

ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: “TO STRIKE FOR RIGHT, TO STRIKE WITH MIGHT”: AFRICAN AMERICANS AND THE STRUGGLE FOR CIVIL RIGHTS IN BALTIMORE, 1910–1930

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“‘To Strike for Right, To Strike With Might’: African Americans and the Struggle for Civil Rights in Baltimore, 1910–1930” examines the nature, character and scope of early civil rights activism among African Americans in Baltimore, Maryland. Utilizing an expansive definition of “civil rights,” it explores not only voting and holding political office, access to public education, and fair housing opportunities; it also considers struggles for access to municipal and social services and struggles related to labor and employment. By placing all of these terrains of struggle under the umbrella of “civil rights,” the dissertation emphasizes the importance of these rights in relation to one another and their importance in the minds and lives of African Americans who struggled for rights in each of these categories as part of a broader struggle for equality.

Baltimore has long been recognized for its civil rights activism by scholars who portray the era of the 1930s to 1950s as a kind of “golden age” of civil rights activism in the city, considering such activism to have been dormant prior to that period. The dissertation reveals an active civil rights movement in the city in the decades preceding the 1930s that was led primarily by members of the middle-class but drew widespread support and strength from members of all classes in Baltimore’s African American community. In uncovering the civil rights activism of the period from 1910 to 1930, the dissertation brings to the forefront previously ignored organizations, including the Federation of Parent-Teacher Clubs, the Women’s Cooperative Civic League, the Independent Republican League, and the Baltimore Urban League. It also reveals that the activism of the period from 1910 to 1930 was important in launching major civil rights campaigns of national organizations such as the NAACP, whose residential segregation campaign had roots in the fight in Baltimore. Throughout, the dissertation explores the ways that black Baltimoreans defined priorities and struggled for rights, resulting in a more nuanced understanding of African Americans’ struggles for citizenship and equality at beginning of the twentieth century.

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AND THE STRUGGLE FOR CIVIL RIGHTS IN BALTIMORE, 1910–1930

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Dedication

To the memory of my grandmother, Rosetter Barrino Doster (1912–2003).

Acknowledgments

According to an often-repeated proverb, “it takes a village to raise a child.” This proverb can easily be applied to the dissertation process for it has taken a “village” of individuals to help me complete this journey. I am extremely grateful for all of the individuals and institutions that have supported me during my graduate school career and helped to shape this dissertation and ultimately bring it to completion.

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Introduction

On April 12, 1941, the Baltimore *Afro-American* carried a brief story buried in one of its back pages on the death of William Ashbie Hawkins. The Baltimore lawyer, who had been battling heart and kidney ailments for four years, finally succumbed to these health conditions in the spring of 1941 after being confined to the hospital for seven months. Hawkins's modest funeral was held at his Northeast Baltimore home, and it was officiated by the pastor of Sharp Street Memorial Methodist Church, where Hawkins had served as a trustee for over three decades. The *Afro-American*'s coverage of Hawkins's passing included a brief biographical sketch, which noted his place of birth, education, and surviving family members. Commenting on his legal career, the article hailed Hawkins as a "champion of right" for African Americans in Baltimore and across the state of Maryland, but offered few details regarding his long and illustrious career.¹

As a leader in the struggle for civil rights for five decades, Hawkins bridged multiple eras and generations, working to secure rights for African Americans in numerous areas including education, housing, political rights, and public accommodations. Hawkins's civil rights activism occurred at both the local and national levels in numerous civil rights campaigns. He served as counsel for the Niagara Movement in the first decade of the 1900s, led the Baltimore NAACP battle against residential segregation in the 1910s, and in the 1920s, became the first African American to run for the U.S. Senate seat for Maryland. However, despite

¹ "Ashbie Hawkins, Attorney for 50 Years, Dies at 78," *Afro-American*, April 12, 1941. The Baltimore newspaper was known as the *Afro-American Ledger* from 1900 to 1915 but for the sake of consistency, it will be referred to as the *Afro-American* throughout the course of this dissertation.

these numerous accomplishments, Hawkins's death did not generate widespread press coverage, and his passing seemed to go almost unnoticed. In subsequent decades, Hawkins and his legacy seem to have quickly faded from memory.

“ ‘To Strike for Right, To Strike With Might’: African Americans and the Struggle for Civil Rights in Baltimore, 1910 – 1930” rescues William Ashbie Hawkins, as well as a host of other leaders and organizations in Baltimore's struggle for civil rights, from historical obscurity. Through an examination of the nature, character, and scope of civil rights activism among African Americans in Baltimore, in the early twentieth century, this dissertation brings these individuals and organizations to the forefront. The dissertation engages and expands upon a number of current trends in civil rights historiography in order to examine the dynamics of the struggle for equality in Baltimore, while filling a gap in historical scholarship of civil rights activism in this city for the early twentieth century.

