

CARTON 10:30

THE BROTHERHOOD OF SLEEPING CAR PORTERS

Pittman, Tarea Oral history
excerpt /clippings

1974

2017/193
C

Tarca Pittman oral history excerpt/clippings
LB 1-29-02

READING ROOM USE ONLY

THE BANCROFT LIBRARY, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA 94720-6000
TELEPHONE: (510) 642-6540

REQUEST FOR PHOTOCOPIES FROM MANUSCRIPT AND MAP COLLECTIONS

MAILING ADDRESS OF REQUESTOR (PLEASE PRINT):

NAME Robert Allan

ADDRESS 1634 Vallejo St.

CITY San Francisco STATE CA ZIP 94133

I WILL PICK UP COPIES PLEASE MAIL COPIES

DAYTIME TELEPHONE: () _____

REDUCTION OK? (CIRCLE YES OR NO)

COMPLETE THE PHOTOCOPY REQUEST FORM ON THE BACK

WARNING CONCERNING COPYRIGHT RESTRICTIONS

- The copyright law of the United States (Title 17, United States Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted material.
- Under certain conditions specified in the law, libraries and archives are authorized to furnish a photocopy or other reproduction. One of these specified conditions is that the photocopy or reproduction is not to be "used for any purpose other than private study, scholarship, or research." If a user makes a request for, or later uses, a photocopy or reproduction for purposes in excess of "fair use," that user may be liable for copyright infringement.
- This institution reserves the right to refuse to accept a copying order if, in its judgment, fulfillment of the order would involve violation of copyright law.

PLEASE DISCUSS YOUR REQUEST WITH A REFERENCE LIBRARIAN BEFORE COMPLETING THIS FORM

- Requests for photoduplication of material will be considered when such duplication can be made without injury to the material, when it is within Bancroft Library policy, and when it is in accordance with donor agreements and copyright restrictions. When allowed, single copies will be provided for the requestor's reference use only.
- Photocopies and microfilm of manuscript material remain the property of The Bancroft Library and are to be returned to The Bancroft Library when no longer needed by the requestor. Further photoduplication of copies provided is not permitted.
- In Making copies available, The Bancroft Library does not thereby grant permission to reproduce or quote for publication. Requests for permission to publish must be submitted in writing to The Bancroft Library. In addition, when copyright is not held by the Library, the permission of the copyright holder must also be obtained by the requestor. The requestor assumes full responsibility for any infringement of copyright or publication rights belonging to the author, his/her heirs or assigns.

I make this request in accordance with the provisions of the copyright law and the policies of The Bancroft Library.

ORDER REVIEWED BY: [Signature] SIGNATURE OF REQUESTOR: Robert Allan DATE OF REQUEST: 1/29/02

STAFF USE ONLY- PREPAYMENT RECORD

39 COPIES @ \$.50 EACH = 19.50
POSTAGE & HANDLING = _____
TOTAL PAID = 19.50

49.50
69.00

CREDIT CARD
PAID

THE REQUESTOR IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE COSTS OF ALL COPIES PRODUCED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THIS REQUEST. UNCLAIMED ORDERS WILL BE DISCARDED AFTER SIX WEEKS.

POSTED

CREDIT CARD

The Bancroft Library

University of California/Berkeley
Regional Oral History Office

Earl Warren Oral History Project

*Copied from originals in The Bancroft Library for reference use only.
Copies may not be deposited in other libraries or institutions without
express permission. Please return all copies to The Bancroft Library
upon completion of your research. Permission to reproduce in full or
in part must be obtained in writing from Access Services, The
Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, California 94720*

Tarea Hall Pittman

NAACP OFFICIAL AND CIVIL RIGHTS WORKER

With an Introduction by

C. L. Dellums

An Interview Conducted by
Joyce Henderson

Copy No. ____

© 1974 by The Regents of the University of California

'Mother' of state's civil rights fight Tarea Pittman dies at 88

By Brett Mahoney
Tribune staff writer

Tarea Hall Pittman, one of the pioneers of the civil rights struggle in Northern California died Wednesday in Berkeley.

Mrs. Pittman, 88, former West Coast regional secretary of the National Association of Colored People and host of a black affairs radio program for fifty years, died quietly in her sleep Wednesday afternoon at the Kyakameema Skilled Nursing Facility after a lengthy fight with a brain tumor.

"She was the mother of the civil rights movement in California," said Lawrence Crouchett, director of the Center for African American History and Culture.

From a family of farmers in Bakersfield, she was the first black student to graduate from the junior college there. She moved to Berkeley in 1923 and earned her masters degree in social welfare from the University of California.

Mrs. Pittman was a walking encyclopedia of this century's black civil rights movement. She lived it, led it and talked about it all her adult days.

She was a member of the NAACP for over 75 years and as West Coast regional secretary during most of the 1960s, she helped build the organization in the Eastbay and elsewhere west of the Mississippi.

Tarea Hall Pittman was a member of the NAACP for over 75 years and as West Coast regional secretary during the 1960s, she helped build the Eastbay organization.



"She was a fighter and a good fighter," said Eugene Lasartemay one of Mrs. Pittman's co-workers in the NAACP.

But it was her voice and elocution that Mrs. Pittman was best known for. For 50 years she brought Bay Area listeners "Negroes in the News" on KDIA radio which under previous owners was named KWBR.

Aleta Carpenter, now general manager of KDIA, remembered listening to Mrs. Pittman when she was growing up.

"My grandmother would sit us down in front of the radio and we were not allowed to go to the bathroom or sneeze or anything. When it was over she would say, 'When you grow up I want you to speak as well as Tarea Hall Pittman,'" she said.

Mrs. Pittman, whose late husband, Dr. William R. Pittman, was the first black dentist to

practice in Berkeley, was never paid for her broadcasting work. Until 1985 she did it as a public service.

Carpenter said that Pittman's primary interest was getting information out whether she was on the radio or just talking to people at the supermarket.

She wanted people to know that there were black doctors, judges, architects and funeral directors who had overcome great obstacles and were role models for other struggling black Americans.

Mrs. Pittman is survived by three sisters who all live in the Eastbay: Eugenia Greene, 91;

OBITUARIES

Clarice Isaacs, 84 and Faricita Wyatt, 78.

A memorial service will be held 3:30 p.m. Sunday, August 4 at Fouche's Hudson Funeral Home, 3665 Telegraph Ave., Oakland.

Copied from originals in The Bancroft Library for reference use only. Express permission. Please return all copies to The Bancroft Library upon completion of your research. Permission to reproduce in part must be obtained in writing from The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, California.

Radio Host Tarea Hall Pittman Dies

Memorial services will be held tomorrow for Tarea Hall Pittman, former West Coast regional director of the NAACP and a longtime radio personality who helped desegregate the East Bay public transit system.

Mrs. Pittman, perhaps best remembered as the voice of "Negroes in the News" which aired over Oakland's KDIA radio for more than 40 years, died Wednesday in Berkeley after a long illness. She was 88.

A native of Bakersfield and a member of one of the oldest pioneer families of Kern County, Mrs. Pittman was the first black student to graduate from Bakersfield Junior College.

After receiving a bachelor's degree from San Francisco State University and a master's degree in social welfare from the University of California at Berkeley, Mrs. Pittman worked for several years as a social worker in San Francisco and in Contra Costa County.

