train—no small task with young children. The most powerful moment of the journey came after the train crossed the line separating the segregated South from the more racially tolerant West. For Ethel this was a memorable experience: "A time when I really put my finger on it . . . when I said goodbye to all that ugly stuff for me and my children."<sup>14</sup>

When women arrived, the East Bay's housing stock was strained beyond capacity. But for black migrants it was worse. Housing segregation was rigidly enforced by racist landlords and real estate agencies, and threats to personal safety. Migrants were thus forced into already overcrowded and older housing in existing black communities—housing that often lacked adequate plumbing, cooking facilities, and heat. The burden of transforming substandard housing into reasonably comfortable accommodations fell largely upon women. Moreover, routine chores like cooking and laundry were time-consuming and challenging without adequate facilities. While women struggled to make-do, they also performed many of the orientation tasks associated with



a major move: enrolling children in schools, locating markets and medical services, negotiating public transportation, finding churches, and better housing.<sup>15</sup>

Olive and the Tillmans, after initially doubling up with relatives and friends, moved from temporary housing into East Bay war housing projects. These projects, flimsily constructed as temporary housing, deteriorated rapidly from overcrowding, lack of maintenance, and underprovision of necessary services such as trash collection, proper drainage, recreational facilities, and street lighting. Moreover, most were completely or partially segregated. Despite these deficiencies, migrant women preferred the projects to the single rooms that they had recently vacated. Women also expressed satisfaction with indoor plumbing, space heat, hot and cold running water, and modern cooking and refrigeration facilities, amenities many had never had. Above all, government housing was woman-centered, spatially conducive to the formation of helping networks. Projects provided common laundry facilities, play areas, and space for communal gardens where women watched children, made friends, exchanged information about churches, jobs, housing, and social services.<sup>16</sup>

Ethel Tillman and an aunt who accompanied the family West "made friends right away." Their popularity grew with their generosity. In addition to sponsoring dozens of families, "putting them up until they could find housing and jobs," they shared food with neighbors, established reputations as medical practitioners, and helped care for children of working mothers. The projects also fostered institution building. The Tillmans joined the Vicksburg Club, a service and social organization founded by migrants from Mississippi.<sup>17</sup>

Olive, while still in the projects, began attending the only black baptist church in town. "But it was hard to get to by 9 a.m.," so she and some friends organized a new congregation, eventually raising enough money to purchase land and build a permanent



8

church. Other migrant women, like Ethel, joined existing congregations, tripling and quadrupling church memberships, initiating church-based services for migrants, and making it possible for congregations to purchase land and buildings. Although migrant men were also loyal church members, church work was widely recognized as women's work. Berkeley's Saint Paul A.M.E. reflected the typical pattern of church membership during the war years, growing from 72 to 185 members between 1942 and 1943, with women forming 72% of the total congregation.<sup>18</sup>

As migrant women created new homes and institutions for with their unpaid labor, they also contributed to family income through wage work. However, even as the war produced greater economic opportunities for migrant women, their economic status in relationship to other workers remained the same. During the war defense industries hired white women first, training them to fill better paying, more highly skilled, and less dangerous jobs. Moreover, white women held jobs longer. Just as large numbers of black women were hired in 1943, war production peaked and began to decline within a year.<sup>19</sup>

Relegated to the least skilled, lowest paying jobs, migrant women also had to contend with hostility from white workers and supervisors, union discrimination, and lack of advancements and promotions. But however bad these jobs were, migrant women relished the fact that "we were at least getting paid for putting up with it. In the South it had been nothing but hard work and bad treatment. Here I was making more in a day than I made back home in a month."<sup>20</sup>

Olive and the sister who accompanied her out West found work at the Kaiser shipyards in Richmond. She signed up to be a scaler, but was reassigned to issue tools and mark time cards because she wrote clearly. But scaling paid better, and Olive spoke up to her supervisor and got her old job back. "After a while I began to show other ladies



how to work. I worked grave, swing, days, and rotated shifts. I enjoyed it but my mother came out to visit and liked to die . . . said she wouldn't go back as long as we were working in the shipyards." In the meantime, Olive's mother found out that the post office was hiring women to sort and route mail, and pressed her daughters to apply. "So that's what we did—went to San Francisco and took the civil service exam." Olive not only passed and received the job, but began giving classes in her Richmond housing project, teaching others to prepare for the exam. "My sister got into it [the post office], and friends got into it, and it was just nice."<sup>21</sup>

Ethel Tillman found a job at Mare Island, sorting scrap metal into different piles according to composition. While she worked the swing shift, her aunt cared for all ten nieces and nephews, as well as other children whose mothers had defense jobs. During off hours, Ethel had her hands full., shopping, washing clothes, preparing meals, and making certain her children were doing well in school.<sup>22</sup>

Most migrant women experienced employment discrimination during the war years, using the FEPC to register hundreds of complaints against employers and unions. Other women protested discrimination by refusing demeaning jobs. One woman, for example, applied for an opening as a power machine operator at the California Manufacturing Company in Oakland. The company hired her, but placed her in a less skilled job. When she protested, she was told that "the white power machine operators objected to having a Negro seated among them." She immediately quit her job and filed a complaint with the FEPC. <sup>23</sup>

Although a majority of married migrant women in my sample worked for wages during the war, most identified themselves as wives, mothers, and "community" women rather than as "workers." Ethel, for example, was visibly proud of her job at Mare Island, but nevertheless described it as "helping out"—supplementing the wages of her husband,



who, regardless of his contribution to family income, claimed the breadwinner role. By defining their community or family work as "real" work, women not only preserved traditional gender roles and family peace, but reproduced—as their mothers had before them—a dignified category of labor independent of white control and judgement. Yet however they defined it, migrant women's paid employment was central to the economic stability of the black working-class. Even when women's employment was irregular and supplemental, their wages enhanced family security and quality of life.<sup>24</sup>

By 1945 most migrant women lost their wartime jobs. Although few returned to domestic service, a majority found work in food processing industries, apparel factories, or institutional settings as nurse's aids, custodians, and cooks—a new form of domestic work. Those fortunate enough to find clerical jobs, usually worked for the government. The post office, for example, employed several women in my sample. In Oakland alone, government employment expanded 28% between 1960 and 1966, employing 29% of the city's civilian black working population by the end of that period.<sup>25</sup>

Olive Blue lost her post office job following the war, but found another clerical position at the Oakland Naval Supply Center handling insurance claims for military personnel. She held this position for thirty-six years, retiring in 1984. In contrast, Ethel Tillman became a full time homemaker after losing her job at Mare Island, while her husband found secure, well-paying employment with U.S. Steel. Although her hands were full with her own family, Ethel established a reputation as a neighborhood mother—a person everyone came to for medical advice, help with child care, and assistance with personal problems.<sup>26</sup>

Now permanent residents, migrant women turned to creating permanent institutions within their communities. Church, rather than the common space once afforded by war housing, became the single most important outlet for women's



12

community work. Other women in my sample formed neighborhood associations, organized boycotts of local businesses that refused to employ black workers, registered voters, led school desegregation campaigns, created new chapters of the NAACP and the National Council of Negro Women, and staffed community development projects funded during the War on Poverty.<sup>27</sup>

Olive Blue, one of the more active women in my sample, not only helped establish a new church, but served as secretary of the Richmond NAACP and National Council of Negro Women—both established by wartime migrants. In her church, she served as secretary, president of Pastor's Aid, and member of the Usher's Board, the choir, Missionary Society, and Christian Aid Board. She also joined the Richmond Democratic Club, and helped with several campaigns and voter registration drives. Ethel Tillman, served as a neighborhood mother and loyal church member, helped establish a local senior center, and retains her membership in the Vicksburg Club, currently helping (at the age of 94) to care for sick and housebound members.<sup>28</sup>

Beginning at the end of the war and increasing during the 1960s, white residents began to leave East Bay cities and relocate to the urban fringe. This white flight coincided with a sharp reduction in manufacturing jobs in the urban core as industry followed white residents to the suburbs. Between 1960 and 1966, for example, Oakland lost one quarter of its manufacturing jobs—jobs traditionally a source of upward mobility for minority workers. In brief, deindustrialization, which captured the attention of the white public in the 1980s, has been a long-standing problem within East Bay black communities. The migrant generation, however, was less affected by this structural shift than younger workers because of their longer employment histories, union seniority, and relatively high skill levels.<sup>29</sup>



As jobs were leaving the East Bay inner cities, poorly planned redevelopment projects further eroded the economic vitality of postwar migrant communities. In West Oakland, transportation officials razed single family homes and the black business district to make room for freeways and the Bay Area Rapid Transit System. Finally, neighborhoods that were spared were separated from vital services and resources, and then targeted for public housing development.

In the absence of sustained societal commitment to providing jobs and housing for black communities, working-class migrants were called upon to stabilize their neighborhoods in the hard economic times of the postwar era. Their helping ethic, desire for economic independence, and commitment to institution building—all pieces of a southern cultural legacy that allowed their forbearers to resist the economic and social costs of Jim Crow—were now turned to helping communities resist chronic unemployment and its accompanying dislocations. In the end, their efforts to provide for their families and neighbors support Jacqueline Jones's contention that "embedded in the historical record of ordinary families . . . is a powerful refutation of the culture of poverty or culture of dependency thesis. The experience and contributions of women like Olive Blue and Ethel Tillman challenge generalizations about inner-city communities—generalizations that obscure community diversity and agency, and the historical processes that led to urban poverty.<sup>30</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> A number of excellent studies document black migration during the first two decades of the twentieth century and describe the impact of male migrants on the communities that received them. However, migration during World War II, and the particular experience and contributions of black women migrants have received little attention. Examples of outstanding work on the First Great Migration include Peter Gottlieb, Making Their Own Way: Southern Black Migration to Pittsburgh 1916–1930 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987); James Grossman, Land of Hope: Chicago, Black Southerners and the Great Migration (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989); Carole Marks, Farewell We're Good and Gone: The Great Black Migration (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989); Joe Trotter, Black Milwaukee: The Making of an Industrial Proletariat, 1915–1945 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985). Marilyn Johnson's The Second Gold Rush: Oakland and the East Bay During World War II (Berkeley: University of



California Press, 1993), is one of the first studies detailing the demographic, cultural and political transformation of the San Francisco East Bay Area during World War II. Although this is a more general study of wartime migration to the East Bay Area, emphasizing the experience of white migrants, it contains richly descriptive sections on black migrant labor, housing, and civil rights activism. Shirley Ann Moore's forthcoming history of African Americans in Richmond, California, containing sections on wartime migration, will also contribute to our knowledge of this subject.

<sup>2</sup> The literature on women and World War II, while discussing labor force participation, employment discrimination, and shifting gender roles, only partially reconstructs how African American Migrant women experienced the War. For an overview of women's experience during World War II see William Chafe, The Paradox of Change: American Women in the Twentieth Century (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); Karen Anderson, "Last Hired, First Fired: Black Women Workers During World War II," Journal of American History 69 (June 1982); Anderson, Wartime Women: Sex Roles, Family Relations and the Status of Women During World War II (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1981); Susan Hartman, The Homefront and Beyond: American Women in the 1940s (Boston: Twayne, 1982); Sherma Gluck, Rosie the Riveter Revisited: Women, the War, and Social Change (Boston: Twayne, 1987).

<sup>3</sup> Gerald Nash, The American West Transformed (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), pp. 26, 66, 67; Robert O. Brown, "Impact of War Worker Migration on the Public School System of Richmond, California from 1940-1945" (Ph.D. dissertation, Stanford University, 1973), pp. 109, 110; U.S. Congress, House Committee on Naval Affairs, Investigation of Congested Areas, 78th Cong., 1st sess., 1943, vol. 1, pt. 3, p. 855; Edward E. France, "Some Aspects of the Migration of the Negro to the San Francisco Bay Area Since 1940" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1962), p. 24; Charles S. Johnson, The Negro War Worker in San Francisco (San Francisco: YWCA and the Race Relations Program of the American Missionary Association, 1944).

<sup>4</sup> Aggregate statistics from fifty oral interviews conducted with former migrants between 1990-1991; Henry S. Shyrock Jr., in "Wartime Shifts of the Civilian Population," in Milbank Memorial Fund Quarterly 25 (July 1947) found that the majority of migrants to the West Coast were from towns and cities. Only thirteen to nineteen percent were former farm residents. Other studies point to the relatively high skill levels of black migrants: Cy W. Record, Characteristics of Some Unemployed Negro Shipyard Workers in Richmond, California (Berkeley: Institute for Governmental Studies, 1947); U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Labor Force in Durable Goods Manufacture in the San Francisco Bay Area, 1943, Monthly Labor Review, October 1945; and Charles S. Johnson, The Negro War Worker in San Francisco.

<sup>5</sup> Ethel Tillman, interview held in Berkeley, California, September 21, 1990.

<sup>6</sup> Olive Blue, interview held in Richmond, California, May 5, 1991.

<sup>7</sup> William E. Montgomery, Under Their Own Vine and Fig Tree: The African American Church in the South, 1865-1900 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992); Charles S. Johnson, The Negro War Worker in San Francisco, p. 87.



<sup>8</sup> Interview with Ethel Tillman; See Paula Giddings, When and Where I Enter: The Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1984); Lynda F. Dickson, "Toward a Broader Angle of Vision in Uncovering Women's History: Black Women's Clubs Revisited," Frontiers 9 (1987); Jacqueline Anne Rouse, Lugenia Burns Hope: Black Southern Reformer (Atlanta: University of Georgia Press, 1989) pp. 89-90; and Linda Gordon "Black and white Visions of Welfare Activism, 1890-1945," Journal of American History 78 (September 1991): 578, for a discussion of elitism among middle class club women.

<sup>9</sup> Olive Blue, interview held in Richmond, California, May 5, 1991; Aggregate Statistics; For a discussion of working class women's networks see Carol B. Stack's, All Our Kin: Strategies for Survival in a Black Community (New York: Harper and Row, 1974); Karen Brodtkin Sacks, Caring by the Hour: Women, Work and Organizing at Duke Medical Center (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987); Nancy Naples, "Just What Needed to be Done: The Political Practice of Women Community Workers in Low-Income Neighborhoods," Gender and Society 5 (December 1991): 478-494; Naples, "Activist Mothering: Cross-Generational Continuity in the Community Work of Women from Low-Income Neighborhoods," Gender and Society 6 (September 1992): 441-463.

<sup>10</sup> Aggregate Statistics; Charles S. Johnson, The Negro War Worker in San Francisco, pp. 5, 7, 12; Marilyn S. Johnson, The Second Gold Rush, p. 53.

<sup>11</sup> Ethel Tillman, interview held in Berkeley, California, September 21, 1990.

<sup>12</sup> Olive Blue, interview held in Richmond, California, May 5, 1991.

<sup>13</sup> Interview with Ethel Tillman; Aggregate Statistics.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Robert Wenkert, A Historical Digest of Negro White Relations in Richmond, California (Berkeley: University of California Survey Research Center, 1967), pp. 10-22; and Robert O. Brown, "Impact of the War Worker Migration on the Public School System of Richmond, California 1940-1945," p. 41; U.S. Congress, House, Committee on Naval Affairs, Investigation of Congested Areas, p. 798; Harvey J. Kerns, Study of Social and Economic Conditions Affecting the Local Negro Population (Oakland: Council of Social Agencies and Community Chest, 1942); Edward E. France, "Some Aspects of the Migration of the Negro to the San Francisco Bay Area," pp. 32-33; Oakland Council of Social Agencies, Our Community: A Factual Presentation of Social Conditions (Oakland: Community Chest, 1945); Barbara Lou Sawyer, "Negroes in West Oakland," Oakland, 1952 (Mimeographed), Black Social Conditions File, Oakland History Room, Oakland Public Library; Marilyn S. Johnson, The Second Gold Rush, p. 116; Charles S. Johnson, The Negro War Worker in San Francisco, pp. 26-27.

<sup>16</sup> Aggregate Statistics.

<sup>17</sup> Interview with Ethel Tillman.