During the 1910s and 1920s, middle-class African American men and women successfully organized and led the battle for civil rights in Baltimore, often relying upon the support of working-class blacks. African Americans in Baltimore enjoyed access to a number of white dominated institutions, including local and state courts, municipal government entities, and political parties. This access, though limited, informed black Baltimoreans' strategies and tactics as they waged civil rights campaigns that realized concrete improvements in maintaining voting rights, increasing educational facilities, and expanding social and municipal services to black neighborhoods.

In examining the two decades from 1910 to 1930, the dissertation uncovers the early twentieth-century roots of the civil rights activism of black Baltimoreans during the mid-twentieth century, which has been a period more often studied in historical scholarship. Simultaneously, this dissertation exposes the continuities and discontinuities in the movement with the struggle for civil rights of the late nineteenth century. Political rights, improvements in the realm of education, and increased employment opportunities were all areas of activism present in the late nineteenth century, which continued to take precedence during the early twentieth century. But changing conditions, particularly the advance of segregation and the strengthening of the Progressive Movement, led to the expansion of the civil rights agenda to include battling for improved housing and the expansion of social and municipal services.

The dissertation begins in 1910, following a period of explosive growth in the city's African American population in the closing decades of the nineteenth century as thousands of African Americans, primarily from rural Maryland and Virginia, migrated to the city. Between 1880 and 1900, the city's African American population increased from 54,000 to 79,000, giving Baltimore the nation's second-largest African American population. With only a slight increase in black population in the next ten years, Baltimore would soon fall behind Washington, D.C., New York City, and New Orleans in terms of numbers of African Americans residing in the city; however, the city's African American population still represented an impressive 15 percent of Baltimore's entire population. In fact, the percentage of African Americans in the population of Baltimore remained relatively constant in the decades following the Civil War until the 1920s. During the latter decade, the African American

population of the city increased over 30 percent, five times as rapidly as the white population. By 1930, the year with which the dissertation ends, African Americans in Baltimore numbered over 140,000 and represented nearly 18 percent of the city's entire population. Thus, from 1910 to 1930, though the city of Baltimore did not experience as great an influx of African Americans as other cities during the first half of the Great Migration, the African American population of Baltimore still greatly increased by nearly 70 percent.²

This study extends to 1930, ending as a period deemed by historians as one of extensive civil rights activism among Baltimore's African Americans began. The period extending from the 1930s through the 1960s has been portrayed as a kind of "golden age" of civil rights activism in Baltimore, focusing on the advent of the City-Wide Young People's Forum in 1931 and the "Buy Where You Can Work" jobs campaign and movement of 1933 – 1934 as the beginning of this new era. Formed by young black college and high school graduates, the City-Wide Young People's Forum was originally focused on community education but soon expanded its agenda to include a variety of issues including securing jobs for black librarians and social workers, and jobs for African Americans within the city's public school system. By 1933, the Forum had formed a pivotal coalition with the revivalist Prophet Kiowa

² Barbara Jeanne Fields, *Slavery and Freedom on the Middle Ground: Maryland During the Nineteenth Century* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985), 176; Stephen Grant Meyer, *As Long as They Don't Move Next Door: Segregation and Racial Conflict in American Neighborhoods* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000), 16; Cynthia Neverdon-Morton, "Black Housing Patterns in Baltimore City, 1885 – 1953," *Maryland Historian* 16 (Summer/Spring 1985), 25–39; Samuel Kelton Roberts, Jr., *Infectious Fear: Politics, Disease, and the Health Effects of Segregation* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 9–10; Ira De A. Reid, *The Negro Community of Baltimore: A Summary Report of a Social Study Conducted for the Baltimore Urban League* (Baltimore: National Urban League, 1935), 16–18; Prudence Cumberbatch, "Baltimore," *Encyclopedia of the Great Black Migration: Greenwood Milestones in African American History*, ed. Steven A. Reich (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2006).

Costonie, thereby launching the direct action phase of the “Buy Where You Can Work” jobs campaign, a movement initiated by Costonie in 1932. Historians have emphasized these two events as important in the struggle for equality among African Americans in Baltimore, arguing that they marked a turning point in Baltimore’s African American community, particularly due to the lack of activity among traditional civil rights organizations, notably the local branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) during the previous decade. Moreover, this movement breathed new life into suffering and moribund civil rights organizations in Baltimore such as the NAACP and the Baltimore branch of the National Urban League.³ But in focusing on this “golden age,” it is important not to obscure the work that went before which laid the ground for these well-known and remembered campaigns. This dissertation uncovers the roots of civil rights activism