Mrs. Pittman devoted her life to human rights. Although she never sought public office, she became known along the West Coast for her activity and leadership in civic affairs, delivering hundreds of eloquent speeches about national social conditions.

"She belonged to so many organizations and was just a hard worker for civic affairs. She was the moving spirit of women in the East Bay and really ahead of her time for a woman," said Tom Fleming, editor of the Sun Reporter newspaper. "In fact, she was ahead of a lot of men, and through her rule in the NAACP she helped break down the bars erected against hiring blacks in the East Bay transit system."

Mrs. Pittman fought against racism for years, Fleming said.

In the mid-1930s, Mrs. Pittman took over as host of "Negroes in the News." For the next 42 years, the show aired on KDIA radio in Oakland, highlighting the accomplishments of African Americans both locally and nationwide.

She also worked to integrate facilities on the campus of UC Berkeley — particularly the barber shop — and often opened her home to struggling students.

In 1952, after more than 10 years of service in the NAACP, Mrs. Pittman was appointed head of the organization's West Coast region. While supervising the organization's operations in nine states, she continued her weekly radio show.

Mrs. Pittman was a board member for many years of the Oakland YWCA and belonged to numerous civic organizations.

Mrs. Pittman is survived by three sisters, Clarice Isaacs of Berkeley and Eugenia Greene and Faricita Wyatt of Oakland.

The memorial service will be at 3:30 p.m. at the Hudson-Fuche Funeral Home, 3665 Telegraph Avenue, Oakland. Donations in Mrs. Pittman's name may be made to local branches of the NAACP.

— Clarence Johnson

INTRODUCTION

As I recall, I first met Mrs. Pittman, "Ty," as she is known, in the early 1930s, and was immediately impressed by her dynamic and magnetic personality. As the years went by, we began to work together in what was known at the time as the Northern California Branch, NAACP. After San Francisco built a branch, the name of Northern California Branch was changed to Alameda County Branch. Some used to say that the Branch was run by Walter Gordon, Tarea Pittman, and C.L. Dellums. At one time, Tarea Pittman became the best known Negro woman in California. She was the head of the best known of the Negro Women's Clubs, and noted for her speaking ability and her ability to arouse and sway an audience. I would classify her speeches as non-violent militancy. When I became President of the Alameda County Branch of the Association, I appointed Ty Chairman of the Membership Committee. By then we had become the very closest of friends, and every year she continued to head the membership drive for me. Together we built the membership from approximately 350 to 3,500 by the end of our regime. The Negro population was less than twenty-five percent of what it is now.

After Franklin S. Williams came out from the East as the Director of the West Coast Region of the NAACP, he turned to Ty Pittman as one of the local leaders to help him build up the region. Within a very few years, and largely through her guidance and support, the West Coast Region became in many ways the strongest region in the Association. After a few years she was persuaded to accept a position as a Regional Field Secretary, really an assistant to Director Franklin Williams, and in that capacity she played a major part in building the Region, and helping to set up an entirely new regional structure. The Region was divided into five Area Conferences or Branches. After Mr. Williams left, Ty was the unanimous choice for the Region's leadership as Williams' successor. She was the Regional Director until a new department of the Association was set up by the National Office, known as Special Contribution Fund for the West Coast. When the National Office was seeking someone to head that Department in the West Coast Region, Mrs. Pittman of course was the unanimous choice to head that Department. She held this position until she decided to retire from full time work.

In the mid-thirties A. Philip Randolph organized the National Negro Congress. Mrs. Pittman was one of the leaders in helping to organize the Congress on the West Coast, and was one of the Officers in the East Bay

Chapter. The National Negro Congress convened in Chicago on February 14th, 15th, and 16th, 1936, for its First National Convention. Ty Pittman attended that session of the Congress, and served as one of the two California delegates on the General Resolutions Committee.

The local chapter of the Congress decided to purchase time on a local radio station for a news program, because at that time the commercial press seldom had anything in them about Negroes, other than criminals. Most newspapers didn't even capitalize the word Negro. The Congress made an arrangement with a local radio station, now known as KDIA, and started putting on a Sunday morning program, known as, "Negroes in the News." After a brief period of time the Congress decided to give up the broadcast, so Mrs. Pittman and four others of us formed the Negro Educational Council of the East Bay, and continued to sponsor the broadcast. Ty had been chosen as the commentator for the program by the Congress, and when the Negro Educational Council took over the program, Ty was continued as the commentator, and I am quite sure that she is the senior continuous newscaster in the nation.

I have never known anyone with more energy, enthusiasm, and dedication to any cause that Ty believed in and participated in.

C.L. Dellums

12 April 1973
Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters
Pacific Coast Headquarters
1716 Seventh Street
Oakland, California 94607

Henderson: I could imagine some black patients got very good rooms, if they could get a private room just because there were no rooms in the black sections.

Pittman: Well, sometimes it did work to their advantage because white people had to pay for their prejudice. Whenever you do some of these things artificially well then sometimes it just doesn't work out, you see, and it works out to your disadvantage. So it did, at times.

VII. Early Work in the NAACP

Henderson: How active were you in the NAACP when you were serving on this committee?

Pittman: Very active. During this time I was a member of the Alameda County Branch and was actively working with them in their branches. I lived at that time in the same place as I now live except that I wasn't in this building. We had a house then in which my husband's office was located and we finally took down the house and built this building on the same spot, so I have actually lived here the whole time. I was very, very active in the NAACP.

Henderson: What was the NAACP doing about discriminatory practices in the hospitals?

Pittman: They were working very hard on it. They had committees; they were applying to everyone that was in authority: the County Board of Supervisors, the city council where things came under the jurisdiction of the city. Of course the chief offenders were the Civil Service jobs that we were trying very hard to have on a non-discriminatory basis, the Police Department and the Fire Department.

Copied from originals in The Bancroft Library for reference use only. Copies may not be deposited in other libraries or institutions without express permission. Please return all copies to The Bancroft Library upon completion of your research. Permission to reproduce in full or in part must be obtained in writing from the Special Services, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, California, 94720.

Pittman: We really went after that. We were working at that for a very long time.

Henderson: Were you able to get any black men on the police force?

Pittman: Yes. We got a few on the police force and we got a few in the Sheriff's Department. We finally got several Negro women in the Sheriff's Department. All in all we broke down much of the discrimination that had to do with housing the prisoners and trying to do away with police brutality. This was very much talked about at that time and we worked very hard on it, very hard. I don't know any program, outside of trying to place Negro school teachers, that we worked any harder on than we worked on trying to do away with discrimination in the county and city facilities.

Henderson: How did the NAACP workers go about doing this?

Pittman: Well, the NAACP is composed of committees and all of the work is done through committees. The president and board of directors had the responsibility of carrying out NAACP national programs locally. This meant that they set up an Education Committee, a Membership Committee, Finance, Labor and Industry Committee, a Youth Work Committee, a Veteran's Committee. All of these committees were set up. Each had a chairman, someone that had particular knowledge of the field that they were going to work in. If it was Labor and Industry maybe a man who was very much interested in and knew or belonged to a labor union would be on that committee. If he wasn't the head of it he would be on that committee, and these committees worked in the particular field of the interest of that committee. They would hold committee meetings and they would get factual data,

Pittman: ~~do surveys because at that time~~ there wasn't this wealth of material that you have now that you can draw upon about how many Negroes there are here. They'd make their own surveys and find out the places where we were not employed, or if we were employed, in what capacities we worked.