<sup>18</sup> Interviews with Olive Blue and Ethel Tillman; St. Paul A.M.E. Church, History of the Church, Church File, Northern California Center for Afro-American History and Life; Taylor Memorial United Methodist Church, History of the Church, Founders and Ministers 1921-1988, Church File, Northern California Center for Afro-American History and Life; Progressive Baptist Church, Twenty Years of Progress, 1935-1955, Church File, NCCAHL; Downs Memorial Methodist Church, A Brief History of Downs, Church File, NCCAHL;



Cooper A.M.E. Zion Church, Souvenir Program 1898-1948, Church File, NCCAHL. Joseph W. Scott and Albert Black, describe the central role of women in the black church in "Deep Structures of African American Family Life: Female and Male Kin Networks," Western Journal of Black Studies, 13 (Spring 1989) pp. 22; The role of migrants in establishing new institutions, and how the migrant population was received by existing black communities is described in Oakland Institute on Human Relations, Seminar Report on What Tensions Exist Between Groups in the Local Community, (Oakland, Calif., n.p., 1946); Albert S. Broussard, Black San Francisco: The Struggle for Racial Equality in the West, 1900-1954 (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1993); Douglas H. Daniels, Pioneer Urbanites: A Social and Cultural History of Black San Francisco (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), pp. 170-180; Aggregate Statistics.

<sup>19</sup> Karen Anderson, "Last Hired, First Fired: Black Women Workers During World War II," Journal of American History 69 (June, 1982), p. 84; 31. Cy W. Record, Characteristics of Some Unemployed Negro Shipyard Workers in Richmond, California, pp. 11-12; U.S. Department of Labor, Labor Force in Durable Goods Manufacture in the San Francisco Bay Area, pp. 713-714; Robert O. Brown, "The Impact of War Worker Migration on the Public School System of Richmond," pp. 174-175.

<sup>20</sup> Interview with Olive Blue; Selected Documents from the Records of the Committee on Fair Employment Practices, Region XII, Reel 111, Richmond Prefabrication Plant File, 12-BR-108; Reel 111, Richmond Shipyard #1 File, 12-BR-81; Reel 110, Machinists Local 824 File; Reel 108, Complaints against Boilermakers File.

<sup>21</sup> Interview with Olive Blue.

<sup>22</sup> Interview with Ethel Tillman.

<sup>23</sup> Selected Documents from the Records of the Committee on Fair Employment Practices, Region XII, Reel 109, California Manufacturing Company File.

<sup>24</sup> Interview with Ethel Tillman

<sup>25</sup> U.S. Department of Labor, Women Workers in Ten Production Areas and Their Postwar Employment Plans, U.S. Women's Bureau Bulletin #209; Earl R. Babbie and William Nichols III, Oakland in Transition: A Summary of the 701 Household Survey (Berkeley: University of California Survey Research Center, 1969), pp. 108-109.

<sup>26</sup> Interview with Olive Blue and Ethel Tillman.

<sup>27</sup> Aggregate statistics.

<sup>28</sup> Interviews with Olive Blue and Ethel Tillman.

<sup>29</sup> Babbie and Nichols, Oakland in Transition, pp. 104-111; 124; 162-163; 184-185.

<sup>30</sup> Jacqueline Jones, "Southern Diaspora: Origins of the Urban 'Underclass,'" in The "Underclass Debate: Views from History, Michael Katz, ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), p. 38.



DRAFT COPY April 1994

Gaining Real Victory for the Future: Frances Jackson Albrier, Women's Culture, and Women's Labor

"If real victory is to be gained for the future, now is the time to get into action . . . Negro women must and will be part of the new order. We must hold what we have gained."

--Frances Jackson Albrier

Introduction

Frances Jackson Albrier is an excellent example of a woman who was attracted to the Garvey movement in its heyday, was active in her local division, where she developed speaking and organizational skills, and then moved on into other arenas of political activism, building on her experience with the UNIA. Her life experience prior to joining the movement carries within it the seeds of motivation to do the type of work she chose in the Garvey movement; it also provided a legacy that led her to devote herself to a lifetime of activism in a series of racial rights, labor, and feminist causes.

Her upbringing in Tuskegee, Alabama, and study at Booker T. Washington's Tuskegee Institute is a fitting precursor to her later involvement in the Garvey movement. The young Garvey had looked to Tuskegee as a prototype for the black industrial school he hoped to build under UNIA auspices in Jamaica when he first began the UNIA in 1914.<sup>1</sup> Albrier's later choices for political affiliation are also significant in their deviation from Garvey's views. While Washington was a man Garvey admired and emulated, A. Philip Randolph, another African-American leader who was an important figure in Albrier's political life, was one Garvey grew to despise, and whom Amy Jacques Garvey bitterly blamed for contributing to the federal repression that led to Garvey's deportation.<sup>2</sup> Albrier not only associated with Randolph, she also became a longtime and honored member of the NAACP, an organization whose purposes and leadership were infamously castigated by Garvey.<sup>3</sup> While she embraced liberal coalition politics in a manner completely foreign to Garvey, Albrier also, as a working person, was strongly identified with labor and was committed to reshaping unionization---through the formation of independent black industrial unions and agitation for nonwhite rights within white-dominated trade unions and for the meaningful participation of black women in unions and union auxiliaries---as a means to social change for the majority of people of color. This approach was very much at odds with Garvey's infatuation with capitalism and captains of industry, his conciliatory stand on strike issues, and his deep suspicion of the motives of whites calling for working class unity.<sup>4</sup> Thus, while Albrier was a Garveyite organizer and the people and political currents of her life overlapped significantly with Garvey's, her interpretation and choices regarding those commonalities often differed sharply from his. Those differences came partly from Albrier's consciousness of herself as a woman. Her early life was grounded in a vital women's community in Tuskegee. Drawing on that background, her career as an activist was a testament to her belief in the necessity of black women's participation in collective political action through separate organizations or auxiliaries acting in issue-oriented coalition with other groups--be they primarily working-class, Democratic, cultural, or interracial in character. The strategy, as well as the



principles of association, was markedly different from Garvey's, and her time in the Garvey movement (1921-1927) was but one phase in a larger career.

### Family and Beginnings in Tuskegee

Frances Mary Redgrey (1898-1987) was born in Mt. Vernon, N.Y.<sup>5</sup> She was the first child of Lewis L. Redgrey, a cook and furniture maker trained at Tuskegee Institute, and Laura Redgrey, a cook in a domestic household in Marietta, Georgia. Her mother traveled to New York to seek the care of a medical specialist to oversee Frances' complicated birth. She died three years later, shortly after giving birth to a second child, Laura Ann. Frances and her sister were raised in Tuskegee, Ala., by their paternal grandmother, Johanna Bowen Redgrey, a former slave who was a midwife and herbalist, AME Church activist, and acquaintance of Harriet Tubman (ca. 1821-1913), Sojourner Truth (1795-1883) and Margaret Murray Washington (1865-1925).<sup>6</sup>

Johanna Bowen was born near Richmond, Va., ca. 1847, the daughter of her enslaved mother's Irish American master. She and her two brothers were sold to the Bowen family who had a plantation in the vicinity of Montgomery, Alabama. A physically imposing and defiant young woman, six feet tall, with striking red hair and a fiery temperament, she was put to work in the cotton fields, where she "would do the work of two men."<sup>7</sup> Years later, when Albrier recalled stories of grandmother's early years, she summed up her reputation for assertiveness ("don't bother her because she has a temper and she'll kill you") and reinforced it with a story of how, when an overseer whipped her, she struck back at him with her hoe, knocking him from his horse.<sup>8</sup> Deeply religious, Johanna Bowen joined other slaves for worship ceremonies. She also became acquainted with whites "who did not believe in slavery. They were abolitionists."<sup>9</sup> She was taught to read by one such woman, a visitor to the farm in Virginia. These experiences contributed to her life-long religious discipline and her conviction in the possibility of cooperation and social equity between blacks and whites—principles she later passed on to her granddaughter.<sup>10</sup> During the Civil War, she was left in charge of the Bowen house in Alabama while Mrs. Bowen, an invalid, was bedridden, and Mr. Bowen went away to war. After Emancipation, she stayed employed on the farm and raised the two Bowen children, using her nursing skills and training as a lay midwife.

She married a man named Redgrey, a Blackfoot Indian who had grown up in Wyoming, spent time in Mexico, and had come to Alabama to farm. Albrier remembered her grandfather as "the ideal man to me. . . He was strong and kind. He didn't like to see women and children mistreated."<sup>11</sup> The Redgreys settled on the outskirts of Tuskegee, Ala., and were among the townspeople who lobbied to have Booker T. Washington come there in the early 1880s to establish the normal school that later developed into the Tuskegee Institute.<sup>12</sup> Johanna Bowen (who continued to be popularly known by her maiden name after her marriage) worked on the farm raising poultry, managing the produce crops, and canning. After Redgrey died (ca. 1906, some two years after Frances and Laura Ann came to live with their grandparents), Johanna Bowen ran the entire farm, hiring students and neighbors to work it. Albrier remembered that her grandmother also "had gone to school and she worked with doctors. She was a midwife and an expert baby nurse."<sup>13</sup> Known for her expertise as an herbalist, she attended many births and also worked as a nurse to whites in the Tuskegee area.<sup>14</sup>

Johanna Bowen sent her son Lewis Redgrey to Washington's Tuskegee Institute, whose classes were initially held in the local AME Zion Church.<sup>15</sup> She also adopted two young women as sisters and sent them to the school, believing strongly in education as a means of uplift for women as well as men.<sup>16</sup> Albrier recalls that during most of her grandmother's life in Tuskegee, the authority women wielded was subliminal: "the men were expected to be the leaders and not



the women. But women were leaders. They were leaders in their family and in the women's groups."<sup>17</sup> The direction of leadership stemmed partly from censorship in more overtly public, political, roles: Albrier recalled that "women's suffrage" for example, was not discussed much "at the time. I think they censured any woman who got up and talked too much"; instead, women concentrated on civic and church affairs, "becoming organized in their homes and women's groups, and in getting an education, and in helping to support schools."<sup>18</sup>

This spirit of separate spheres of action was given formal organizational structure in Tuskegee during the 1890s. Margaret Murray Washington (who succeeded Olivia Davidson Washington, who died in 1889, as Lady Principal of Tuskegee Institute, and in 1892, as Booker T. Washington's wife) began a Mothers' Council and the Tuskegee Woman's Club as means of organizing local women in support of school functions and to work for general community uplift.

Albrier's grandmother was active in the Mothers' Council, which began in 1892, with meetings in rooms above a grocery storefront in town. The meetings were held on Saturdays, market day for the rural women, who walked into the village, often bringing their children with them. The meetings focused on standard issues of middle-class uplift and social reform applied to poor agricultural women: morality, dress, motherhood, religious and domestic duties, sanitation, nutrition, cooking and farming techniques. They also taught the primary principles of self-respect and race pride ("You need more race pride" Washington told the farm women, "Cultivate this as you would your crops"). "Eighty percent of our women have their homes in the country or on the plantations" explained Washington in 1904, when the ranks of the Council had grown from its original six to nearly three hundred, "they live in the old-time log cabins, but they have hearts, they have aspirations for the future." Albrier remembered going "to the meetings with my grandmother, so I automatically came up in this type of club work."<sup>19</sup>

The much more elite Tuskegee Women's Club had a selective membership of 13 women at its formation in 1895, 74 in 1905, and 130 by 1920. Made up of more privileged, educated women, many of whom were affiliated with Tuskegee Institute (as teachers or as faculty wives), the club members devoted themselves to religious work in the local jail; food banks; a Bible day school for children, and, for a time, a night school for women, which taught African American history among other subjects; a public library open to both races; settlement work (including overseeing classes and programs for the Mothers' Council and making home visits to workers on nearby plantations and farms); and Temperance and Woman Suffrage divisions.

Albrier's grandmother was very active in the Mothers' Meetings, and by extension, in the regional and national networks the local women's groups were associated with through Washington's leadership: the Alabama State Federation of Colored Women's Clubs, the Southern Colored Women's Clubs, the National Federation of Afro-American Women, and, finally, the National Association of Colored Women.<sup>20</sup> Her grandmother also was a leader in her church and an activist in national AME Church conventions.

Johanna Bowen sent Frances, like her father before her, to study at Tuskegee. As Albrier walked to school past other children working with their sharecropper families in the fields, she was conscious of both her privilege and her duty to succeed.<sup>21</sup> As an adult, she praised Washington as a champion of the masses, and attributed her own faith in personal effort to a combination of her grandmother's pride and skill and Washington's philosophy of individual vocation and group uplift. She studied botany with George Washington Carver, a friend of her grandfather's, and participated in the sex-segregated curriculum, in which boys were taught "male" vocations (brick making, carpentry, foundry work and blacksmithing, etc.) and girls were prepared for homemaking and domestic employment (laundry work, cooking, sewing, tailoring, waitressing; mattress, pillow, and broom making) in addition to academic classroom work.<sup>22</sup> Local teachers and nurses were also produced by the Tuskegee program. Over time, in response to the "want of occupations for women," the curriculum for girls was further widened to



include agriculture-related skills (dairying, poultry raising, horticulture and floriculture, livestock care and produce gardening)--a curriculum overseen by Margaret Murray Washington that was designed to instill in young women "satisfaction and a sense of independence."<sup>23</sup>

#### Howard University, a Profession, and a Family

While Booker T. Washington saw the Tuskegee brand of education as part of the principle of casting down one's bucket where one was, many parents and students saw their own goals differently. For parents and grandparents, who, like Johanna Bowen, had experienced slavery, agriculture, especially field work, was associated with forced labor and a lack of freedom. For them, dignity came in escape from rural life into towns and cities, and from agricultural work into domestic or professional employment, in casting down their buckets elsewhere and in their own way.<sup>24</sup>

Frances Albrier was raised in this latter tradition. After graduation from Tuskegee, (where, as she explained, students who had professional ambitions received the vocational training that would enable them to support themselves through further schooling) she briefly attended Fisk University in Nashville before transferring to Howard University in Washington, D.C. During her tenure at Howard she studied with Kelly Miller, Alain Locke, Carter Woodson, and William Pickens. She also met Mary Church Terrell (she "was the same type of person my grandmother was") while doing clubwork in Washington.<sup>25</sup> Woodson inspired her to talk to her grandmother about her personal history and to talk to the older people she grew up with about Africa. She did so, and found that "there were a lot of the old black ladies who lived near us and who knew their histories and African background . . . My grandmother always said that she was Somebody and she came from being Somebody . . . She had a feeling of pride in her background that gave her life meaning. Many people lost that pride because they didn't know their history."<sup>26</sup> She also realized that much of her grandmother's skill as an herbalist and caretaker had its roots in knowledge about plants and their uses transmitted from Africa to the New World, including knowledge about childbirth and abortion. In balancing home life, work, and her studies, she soon learned that "the woman had to do double what a man had to do in her work and her curriculum" and that this "discouraged a great many women." On the other hand, fellow women students "felt that they had this education that enabled them to raise their families better, to raise their standing in their communities, and to work better with Negro youth, inspiring them."<sup>27</sup>

Intending to follow in her grandmother's tradition as a health care practitioner by studying to become a professional nurse, she completed two years of science courses and nurses' training, then changed her major to Social Work, graduating with a bachelor's degree in 1920. In the meantime, her grandmother died and her sister had moved West to join their father, who had remarried and settled in California. He worked as a chef and his wife as a dressmaker and they lived in a predominantly white neighborhood in Berkeley. Frances Albrier joined her family there after graduation and sought work as a nurse. She had not anticipated encountering such harsh racial discrimination in hospitals and physicians' offices in the North, and after a discouraging search for a professional position, was employed as a practical assistant to a white obstetrician who did home deliveries.