We would receive complaints. It is an organization set up to serve people, and we would get many complaints that people had applied for positions, taken examinations, and were never called. We would then go to the Civil Service Commission of the city or county and try to find out why these particular Negroes didn't pass or why they couldn't get placed on the list to be appointed. We got all the factual data. Then after we had the factual data or got individual complaints from people who had been discriminated against, we would go to the Board of Education, to the City Manager or the City Council or the County Board of Supervisors, or whoever was in charge of that particular institution, and try to find out why this discrimination existed and what could be done about it and try to exert enough pressure on them to get them to lift their discriminatory practice from the facility. All of this was done through committees. Then the committees would report back to the board and the membership. There were regular committee meetings once every month and every committee was supposed to meet at least once a month. Then you'd take something to the board of directors and you'd end up at the membership meeting with the whole membership being appraised of what had happened, what we were trying to do about it.

Pittman: We even did some boycotting at that time. We asked people not to

patronize a certain place. We were instrumental in getting the
Civil Rights Law put on the books where people could be fined.
It is true it was only/^a\$100 fine and court costs but this was a
step forward. We got that passed in the legislature. It was
a state law that if you discriminated against anyone because of
their race or their color you could be, if you were found guilty,
fined \$100 and court costs.

We did some very interesting things on this. I remember the
case of a man who was running a Cocktail Lounge. He discriminated
against Negroes and didn't want them in his place and he would ask
them out. We always had people of good will of all races and creeds
who were busy working with us. A white member of our Alameda County
Branch went with a Negro member who was refused and he acted as a
witness. The owner was found guilty and after that, Negroes went
in his place. He at first was very arrogant and he said, "Oh, he
didn't mind paying \$100. It was worth it to keep 'Niggers' out of
his place." But he got so many cases that he came to the Board of
Directors of the NAACP and pleaded with us (I was there at that
Board meeting.) He pleaded with us not to fine him any more and said
his doors were open. He said that this was ruining him, about to
put him out of business, and that his place was open to all and
that he welcomed us and so forth. So even though this was a very
small fine plus the cost of court, it did act as a deterrent in
many cases where we could prove that they did discriminate and
refused to give service because of race.

Copied from originals in The Bancroft Library for reference use only.
 Copies may not be deposited in other libraries or institutions without
 express permission. Please return all copies to The Bancroft Library
 upon completion of your research. Permission to reproduce in full or
 in part may be obtained by writing from Access Services, The
 Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, California, 94720

So public accommodations such as restaurants, hotels and motels were a very big thing, high on the agenda then. It was a long time before we could get restaurants, hotels, and motels (motels were the worst) opened to Negroes because they would say that they were full and you'd have a very difficult time finding out (the people were coming and going), but we did the same thing with them. A Negro couple would go in and ask for a room and they'd say that they didn't have any. Right behind them a white couple would go in and many times that white couple was an NAACP couple and they would get a room. The owner would then be fined. Then we had our public accommodation law that was strengthened when we had the FEPC law passed. Today there are very few places which are open to the public that will discriminate against people, unless for some other reason, but their color is not the reason. If they are white and they are boisterous or drunk or something of that sort, they can be barred from a place. We absolutely opened up public accommodations in this country. Of course we have opened them up even in Mississippi and the deep south, so you know we have opened them up here. But it was a very big thing at that time.

Henderson: When was the Civil Rights Law passed?

Pittman: The Civil Rights Law was passed, I guess it must have been mid-'30's that we were working on passing that law. This pertained to places of public accommodation and we worked very hard on that. It was very hard to get that passed as many of the men in the legislature were conservative and reactionary. They didn't want to pass it. Oh, we had a terrible time trying to get it passed.

Henderson: Did you do any lobbying in Sacramento?

Pittman: A great deal of lobbying. I've done a lot of lobbying. We lobbied on this bill.

You see, all of the legislators come home and they have offices in the county. We went to Sacramento when the bill would be up for hearing, but we worked on the legislators when they would come home on either weekends or vacations, because most of them were home every weekend. We waited on them and worked with them and tried to persuade them, and then if they would not vote our program or were very hostile to us, when they were up for re-election we lobbied against them then and we tried to see that we would get a candidate that would be for this legislation. We finally did get the bill passed.

Henderson: Were there any legislators who were particularly strong against this statute?

Pittman: Yes, I don't have the names of them right now. If I would see them I'd know them but I can't think who our legislators were.

Henderson: It is just the names of some people which stay in your mind.

Pittman: I know they do, and they would stay in mine. I just haven't reviewed who they were for so long that I can't think right now. I need the roster.

Henderson: OK. Did you serve on the NAACP Educational Committee?

Pittman: Our forces were rather limited in Alameda County. We had a very strong branch but obviously our branch would not have the large number of members as the Chicago, New York or Atlanta branches, or some of the other big places because at this time that we're talking about, there was quite a small black population in the Bay Area.

Henderson: We're talking about the '30's, aren't we?

Pittman: Yes, in the '30's. We didn't get the big influx of Negroes

until World War II when we got people coming in to work in the shipyards and that was in the '40's. But in the '30's the population hadn't burgeoned like it did later. It just mushroomed after this. The whole population began to grow and particularly the black group came in.

So we had a number of key people in the NAACP branch. If they were not employed or if they were employed and they had the time, there was this big thrust to try to get some of these things done because we could begin to see where we were going. The average black citizen of the Bay Area had come from the South, one of the thirteen Southern states, and they could see the vestiges of discrimination here, that California was going to be exactly like Texas, Arkansas, Alabama and Georgia and every place else if we didn't do something and try to work at it very hard and try to expedite it, too. We were trying to get it done as quickly as possible. This was the thing; it was just like going up against a big stone wall and you had no facilities to push that wall down. So it was a very hard job.

I set out to say that we key people who were on several committees and if you were an officer - a president, a vice-president, a secretary (all of which I was at one time or another) -- then you would be an ex-officio member of all these committees, and you were working to try to direct the committee or to help formulate some of the policies of the committee so that you could make a thrust in this area. I was on the Membership Committee and ran a number

Pittman: of membership drives. I was on the Labor and Industry Committee

and worked with the Fire Department, particularly I did a big job with heading the Oakland Fire Department fight for integration.

Once you had this in your hands, even though you the next year might not be elected, you might go on to another committee but you had so much background and experience in the particular field where you were that you more or less sort of stayed on with that committee. So most of the time we had people because we had rather a small membership at the time. We didn't have as many people as we did in the later years. A number of us -- particularly people that were officers, conspicuous officers -- were on several of these committees. So, as I've said, I was on the Labor and Industry Committee, the Education Committee and, of course, there was no committee really in the whole association that as a lay leader I did not work on at one time or another.