She met William Albert Jackson, a University of California student, married him in 1922, and together they began a family. Like her, her husband was unable to find work commensurate with his university education and skill; trained as an engineer, he worked instead as a laborer in construction and later as a clerk in a bookstore. Radicalized by racism and economic inequity, he was attracted to Marxist philosophy and became politically active in the Communist party in San Francisco, action which brought him under government surveillance. "He lost faith in our



constitution so far as the black man was concerned," Albrier explained: "He felt there was more hope in the communist philosophy regarding the workers of a country. The majority of Negroes in the United States were working citizens; through their work--one hundred years of slavery--with their strength and hands, they built America . . . . That's what made him very bitter."<sup>28</sup> He and Albrier separated when he moved to New York to seek employment; he died there in 1930 at an early age, leaving Albrier widowed with three children.<sup>29</sup>

### Garveyism and the Black Cross Nurses

It was during this period that Frances Albrier became a Garveyite. She had already continued her earlier work with the black woman's club movement when she came to California (she began the Department of Women in Industry in the Federation of Colored Women's Clubs).<sup>30</sup> In the UNIA, she was to find another outlet for her desire to create change for black women. She heard Marcus Garvey speak at the Oakland Auditorium in 1921; he also made a round of local churches, where ministers urged their congregations to come out to hear him. Her husband was skeptical of Garveyism, feeling that the movement was escapist in its stress on a Back to Africa platform, and that Garvey himself, with his Jamaican upbringing, was too far removed from the African-American experience and too imbued with British ways of thinking and regimens.<sup>31</sup> Albrier disagreed, feeling that her husband saw only the outer trappings of the Garvey movement--the parades and uniforms--and missed the real political and emotional motivations at its core, namely, the same kind of racial pride, selfhood, and consciousness of connection with Africa that she had learned from her grandmother, and the emphasis on self-reliance, education, property holding, and business investment that had been part of Booker T. Washington's approach for bettering the condition of the black majority.

Although she had long lived in close association with whites, she also understood Garvey's "internationalism," as she termed Pan-Africanism, as a strategy of unity and nation-building that was more than simple separatism.<sup>32</sup> She also found Garvey attuned to the African-American experience, believing that "he felt that the black people in America--they'd been so torn apart by slavery and dehumanized from slavery--they could get together and bring about a kind of pride in their race and in themselves. That was his dream."<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, she saw Garvey seeking to end the division between black people and their past, to overturn black shame in regard to Africa, heal rivalries between black West Indians and African Americans, and to question the color consciousness that stratified the black community. It was her belief in the obliteration of these divisions, the alienation of many blacks from a sense of group identity and African heritage and pride in self, that made her "part of his movement."<sup>34</sup> She also appreciated the broad base of Garvey's appeal, "to all classes both educated and uneducated." She decided as she heard him speak "to join his movement because I wanted to put my foot on African soil before I died."<sup>35</sup>

She served as the Lady Vice President of the Oakland division in 1923, the year that Amy Jacques Garvey and Marcus Garvey made an organizational tour of the West, including UNIA divisions in southern California and the Bay Area.<sup>36</sup> The social functions of the women's divisions were already familiar to her from her upbringing with the Mother's Clubs in Tuskegee and her earlier activism with women's clubs in Washington, D.C., and California. In describing the work of the women in the division, Albrier said that they "secured financial aid, taught the uneducated, and circulated among the community to bolster moral support in the movement." They also "put on plays, skits, and programs for Black folks illustrating many of Marcus Garvey's ideas," such as the Black Star Line.<sup>37</sup> Albrier was a frequent participant in Oakland UNIA division meetings in 1925--1926, when she was Second Lady Vice President of the division. Division secretary Arthur Gray reported in July 1925 that she "read a paper on the meaning of



Garvey Day. Her composition was a masterpiece of thought and literary ability, revealing in an unmistakable way her grasp and knowledge of the UNIA's ideals."<sup>38</sup>

Albrier found a special niche for activism in the Black Cross Nurses auxiliary. After her experience of personal rejection and isolated work, she embraced the chance for black nurses to "have more affiliation with each other and to help each other."<sup>39</sup> She became a Black Cross Nurse instructor, holding classes for local units, and an organizer bringing in new members in Oakland and Berkeley. She remembers lecturing to young women "to give them an incentive to join. We were able to get a great many of them so enthused, interested, that they went to school. Some became practical nurses and some of the younger girls in the group went into [professional] training."<sup>40</sup> For Albrier, the experience was her first real entre into the black community of the Bay Area: "I began to meet a great many black people, large groups of black people whom I didn't know lived in California"; more specifically, it introduced her into a broad network of black women's groups, large and small, church- and club-related, and gave her a great deal of experience in speaking to and organizing women.<sup>41</sup>

She remembered that when she was doing UNIA organizing, opposition from women came mostly from the unsupported rumor that Garvey favored mass repatriation to Africa; the economic and race pride aspects of Garveyism were readily accepted. As a health instructor, Albrier also met some opposition from women who opposed lessons on birth control on religious grounds.<sup>42</sup> Looking back, Albrier felt that the most important thing Garvey did for women was to provide an opportunity for them to think about issues of cultural dignity and economic enterprise and to believe that "they were somebody. He laid the groundwork for the thirties, the forties, the sixties. He laid that groundwork for the sixties . . . that wave of civil rights--pride in yourself, black is beautiful, your hair is beautiful, you're a beautiful person, you see. He was just a forerunner of those things."<sup>43</sup>

Albrier remained active in the UNIA in the Bay Area until the membership dwindled with the deportation of Garvey in 1927. She did not see herself abandoning Garveyite principles, however, she merely transferred them to her work with the NAACP and women's groups, and concentrated on developing and supporting schools for black youth and the traditionally black colleges. In the next decade, she also became increasingly involved in labor issues effecting black women and men.

#### Black Labor: From Garveyism to Union Organizing

After Albrier and her husband separated and he went through long periods of unemployment, unable to send financial help to the family, she sought work as a clerk in department stores and as a receptionist in office buildings, but was repeatedly told that the businesses did not hire blacks. In the thirties, when the Works Progress Administration "opened up a lot of employment for working mothers" she finally secured a job as a nurse in Highland Hospital, a public institution that was obligated to employ blacks under federal guidelines.<sup>44</sup> Until then, her father helped her and she worked at a number of different jobs, including assembly line work at book binderies and as a housekeeper / waitress / receptionist in a white home in San Francisco (a position she maintained partly because of skills she had learned in practical training courses at Tuskegee years before). During these periods of employment in domestic service she boarded her children with a married friend across the bay, visiting them as much as possible. She worked as an childbirth assistant for Dr. O. Roy Busch, who did home deliveries for black women and who was one of two black physicians she knew of in the Bay area. Exhausted by her schedule, which put her on call at all hours, she was attracted by a friend's suggestion that she seek employment with the Pullman railroad service, which liked to



hire women with nursing backgrounds in case of illness or injury among the passengers. She subsequently worked as a maid on the railroads (from 1926 to 1931), finding the work a relief after the long hours and physical and emotional demands of assisting at births.

As a Pullman maid, she worked in a highly masculinized environment, the lone woman employee on a given train; the rest of the workers--porters, waiters, cooks, bartenders--were men. Many of them were supporters of A. Philip Randolph's Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, and Albrier joined in the "battle in getting the Pullman Company organized."<sup>45</sup>

The Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters was founded in Harlem in 1925 after a small group of militant porters approached Randolph, as a veteran of New Negro intelligentsia political organizing, and recruited him to help shape a union for both porters and maids. Dominated by porters and led almost entirely by men, the union represented a break from a history of accommodation to white constructions of expected black male employee behavior. Beginning in the 1860s, the Pullman Co., the most powerful of sleeping car enterprises, had a black-only hiring policy that stemmed from a belief that slavery had imbued the "proper" characteristics of servitude and gratitude toward white patronage into black male workers. Porters, in addition, were initially paid no wages, earning only tips, a system which further trapped them in an overt work culture of obsequiousness in order to ensure a living. As the sleeping car work force was proletarianized in the early twentieth century, it developed into a clear racial division of labor, with blacks (many, like Albrier, well-educated and vastly over-qualified), employed in low-wage service positions as cooks, waiters, maids and porters and support labor as switchmen and brakemen (labor intensive jobs with no paths of promotion into more highly paid or capital intensive positions, and disproportionately subject to unemployment) and whites employed as conductors, locomotive firemen, and engineers. Coupled with the exclusion of nonwhite workers from the more elite railroad job categories were the discriminatory practices of the white-controlled unions. Unions that covered the service positions, such as the Hotel and Restaurant Employees Alliance, accepted black unions like the Brotherhood of Dining Car Employees on a secondary, segregated basis.

The work conditions of porters and maids reflected the low status accorded them within the racial bifurcation of the work force. In the mid-twenties, when Randolph began organizing the Brotherhood, the basic work month for porters was 400 hours, or eleven thousand miles, whichever was achieved first. Porters and maids paid for their own uniforms and equipment and for boarding houses on the ends of runs away from home. They were not paid for "dead" time, the periods when they prepared trains for departure. They often found themselves "doubled out," sent out on back-to-back runs of between one day and one week without a break in service. Albrier, like all maids, spent her first year "running wild": serving on any run that needed a fill-in maid, thus working irregular hours on runs all over the United States. After the first year, maids could apply for a regular work. Albrier found an opening on the Sunset Limited (a run from San Francisco to New Orleans), which became her regular run. Despite the racial segmentation of the work force and the railway unions, and the aggravations of the working conditions, Pullman maid and porter jobs were respected positions, particularly in conservative black communities, where they were seen as good opportunities and the basis of the possibility of supporting a family and of acquiring property.

Randolph used the proletarianization of the workforce as a rationale to justify the need for the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters in an open letter to the Pullman Co. in 1927. In doing so, he argued diplomatically that the changes in the character of black labor were an asset to the company; between the lines he was informing Pullman that a new construction of black manhood had imbued porters, and by extension, a new vision of womanhood was also informing the self-concept and job performances of the maids. The demand for union recognition was the result of these changes in selfhood and attitudes toward racial unity and collective action. Speaking of



the technological advancement and huge capital growth of the company since its nineteenth-century beginnings, Randolph pointed out that the service work force had changed as well, and indeed, that the porters and maids were to great extent responsible as producers "of this phenomenal progress," and had themselves been "profoundly influenced intellectually and spiritually" in the process. Randolph used the terms "rural mind" and "urban mind" to characterize the transformation in the attitudes of the work force; the nineteenth-century agricultural worker or former slave turned porter was not of the same consciousness as the often well-educated urbanite facilitating modern travel. Randolph was informing Pullman, in the most benign language, that he was dealing with a New Negro. He spelled it out more overtly in explaining the porters's and maids's rejection of the company-controlled employee representation plan and acceptance of the Brotherhood: the first the workers understood to rely on force without true representation, while the latter was "born of a vital race consciousness and pride in self-organization responsibility."<sup>46</sup> The latter principles were ones that Albrier, as a Garveyite, well understood.

The organization of the Brotherhood meant, as Jervis Anderson has put it, that many of the porters "had stopped smiling."<sup>47</sup> As Randolph began an organization tour to begin the union, he laid out its demands: recognition of the union as the authorized representative of the porters by the Pullman Co.; an end to tipping and the setting of a minimum monthly wage and a basic work month of 240 hours; compensation for time worked when the trains were not in motion and an end to double runs; conductor-level pay for porters substituting as conductors; and last but "by no means least, that porters be treated like men."<sup>48</sup> Two hundred porters joined the union the day after Randolph's initial speech announcing its formation; by 1926 there were sixteen divisions of the Brotherhood in major cities and of some ten-to-twelve thousand porters in service, slightly over half of them were members. Albrier joined in New Orleans; she deliberately avoided paying dues in the Bay Area so that the local company officials "couldn't see my name on a list."<sup>49</sup>

Oakland was one of the primary areas Randolph organized on his initial tour in 1925. Albrier, building on experience working with women in the Garvey movement, worked with the Colored Women's Economic Council, the affiliated women's wing of the Brotherhood.<sup>50</sup> The local branches of the council raised money to finance organizers through union dinners and dances. They served as liaisons, collecting union dues from individuals who needed to keep their membership quiet. They encouraged menfolk to support the union platform and held house meetings to educate women about the labor movement and its goals. Wives of porters dominated the membership of the councils, with Pullman maids and other women workers involved in the Brotherhood often participating, sometimes in leadership roles. Council organizing emphasized the family and the idea of a family wage, as well as the importance of the wives of union members as consumers and "union homemaking."<sup>51</sup>

By 1926, when Randolph called for a strike (which was eventually averted under pressure from the AFL) Oakland was considered a stronghold of support, with an estimated 90 percent of workers prepared to follow the directive, backed up by family members and students from the university in Berkeley. Women as well as men played a role in planned preparations for the strike. Oakland division organizer C. L. Dellums stated that the Oakland porters felt they wanted to "win the strike, no matter what the cost. We were going to put women and children in front of trains," bring students as volunteers, set up soup kitchens and picket lines, and if necessary, mechanically sabotage the trains.<sup>52</sup> Although Dellums was sure of the community's backing for the union, Albrier's own organizing experience raised greater doubts. Albrier used her expertise in organizing women to run meetings for the wives of Pullman employees. She found them largely resistant to the union on the grounds that during hard times the railroads were seen as one of the few remaining job opportunities for black men. She persisted in trying to educate the



wives to the advantages of unionization, bringing them out for mass meetings and to hear Randolph speak when he was in town: "I would try to get the wives to come if their husbands couldn't come—to understand what he was trying to say and do for them, and the reasons."<sup>53</sup> The wives remained frightened, however, fearing for their families, and loath to attract public attention to themselves. Albrier also found fellow maids resistant to the union; as Albrier recalled, "They weren't brought up under that militancy and they didn't have the background that I had—going through school at Tuskegee and Howard. Our responsibility was trying to educate the black public and the black women on these things. They didn't understand economics; they only understood the need for the job."<sup>54</sup> Many of the maids secretly donated money to Albrier, but refused to join in the movement, leaving actual activism to the porters or to their husbands.<sup>55</sup>

### The Depression Years

Albrier was laid off from her railroad job in 1931, when the Depression caused the Pullman Co. to make cutbacks. The lay off was representative in a way of black women's experience in the labor force in the thirties: concentrated in sharecropping, domestic service, and unskilled light industrial jobs, they faced disproportionate unemployment as conventionally "black female" job categories were eliminated, mechanized, or given over to whites. While family and individual need increased (further divorcing black women and men from the idea of a male-earned family wage), employment opportunities became even more limited than in the previous decade, and federal social services and worker protection regulations were unevenly enforced along racial caste lines. Domestic workers (the majority of black female wage earners) were subjected to speedups, wage cuts, and frequent lay-offs. As Albrier put it, "People were unemployed and not even women were employed, black women, who were able to be cooks and nurses and housemaids all of their life, they were denied that type of employment, especially if it paid anything."<sup>56</sup> According to the Women's Bureau of the Department of Labor, in 1930 well over a million African-American women were employed in the domestic and personal sectors of the economy (including domestic servants, laundry workers, housekeepers, waitresses, lay nurses and midwives, hairdressers and manicurists, charwomen, cleaners, and elevator operators). Agricultural work occupied about a half a million, with a remaining 180,000 in manufacturing and mechanical positions, the professions, transportation and communications, or clerical jobs. The gain in domestic and personal work had been over fifty percent over the course of the 1920s, with domestic work alone burgeoning by some eighty-one percent. The 1930 census reported that one out of every six women in the work force in the United States was an African-American.<sup>57</sup> The problem of racial job categorization was soon augmented by that of unemployment. In the first years of the Depression, when Albrier lost her railroad job, black unemployment rates exceeded white unemployment rates by approximately two-thirds. The number of blacks in skilled, clerical, sales, managerial or professional positions was cut in half, and manufacturing employment declined by a third. In black communities, pink collar work in beauty parlors, which had been an employment mainstay and, for some, a route to small business ownership and management in the twenties, collapsed along with the service economy at large. By 1938, over half of previously employed African-American women were out of work.<sup>58</sup> At the same time, black women's participation in industrial unionism increased. As one historian has put it, "black women's work in the 1930s took place within a matrix of federal action, interracial and black political activism, neighborly cooperation, and personal initiative."<sup>59</sup>

In 1934 Albrier married for a second time, to a railroad dining car waiter and fellow union activist William Albrier. Willie Albrier had been raised in a union home with a father who was a



roofer and American Federation of Labor (AFL) member. He was active with the Dining Car Cooks and Waiters Union, Local 456 of the AFL, and soon Albrier organized the Ladies Auxiliary of Dining Car Workers of the same local. In explaining why she helped organize and lead the women's auxiliary, she used an argument often heard about the role of women within the Garvey movement: the need for women to bolster, support, and encourage men.<sup>60</sup> She said that they needed "the women behind the men---their wives interested in the labor and the grievances of labor," otherwise "the men would become disappointed and discouraged."<sup>61</sup> The local also took in black women working as cooks in department store cafeterias and similar settings. Members of the auxiliary, were, in Albrier's words, "housewives," i.e. primarily women with families, who were "employed in some form or another," usually as cooks or maids in private homes. In spite of the fact that she reports that "Mr. Albrier was one of those old-fashioned men" who felt that wives shouldn't be working, that "they should stay home and take care of the homes and children" while the husband earned support for the family, Frances Albrier, like her sisters in the union auxiliary, continued to participate in the wage work force.<sup>62</sup> In addition to her work at the hospital, she was a social service case worker and advocate for mothers who had not been hired under federal programs.

She engaged in a great deal of unpaid political labor as well. She worked for the Labor Non-Partisan League to organize citizens to vote on labor and economic issues and was also a campaign worker for the Democratic party slate in California. She organized food and clothing banks through churches and worked as secretary and accountant for the Mt. Pleasant Baptist Church. Continuing with her work among women, she organized the East Bay Women's Welfare Club of mothers and in the late 1930s created a coalition of women in the Welfare Club, the Northern Federation of Colored Women's Clubs, churches, and the Local 456 Auxiliary to focus on lobbying for black teachers to be hired in the Berkeley city school system. She was elected to the Democratic Central Committee for Alameda County in 1938 (holding office for the next two decades) and ran for the Berkeley City Council in 1939 to publicize the desegregation of the teaching force issue. In response to the pressure, the board of education approved a policy to hire on merit, regardless of "race, creed, or color." Nevertheless, it took five more years of effort before the first black teacher was hired.<sup>63</sup> By 1940, Albrier was president of the Citizens Employment Council and organizing the picketing of small businesses as part of the "Buy Where You Can Work" campaign. While circulating on these picket lines, she passed out flyers to women shoppers, reading in part "A race cannot rise any higher than its women will allow it. The future of the race lies within its women," asking the women consumers not to buy where they and their sisters could not be employed.<sup>64</sup>

In these years Mary McLeod Bethune, whom Albrier had met as a young woman, traveled west for the National Council of Negro Women and contacted Albrier, among other Bay Area black women leaders, to encourage the heads of women's organizations to "get together so they could number hundreds of thousands of black women, because she wanted to make inroads in the political life of the nations with representation."<sup>65</sup> Albrier answered the call; a life member of the NCNW, she became the original president of the San Francisco chapter in 1935, served on its Board of Directors, and attended NCNW national conventions as a delegate. She coordinated the Citizenship Education Project ("A Voteless People is a Hopeless People") with National Urban League funding and NCNW volunteers who canvassed households to get members of the black community to register to vote. She chaired the NCNW regional conference in San Francisco in 1954, which was dedicated to the issue of world peace.<sup>66</sup>



## World War II: Industrial Employment for Black Women

With the advent of World War II, Albrier began a new personal campaign on behalf of black labor, especially black women: access to defense jobs in local shipyards and to membership in the unions that controlled shipyard labor. Again, as in the thirties, her life experience serves as a metaphor for larger trends effecting the employment of black women (and in the forties, of older, married women of all races, as well).

During the war, employment rates of white women converged to approximate the rates already experienced by black women, while African-American representation in the industrial work force in general rose. While the forties represented a surge in white women's entrance into the wage work force, black women already in the work force remained in it, but with some significant shifts in type of employment. Many black women in the South moved from agricultural work into laundries and factories; about a fifth of the black women in domestic service moved into industry. Despite these trends, thousands of black women with vocational training in trades were turned away from factory jobs. By 1943, for example, there were an estimated twenty-eight thousand black women available for defense plant work in Detroit, yet they had difficulty obtaining anything other than janitorial positions. The desire for access to assembly-line and skilled industrial jobs spurred black women to union militancy and civil demonstrations, most notably in major northern cities, where defense-related work was being allocated to white migrants from the South and closed to blacks. The National Council of Negro Women particularly lobbied for breaking down barriers in the kinds of employment available to black women.<sup>67</sup>

Albrier was part of this trend. Beginning in 1942, she and a woman friend studied welding at the Central Trades School, in classes that met from 11 P.M. to 4 A.M., designed especially for women with children who needed to care for their families by day, or who worked a day job. Albrier initially thought of her action as challenging the sexual, rather than racial, division of labor: "We had no idea of breaking the color line" she says, remembering her initial motivation; "we just felt that we would like this as a new field for women, and we would like to be welders."<sup>68</sup> Upon completion of the courses and an extra-long training period, to be certain of her skill, she successfully tested for a job at Kaiser Shipyards in Richmond, but was denied the job because the union local representing the shipyard (the International Brotherhood of Boiler Makers, Iron, and Ship Builders, and Helpers of American Local No. 513) did not admit blacks. Albrier protested to the chair of Kaiser and then confronted the head of the union. She also challenged the State Employment office to send women to the Boilermakers as a test case, and then bring federal discrimination action against them when they denied the women applicants membership.<sup>69</sup> Under pressure from the regional War Manpower Commission, the Boilermakers created a separate Negro auxiliary and Albrier, who had passed her probationary period and had a journeyman position, obtained official union status.<sup>70</sup> When the African-American auxiliary proved to be a token gesture, with no black representatives, meetings, or independent committees, and offering little protection or benefits to black workers, Albrier made a statement by paying her dues at the white Local office.<sup>71</sup> Other black women in the Bay Area were being trained in welding in high schools, only to find they could not get jobs. Albrier worked with the NCNW and with other women's clubs leaders who approached employment offices to protest the racial ban.

What was happening on the local level was part of a mass protest developing nationally. Albrier's acquaintances A. Philip Randolph and Mary McLeod Bethune were lobbying on the federal level for black fair employment. Bethune approached Eleanor Roosevelt with documentation of gross discrimination in employment, while Randolph began to organize the all-black March on Washington movement to reinforce the demands.<sup>72</sup> Largely responding to pressure from his wife, Franklin Roosevelt met with Randolph and issued Executive Order 8802 in



1941; as a result the shipyards and other defense industries began to employ blacks. In 1942, navy yards, technical laboratories, and aircraft plants began to hire both black and white women mechanics and assembly line workers, employing several thousand, many of them married and mothers, by 1943 (the year Albrier obtained her union membership).<sup>73</sup> Private manufacturing companies with defense contracts followed suit. "One of the best men in the shop," one company foreman reported, was "a Negro girl." Black women were also employed in steel mills and foundries, in masonry and sintering plants (which handled ore), and arsenals. Black women also became essential in previously "male" jobs on the railroads, as gang "men," laborers, coach cleaners, callers, loaders, and truckers as well as within the cars as waitresses (an area previously dominated by male waiters).<sup>74</sup> In the Bay Area, hundreds of thousands of new workers were recruited, most of them black and white working- and lower-class people from the South and Southwest. One out of six shipyard workers in the United States in the mid-war years was employed in the San Francisco Bay area.<sup>75</sup> The racial isolation Albrier had felt upon first moving to the Berkeley area around 1920, and which activism in the Garvey movement had helped reduce, was altered as the African-American population of the East Bay burgeoned, and the kind of black culture and community interaction that Albrier was used to in her youth arrived in force in Oakland and Richmond.<sup>76</sup> Long after shipyard employment and skilled industrial work had dissipated for black women, the African-American communities created in the war years in the East Bay remained.

Her political point made with the union and management at the shipyard, Albrier resigned her position in Richmond and moved on to a new job with the U.S. Post Office, shifting her activism from the industrial to the public service sector. There she became president of the black Postal Service Workers Club, which handled grievances, approached management with racial discrimination issues (ranging from verbal incidences of prejudice to the overall racial division of labor), and published a bulletin.<sup>77</sup> She continued working on the issue of breaking job barriers for black women (and older women and mothers) as chairperson of the California State Association of Colored Women's Department of Women in Industry, which she founded. She published on the subject in the CSACW's Woman's Journal and in the Department of Women in Industry Bulletin. She reminded Bulletin readers that "Women's work today is more strenuous than men's because many women are performing two jobs: that of keeping the Home fires burning and her job in Industry." Drawing on old experience as a nurse and as an instructor with the Black Cross Nurses, she gave direction to working women on how they might best guard their health (including, after instructions on diet, rest, exercise, leisure, and safety on the job, attending union meetings and registering to vote).<sup>78</sup> In Journal columns, she described the break-throughs that had been made into nontraditional jobs ("women accustomed to wearing a spotless gingham housedress or a smart tailored suit are seen in grimy, oily overalls doing their part to solve the transportation problem . . . women have become skilled in the building of ships-as welders, fitters, scalers, sign painters, electricians, truck drivers, shipwrights and burners").<sup>79</sup> She praised these women as "soldiers on the home front. Women in Industry, they are the bulwark of Democracy; they are making Democracy work." As the war drew to a close, she urged women, particularly black women, to organize to ensure that the changes they had achieved would be permanent ("If real victory is to be gained for the future, now is the time to get into action to prevent reaction against women after the war. Today women are leaders on the production front, and they as well as men have to lead on the home front. . . women must be active, be ready, be strong. Promote the interest of women of labor of industry and of the nation in the new world order to come. Negro women must and will be part of the new order. We must hold what we have gained.")<sup>80</sup>



### Further Activism in the Post-War Era

Albrier also became an important force in California Democratic party politics. She joined the Alameda County Democratic Women's Study Club, which met to discuss political issues, in the 1930s and served as its president in the 1960s.<sup>81</sup> She was a member of the Board of Canvassers of Alameda County in 1938 and became the first woman elected to the Alameda County Democratic Central Committee (on the Progressive Democratic slate), serving from 1938 to 1958. It was in that capacity, and as an officer in several organizations, including as president of the railroad auxiliary, that she wrote to Robert Kenny, chair of the California delegation to the Democratic National Convention, in 1944, spelling out the agenda that was important to black Californians. "The Negro values democratic human rights above anything else" she told Kenny, calling for an end to discrimination within the armed forces, for federal anti-lynching legislation, for protection of Negro soldiers returning home, for right to work legislation governing railroad unions, an end to employment discrimination, a federal education bill to equalize opportunities for Americans of all races, and enforcement of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth amendments.<sup>82</sup> She was a delegate to the Women's Democratic Conferences, which met in convention to endorse women candidates or male candidates who supported women's issues (especially child care for working women, one of Albrier's key causes). (The function and effectiveness of these conventions was eventually subsumed when the party created its own women's division, largely, as Albrier puts it, "influenced by the men").<sup>83</sup> Albrier criticized sexism within the party, noting the sexual division of labor, with men in public and policy roles and women serving support functions as campaign and office workers. She also noted its racism, exemplified in the few blacks, particularly black women, in policy roles. She remained the only black on the central committee until 1950, when another black woman, Tarea Pittman, a fellow NAACP member, was elected. Despite these concerns, Albrier chose to boycott the 1952 presidential election, refusing to vote for Adlai Stevenson's running mate, the Alabama senator John Sparkman, and unwilling to throw her support behind the Progressive party ticket, which included a fellow former Garveyite, California activist, and friend, Charlotta Bass, as its vice presidential candidate, because of fears that Progressive votes would split the Democratic party.<sup>84</sup>

Albrier's political work on labor, women's, and racial equity issues which she had begun in the women's club movement and the UNIA continued for decades. She founded the Little Citizens Study and Welfare Club ("I named it Little Citizens . . . I said, well, little citizens are the majority").<sup>85</sup> In functions not unlike those of the UNIA's ladies' wings of local divisions, the group ran food banks, sponsored lectures and entertainments, emphasized the power of the vote, and helped acculturate women from rural areas to life in the city. She became one of the first blacks in the League of Women Voters. She also worked with the parallel League of Colored Women Voters. She was a life member of the NAACP and CORE, the latter closely identified with Garvey and his nationalist beliefs.<sup>86</sup> She worked in a coalition of women's groups to petition the hiring and training of black nurses in city and county hospitals.<sup>87</sup> She held her meetings for the Ladies Auxiliary of Local 456 at the YWCA as part of the movement to desegregate the Ys and open the community rooms to blacks for local meetings. Much like her former work as an instructor with the Black Cross Nurses, she taught Red Cross first aid classes in churches (during the war, she had volunteered for the Red Cross motor corps, the prototype for the UNIA's motor corps). Like her grandmother before her, she was active in Eastern Star, the women's wing of the Masons, which, like the UNIA, stressed benevolence, burial and sick funds, and the basic principle of mutual aid.<sup>88</sup> She worked with the Negro Historical and Cultural Society to bring black history to public settings.<sup>89</sup> In her long career with women's organizations, she became president of the Berkeley Women's Town Council, a kind of umbrella committee coordinating the work of women's clubs around the city, in the 1970s. She advocated the Equal Rights



Amendment. She joined other Women's International League for Peace and Freedom members in protesting the Vietnam War and opposing nuclear armament, and, in an early expression of ecofeminism, articulated links between militarism and air and water pollution, women and peace. Reaching back full circle to the themes of her early work with the Black Cross Nurses, she drew on her experience in hospitals and social work to convince city officials to sponsor services for elderly residents (a majority of them women), including the building of centers that offered hot meals, health and legal aid, and classes—not unlike the functions that many local Liberty Halls had served in the 1930s.<sup>90</sup>

#### Global Feminism and Maintaining the Pan-African Promise

When interviewed in 1977-1978, Albrier stated that she felt that women, though more pacifistic than men, made better advocates, and thus better activists. Why? She offered a cultural and global feminist argument to defend her viewpoint:

I think it's women's make-up and build to save people, to save lives. Men think of making money, building houses, and nations . . . more so than women. Women can see farther. They have more spiritual feeling and more spiritual sense of history and what's happening than men. They can see farther. I think they have that gift from God. . . . I do think that to save the world [it] is going to take the women of the world. If we could get the women of the world to get together, all nations, for peace, to end this war syndrome that they [men/nations] have. The women of all the nations--African nations, European nations, Russia, all--because we don't want to see people destroyed, which they will be.<sup>91</sup>

In 1960, Frances Albrier fulfilled the dream she had while listening to Marcus Garvey speak in Oakland some forty years before: she set foot on African soil.<sup>92</sup> She toured Nigeria, Liberia, Senegal, Guinea, and Ghana. She observed "Nigerian girls . . . studying nursing and midwifery at a beautiful modern hospital," and women in other professional roles.<sup>93</sup> She stopped to watch African women weaving, and was reminded of her grandmother spinning cotton many years before, in Tuskegee, Alabama. The experience did for her what she hoped Garveyism would do for everyone who participated in it: it healed spiritual and historical divisions, it connected her present and her past, her own strong African American women's legacy with the ongoing realities of Africa. She returned home and told a succession of Berkeley school children being raised in a new spirit of nationalism and activism about her experience.<sup>94</sup>



## Notes

1. Garvey had been partially inspired to create the UNIA by reading Washington's Up From Slavery, and first developed ideas of visiting the United States in order to meet Washington and tour his school. Although Washington died (1915) before Garvey made the trip to the United States which eventually led him to relocate the headquarters of the UNIA in Harlem, Washington's example as a shrewd behind-the-scenes leader and head of a powerful political machine, as well as his philosophy of social segregation and racial uplift through vocational education, small business, self-reliance and personal enterprise remained cornerstones of Garveyism. In eulogizing Washington when the fledgling UNIA was about one year old, Garvey told a Kingston audience that Washington had "raised the dignity and manhood of his race to midway, and it is now left to those with fine ideals who have felt his influence to lead the race on to the highest height." Garvey and Amy Jacques Garvey visited Tuskegee in 1923, and the school's approaches were translated into various educational efforts of the UNIA, notably Liberty University, the short-lived UNIA school in Claremont, Virginia. Echoes of Washington's brand of racial politics can also be heard in Garvey's lessons for the African School of Philosophy, a course he developed to train regional officers for the UNIA that he taught in Toronto in 1937 and that was for many years offered as a correspondence course through UNIA headquarters. On Washington's influence and Garvey's first trip to the United States, see Hill, et al., Garvey Papers, vol. 1. Garvey's eulogy speech is reported on p. 166 of that volume. For an overview on Liberty University and other UNIA educational efforts see annotation by Bair in Hill, et al., Garvey Papers vol. 6: pp. 439-440, n. 1; on Liberty University, see also vol. 6: pp. 436-440, 601; and Bair "Liberty University: The UNIA and African-American Education in Virginia." For the twenty-one lessons of the African School of Philosophy, see Hill and Bair, Life and Lessons, pp. 183-352, or Martin, Message to the People. Garvey's support of Washington was ambivalent. As the UNIA leader moved from economic nationalism and the idea of building a power base in the United States toward political nationalism (America as a white man's country, Africa as the black man's), he began to openly criticize Washington and his successor, R. R. Moton (Garvey Papers 1: 502, 2: 419).