But particularly I was working with the schools trying to get black teachers in the schools, and on the Labor and Industry Committee trying to do something about jobs. When we got around to the war years then we were working very hard because the cry went out that there would be no black people that would work in Kaiser Shipyards, and Kaiser Shipyards was the big employer. There were other employers but no one that was as conspicuous or that was doing the work or sending out the recruiting like Kaiser Shipyards was. So they were saying that they would not hire any black people because they had no place to house them. There was war housing but they weren't going to let any Negroes live in the war housing. So this

Pittman: **became, of course, one of our** very, very big fights. I worked very directly on that problem with Mr. C. L. Dellums and Henry Johnson who died a couple of years ago, and a number of our people who were here, such as, Attorney John Drake, and just any number of persons who were here and very conspicuous people. Walter Gordon was very instrumental in working with the Police Department and the Fire Department and he himself was an attorney and had been the first black policeman in Berkeley. He was very conversant with the whole situation that had to do with the police and this kind of thing. So I did work on that. It was a very, very big job. We tried very hard. It was hard work. We'd meet no less than once a week and we'd generally meet at night because most of our people worked and they could not meet in the afternoon.

Our open public meetings were always on Sunday afternoon. We met for many, many years from church to church. We had a schedule set up and the schedule was laid out for the year. We would in the North Oakland Baptist Church then at Taylor Memorial Church, and then at Beth Eden. We made the rounds of the churches according to schedule. We also met at First A.M.E. Church which used to be the old 15th Street Church.

Henderson: What did you do at the public meetings?

Pittman: At the public meetings the committees would report on whatever action we needed and it would have to be endorsed and concurred with and voted by the general membership. For instance, if we were to vote that we would like the boycott of a certain store, whatever it was, we would bring in all the information, answer questions and then the general membership would vote to either go with the recommendation of the committee or not to go with it and to turn it down.

Pittman: So everything had to be voted on by the general membership.

Henderson: What strategy did you use to get firemen employed? You said that you worked very hard on that.

Pittman: We worked very hard with the Oakland city manager. The city manager was the key man. Then we worked with the battalion chiefs and the fire chief himself. We were really building pressure for equal opportunity for our firemen and we did it by working through the Fire Department itself, the head of the Fire Department, which is the fire chief who is responsible to the city manager, and in this instance it was in Oakland. We also didn't have any Negro firemen in Berkeley. We were working on Oakland and we still have only one or two in Berkeley. It was in Oakland where they had the eight or ten men, perhaps a dozen men, that were all segregated in Engine 22, which was where they put all of the Negroes as they came into the Oakland department. They did not allow any of them to be appointed and go to any fire engine house except that particular house. That was a black house and it was a black facility inside the Fire Department, you see.

Henderson: And so the NAACP was trying to break up this segregation?

Pittman: Yes, trying to get them out and to get those men placed in other units of the Fire Department, any place over the city. Finally, of course, we were successful and got Engine 22 put out of commission. All the men were reassigned, one here, one there, another two - all over the city of Oakland.

Henderson: Do you have any idea around what time Engine 22 was broken up?

Pittman: Engine 22 wasn't broken up, I would say, until the '40's. We were

Pittman: ~~working on it all this time.~~ We were actually working on it for

15 or 20 years. Unbelievable! It is unbelievable! But at any rate, these are the facts of the case.

Henderson: When was the first Negro teacher hired?

Pittman: Miss Ida Jackson was the first Negro teacher hired at Prescott School in Oakland. She is still living, but has been in rather poor health. She's been retired for a number of years and lives out in East Oakland. She would be an interesting person for you to talk to.

Henderson: I understand that she was hired as early as 1925. Would you say that?

Pittman: At this time I don't recall the date. I was on campus then, and she was, too. You see she was back doing graduate work. She came here as a graduate of New Orleans University. I think her university became either Dillard or Xavier later on, one or the other. At any rate, she came to California. She had taught in the South before she came here. She received her A.B. degree from the University of California in 1922 and she was back at the University doing graduate work when I first came to the Berkeley campus.

Henderson: Why was the Education Committee set up?

Pittman: Well, the Education Committee was set up to try to do something about the schools generally. You see, the schools were just notorious for not giving Negro students an opportunity to take a college preparatory course. Of course the counselling has remained poor right down through the years, but at one time it was scandalous.

We were trying to work with the school authorities to see that Negroes were given the courses and given the opportunity to prepare

Copied from originals in The Bancroft Library for reference use only. Copies may not be deposited in other libraries or institutions without express permission. Please return all copies to The Bancroft Library upon completion of your research. Permission to reproduce in full or in part must be obtained in writing from Access Services, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, CA 94720

Pittman: to go to college. Now if they couldn't go, that was going to be another thing but those whose parents could afford to send them

to college found that they were not eligible because they had been sidetracked in taking many needed subjects. They didn't have college preparatory courses that would enable them to be ready for entrance examinations or to enter the various colleges and universities in the area. So we were working with the schools, trying to get them not to discriminate against the Negro students.

We had all kinds of trouble. We had black-face plays that were given. We had Uncle Tom's Cabin and people were blacked up in it. We had Topsey and Eva, and Topsey was blacked up; it wasn't even a Negro student that was taking the part of Topsey because one of the places where you were discriminated against a great deal was in the dramatics department of the schools. It was just unheard of for Negroes to be in the school play - well, I mean unless they had some big chorus. But as far as taking a regular speaking part of something, that was just out. Our Education Committee was very, very instrumental in breaking up Black-Faced Minstrels. The Elks Club, not the black Elks but the white Elks, had, at one time, a yearly Minstrel Show. It was a Black-Face Minstrel Show. Finally an Attorney General wrote an opinion that no school building could house or have a Black-Face Minstrel or any entertainment where any race was ridiculed, that this was against the policy of the schools, and that they couldn't use the auditoriums. Well, we had a time trying to stop Black-Face Minstrels. Our Education Committee worked hard on trying to keep the theatre producers from showing The Birth of a Nation because it was a hate play and it was a very racist film.

Rittman: We worked hard on The Birth of a Nation to try to keep it from being shown. So the Education Committee was doing all of these things. For years we were trying to get "Negroes" spelled with a capital "N." We were going to the papers and trying to keep them from playing up cuttings, scrapes, rapes and naming "This was a black." It is very interesting today, where we have taken the step and we've gone back to wanting to be referred to as "black" when we fought so hard to keep from having this denominator or this designation placed behind the name of persons of color, particularly Negroes, you see, because this then played it up: "It was a black man that was doing this," or a "black girl" or a "black boy." We were fighting very hard against that because it prejudiced people against us. This made the public feel that we were sort of a sub-culture, because the papers didn't play up anything that was good. Of course you'd think that no Negro ever married or died or anything else because unless it was someone very, very important, it never got in the news. Oh well, death notices have to come out and be published but other than that, there would be no notice of it. It was unheard of to have a Negro wedding picture in the paper. I mean, that was just out of the question!

Finally we got a Miss Delilah Beasley, who went to work for the Tribune, and we had a Negro page in the paper. I don't know precisely where Miss Beasley's native home was, but she was here in the early twenties. She didn't die, I don't think, until around probably the last of the forties or early fifties. I think she had been trained as a journalist. She had come from some place in the East. I think it was Ohio. She had done quite a bit of

Copied from originals in The Bancroft Library for reference use only.
 Copies may not be deposited in other libraries or institutions without
 express permission. Please return all copies to The Bancroft Library
 upon completion of your research. Permission to reproduce in full or
 in part must be obtained in writing from Access Services, The
 Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, California, 94720

Pittman: writing and editing and so forth and was quite a woman of letters.

So she was given the position by the Oakland Tribune to write the Sunday page of the news about Negroes. They had a page then in the Oakland Tribune that would give some of the happenings. Before they had that, you know, perhaps there would be nothing about Negroes.