2. On Amy Jacques Garvey's memories of Randolph, Owen, and the period of Garvey's persecution, see Anderson, A. Philip Randolph, pp. 136-137. When the young Garvey arrived in Harlem in 1916 (on the trip that he had originally planned to include a meeting with Washington), Randolph was well established as a radical street orator in Harlem, and compatriot with Hubert Harrison, W. A. Domingo, and others who formed a core of intellectuals combining New Negro nationalist and class analysis in their political theory and activism. Garvey was welcomed into this group and one of his early featured speaking engagements was at a meeting of Harrison's Liberty League of Negro Americans. Interestingly, Harrison had earlier been the victim of Washington's Tuskegee machine, when Washington used political pressure to have Harrison dismissed from his position with the U.S. Post Office after Harrison wrote two editorial letters critical of Washington's accommodationism. After establishing the UNIA in Harlem, Garvey recruited both Harrison and Domingo to work on the editorial staff of the Negro World (Harrison from 1920-1922 and Domingo in 1919). He was also close to Randolph in the first year of the UNIA's formation in the states. By 1922, however, he had had severe differences with the group of black Leftists who had originally paved his political pathway in Harlem. The height of animosity built as a result of two incidents: Garvey's seeming praise of Jim Crow in 1922 speeches and his meeting with the acting imperial wizard of the Ku Klux Klan in the summer of that year, and the murder of the popular former UNIA officer James Eason in New Orleans at the



beginning of January 1923. Randolph and his co-editor at the Messenger, Chandler Owen, formed the Friends of Negro Freedom, which spearheaded the "Garvey Must Go" campaign. Open air rallies in Harlem drew large attendance in August 1922, and eight black activists, including Owen, Robert Bagnall, William Pickens, Harry Pace, Robert Abbott, John Nail, George Harris, and Julia Coleman, wrote a letter denouncing Garvey to the attorney general and called for his deportation. Garvey in turn launched tirades against the signers, labeling them "Socialists and Bolsheviks" and describing the degrees to which caucasian heritage entered into their family backgrounds. For an overview of the relationship between Randolph, Garvey, and other activists in Harlem in the post-World War I era, see Anderson, A. Philip Randolph, Ch. 9, pp. 120-137, see also pp. 361-364. On the "Garvey Must Go" campaign, see Hill, et al., Garvey Papers, vol. 5: pp. 220-228, 230; the text of the letter to the attorney general is reprinted on pp. 182-187; it also appears in Jacques Garvey, Philosophy and Opinions vol. 2: pp. 293-309. Garvey attacked the Leftist politics of the letter signers in a letter to the attorney general (Garvey Papers, vol. 5: pp. 217-218) and their mixed racial backgrounds in Philosophy and Opinions, p. 308, as well as in numerous other forums, including editorials and ads in the Negro World and a pamphlet, Eight Uncle Tom Negroes: The Seven Men and One Woman of the Negro Race Who Wrote the Infamous Letter to the Hon. Attorney General, which was sold as a companion to Garvey's W. Burghardt Du Bois as a Hater of Dark People (see, for example, NW, 24 February 1923). For information about Domingo and/or Harrison, see biographical profiles by Barbara Bair, in Hill and Bair, Life and Lessons, p. 378, and in Buhle, Buhle, and Georgakas, Encyclopedia of the American Left, pp. 199, 292. See also Hill, et al., Garvey Papers, vol. 1; Foner, American Socialism and Black Americans; Foner and Allen, American Communism and Black Americans; Post, Arise Ye Starvelings; and Rogers, World's Great Men of Color.

3. On Albrier's experience in the Alameda County NAACP, see the Brower interview in "Walter Gordon" and Albrier's personal papers at the Bancroft Library. On Garvey's well known personal feud with Du Bois and the NAACP, see Garvey Papers.

4. Albrier shared Garvey's distrust of the Communist party. She said that during the "Don't Buy Where You Can't Work" campaign, "We kept the Communists out of our meetings." She said that the experience of many of the campaign activists in growing up in the South had made them fear tactics that led to confrontation with the police, feeling that in a mixed-race situation, blacks would bear the brunt of any police brutality. Albrier, a pacifist, associated Communist organizing with violent action and the destruction of property. Further, in words that echo responses to white Civil Rights workers in the 1960s, Albrier stated that black women saw the Communists as "tearing up homes in the community by black men with white women" (Albrier, "Frances Mary Albrier: Determined Advocate for Racial Equality," pp. 274-275. Quoted courtesy of The Bancroft Library). On the issue of Communist organizing, see also Brower interview of Albrier in "Walter Gordon," pp. 160-161. Albrier was also no doubt strongly influenced by the anti-Communism that factionalized the progressive labor coalitions in the East Bay in the late 1940s. For more discussion on Garvey's views of unionization, the overlaps between Garveyism and the Left, and the issue of interracial issues in Communist organizing in black communities, see Ch. , "There Wasn't Nothing to Do But Get Into the Struggle: Queen Mother Audley Moore."

5. On Albrier's life, see the "Determined Advocate" oral history and interview by Herbert Hill, 1968, at the Archives of Labor. Profiles have appeared in Daily Gazette (Berkeley), 8 February 1971, The Post (Berkeley-Oakland), 22 July 1971, California Voice, 27 August 1987, San Francisco



Chronicle, 27 and 28 August 1987; San Francisco Chronicle, 3 November 1985; and Painter and Valois, Gifts of Age: Portraits and Essays of 32 Remarkable Women, pp. 46-49. Raoul Petersen, "Garveyism in California," CORE 3, no. 3 (Fall-Winter 1973) profiles Albrier as part of a larger special issue on Garveyism. The Petersen article is reprinted along with a number of other biographical articles within the transcript of the "Determined Advocate" oral history. The entire issue of CORE is available in Albrier's papers, along with correspondence and scrapbook material, which have been deposited at the Bancroft Library. See also California Assembly Daily Journal, 11 May 1949; California Voice, 1 August 1958, 19 August 1960; Daily Californian, 28 August 1987; Daily Gazette (Berkeley), 19 February 1970, 15 March 1971, 4 October 1973; National Notes 40, no. 9 (Summer 1952): 9, 19; Oakland Tribune, 24 April 1957, 19 March 1961, 11 February 1968, 24 November 1975; The Post (Berkeley-Oakland), 9 May 1964, 1 May 1965, 11 January 1967, 6 March 1968, 4 February 1969, 4 February 1971, 17 February 1972; San Francisco Examiner, 29 September 1956; The Sun Reporter (San Francisco-Oakland), 13 October, 20 October 1956, 23 February, 25 May 1957, 20 February 1965, 14 January, 28 October 1967, 18 October 1969, 8 November 1975; Times-Star (Alameda), 8 February 1971; and Sedwick, Women of Courage, p. 44.

Frances Albrier's maiden name was Redgrey; she changed her name to Jackson upon marriage to William Albert Jackson in 1922, and changed her name again in 1934 when she married her second husband, William Albrier. Her name was Jackson in the years that she was involved in the Garvey movement. I refer to her as Frances "Albrier" throughout the chapter, even for those periods before her final name change.

6. On Johanna Bowen's relationship with Harriet Tubman and Sojourner Truth, see Albrier, "Determined Advocate," pp. 39, 41.

7. Albrier, "Determined Advocate," p. 7.

8. Albrier, "Determined Advocate," p. 7. On the sexual division of labor under slavery and women's roles and resistance, see Barbara Bush, "The Family Tree is Not Cut: Women and Cultural Resistance in Slave Family Life in the British Caribbean" in Okihiro, ed., In Resistance, pp. 117-132; Davis, "The Legacy of Slavery: Standards for a New Womanhood," in Women, Race, and Class, pp. 3-29; Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, "Strategies and Forms of Resistance: Focus on Slave Women in the United States," in Okihiro, In Resistance, pp. 143-165; Hooks, "Sexism and the Black Female Slave Experience," in Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism, pp. 15-49; and White, Ar'n't I a Woman? Female Slaves in the Plantations South.

9. Albrier, "Determined Advocate," p. 20.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 39.

11. *Ibid.*, pp. 57, 58.

12. Harlan, Booker T. Washington, p. 112.

13. Albrier, "Determined Advocate," p. 12; see also p. 18. On midwifery as an important occupation in black communities, see L. Holmes, "Traditional Afro-American Midwives," in The American Way of Birth, ed. Pamela Eakins (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986); Jones, Labor of Love, p. 214; Logan, Motherwit: An Alabama Midwife's Story; and S. Robinson, "A Historical Development of Midwifery in the Black Community, 1600-1940" Journal of Nurse-Midwifery 29 (1984): 247-250.



14. "My grandmother . . . acted as midwife and nurse to many white families. She would attend to them--give them medicines. Her teas and brews--she was quite an herbalist. She would save, and she knew all the herbs. For miles around, my grandmother was the only person who could cure a rattlesnake bite if she got to them in time. If I had known like I know now, I could have been quite an herbalist and known the different herbs that she used" (Albrier, "Determined Advocate," pp. 18-19).

15. Albrier stated that her grandmother was a local lobbyist for the school and a member of the official party that greeted Washington upon his arrival in Tuskegee ("Determined Advocate," p. 12). On the opening of the school, see Harlan, Booker T. Washington, pp. 109-133; Emmett J. Scott and Lyman Beecher Stowe, Booker T. Washington: Builder of a Civilization (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1917), Ch. 1 "The Man and His School in the Making," pp. 3-18; Booker T. Washington, The Story of My Life and Work (1900) and Up From Slavery (1901), reprinted in Harlan, et al., The Booker T. Washington Papers, vol. 1.

16. "She had two friends she had adopted as her sisters. One of these young women was one of the first persons who graduated from the school" ("Determined Advocate," p. 13; see also pp. 43-44, where Albrier refers to this woman as her great-aunt). It is possible that this is a reference to Cornelia Bowen, who became a leading educator and feminist. Tuskegee was founded 4 July 1881, with thirty students. The 1882 Tuskegee catalog lists in its roster of students three Bowens: Kaziah, Berry, and Neelie (Cornelia?). Cornelia Bowen was born in 1858. Her mother was a slave owned by William Bowen (who later was postmaster of Tuskegee and whose land the Tuskegee Institute was built upon). Cornelia graduated from Tuskegee in 1885, taught locally, founded a school in Mt. Meigs, Alabama, in 1888 and attended classes at Columbia University's Teacher's College in 1893-1894, later studying abroad. In 1912, she became president of the Alabama State Federation of Colored Women's Clubs. She was also the president of the Alabama State Teachers Association. See Harlan, et al., The Booker T. Washington Papers, vol. 2: pp. 135 n. 2, 166, 191 n. 12; vol. 3: 288 n. 1. On Cornelia Bowen, see also Neverdon-Morton, Afro-American Women of the South, p. 138.

17. Albrier, "Determined Advocate," p. 40.

18. Ibid., p. 42. Despite Albrier's memory that women's suffrage was not discussed much at the time, it was a central tenet of the work of the Tuskegee Woman's Club, which at the turn of the century had a strong Suffrage department and also maintained a library on the subject open to all members of the club. It is quite possible, however, that while suffrage was a topic of discussion among the elite women associated with Tuskegee Institute and the club movement, that it was a less spoken of and less-prioritized issue for working class and rural women, including those Albrier's grandmother knew. On the suffrage department of the Tuskegee Woman's Club, see The Booker T. Washington Papers, vol. 8, pp. 479-480; for a general debate on the issues of suffrage and women's rights, see "Votes for Women: A Symposium" Crisis 10 (August 1915), reprinted in Aptheker, ed., A Documentary History of the Negro People in the U.S., vol. 3, pp. 94-116.

19. Washington is quoted from a section she wrote ("Helping the Mothers") for her husband's overview of life at Tuskegee, Booker T. Washington, Working with the Hands, pp. 127, 124. Albrier, "Determined Advocate," p. 140.

20. On Margaret Murray Washington, the Mothers' Meetings, the Tuskegee Women's Club, and the club movement in general, see Albrier, "Determined Advocate," pp. 22, 41-42; Guy-Sheftall, Daughters of Sorrow, pp. 26, 150; Harlan, Booker T. Washington, p. 188; Harlan, et al., The Booker



T. Washington Papers, vol. 1, p. 60; vol. 2, pp. 514-515; vol. 5, pp. 587; vol. 7, pp. 248-251; vol. 8, pp. 475-382; Neverdon-Morton, Afro-American Women of the South, pp. 132-138; Salem, To Better Our World, pp. 24-25; Booker T. Washington, Working with the Hands, p. 119-134, p. 194; and Margaret Murray Washington, "Are We Making Good?" in Aptheker, A Documentary History of the Negro People of the U.S., vol. 3, pp. 120-123.

21. Albrier, "Determined Advocate," p. 44.

22. For Albrier's description of the sex-segregated curriculum, see "Determined Advocate," p. 48.

23. On the Tuskegee curriculum and separate tracks of education for young men and women, see Washington, Working with the Hands. Quotes are from pp. 107, 117. Despite the reputation of Tuskegee for conservative accommodation, Albrier saw her years there as instilling personal self-reliance and a dedication to activism (The Post [Berkeley-Oakland], 22 July 1971). When she was awarded as the Distinguished Tuskegean of the Year in the Bay Area in 1958, she was credited with having "carried out the Tuskegee spirit of being an active, militant citizen" (California Voice, 1 August 1958).

24. For Booker T. Washington's own explanation of this split in desire and purpose, see Working with the Hands, pp. 39-40, etc. Washington also adds another level to his argument for vocational rather than professional training, and for the focus on agricultural work: such training supplied a ready (relatively powerless) black work force for whites, whereas the training of professionals supplied an elite work force for fellow blacks; thus the former, rather than the latter, would attract the white approval and patronage Washington felt was essential for the school's ongoing operation, and, indeed, which he successfully parlayed into his own kind of political machine. See Working with the Hands, pp. 25-26.

25. Albrier, "Determined Advocate," p. 52.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 54.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 55.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 73.

29. *Ibid.*, pp. 29, 30, 32, 63, 66, 73.

30. *Ibid.*, p. 140.

31. *Ibid.*, pp. 65, 66.

32. *Ibid.*, pp. 69-70.

33. *Ibid.*, pp. 70-71.

34. *Ibid.*, p. 71.

35. Peterson, "Garveyism in California: A Lady Remembers," p. 20. (Also reprinted within Albrier, "Determined Advocate," pp. 65ff).



36. Albrier (then Frances Jackson) apparently held office in the local UNIA from 1923 to 1926; she was listed in several division reports filed with the Negro World as second lady vice-president in 1925 (Negro World, June-December 1925). An account of "Women's Day," 18 April 1924 (Negro World, 24 May 1924), lists Lois Pittman as president of the Oakland Black Cross Nurses; Letha Bush as lady president and Mrs. Covington as lady vice-president of the division; a Mrs. Kent was, like Albrier (Jackson) an instructor for the Black Cross Nurses. Lois Pittman became lady president in 1925; shortly after she emigrated to Monrovia, Liberia, fulfilling the Back-to-Africa dream that attracted many African-American adherents to Garveyism (Negro World, 28 November 1925).

Albrier did not comment in interviews on her view of Amy Jacques Garvey, but the only markings she made in her copy of the 1973 CORE special edition on Garveyism was to underline and star the announcement of Amy Jacques Garvey's death in Jamaica. Since she often similarly marked passages about herself in clippings she saved, the special notice she gave Jacques' passing suggests both regret and identification.

37. Peterson, "Garveyism in California," p. 21.

38. Negro World, 18 July 1925; on Albrier's participation in the programs of the Oakland division, see also Negro World, 19 September, 26 November, and 12 December 1925, and 2 January 1926.

39. Albrier, "Determined Advocate," p. 67.

40. Ibid.

41. Ibid., p. 68.

42. Albrier personally rejected this argument, as well as the nationalist opposition to birth control as a form of aiding racial genocide, already perpetrated from without through the effects (illness, high infant mortality rates, violence, etc.) of poverty and racism. Albrier was very interested in the work of Margaret Sanger and concerned with birth control as a Third World issue, wherein "women were suffering--because of so many births and increase in population" (Albrier, "Determined Advocate," p. 82). While Garvey was personally opposed to birth control for religious reasons, Sanger's work was debated both pro and con in the pages of the Negro World in the period when Albrier was active in the movement (see, for example, Negro World, 10 March 1923, 4 April 1925).

43. Albrier, "Determined Advocate," p. 71.

44. Ibid., p. 73. Mark Naison has described the positive (but short-lived) effect of WPA policies on black employment in Harlem in the mid-1930s, when opportunities for blacks to enter white-collar positions temporarily expanded, WPA projects employed blacks in the humanities and the arts, and WPA health centers hired black physicians and nurses. Many black residents of Harlem (like Albrier in Oakland) for the first time in their lives found work in the occupations they had trained for (Naison, Communists in Harlem, p. 194).

45. Ibid., p. 79. On A. Philip Randolph and the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, see Anderson, A. Philip Randolph; Bracey and Meier, "Records"; Foner and Lewis, Black Workers, pp. 36-37; Harris, Keeping the Faith; and Wilson, Tearing Down the Color Bar.



46. Open Letter by A. Philip Randolph to the Pullman Company, 4 June 1927, printed in the Messenger, 9 (July 1927):237-241; reprinted in Foner and Lewis, Black Workers, pp. 392-403. "True liberation," Randolph told a 1937 National Negro Congress audience, "can be acquired and maintained only when the Negro people possess power, and power is the product and flower of organization---organization of the masses, the masses in the mills and mines, on the farms, in the factories" (Speech to the Second National Negro Congress, October 1937, National Negro Congress Papers, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library, Box 11; quoted in Kirby, Black Americans in the Roosevelt Era, p. 173).

47. Anderson, A. Philip Randolph, p. 160.

48. Anderson, A. Philip Randolph, p. 169.

49. Albrier, "Determined Advocate," p. 80. In 1928, the American Federation of Labor (AFL) accepted the Brotherhood's affiliation as an independent union, and finally, in 1936, a year after it won overwhelming election support from porters in Pullman Co. employ and the Board of Mediation directed the company to recognize it as the legitimate body to represent porters and maids, it was accorded international status. The agreement with the Pullman Co. took two years to negotiate, but was signed in August 1937. Membership peaked in the early 1940s, with some eighteen thousand members working out of over one hundred terminals. The Pullman Co. was at that time the largest single employer of blacks in the United States. See Anderson, "The Case of the Pullman Porter," Part IV, A. Philip Randolph, pp. 151-225; Wilson, Tearing Down the Color Bar, p. 26.

50. The women's councils began with the Hesperus Club of Harlem, which affiliated with the Brotherhood shortly after it was founded in 1925; strong councils developed in several major cities, including Chicago, St. Louis, Washington, D.C., and Philadelphia. The functions of the councils were recognized in 1938 with the official creation of the BSCP Ladies Auxiliary, a year after the recognition of the union. Halena Wilson and Rosina Tucker emerged as the leading women in the Auxiliary on the national level. In 1940 Tucker wrote to Mary Anderson, director of the Women's Bureau of the Labor Department, and reported that the Auxiliary had forty-three branches in thirty-one states. Anderson was a supporter of the union; she spoke at the BSCP Woman's Day mass meeting in Washington, D.C., in 1936, before formal recognition, and both Tucker and Randolph continued to report to her on the union's progress. See Tucker to Anderson, 1 August 1940 and Randolph to Anderson, 1 August 1939; see also Wilson to Anderson, 18 April, 24 June, 5 July, 3 September, 9 September, 30 December 1940; and Program of the BSCP Labor Mass Meeting Woman's Day, Florida Baptist Church, Washington, D.C., 8 December 1936, all in DNA, RG 86, General Correspondence of the Women's Bureau, Box no. 52, "Unions, Railroad Brotherhoods." On the BSCP Auxiliary and councils, see also the Rosina Tucker papers at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library; Chateauvert, "Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, International Ladies' Auxiliary"; Santino and Wagner, "Miles of Smiles, Years of Struggle"; Speech by Helena Wilson, 1953, and comments on the role of women by A. Philip Randolph, in Wilson, Tearing Down the Color Bar, pp. 113-117, 214-215. See also Reel 7, Box 8, no. 0621; Reel 8, Box 9, nos. 0448 nad 0696; Reel 9, Box 11, no. 0993; Reel 10, Box 11 (contin.), nos. 0000, 0024, 0079, 0131; and Reel 13, Box 17, no. 0558, A. Philip Randolph Papers, Library of Congress, for documentation of the BSCP maids and the Ladies Auxiliary in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s.

51. The phrase is M. Melinda Chateauvert's, "Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, International Ladies' Auxiliary," p. 6. Chateauvert reports that "each summer as many as a dozen members or their daughters received labor school scholarships to learn labor history, economics, union leadership, public speaking, and union homemaking." Cooperative buying clubs were started



in Denver and Chicago (p. 6). In iconography similar to that of the Garvey movement, the illustration on the cover of Rosina Corrothers-Tucker's Auxiliary theme song, "Marching Together," featured a man in uniform (the BSCP member) and a woman in white dress, hose, and shoes (the Auxiliary member) marching arm in arm (see *ibid.*, p. 5)

52. Dellums is quoted in Anderson, A. Philip Randolph, pp. 200-201. For more information on Brotherhood of Sleeping Car activism, see C. L. Dellums, "International President of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and Civil Rights Leader," Interview by Joyce Henderson, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 1973. In addition to the Brotherhood, Dellums and Albrier also worked closely in the Alameda County branch of the NAACP; see Brower interview of Albrier in "Walter Gordon," and the Papers of C. L. Dellums and the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters at the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

53. Albrier, "Determined Advocate," p. 80.

54. *Ibid.*, p. 81.

55. Robin Kelley has described similar dynamics in Communist party organizing in Alabama in the 1930s. Much of women's activism was along the lines of the sexual division of labor, with motherhood and the family economy (rather than women themselves as workers) as the means of garnering support. Although in other contexts women organizers sometimes found the wives of male comrades recalcitrant, suspicious, and unable or unwilling to break out of proscribed female roles, Kelley estimates that in the case of the Share Cropper's Union women's "indispensable organizing skills and basic concerns were the foundation of union activity" (Kelley, Hammer and Hoe, 46, see also 46-47, 69).

56. Albrier, in Brower interview, Walter Gordon, p. 160.

57. "Occupational Distribution of Negro Women, 1890 and 1930," in Brown, The Negro Woman Worker, Bulletin of the Women's Bureau #165, DNA, RG 86, Women's Bureau Records, Box 378. Census information and ratio of African-American women in domestic service, pp. 1, 2. See also Anderson, "The Plight of Negro Domestic Labor."

58. Brown, The Negro Woman Worker, p. 3

59. Jones, Labor of Love, p. 198; see also p. 197. On this period in black women's labor history, see Jones, Ch. 6, "Harder Times: The Great Depression," pp. 196-231. On the unemployment, changing work patterns, and union participation of women and blacks in the 1930s (with emphasis on the experiences of white women and black men), see Ruth Milkman, "Women Workers and the Labor Movement in Hard Times: Comparing the 1930s and the 1980s" in Beneria and Stimpson, eds., Women, Households, and the Economy, pp. 111-131; Milkman, "Women's Work and Economic Crisis: Some Lessons of the Great Depression"; and Baron, The Demand for Black Labor, pp. 26-27; Foner and Lewis, Black Workers, pp. 375-445; Abram L. Harris, "The Negro Worker: A Problem of Vital Concern to the Entire Labor Movement," in Aptheker, A Documentary History of the Negro People in the U.S., pp. 637-640; and Harris and Spero, The Black Worker.

60. A. Philip Randolph said the same thing in regard to the BSCP. In his tribute to the work of the Ladies' Auxiliaries, he spoke of women's moral, spiritual, and supportive qualities, and praised the women for their effect upon the men ("I don't recall a single conference that we have held where



we did not have some of the women present who were willing to tell the men, 'Stand up and keep moving forward'), Wilson, Tearing Down the Color Bar, 214.

61. Albrier, "Determined Advocate," p. 100.

62. Ibid., p. 88. In a separate interview she praised both her husband and her children for their willingness to share "wifely" household duties to accommodate her activism: "Not all men are so understanding and cooperative. Without his going along with me, I couldn't have done so much" (The Post [Berkeley-Oakland], 22 July 1971).

63. Ibid., pp. 105-111. See also Walter Steilberg to Frances Albrier, 25 September 1939, in Albrier papers, Bancroft Library. In a letter that echoes current adverse reactions to "political correctness" in academics, Steilberg accuses Albrier's pressure group of abrasively depriving those who "cherish the illusion of Nordic superiority" of their freedom of opinion, warns her that "a man in public office is subject to a great many little irritations and the use of such words as 'demand' and 'insist' are very likely to antagonize him," and threatens that such militancy is not in "your best interest," stating that it feeds the belief of some "that the appointment of a non-Caucasian to our teaching staff would just mark another advance for the so-called radicals."

On the campaign to desegregate the teaching work force, see also Brower interview in Walter Gordon. The East Bay Women's Welfare Club was "composed primarily of mothers of Negro girls who had graduated as teachers from the University of California but because of existing hiring policies could not secure employment as teachers in the Berkeley schools." These women conducted a survey of the Berkeley graduates and of Berkeley taxpayers, and used the information gathered for the "No Taxation Without Representation" platform used in Albrier's city council race (Daily Gazette [Berkeley], 8 February 1971).

64. Ibid., p. 125. Other East Bay Organizations' Employment Committee literature used to hand out from the picket lines (with Albrier's name and telephone number given as the contact person) is preserved in Albrier's papers at the Bancroft Library.

65. Ibid., p. 53; see also pp. 232-233.

66. Ibid., p. 234; Peterson, "Garveyism in California," p. 22; see also San Francisco Examiner, 29 September 1956; Sun Reporter (San Francisco-Oakland), 13 October 1956, 25 May 1957. Primary documents pertaining to Albrier's many years with the NCNW, including the typed reports of conventions and a membership roster, are preserved in her papers at the Bancroft Library.

67. On the convergence of white and black women's employment rates, Jones reports that "in 1944 three out of ten white women and four out of ten black women worked" (Jones, Labor of Love, p. 234). The Women's Bureau report two out of five African-American women and two out of eight white women in the work force in 1940. The number of African-American women working on farms was cut in half in the four years from 1940 to 1944 (Blood, Negro Women War Workers, Women's Bureau Bulletin No. 205, pp. 16, 18 [Charts of Negro Women by Occupation, 1940-1944, pp. 20-23], DNA, RG 96, Box 641).

On the employment of black women in the forties and their militancy regarding access to industrial jobs, see Jones, Labor of Love, pp. 235-240, 251-260; Kessler-Harris, Out to Work, p. 279; and Milkman, Gender at Work, p. 55, see also pp. 54, 111. Despite shifts into industrial work, the basic occupational structure for black women remained unchanged by the war, with 60 percent of all black women workers still concentrated in institutional and household service jobs at the end of the decade. Similarly, white women's claims on employment for older, married, women and women



with children and inroads into industrial work was fleeting. Despite new types of jobs, sexual discrimination continued to plague women in areas such as work hours, pay scales, and availability of child care and other support services that acknowledged women's dual duty in the wage and household labor forces. As in Albrier's case, unions balked at allowing women's membership. The war's end resulted in massive layoffs from nontraditional jobs. By 1950 slightly less than half of all working white women were employed in sales or clerical positions and the ideal of the (white) breadwinning husband and homemaker wife was again in full force (see Jones, Labor of Love, pp. 234-235; Kessler-Harris, "Making History Working for Victory," Ch. 10 in Out to Work, pp. 273-299; Milkman, "Demobilization and the Reconstruction of 'Woman's Place' in Industry," Ch. 7 in Gender at Work, pp. 99-127).

Albrier was president of the Citizenship Education Project sponsored by the National Council of Negro Women and the National Urban League. She was also chair of the Public Relations committee of the East Bay Council and president of the San Francisco Council ("Determined Advocate," p. 235 a).

68. Albrier, "Determined Advocate," p. 130. See also Woody Johannes, "Here's What Happened to Rosie the Riveter," Albany Times, 20 April 1977 (which profiles Albrier), reprinted p. 128 a. For oral history accounts with other women who entered defense work in the 1940s, see Gluck, Rosie the Riveter Revisited.

69. See oral history interview with Albrier by Herbert Hill, Berkeley, Calif., 3 November 1968, Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University.

70. Albrier carefully preserved the slip she received notifying her that she could apply for union membership and the initiation slip giving her union clearance and a receipt for her dues on 28 January 1943; see Albrier papers, Bancroft Library. On the slow desegregation of the Boilermaker's Union, see Blum, "The Boilermakers and the Blacks."

71. Oral History interview with Herbert Hill, 1968. This state of affairs was nothing new, of course. Discrimination and exclusion and double standards for segregated branches of unions had long characterized the white-dominated labor movement's response to African-American demands for union protection. Segregated locals subordinated to white control and limitations on the promotion of African Americans to skilled positions at work and office-holding within unions were the norms, not the exceptions. As Robert L. Allen has pointed out, Randolph described the typical segregated local as like a black colony within a white empire, with the colonized enjoying "none of the rights that the white population in the mother country enjoy, except the right to be taxed" (quoted in Allen and Allen, Reluctant Reformers, 176; Allen in turn quotes from Marc Karson and Ronald Radosh, "The American Federation of Labor and the Negro Workers, 1894-1949," in Jacobson, The Negro and the American Labor Movement, p. 181). Allen has described the technique of "organizing black workers into powerless, segregated locals" as one in which "black workers were organized, segregated and then ignored" (Reluctant Reformers, 176). Albrier, by paying her dues at the white union office, was displaying the fact that she still existed and that she, and those like her, could not be conveniently ignored.

72. Jones refers to Harvard Sitkoff, A New Deal for Blacks, p. 314, in crediting a black woman delegate to a 1940 civil rights convention in Chicago with originating the March on Washington idea as a means to counter discrimination against blacks in defense work--an idea that Randolph then carried out (Jones, Labor of Love, p. 233). Mark Naison has observed that in "calling for an all-black march, Randolph invoked the still vital tradition of Garveyite militancy, and by calling for mass protest and disruption, he identified with strategies pioneered by Communists, but his



chosen constituency was the mainstream black organizations--the churches, fraternal organizations, the Urban League, and the NAACP." Many of the people who participated in the march on Washington committee that Randolph formed in New York had been active in Popular Front coalitions that had on some issues included Garveyites and other nationalists (Naison, Communists in Harlem, p. 310). For consideration of Mary McLeod Bethune's role in the Roosevelt administration and her initial support for the March on Washington movement, see Kirby, Black Americans in the Roosevelt Era, pp. 110-121; on Randolph and the March on Washington movement, see *ibid.*, pp. 171-175; see also Ch. 4, "Eleanor Roosevelt and the Evolution of Race Liberalism," *ibid.*, pp. 76-96.

73. Blood, Negro Women War Workers, pp. 1-2.

74. Blood, Negro Women War Workers, Bulletin No. 205 of the Women's Bureau, DNA, RG 86, Women's Bureau Records, Box 641; reprinted in Foner and Lewis, Black Workers, pp. 513-524.

75. See Boyden, "Katherine Archibald's Wartime Shipyard Revisited," which focuses on the Moore Dry Dock in Oakland, where Albrier paid her union dues. See also Archibald, Wartime Shipyard, and the C. L. Dellums papers at the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

76. According to U.S. Census figures the percentage of African-Americans in the total population in Oakland grew from 2.8 percent in 1940 to 12.4 percent at the end of the decade (Johnson, "Mobilizing the Home Front," 6). In the post-war period Richmond was 40 to 45 percent black (Moore, "Not in Somebody's Kitchen" and "The Black Community in Richmond, California").