Henderson: Was this also in the '30's that this page was run?

Pittman: Yes, it was going on in the '30's. Maybe the very last of the '20's even, and in the middle of the '30's she was writing this page.

VIII. The Negro Educational Council: Negroes in the News

Pittman: This was the reason why the Negro Educational Council of the East Bay, a group of ten people, banded themselves together in 1935 to put on a radio program, Negroes in the News. Now the whole intent behind that was that if we should get on the air, we would be able to offset this lack of news and report constructive news about Negroes by having a weekly program that people could listen to and actually hear something other than that someone had cut someone and been arrested in a crap game or something like that. Mr. C. L. Dellums was the chairman and I was the secretary. We had other people: the treasurer, Mrs. Lilly Wilkerson who is now deceased, E. S. Thomas who was a member of the committee, George Towns who had his master's degree and was one of our first students to graduate from Stanford University, and a number of people who banded themselves together to put this program on. Actually, we were able to go to Mr. Stuart Warner of Warner Brothers. There were three brothers that ran a record and music shop with radios, recorders and this kind of thing. But they also owned a radio station. They owned station KLS; those were the call letters.

Pittman: It was a very small station, but they owned it. They were quite religious people, so mostly they were programming religious programs. They were emanating from a temple out on 10th avenue and had various religious groups - not Negroes. I am now talking about white religious groups that were having broadcasts at that time. So we asked about getting just a small bit of time. We wanted a block of fifteen minutes to put on this program.

Mr. Warner consented and said we could do it. He said that we would have to pay a stipend for the air time. This is why we had to have some sponsors. So we got Baker Mortuary, Edward J. Wilson Insurance Agency when he formed his company, and several other sponsors. Then it was decided by the group that I would be the commentator. We gathered news from the Associated Negro Press and from church announcements and civic groups' announcements in the area. We knew Leon Washington of the Los Angeles Sentinel very well and received his paper. This was a weekly program so we didn't have to be gathering news every day. Of course Los Angeles was the hub of whatever was being done west of the Rockies as far as Negroes were concerned and we had access to The Sentinel and another paper that was a very old one. It is out of existence now, The Los Angeles Eagle. We had these two papers that we received regularly, along with the Pittsburgh Courier, the Chicago Defender, and the Amsterdam News. All of these papers we subscribed to and more. Also we had access to the Negro press releases that Claude Barnett and his group put out.

So with the local news and this coverage that we got of California and the national scene we were able then to take out

Pittman: sort of a cross-section of the news and present it every Sunday morning. Now this was the way the radio program began thirty-five years ago and it has never ceased to exist. The reason we wanted to call it Negroes in the News was because we wanted people to know that it was exactly that: Negroes in the news. We were stressing, not just news, but Negroes in the news, so we could hear about what we were doing on a local, national and statewide level.

Now that's the way that began. It was a completely volunteer group. Nobody was paid - not even the commentator. I never was paid. But we got enough money from our sponsors to pay the station for the time. I did it just as a hobby. I had had several courses in radio in my college work and I was anxious to do this because this was sort of like a laboratory that I could use in connection with doing the work that I had done in several courses. So that is how Negroes in the News began.

Henderson: And it hasn't changed?

Pittman: It hasn't changed. Dellums has remained the chairman. Mrs. Lilly Wilkerson died and Mr. Dellums then became the chairman-treasurer. Mrs. Frankie Jones belongs to it. Mr. E. S. Thomas is still living, and a number of our members are still in existence. We would meet now and then and have a little session about what we have done and what we are doing.

But it is a self-sustaining kind of group, and their function was never anything else other than Negroes in the News. They never did take on any other project.

Henderson: Of course you've changed stations now.

Copied from originals in The Bancroft Library for reference use only.
 Copies may not be deposited in other libraries or institutions without
 express permission. Please return all copies to The Bancroft Library
 upon completion of your research. Permission to reproduce in full or
 in part must be obtained in writing from Access Services, The
 Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, California 94720

Pittman: The station's call numbers changed. KLS was sold to a group that changed the call numbers to KWBR. It was KWBR for maybe fifteen or so of these years. Then it became KDIA because another station bought it and it belongs to the Sunderling chain. These call numbers were changed but it was the same station changing call numbers as a result of changing ownership. It's the same place on radio dial. They were buying the station and its wave length and everything that went with it. So it remained 1310 on the dial. That is where it is today.

Henderson: When you first began as commentator, did Miss Beasley serve as a reference person for you?

Pittman: No, we were always independent of her. She was doing other kinds of things - writing for some of the clubs. I'm going to try to find my copy of Lifting as They Climb. Miss Beasley had been quite a nice-looking woman and she had a very interesting love story. It was really something.

She had been, she said, engaged to Colonel Charles Young, who was the first Negro colonel in the United States Army and the third Negro to graduate from West Point. Lots of people have heard of Colonel Young. Miss Beasley was quite a gentlewoman. She was someone who would stand out in your mind and you would remember. She was thin, with soft hair - quite a character. She was something else; always Miss Beasley and she never married. When that Colonel Young thing broke up, why then she never did marry.

Henderson: Did she serve as president of the Association of Colored Women's Clubs?

Pittman: No, she was never the president. I never knew Miss Beasley to be the head of anything. Here is Miss Beasley in this picture.

She was sort of an Indian-looking woman.

Henderson: She had beautiful eyes.

Pittman: Yes, she had been very beautiful I am sure as a girl. I saw her as a mature woman and then as an older woman. She was always alone. Well, she lived with people in their homes. You know we didn't have apartments then like we have now. You know, you had housekeeping privileges and you roomed with some one. She roomed with a Masengale family for many, many years on 35th Street in Oakland, right off of Market Street. I'd see her at different functions but I never knew her to head an organization.

There is a write-up by her in Lifting as They Climb. She wrote the history of the big national convention of the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs held in Oakland in 1926. She was very active then. She wrote and covered this story for the Tribune. She covered the national convention in 1926 as their chief reporter. According to records she was writing and publishing as early as 1919.

That was the first time that a group of Negro women chartered a train and came across country with this big entourage of Negro women and they ended up in Oakland. It was a big, big affair. The Oakland Municipal Auditorium over by the lake was new at that time, and that is where they held their convention.

Mary McLeod Bethune was the national president and she absolutely electrified people. They came from all around to hear

Copied from originals in The Bancroft Library for reference use only.
 Copies may not be deposited in other libraries or institutions without
 express permission. Please return all copies to The Bancroft Library
 upon completion of your research. For reproduction in full or
 in part must be obtained in writing from Access Services, The
 Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, California, 94720

Pittman: **Mary McLeod Bethune** because she was the national president and she was so eloquent. You were just spellbound listening to her.

So Delilah Beasley covered that event!

Henderson: She had a column in the Tribune at that time.

Pittman: The Tribune did a document on it, a resume. Now I haven't seen that resume. You see, at that time I was of course in school and I was not as active in the community as I became ten years later. I was very young at the time and I didn't know too much about club work. I knew the people that were in it -- Mrs. Wall who founded the Fanny Wall Children's Home, and other people, but I wasn't really helping to direct anything at that time or working directly with the association in a grassroots way where I would know too much about it.