77. Albrier, "Determined Advocate," 145-146.

78. See California State Association of Colored Women, Department of Women in Industry Bulletin 1, no. 1 (n.d., ca. 1943), in Albrier papers, Bancroft Library.

79. Albrier, "Mrs. Frances Albrier, President of Cooks and Waiters Auxiliary and Vice-President of Berkeley Democratic Club," Woman's Journal (1945), pp. 18-19.

80. Albrier, "Women in Industry," Woman's Journal n.d. (ca. 1944), pp. 13-14, in Albrier papers, Bancroft Library.

81. *Ibid.*, p. 89. The Study Club was organized in 1932 as an affiliate of the Women's National Democratic Club, Albrier was president in the 1967-68 (see mimeographs regarding meetings in Albrier's personal papers, Bancroft Library; The Post [Berkeley-Oakland], 11 January 1967).

82. Albrier to Robert Kenny, 15 July 1944 and 24 July 1944, in the Papers of Robert Walker Kenny, box 13, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

83. Albrier, "Determined Advocate," p. 171. On women and Democratic party activism in this period, see Clara Shirpser, "One Woman's role in Democratic Party Politics: National, State, and Local, 1950-1973," Oral History Interview by Malca Chall, 1972, 1973. Regional Oral History Project, the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.



84. Ibid., pp. 186, 226-228. On Tarea Pittman, see the San Francisco Chronicle, 3 August 1991, San Jose Mercury, 4 August 1991, and Albrier's comments on her in Brower interview, "Walter Gordon"; on Albrier's relationship with Charlotta Bass, see Sun Reporter (San Francisco), 20 February 1965, and Albrier's personal papers at the Bancroft Library. For further information on Albrier's role in Democratic party politics, see California Voice, 19 August 1960, The Post, 9 May 1964; and Sun Reporter, 18 October 1969, and Daily Gazette (Berkeley), 19 February 1970.

85. Ibid., pp. 150-151.

86. Albrier was director of the Alameda County branch of the NAACP in 1940, and helped push to make the branch more committed to local action. She received the NAACP's Fight for Freedom Award in 1954 and was treasurer of the Berkeley branch in 1968-1970, becoming a Life Member in 1976 (Albrier, "Determined Advocate"; San Francisco Chronicle, 27 August 1987). On CORE and the legacy of Garveyism, see CORE 3, no. 3 (Fall-Winter 1973).

87. Albrier, "Determined Advocate," pp. 214-216.

88. Ibid., p. 240.

89. Albrier lectured to organizations and school groups on Africa, Blacks in California, and various individuals, including George Washington Carver and Mary McLeod Bethune. She also organized a series of exhibits on the contributions of blacks to American and California history. Interestingly, while these exhibits included photographs and descriptions of Booker T. Washington, Carver, Bethune, Randolph, and others with whom Albrier was personally acquainted and with whom she worked, none of the exhibits or lectures documented in her personal papers include mention of Garvey.

90. See Painter, Gifts of Age, pp. 48-49; "Aging in America," Herrick Hospitaler, Herrick Memorial Hospital, Berkeley (March 1978): 16-21; "New Ways to Older Hearts Discussed," The Herrick Cross 27, no. 4 (June 1978): 2; "National Caucus on the Black Aged Conference Slated," Sun Reporter, 8 November 1975; Oakland Tribune, 24 November 1975; Warren Widener, mayor, Berkeley, to Albrier, 29 November 1977; Vertin R. Thompson to Albrier, 28 October 1975, Albrier papers, Bancroft Library. While earlier Albrier was usually described as a "club woman" or civil rights activist, in her last two decades of life she was seen as an advocate for the elderly. She was on the board of directors of Herrick Memorial Hospital and ran workshops on aging; she was also the senior citizen representative for the Southern Berkeley Model Cities Neighborhood Council, and a volunteer for the Senior Center Portable Meals program. On the conversion of Liberty Halls to supper kitchens, shelters, and group meeting areas in the '30s, see Amy Jacques Garvey, Garvey and Garveyism.

91. Albrier, "Determined Advocate," pp. 225-226; p. 225. For a discussion of global feminism, see Bunch, Passionate Politics.

92. Albrier, "Determined Advocate," pp. 259-262; Peterson, "Garveyism in California," p. 22; "From Slave Ship to Jet," Oakland Tribune, 19 March 1961.

93. Oakland Tribune, 19 March 1961.

94. For a fictional account of a similar kind of psychic Pan-African journey by an elderly woman, see Paule Marshall, Praisesong for the Widow (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1983), especially pp. 188-197. Albrier returned from Africa and lectured widely on her experiences there; she developed



a crowded agenda of talks to school children, wearing African dress and showing slides. Letters from the children are preserved in her papers at the Bancroft Library.



# Bibliography, Frances Albrier

- Albrier, Frances. "Frances Mary Albrier: Determined Advocate for Racial Equality." Oral history by Malca Chall, 1977-1978. Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America, Radcliffe College, Cambridge, Mass., Black Women Oral History Project and the Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California at Berkeley, Women in Politics Oral History Project.
- Albrier, Frances. Oral History interview by Herbert Hill, Berkeley, California, 3 November 1968. Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit.
- Allen, Robert L., with Pamela P. Allen. Reluctant Reformers: Racism and Social Reform Movements in the United States. Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1974.
- Anderson, Jervis. A. Philip Randolph: A Biographical Portrait. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1973.
- Anderson, Mary. "The Plight of Negro Domestic Labor" Journal of Negro Education 5 (January 1936): 66-72.
- Aptheker, Herbert, ed. A Documentary History of the Negro People in the United States. Vol. 3: 1910-1932. Secaucus, N.J.: Citadel Press, 1973.
- Archibald, Katherine. Wartime Shipyard: A Study in Social Disunity. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1947.
- Baron, Harold M. The Demand for Black Labor: Historical Notes on the Political Economy of Racism. Cambridge, Mass.: Radical America Pamphlet Series, 1971.
- Beneria, Lourdes, and Catharine R. Stimpson, eds., Women, Households, and the Economy. New Brunswick and London: Rutgers University Press, 1987.
- Blood, Kathryn. Negro Women War Workers. Bulletin of the Women's Bureau No. 205. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Labor, 1945. Typescript, DNA, RG 86, Box 641.
- Blum, Joe. "The Boilermakers and the Blacks: Caste and Confrontation in World War II." Paper delivered as part of a panel on Wartime Shipyards: Race, Class and Gender in World War II, at the Pacific Coast Branch of the American Historical Association Annual Meeting, Oregon State University, Corvallis, Oregon, 13-16 August 1992.
- Boyden, Richard. "Katherine Archibald's Wartime Shipyard Revisited: Race, Gender, and Class at Moore Drydock Co., 1941-1946." Paper delivered as part of a panel on Wartime Shipyards: Race, Class and Gender in World War II, at the Pacific Coast Branch of the American Historical Association Annual Meeting, Oregon State University, Corvallis, Oregon, 13-16 August 1992.
- Bracey, John H., Jr., and August Meier. Records of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. Series A: Holdings of the Chicago Historical Society and the Newberry Library, 1925-1969. Black Studies Research Sources Series. Bethesda, Md.: University Publications of America, 1991.
- Broderick, Francis, and August Meier, eds. Negro Protest Thought in the Twentieth Century. New York and Indianapolis: Bobbs Merrill, 1965.
- Brower, Anne. Interview with Frances Mary Albrier, for Walter Gordon: Athlete, Officer in Law Enforcement and Administration, Governor of the Virgin Islands. Berkeley: Regional Oral History Office, Bancroft Library, 1979, pp. 155-169.
- Brown, John Collier. The Negro Woman Worker. Bulletin of the Women's Bureau No. 165. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Labor/GPO, 1938.
- Buhle, Mari Jo, Buhle, Paul and Dan Georgakas, eds. Encyclopedia of the American Left. New York and London: Garland, 1990.
- Bunch, Charlotte. Passionate Politics: Feminist Theory in Action: Essays 1968-1986. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987.
- Chateaubert, M. Melinda. "Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, International Ladies' Auxiliary (1938-



- 1957)." In Black Women in America: An Historical Encyclopedia. Eds. Darlene Clark Hine, Elsa Barkely Brown, and Rosalyn Terborg-Penn. 2 vols. Brooklyn: Carlson, 1993. Vol. 2: 613-615.
- Davis, Angela. Women, Race, and Class. New York: Vintage, 1983.
- Foner, Philip. American Socialism and Black Americans. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1977.
- Foner, Philip and James Allen, eds. American Communism and Black Americans. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987.
- Foner, Philip and Ronald L. Lewis, eds. Black Workers: A Documentary History from Colonial Times to the Present. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989.
- Gluck, Sherna Berger. Rosie the Riveter Revisited: Women, the War, and Social Change. Boston: Twayne/G.K. Hall, 1987.
- Guy-Sheftall, Beverly. Daughters of Sorrow: Attitudes toward Black Women, 1880-1920. Brooklyn, N.Y.: Carlson Publishing, 1990.
- Harlan, Louis R. Booker T. Washington: The Making of a Black Leader, 1856-1901. London, Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1972.
- Harlan, Louis R., et al., eds., The Booker T. Washington Papers. 13 vols. Urbana: University of Illinois, 1972-1984.
- Harris, Abram and Sterling Spero. The Black Worker. New York: Columbia University Press, 1932.
- Harris, William. Keeping the Faith: A. Philip Randolph, Milton P. Webster, and the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, 1925-1937. Urbana: University of Illinois, 1977.
- Hill, Robert A. and Barbara Bair, eds. Marcus Garvey: Life and Lessons. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1987.
- Hill, et al., eds. Garvey Papers vols. 1, 5, 6
- Hooks, Bell Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism. Boston: South End Press, 1983.
- Jacobson, Julius, ed. The Negro and the American Labor Movement. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday-Anchor, 1968.
- Johnson, Marilyn. "Mobilizing the Home Front: Labor and Politics in Oakland, 1943-1951." Paper delivered at the Organization of American Historians Annual Meeting, Anaheim, California, 17 April 1993.
- Jones, Jacqueline. Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work, and the Family, from Slavery to the Present. New York: Vintage, 1985.
- Kelley, Robin. Hammer and Hoe: Alabama Communists During the Great Depression. Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1990.
- Kessler-Harris, Alice. Out to Work: A History of Wage-Earning Women in the United States. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982.
- Kirby, John B. Black Americans in the Roosevelt Era: Liberalism and Race. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1980.
- Lemke-Santangelo, Gretchen. "I Always Desired Independence, Never Wealth: African American Migrant Women in the Wartime East Bay." Paper presented as part of a panel on African American Workers in the Twentieth Century, Southwest Labor Studies Conference Annual Meeting, University of California, Santa Cruz, 29-30 April 1994.
- Logan, Onnie Lee. Motherwit: An Alabama Midwife's Story. New York: Dutton, 1989.
- Martin, Tony. Message to the People: The Course of African Philosophy. Dover, Mass.: Majority Press, 1983.
- Milkman, Ruth. "Women's Work and Economic Crisis: Some Lessons of the Great Depression." Review of Radical Political Economics 8 (Spring 1976): 73-97.
- Milkman, Ruth. Gender at Work: The Dynamics of Job Segregation by Sex during World War II. Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1987.
- Moore, Shirley. "Not in Somebody's Kitchen: African American Women War Workers in Richmond, California." Paper delivered as part of a panel on Wartime Shipyards: Race, Class and Gender in World War II, at the Pacific Coast Branch of the American Historical Association



- Annual Meeting, Oregon State University, Corvallis, Oregon, 13-16 August 1992.
- Moore, Shirley. "The Black Community in Richmond, California, 1910-1963." Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1989.
- Okihiro, Gary Y., ed., In Resistance: Studies in African, Caribbean, and Afro-American History. Amherst: University of Massachusetts, 1986.
- Painter, Charlotte (essays) and Pamela Valois (photographs), Gifts of Age: Portraits and Essays of 32 Remarkable Women. San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1985.
- Peterson, Raoul C. "Garveyism in California: A Lady Remembers." CORE 3, no. 3 (Fall/Winter 1973): 20-22.
- Post, Ken. Arise Ye Starvelings: The Jamaican Labour Rebellion of 1938 and Its Aftermath. The Hague: Nijhoff, 1978.
- Rogers, Joel A. World's Great Men of Color. 2 vols. New York: Macmillan, 1947.
- Salem, Dorothy. To Better Our World: Black Women in Organized Reform, 1890-1920. Brooklyn, N.Y.: Carlson Publishing, 1990.
- Santino, Jack and Paul Wagner (Rosena Tucker, narrator). Miles of Smiles, Years of Struggle: The Untold Story of the Black Pullman Porter. Benchmark Films, 1982.
- Sedwick, Judith. Women of Courage. An Exhibition of Photographs by Judith Sedwick, based on the Black Women Oral History Project. Cambridge: Radcliffe College/Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library, 1984.
- Sitkoff, Harvard. A New Deal for Blacks: The Emergence of Civil Rights as a National Issue: The Depression Decade. New York: Oxford University Press, 1978.
- Washington, Booker T. Working with the Hands: Being a Sequel to "Up from Slavery" Covering the Author's Experiences in Industrial Training at Tuskegee. 1904; reprint ed. New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969.
- White, Deborah Gray Ar'n't I a Woman? Female Slaves in the Plantations South. New York: W. W. Norton, 1985.
- Wilson, Joseph F. Tearing Down the Color Bar: A Documentary History and Analysis of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. New York: Columbia University Press, 1989.



## Biographical Statement

Barbara Bair is a cultural historian working on a book on African-American women activists who began their political careers in the Garvey movement. She has taught at Brown University and has been affiliated with the Institute for Research on Women at Rutgers University and the African Studies Center at UCLA. She has recently returned from a semester at the Virginia Center for the Humanities. She is the author or editor of various works in African American history and Ethnic and Women's Studies. She received her Ph.D. at Brown University.



BARBARA BAIR  
216 CYPRESS AVENUE  
SANTA CRUZ, CA 95062  
408-429-6450

EDUCATION:

Ph.D. and M.A. in American Civilization, Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island, 1984, 1979.  
Fields of Expertise in American Cultural History and American Literature, with specialty in Women's Studies and African American Studies.

B.A. in American Studies, University of California, Santa Cruz, 1977.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

*Historian*, Will Rogers Memorial Commission, Claremore, Oklahoma. Associate Editor, Will Rogers Papers Project. Documentary editing, historical writing and research in Native-American History, the History of the West, and American Popular Culture. Co-editor of documentary edition on the life of Will Rogers for University of Oklahoma Press. 1991-present.

*Fellow*, Virginia Center for the Humanities, Charlottesville, Virginia. Conducted research for project on the history of the Universal Negro Improvement Association in Virginia. Fall 1993.

*Member*, Adjunct Teaching Pools, American Studies/Ethnic Studies and Women's Studies boards, University of California, Santa Cruz. 1992 to present.

*Historian*, James B. Coleman African Studies Center, University of California, Los Angeles. Contributing Editor and Consultant, African Series, Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers Project. Editing, consultation, and historical research and writing for volumes on Pan-Africanism and Garveyism in Africa for University of California Press. 1991-1993.

*Associate Editor*, American Series, Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers, University of California, Los Angeles. Conducted or supervised all phases of preparation of volumes on Garveyism in the United States and Europe. 1985-1991. Assistant Editor, African and American Series, 1984-1985.

*Scholar-in-Residence*, Rockefeller Foundation Humanist in Residence, Institute for Research on Women, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey. Guest lecturer in Women's History and Honors Program. Participant in interdisciplinary faculty research groups and Laurie-New Jersey Chair in Women's Studies Seminar; consultant on curriculum development in Women's Studies. Spring and Fall semesters 1989.

*Instructor*, Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island. Offered courses in American Civilization and Modes of Thought Programs. Served on American Civilization and U.S. Women's History Honors Thesis Committees and Faculty Committees. 1980-1984.

*Historian*, Rhode Island Historical Society. Conducted research for exhibition texts, American Women's Colonial and Early National history. 1983.

*Historian*, Rhode Island Committee for the Humanities. Conducted oral history project with activists in community organizing for public services for mentally disabled citizens. 1981.

*Instructor*, American Studies, University of California, Santa Cruz, Cowell College. Taught "Introduction to American Studies." 1977.

*Social Service Worker*, Department of Social Services, Santa Cruz, California. Provided home health and hospice services to elderly clients. 1976-1978.

*Editorial and Research Assistant*, the Julia Morgan Project, Santa Cruz, California. Architectural women's history project sponsored by the National Endowment for the Arts. 1977-1978.

EXHIBITIONS:

Associate Guest Curator, Marcus Garvey: The Centenary Exhibition. Traveling exhibition presented at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York, and the Museum of Afro-American History and Culture, Los Angeles. 1987-1988.



Consultant, The Marcus Garvey Movement in Harlem: Walking Tour, Schomburg Center for Research on Black Culture, New York. Sponsored by the Eastman Kodak Company, 1987.

Historian, Let Virtue Be a Guide to Thee: Needlework in the Education of Rhode Island Women, 1780-1830. Traveling exhibition presented at the Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, and the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. 1984-1985.

Historian, Days of Darkness, Days of Hope: The Care of Mentally Disabled People in Rhode Island. Traveling exhibition sponsored by the Rhode Island Committee on the Humanities. 1981-1982.

#### PUBLICATIONS:

##### BOOKS:

Editor, The Papers of Will Rogers, vol. 1, The Early Years: Cherokee Heritage, Argentina, South Africa, and Australia (1879-1904), with Arthur Frank Wertheim (Norman and London: University of Oklahoma Press, in press June 1993, scheduled for publication Spring 1995).

Editor, Wings of Gauze: Women of Color and the Experience of Health and Illness with Susan E. Cayleff (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1993).

Associate editor, The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers, with Robert A. Hill, vol. 7 (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1990).

Associate editor, The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers, with Robert A. Hill, et al., vol. 6 (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1989).

Associate editor, Marcus Garvey: Life and Lessons with Robert A. Hill (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1987).

##### ARTICLES AND ESSAYS:

"Pan-Africanism as Process: Adelaide Casely Hayford, Garveyism, and the Cultural Roots of Nationalism" in Pan-Africanism Revisited: Class, Culture, and Consciousness in the African Diaspora eds. Sidney J. Lemelle and Robin D. G. Kelley. (London: Verso Press, in press).

"'The Same Tongue of Flame as the Men': Gender and Religious Discourse in the Garvey Movement" in Race, Gender, and Religion in America. eds. Susan Juster and Lisa MacFarlane (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, in progress).

"Fire and Ice: Constructions of Love, Death, and Self in Sarton's As We Are Now" in A Celebration for May Sarton ed. Constance Hunting (Orono, Maine: Puckerbrush Press, 1994).

"Marcus Garvey and Black Women," "Henrietta Vinton Davis," and "Audley Moore" in Black Women in America: An Historical Encyclopedia eds. Darlene Clark Hine, Elsa Barkley Brown, and Rosalyn Terborg Penn. (Brooklyn, N.Y.: Carlson Publishing, 1993).

"Frances Albrier," "Charlotta Bass," "Henrietta Vinton Davis," "Laura Kofey" and "Queen Mother Moore" in African American Women in the United States: A Biographical Directory ed. Dorothy Salem (New York: Garland Press, 1993).

"True Women, Real Men: Gender, Ideology, and Social Roles in the Garvey Movement" in Gendered Domains: Rethinking Public and Private in Women's History: Essays from the 7th Berkshire Conference on the History of Women eds. Dorothy O. Helly and Susan M. Reverby (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1992), 154-166.

"Double Discourse: Gilman, Sarton, and the Subversive Text" in That Great Sanity: Critical Essays on May Sarton eds. Susan Swartzlander and Marilyn Mumford (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan Press, 1992), 187-208.

"Garveyism," "Cyril Briggs and The Crusader," "W.A. Domingo," and "Hubert Harrison," in Encyclopedia of the American Left. eds. Mari Jo Buhle, Paul Buhle, and Dan Georgakas (New York: Garland, 1990).

"Emma Lazurus" and "Grimke's Letters on the Equality of the Sexes and the Condition of Women"



in Women's History in the United States: A Handbook. ed. Angela Howard Zophy (New York: Garland, 1990).

"Marcus Garvey" in Research Guide to American History. ed. Robert Muccigrosso (Washington, D.C.: Beacham, 1989).

"My Antonia in American Studies: History, Landscape, Memory" in Teaching Cather's My Antonia. ed. Susan J. Rosowski (New York, Modern Language Association, 1989).

"The Full Light of This Dawn: Congressman Fogarty and the Historical Cycle of Community Mental Health Policy in Rhode Island." Rhode Island History 41 (November 1982): 127-137.

"The Parents' Council for Retarded Children and Social Change in Rhode Island." Rhode Island History 40 (November 1981): 145-159.

#### REVIEWS:

Will Rogers: A Biography by Ben Yagoda for The Journal of American History (forthcoming, 1994).

Edith Wharton's Letters from the Underworld: Fictions of Women and Writing by Candace Waid in Studies in the Novel 25, no. 2 (Summer 1993): 247-251.

After the World Broke in Two: The Later Novels of Willa Cather by Merrill Maguire Skaggs for Studies in the Novel 24, no. 4 (Winter 1992): 456-459.

Ladies, Women, and Wenches: Choice and Constraint in Antebellum Charleston and Boston by Jane H. Pease and William H. Pease in Gender and History 4, no. 2 (Summer 1992): 264-266.

Changing Our Own Words: Essays on Criticism, Theory, and Writing by Black Women ed. Cheryl Wall in Studies in the Novel 23, no. 4 (Winter 1991): 514-518.

Edith Wharton and the Art of Fiction by Penelope Vita-Finzi in Studies in the Novel 23, no. 2 (Summer 1991): 291-293.

Willa Cather in Person: Interviews, Speeches, and Letters by L. Brent Bohlke and Felicitous Space: The Imaginative Structures of Edith Wharton and Willa Cather by Judith Fryer, in Studies in the Novel 20, no. 3 (Fall 1988): 340-343.

Models for the Multitudes: Social Values in the American Popular Novel by Karol Kelly, in Studies in the Novel 20, no. 1 (Spring 1988): 108-109.

The Voyage Perilous: Willa Cather's Romanticism by Susan J. Rosowski, in Studies in the Novel 19, no. 4 (Winter 1987): 501-503.

"A Scientific Use of Their Humanity," review of Sympathy and Science: Women in American Medicine by Regina Markell Morantz-Sanchez, in Medical Humanities Review 1 (July 1987): 66-69.

#### HISTORICAL RESEARCH FOR:

Howard Chudacoff, How Old Are You? Age Consciousness in American Culture. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989.

Sara Holmes Boutelle. Julia Morgan, Architect. New York: Abbeville Press, 1988.

Sara Holmes Boutelle. Julia Morgan: Life and Work. Newport, R.I.: Budek Films, 1978.

Betty Ring. Let Virtue Be a Guide to Thee: Needlework in the Education of Rhode Island Women, 1730--1830. Providence, R.I.: Rhode Island Historical Society, 1983.

#### PROFESSIONAL PAPERS AND GUEST LECTURES:

"Questions of Diversity in the Cherokee Nation West: The Case of the Rogers Family." Paper presented at the Southwestern Historical Association meeting, San Antonio, Texas, March 31-April 2, 1994.

"Liberty University: The UNIA and African-American Education in Virginia." Virginia Center for the Humanities Colloquia Series, Summer/Fall 1993, Charlottesville, Virginia, November 1993.



"Gendered Pan-Africanism: The UNIA and the African-American Vision of Africa." Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Studies Association, Costa Mesa, California, November 1992.

"Dignity and Redemption: Reconstructing Gender in the Auxiliaries of the UNIA." Virginia Center for the Humanities Colloquia Series, Summer/Fall 1992, Charlottesville, Virginia, December 1992.

"A Woman's Labor: Frances Albrier and African-American Activism in the Bay Area, 1923-1945." Paper presented as part of a panel "Breaking Barriers: Women's Activism in the 20th Century," 85th Meeting of the Pacific Coast Branch of the American Historical Association, Corvallis, Oregon, August 1992.

"Fire and Ice: Constructions of Love, Death, and Self in May Sarton's Fiction." Paper presented at "May Sarton at 80: A Celebration of Her Life and Work," Maine Women Writers Collection Conference, Westbrook College, Portland, Maine, June 1992.

"The State of the Republic: Comparing Benito Cereno and Middle Passage at the Quincentennial of Columbus' Voyage." Paper presented at the California American Studies Association Conference, "Origins and Visions: American Voices at the Quincentennial," Fullerton, California, May 1992.

"The Garvey Movement, Migration and Diaspora: Moving Beyond Dichotomy and Personality in Historical Models." Paper presented at the California American Studies Association Conference, "Moving America," San Jose State University, San Jose, California, April 1991.

"Teaching American Literature as Social History: Meridel Le Sueur and the Politics of Culture in the 1930s." Paper presented at the University of Washington, Seattle, Washington, February 1990.

"The Power of the Word: African-American Activism and the Garvey Movement." Paper presented to the Faculty Group on the Interdisciplinary Study of Gender, English and History Departments, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey, December 1989.

"Women in the Garvey Movement: The Politics of Difference." Rockefeller Humanist-in-Residence Lecture, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey, November 1989.

"Diplomat, Teacher, Soldier, Nurse: Social Roles and Ideology in the Universal Negro Improvement Association." Guest lecture in Interdisciplinary Lecture Series sponsored by the Honors Program and the Women's Studies Program, Rutgers University, Newark, New Jersey, November 1989.

"German and African-American Nationalism: Questions for Women's History." Guest presentation, graduate seminar in American Women's History, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey, October 1989.

"Disrupting Univocality: Contradiction and Transformation in Beloved." Commentary, panel on Toni Morrison. Conference on Feminism and Representation, Rhode Island College, Providence, Rhode Island, April 1989.

"Leadership and the Nature/Culture Debate: Black Women's Organizational Roles in Historical Perspective." Paper presented to the Laurie New Jersey Chair in Women's Studies Seminar on Leadership, Power, and Diversity, Douglass College, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey, April 1989.

"Slavery and Self-Possession in the Novels of Buchi Emecheta and Toni Morrison." Paper presented at the 19th Conference of the Western Association of Women Historians, Huntington Library, San Marino, California, May 1988.

"If Haile Selassie Had Been a Real Man: Gender and Power in the Garvey Movement." Paper presented at the 7th Berkshire Conference on the History of Women, Wellesley College, Wellesley, Massachusetts, June 1987.

"The Needle and the Nightingale: The Narrative Voice and the Domestic Tradition in the Fiction of Alice Walker and Paule Marshall." Paper presented at the 18th Conference of the Western Association of Women Historians, Huntington Library, San Marino, California, May 1986.

"The Politics of Reproduction in the Short Works of Meridel Le Sueur." Guest lecture sponsored by the American Literature Board, University of California, Santa Cruz, January 1986.

"I Felt My Eyes Open on a World I Never Knew: Sarah Orne Jewett and Meridel Le Sueur." Paper presented at the 17th Conference of the Western Association of Women Historians, Mills College, Oakland, California, May 1985.

"Ties of Blood and Bonds of Fortune: The Cultural Construction of Gender in American Women's



Fiction." Ph.D. dissertation, Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island, 1984.

"Women's Therapeutic Communities and the Politics of Healing in the Nineteenth Century: The Fiction of Sarah Orne Jewett and Willa Cather." Paper presented at the 7th Conference of the New England Women's Studies Association, Keene State College, New Hampshire, March 1983.

"Women as Caregivers of the Mentally Retarded: Gender as a Factor in the Volunteer Sector." Guest lecture in Mental Health Policy, Sociology Department, Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island, 1982.

#### HONORS AND AWARDS:

Entrance with Honors, California State University, Fullerton (1973); Regents Fellow, University of California, Santa Cruz (1976-1977); Honors for Teaching, University of California, Santa Cruz (1977); University Fellow, Brown University (1978-1980); Teaching Fellow, Brown University (1980-1984); Mellon Fellow, Institute for the Editing of Historical Documents, University of Wisconsin (1984); National Historical Publications and Records Commission Fellow, University of California, Los Angeles (1984-1985); Rockefeller Humanist-in-Residence, Rutgers University (1989); Alternate, Monticello College Foundation Fellowship for Women, Newberry Library, Chicago (1992); Lyman Butterfield Award, Association of Documentary Editing (to the Marcus Garvey Papers Project) (1992); Fellow, Virginia Center for the Humanities (1993); Mellon Fellow, Virginia Historical Society (1994).

#### PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS:

American Historical Association; American Studies Association/California American Studies Association; Association for Documentary Editing (Education committee, 1986-1987); Berkshire Conference of Women Historians; Faculty Research Seminar on Women, Culture, and Theory, UCLA Center for the Study of Women (1985-1989); Laurie New Jersey Chair in Women's Studies Seminar, Institute for Research on Women, Rutgers University (1989); Modern Language Association; Organization of American Historians; Southwestern Social Science/History Association; Western Association of Women Historians. Associate, Pembroke Center for the Study of Women, Brown University; University Press of Virginia, Advisory Board Member for the "Feminist Issues: Practice, Politics, Theory" Series; Greenwood Publishing Group, Advisory Board Member, Women's Studies List (1993); National Historical Publications and Records Commission and National Endowment for the Humanities, Reviewer of Grant Applications; National Historical Publications and Records Commission, Consultant to Documentary Editing Projects in Women's History.



216 Cypress Avenue  
Santa Cruz, CA 95062  
408-429-6450

30 March 1994

Robert Allen  
389 Belmont  
Oakland, CA 94610

Dear Mr. Allen:

David Brundage recently added me to the panel on "African American Workers in the Twentieth Century" for the upcoming Southwest Labor Studies Conference at UC Santa Cruz. I see by the literature he has sent out that papers should be to commentators by April 4. I am leaving tomorrow to present another paper at a conference in San Antonio on Friday, and I will be staying on in Texas to do research for ten days, so I will be gone when the paper is due in to you. In lieu of the paper, I am sending you a copy of a larger chapter I have written on Frances Albrier, to give you an idea of my thinking about her and the materials I have consulted.

The approach of the chapter is biographical. It is part of a larger study in which I am profiling various women who began their political activism in the Garvey movement and then went on to different kinds of organizing. Part of the point of the larger study (whose working title is Freedom is Never a Final Fact, a quote from A. Philip Randolph) is that there was quite a diversity of thought in the Garvey movement and that involvement in the movement on a grassroots level gave rise to a wide spectrum of activism in which the core beliefs of Garveyism were reframed in various, sometimes very contradictory, ways.

My paper for the conference will focus on Albrier's experiences in the work force in the 1920s and 1940s, drawing from the parts of the chapter on the UNIA and the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, and on World War II. I want to present her personal experience as emblematic of wider trends: i.e., the exclusion of African Americans from skilled positions and the concentration of African-American women in the domestic and personal service sector; efforts to build and/or reform unions; and the changes in labor patterns in wartime. I think the overall framework will be to compare the tactics of separate African-American industrial unionism (the BSCP) with militant action to change segregated locals (the Boilermakers) (all in twenty minutes or less).

I should mention that I am not a labor specialist, although I am very interested in issues of labor and labor history. I am primarily a women's historian. While much of Albrier's activism was directed toward labor, the other women I am looking at were involved in other areas---religion, education, the Progressive party, the

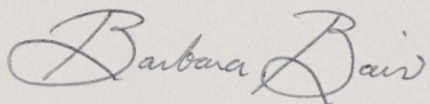


Communist party, legislative politics, the Pan-African movement, etc.

I enclose a brief biographical statement for your reference for introductions. I also enclose a current vita in case you need any aspects of the statement clarified.

I am looking forward to meeting you and to doing the panel.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Barbara Bair". The signature is fluid and elegant, with the first and last names being clearly legible.

Barbara Bair



Call  
re-bid

**Lynn Shaw**  
**Nontraditional Employment for Women**

---

+ Vivian Price  
Neshtey Gudy

Don Dr. Allen -

3/30/94

Here's the video we're  
showing at the Southwest Labor  
Conf. Apr 30<sup>th</sup> (four panels is the one  
which you  
are presiding over).

Sorry for this stoppy  
handwriting - I'm tired but  
I want to get this off to you  
ASAP.

Thanks - we're looking  
forward to meeting you -  
Vivian Price