But Miss Beasley covered the national convention for the Tribune and they put out some type of report in capsule form -- a little brochure. I didn't get to see it, but no doubt the Tribune has it, because they did it. After that was over they compiled the happenings of the convention, because it was something that they had never heard of. All of the women -- really the brains of the nation as far as Negro women were concerned -- were here at the national meeting in 1926. So the paper was just sort of dumbfounded about this whole thing and they compiled a resume.

Henderson: I see. When did you feel it was necessary to break up the NAACP into smaller branches? I know that at first there were very few people in the Alameda County Branch.

Pittman: I intimated that we were working with the legislature and with city councils and all. Well, by 1956 we had gotten such an influx

Pittman: of people into the state and into this section that we now had a sizeable group in Berkeley, the city of Alameda, and Oakland. It became too confusing for the same committee to try to get all the information about, let's say, the schools in Berkeley and make a presentation to the Berkeley Board of Education. Then we would have to get all the information about Oakland and make a presentation to the Oakland Board of Education and likewise to Alameda. So the Alameda County Branch, after a great deal of thought and working on it, petitioned the national head to have the three cities of Alameda County have three distinct charters, forming three distinct branches. This was what it was: the work had gotten heavy and it was just too much for the various committees to try to work and get the information and receive the complaints from the various cities. So we then decided that the only way we could work effectively was to have three distinct chapters, one in Berkeley, one in Oakland, and one in Alameda. We founded them and divided the membership. We went down the roster and took the Alameda members and made them the nucleus of the Alameda Branch, likewise Oakland and Berkeley.

Henderson: Did you join the Berkeley Branch?

Pittman: I joined the Berkeley Branch. But in 1956 when this was done, I, by that time, had become a national officer of the NAACP and was supervising all the branches. I had gone into the Regional Office in 1952.

Copied from originals in The Bancroft Library for reference use only. Copies may not be deposited in other libraries or institutions without express permission. Please return all copies to The Bancroft Library upon completion of your research. Permission to reproduce in full or in part must be obtained in writing from Access Services, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, California, 94720

TAREA PITTMAN INTERVIEW #4

October 21, 1971

Joyce Henderson, Interviewer

IX. Fair Employment Practices Legislation in California

Henderson: Did the NAACP take the leadership in getting an FEPC bill passed in California?

Pittman: Yes, they did. That's true.

Henderson: In what year was it first introduced?

Pittman: Well, there had been a bill introduced in the assembly in 1945, but the introduction of the bill that finally was voted into law in 1959 began in June of 1953. It was not until 1953 that the bill was introduced in the assembly by Assemblyman W. Byron Rumford with a number of other legislators including Augustus Hawkins. W. Byron Rumford and Augustus Hawkins were co-authors of the bill and there were a number of other legislators who joined them.

Henderson: If the bill was first introduced in the legislature in 1953, for what do we remember the year 1945?

Pittman: There were various attempts to get legislation. The 1945 effort was a bill that was introduced into the assembly and, more or less, it was not a strong bill or the bill that we wished to see, but it was a statement of policy and this kind of thing. It could not pass; it simply was one of the early efforts. But in 1953, after statewide meetings in 1952 and after we declared it to be on the agenda of NAACP to get this type of legislation enacted, this was the biggest effort that had been made and it was a cooperative

Copied from originals in The Bancroft Library for reference use only.
 Copies may not be deposited in other libraries or institutions without
 express permission. Please return all copies to The Bancroft Library
 upon completion of your research. Permission to reproduce in full or
 in part must be obtained in writing from Ms. [redacted] Services, The
 Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, California, 94720

Pittman: one with church, labor, social and civic groups coming together
 to work together to get this particular bill passed. NAACP had

a commitment for a strong civil rights bill. In other words,
 that meant one that had sanctions and enforcement provisions.

Many of the bills that were enacted early in this field were
 just statements of policy and so forth, but they had no enforcement
 power. NAACP had a mandate to support a bill, to have a bill
 written that would have enforcement powers. Earlier, Assemblyman
 Augustus Hawkins took the leadership in this field with other men
 concurring. Then every other year the other Negro assemblyman,
 W. Byron Rumford, would sponsor the legislation and be joined
 by the others.

In 1953 Mr. Rumford took the leadership with the bill and
 we had quite a stormy time indeed. It was a rugged thing that we
 were trying to do because it was to the moderates and the conservatives
 at that time very "far-out" legislation. There were those who con-
 tended that the defeat of the 1946 FEPC statewide initiative meant
 that the majority of the people of the state did not want it, and
 they said that was a mandate from the people. This was one of the
 reasons why they didn't want to vote it into law. It was one of
 the things that they fell back on.

Henderson: How do you interpret what happened in 1946? Do you think it was
 a mandate of the people?

Pittman: I think that it showed the extent to which the state of California
 was subject to discrimination and segregation and the forces that
 were at work to keep racial minorities from having their full citizen-
 ship rights. It simply showed that we had a state that was filled

Copied from originals in The Bancroft Library for reference use only.
 Copies may not be deposited in other libraries or institutions without
 express permission. Please return all copies to The Bancroft Library
 upon completion of research. Permission to reproduce in full or
 in part must be obtained in writing from Access Services, The
 Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, California, 94720

Pittman: with Southerners and other people that were in sympathy with

undemocratic forces - let me put it like that. It just showed how difficult it was going to be for us to get the votes to get this enacted into law. I think that it is safe to say, without fear of contradiction, that the 1953 effort was a coalition of the various facets of our organizational structure in the state, headed by the FEPC committee. We had leadership from all of the principal areas that were concerned with this - greater than we had before or since. We have never had an effort like this in which we came together statewide. We came together in the northern area and southern area of the state. Then, we worked out of the Capitol in Sacramento. For the first time we had a lobbyist that stayed in Sacramento full time.

Henderson: Who was that?

Pittman: I was the lobbyist. Then we had other people. We called mobilizations and the grassroots people themselves lobbied. But we had a person registered and acting as the lobbyist.

Henderson: What did you have to do as a lobbyist?

Pittman: As a lobbyist I was in the Capitol working with the author of the bill, working with the Speaker of the two houses, generally working to find out when this particular bill was before the Committee on Ways and Means. I was trying to find out and acquaint myself with the procedures as to when this bill would be called up and be called before committee. Sometimes it was very difficult to find out in advance. Then, once I found out, it was my job to alert all of the co-chairman that we had throughout the state so that they

Copied from originals in The Bancroft Library for reference use only.
 These may not be deposited in other libraries or institutions without
 express permission. Please return all copies to The Bancroft Library
 upon completion of your research. Permission to reproduce in full or
 in part must be obtained in writing from Access Services, The
 Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, California, 94720

Pittman: could come to the hearing. Once they set those hearings then it

was my job to see that our people, that is, those that were working
 on the committee, would get to Sacramento for the hearings and give
 testimony.

I also gave testimony in connection with this at all the
 hearings. We had other spokesmen at that time. Franklin Williams
 was our NAACP regional director and he was a very vocal and brilliant
 speaker himself. He, of course, gave testimony. We had testimony
 from the chairman of our West Coast Regional Legal Committee, who still is
 the same man, Attorney Nathaniel Colley of Sacramento. He was a
 very able spokesman who spoke on the effect and the legal aspects
 of the bill. Mr. Dellums was another very able spokesman. He was
 a very brilliant speaker also, and, as the vice-president of an
 international labor union, he, of course, gave very valuable
 testimony in connection with labor aspects of it.

It wasn't just Negroes who testified. We had many, many other
 people in the field of labor, the church - both Catholic and Protestant -
 the Friends had a lobby. Labor had a lobby. The Friends had an offi-
 cial lobby and they included FEPC in their program along with other
 subjects that they were interested in and other peoples that they
 were interested in. So we would meet with sort of a cross-section
 of lobbyists, trying to map our strategy on what we would do and
 who we would call in to give the testimony, who would give certain
 phases of it and this kind of thing, so that we would cover the
 questions that would be asked. And of course we attempted to bring
 pressure to bear on the various legislators from our various NAACP

Copied from originals in The Bancroft Library for reference use only. Copies may not be deposited in other libraries or institutions without express permission. Please return all copies to The Bancroft Library upon completion of research. Permission to reproduce in full or in part must be obtained in writing from the Reference Services, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, California, 94720.

Rittman: branches located where these legislators lived and we did some very strategic work there. The lobbyists would contact people in the local community to try to build up support for the bill.

Lobbying was a very hard job. Legislators were very hard to contact. If they knew you were trying to get them you almost had to run and waylay them in the halls. They wouldn't see you because naturally they were not anxious to tell you they wouldn't vote for the bill and they were trying to get out from under pressure - that is if they were those legislators who lived in areas where they didn't want to have anything to do with this bill.

So it was a very hard job. We were running up and down halls and trying to find out where the legislators were, running around early before they went to the floor, and trying to catch them when they came in at noon. Then you'd go to the floor if they declared a recess. If you were a certified Legislative Advocate, as they called it, you could go to the floor. We'd try to get some of the legislators during an intermission or as they left the floor or came back on the floor.

Now obviously this was not the best time in the world to get them, but when you were desperate, you had to have a lot of nerve and you had to have a lot of vigor about this. You simply had to try to get them any way you could. I was the Legislative Advocate for the Fair Employment Practices Committee, that was made up of a cross-section of organizations. But the heart of it was NAACP asking others to join with them. So I, at this particular time, was a lobbyist for the California Committee for Fair Employment Practices. I was then acting for the committee.

Copied from originals in The Bancroft Library for reference use only.
 Copies may not be deposited in other libraries or institutions without
 express permission. Please return all copies to The Bancroft Library
 upon completion of your research. Permission to reproduce in full or
 in part must be obtained in writing from Access Services, The
 Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, California 94720.

Henderson: And what was your job with the NAACP?

Pittman: I was a Field Secretary with them. But I put full time into this.

I went to Sacramento and lived. I would come home to the Bay Area on occasion or perhaps on a weekend because most of the legislators went home on weekends. But mostly I stayed in Sacramento all week because we were so busy and were trying to do so many things.

Henderson: I wanted to ask you about the meeting at which the statewide committee was first formed on February 8, 1953. My notes say that it was formed in Fresno.

Pittman: Yes.

Henderson: And that the meeting was called by a man named Anthony Ramuglia. Do you remember him?

Pittman: No, it wasn't called by him. I don't know where we got that from.

Henderson: From a news clipping.

Pittman: Maybe he was the head of one of the labor unions. He was of the CIO.

Henderson: The CIO Industrial Council.

Pittman: Yes, all right. He called the members of his union - he and John Despol. John Despol was the secretary-treasurer. I believe Ramuglia was the statewide president of it. Now they made the call for their unions statewide and the NAACP made the call for theirs. The Jewish community and the Amalgamated Clothiers made a call for theirs. In other words, all these people made a call. Sue Adams was the co-chairman for AFL. See, this was before the AFL-CIO joined together. So it was not the AFL-CIO as it now is. I see where this was in here, in this news clipping. And it does give the inference that the committee was formed with the announced purpose of attaining passage of FEPC, and I see it says "at a

Copied from originals in The Bancroft Library for reference use only.
Copies may not be deposited in other libraries or institutions without
express permission. Please return all copies to The Bancroft Library
upon completion of your research. Permission to reproduce in full or
in part must be obtained in writing from Access Services, The
Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, California, 94720

Pittman: meeting at the California Hotel called by Anthony Ramuglia of
the CIO."

You see, representatives of more than a dozen leading organizations organized themselves into a permanent committee. But Ramuglia made the call for his union. This is a misleading statement. It says he made the call for representatives of more than a dozen leading organizations. But he made the call for more than a dozen CIO unions and they came in from all over the state. He was only one person and he was never one of the conspicuous people. Sue Adams was very, very active. Ed Roybal, who was at that time a councilman in Los Angeles and now is a congressman in the House of Representatives, made the call for CSO, which is Community Service Organizations representing what now would be a Chicano group. He represented the Mexican-American community. And the California Federation for Civic Unity was a statewide organization. Irving Rosenblatt, the president of that organization, was one of the co-chairmen of the California Committee. There was a big, big representation and we met in Fresno after doing some preliminary work. We'd been meeting as a Northern California group and a Southern California group and then we were in this meeting galvanizing it and putting it together statewide.

One of the techniques that we voted to use was to have what we called a mobilization and it was the first meeting of that kind that had ever been held. There have been some others since then, but that was the first one, where we would call in the main membership of the sponsoring and co-sponsoring organizations and we would have them to come in to the Capitol itself in Sacramento.

Pittman: We had a mobilization for two days. When they came in we had

workshops on how to lobby and how to go and see their congressmen, because they came in from all over the state. What they really were going to do was to go and see their representative. It might be their state senator or it might be their state assemblyman, and they were going to see them in their offices. Most of them had made appointments to see them before they left home, so that they would have an opportunity to do this. Then on Sunday afternoon we called a big mass meeting at one of the largest churches in Sacramento, adjacent to the Capitol grounds, and had Mr. Rumford and Gus Hawkins and a number of other legislators who were co-authoring the bill with Rumford and Hawkins to attend. We tried to let people know why we had to have the bill, what abuses there were in the field of employment, and this kind of thing.

There were those who felt that we needed to include the field of housing. They said they went hand-in-hand. We knew that there was gross discrimination in housing. But we realized that it added to our difficulty in trying to get the legislation on the books because there were delegates to the mobilization who would go off on a tangent and they wouldn't like what was being said about the housing, and would just cause a lot of confusion. So to keep that down and to realize that if we went in and got it in the field of employment, then later we could go into the field of housing. This is what we did. This is what was done and this caused us a lot of work to get that clarified.

Pittman: There were many organizations that felt that the mobilization would be just a big group that would be up in Sacramento and would cause a lot of confusion. They thought that there may be violence and that would cause a lot of difficulties. But the mobilization was very, very well-disciplined. The people knew what they were to do and we had a sargeant-at-arms and people that were responsible for seeing about the delegations from certain areas and it really was so well-planned! We had done so much. There was an understanding by some of the delegates - sort of an underground thing - that it was going to be taken over by the left-wing, by the Communists, and that they planned to infiltrate it. But we only accepted delegates from those organizations with whom NAACP affiliates. We had a national policy that we could not affiliate with self-asserted Communists groups. So this meant that we did not have to accept any delegates except from organizations with whom we affiliated. That was the meaning of that.

Henderson: Were there many left-wing organizations that wanted to join?

Pittman: Well, we never did know how many wanted to. We simply took the affirmative action that we would not accept any delegates from any organizations that were on the Attorney General's list of subversive organizations at that time that our national office gave us, that we could not and would not work with. We were just working in the affirmative and we did not have to meet that problem.

Henderson: So the first mobilization took place in 1953?

Pittman: That's right. In March of 1953.

Copied from originals in The Bancroft Library for reference use only.
 Copies may not be deposited in other libraries or institutions without
 express permission. Please return all copies to The Bancroft Library
 upon completion of your research. Permission to reproduce in full or
 in part must be obtained in writing from The Bancroft Library,
 Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, California, 94720

Henderson: Who, do you think, was responsible for thinking of such an idea
 of everybody coming there, marching on Sacramento.

Pittman: Well, I would say that it came out of the Policy Committee of the
 West Coast Regional Office under the chairmanship of Mr. Dellums
 and the staff which included Franklin Williams, Lester Bailey and
 myself. The chairmen of the various statewide NAACP committees
 were also active in this regard. These included the legal committee
 co-chaired by Loren Miller and Nathaniel Colley, and the labor
 committee chaired by William Pollard. You see, we actually
 authored the bill. We wrote it. Finally, Mr. Rumford handled
 the bill in 1959. I was telling you that he and Augustus Hawkins
 alternated with handling the bill. In '53, it seems to me that
 Gus Hawkins was there and I believe that he was the prime handler -
 although with Rumford - and then in '59 it was Rumford.

Henderson: That's right. AB 900 in 1953 was introduced by Gus Hawkins.

Pittman: Yes.

Henderson: Does that mean that Hawkins handled it in 1955?

Pittman: Yes, every other year it was Assemblyman Hawkins and W. Byron
 who
 Rumford took the leadership. But when we finally got it passed
 in 1959 Rumford was the author and he was joined by co-authors,
 about twelve or fourteen men.

Henderson: Do you remember any senators during the '50's who were particularly
 in favor of the bill?

Pittman: We had great difficulty with the bill. We had a difficult time
 everywhere but particularly in the Senate. Hugh Burns was the
 leader of the Senate and the speaker. He was very anti-FEPC and
 he gave us a very difficult time as did also the senator from

Pittman: ~~Vallejo~~ oh, isn't that ridiculous! I'm having as much

trouble with his name as we had with him!

Henderson: Was his name Luther Gibson?

Pittman: Luther Gibson, of course! How could I ever forget.

Henderson: He was also against the housing bill later on.

Pittman: Oh, he just offered all kinds of opposition and it was very difficult for us. Now I am trying to think who the principal senator was that carried the ball over in the Senate. Oh, Richards. Richard Richards of Los Angeles was a young, brilliant attorney and a very able spokesman. We only have one Negro in the state senate today. At that time, of course, we had none. Milton Marks of San Francisco was an able and forthright advocate of the legislation and a Republican. We had a number of men that did help with it and it was quite a chore to get it through.

Henderson: What interest did Governor Earl Warren show in the committee's efforts to get an FEPC?

Pittman: It is very interesting that although there were those who claimed that Governor Warren was not against the bill, he would not come to the mobilization or speak, and he would not see our delegation. We tried very hard to meet with him and to ask that he use his influence to get the bill through. But this he never did - publicly. And it is very interesting that I saw a news release that wanted Eisenhower to talk to our governor. But he wouldn't because the Republicans, you see, had the state, and they were in ascendancy in the legislature, both houses, as well as having the Republican governor. I do remember very, very clearly that the committee

Pittman: which was putting on the big mobilization pleaded with

Governor Warren to come to the meeting and speak and give his approval to FEPC, and to do what he could do, and so forth. That he would not do. We didn't have a press conference or a conference with him ever on FEPC.

Now we did have conferences with Governor Edmund G. "Pat" Brown. We had conferences with him and he would see the statewide committee. He set up the appointment and people came in from all over the state to meet with him. So we definitely had a commitment from him and we had him saying even as a campaign pledge that he was pledged to it. He felt FEPC was morally right and that discrimination based on race or sex or national origin was immoral and this kind of thing. But we never had any conference like that with Warren.

The only time I saw Governor Warren and was in his presence was when he was making statements or doing anything publicly was on the occasion of holidays, national holidays, state holidays. That's the only time that I saw him.

Henderson: This was when you were stationed in Sacramento?

Pittman: Well, this was before, before I was there and during the time I was there. This was when I would see him. Of course I remember having seen him in the courthouse in Alameda and I saw him as district attorney for Alameda County.

Henderson: Were you working with the NAACP then?

Pittman: Oh yes, I was a member of NAACP, because I was a member of NAACP from my earliest days here, which went back to my student days when I first came here to U.C. from Bakersfield.

Henderson: I was just wondering what you were doing that took you into the courthouse.

Henderson: She helped introduce that first FEPC bill that Augustus Hawkins introduced in 1945. Of course she was in the legislature after that, too. But I was just thinking that maybe she was another outspoken person for FEPC.

Pittman: I don't recall working with her, but Pauline Davis did a very good job. Ed Gaffney of San Francisco was excellent. He was a very, very outspoken and staunch supporter.

I don't remember Kathryn Niehouse. I didn't work with her. I'm sure that some of these other fellows did, but I didn't work with her.

Henderson: When was the FEP commission finally set up?

Pittman: The commission was named and it was confirmed in 1959 by Pat Brown.

Henderson: How many Negroes were appointed to it?

Pittman: Only one and that was C. L. Dellums.

Henderson: Was he a natural for the commission or was there a lot of hassle over his appointment?

Pittman: No. He was, I would say, a unanimous choice of the Negro community and of minority groups statewide. He had been, and still is, an outspoken foe of discrimination. His whole adult life, and while he has been in the Bay Area, has been given to the cause. He was more knowledgeable about many phases of this than many people because he was in the labor movement. He knew of the need for this as far as jobs were concerned, with his work with the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, in the unions proper, and just in general. So he was one of the outstanding civil rights leaders of the whole state -- and the nation, for that matter.

Copyright original in The Bancroft Library for reference use only.
Copies may not be deposited in other libraries or institutions without
express permission. Please return all copies to The Bancroft Library
upon completion of your research. Permission to reproduce in full or
in part must be obtained in writing from Access Services, The
Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, California, 94720

Pittman: He was a national figure. We felt that it would be good if we could have another Negro commissioner, rather than just one. We felt that the case load was going to be heavy and that we would need another. But there was no thought of having opposition to Mr. Dellums himself as a person.

Henderson: Do you think it a little strange that the chairman was a white man?

Pittman: Well, here again, there was opposition to the commission. There was no one - and I say this without fear of contradiction - who was as knowledgeable and who probably "deserved" to be chairman more than Mr. Dellums himself. But when you consider that the whole matter of FEPC was so controversial at the time and that people had to be confirmed as members of the commission, that it would be almost impossible to have generated enough support so that the governor would not have difficulty in appointing a Negro.

My interpretation would be that this was an unpopular subject with many people and they didn't want the commission ever to have been enacted into law. Then once it was enacted, they wanted to certainly be sure that the commission wouldn't have any more power that it possibly could have. They wanted to get a mild-mannered, sort of middle-of-the-roader for the chairman and to get some people on it that they felt would not press. They had all kinds of dire predictions on what would happen if they passed the FEPC bill. At this time it was very unpopular. People were very fearful about it. They thought that this would be something that would turn the state upside down.