³ For more information on the struggle for civil rights in Baltimore from the 1930s to the 1960s, see Sandy M. Shoemaker, “‘We Shall Overcome Someday’: The Equal Rights Movement in Baltimore, 1935–1942,” *Maryland Historical Magazine* 89 (1994): 261-274; Andor Skotnes, “‘Buy Where You Can Work’: Boycotting for Jobs in African-American Baltimore, 1933 – 1934,” *Journal of Social History* 27 (Summer 1994): 735-761; Andor Skotnes, “The Communist Party, Anti-Racism, and the Freedom Movement: Baltimore, 1930 – 1934,” *Science & Society* 60 (Summer 1996): 164-194; David Taft Terry, “‘Tramping for Justice’: The Dismantling of Jim Crow in Baltimore, 1942 – 1954,” (Ph.D. diss., Howard University, 2002); Prudence Denise Cumberbatch, “Working for the Race: The Transformation of the Civil Rights Struggle in Baltimore, 1929 – 1945” (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 2001); Andor Skotnes, “The Black Freedom Movement and the Workers’ Movement in Baltimore, 1930 – 1939” (Ph.D. diss., Rutgers University, 1991); Bruce A. Thompson, “The Civil Rights Vanguard: The NAACP and the Black Community in Baltimore, 1931 – 1942” (Ph.D. diss., University of Maryland College Park, 1996); John R. Tilghman, “No Road to Renaissance: Black Protest and Downtown Expansion in Baltimore, 1954 – 1977” (Ph.D. diss., Howard University, 2012); Roderick W. Ryon, “An Ambitious Legacy: Baltimore Blacks and the CIO, 1936 – 1941,” *Journal of Negro History* 65 (1980): 18-33; Lee Sartain, *Borders of Equality: the NAACP and the Baltimore Civil Rights Struggle, 1914 – 1970* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2013); Jessica I. Elfenbein, Thomas L. Hollowak, and Elizabeth M. Nix, eds., *Baltimore ’68: Riots and Rebirth in an American City* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2011); Howell S. Baum, *Brown in Baltimore: School Desegregation and the Limits of Liberalism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2010); Rhonda Y. Williams, *The Politics of Public Housing: Black Women’s Struggles Against Urban Inequality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); C. Fraser Smith, *Here Lies Jim Crow: Civil Rights in Maryland* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008).

of the 1930s and onward, placing these latter movements within the context of a larger and protracted civil rights struggle.

At the turn of the twentieth century, Baltimore was home to a substantial African American community and had fostered such a community since the beginning of the nineteenth century. According to historian Leroy Graham, Baltimore maintained one of the largest black populations in the United States throughout the nineteenth century.⁴ As a consequence of the presence of a sizeable African American population over the course of the nineteenth century, black Baltimoreans developed a rich institutional life composed of a myriad of organizations including churches, literary societies, and fraternal organizations. According to historian Christopher Phillips, African Americans effectively used these organizations in the period prior to the Civil War as a vehicle to assert a certain political agenda and address black concerns. More specifically, these institutions enabled African Americans to effectively combat efforts to force colonization upon them, attempts to remove the free black population from the state of Maryland, and intense job competition from German and Irish immigrants.⁵ In the period following the Civil War, these

⁴ Leroy Graham, *Black Baltimore: The Nineteenth-Century Black Capital* (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1983), 15-33.

⁵ Christopher Phillips, *Freedom's Port: The African American Community of Baltimore, 1790 – 1860* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 239.

For other works on the African American community of Baltimore prior to the Civil War, see Fields, *Slavery and Freedom on the Middle Ground*; Graham, *Black Baltimore*; Diane Batts Morrow, *Persons of Color and Religious at the Same Time: The Oblate Sisters of Providence, 1828-1860* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); Seth Rockman, *Scraping By: Wage Labor, Slavery, and Survival in Early Baltimore* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009); T. Stephen Whitman, *The Price of Freedom: Slavery and Manumission in Baltimore and Early National Maryland* (New York: Routledge: 2000); Andrew Keith Diemer, "Black Nativism: African American Politics, Nationalism and Citizenship in Baltimore and Philadelphia, 1817 to 1863" (Ph.D. diss., Temple University, 2011); "'Fair daughters of Africa': African American Women in Baltimore, 1790

institutions would prove equally important in assisting African Americans in making the transition from slavery to freedom and in advancing a civil rights agenda.

In the first few decades following the Civil War, African Americans in Baltimore experienced tremendous changes, particularly in the realms of politics, education, and labor. Immediately, African Americans sought a voice in the political life of the city and the state through the Republican Party. In 1867, for the first time, African Americans were part of integrated delegations where they spoke before mixed-race audiences assembled at the Republican State Convention. Between 1868 and 1870, however, blacks were regularly excluded from Republican Party primaries, ward meetings, and conventions. But, as a result of constant agitation following ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment in 1870, African American men in Baltimore soon enjoyed the right to vote and by the mid-1870s regularly worked with whites at Republican Party meetings and served on the Republican State Central Committee.⁶ Moreover, armed with the right to vote in the state of Maryland, African Americans in Baltimore were able to elect black men to the city council beginning in 1890, when Harry S. Cummings became not only the first African American to be elected to the Baltimore City Council, but also the first African American elected official in the

– 1860” (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 2001); Michael Thomas Johnson, “Black Lives and White Minds: Race and Perception in Antebellum Baltimore” (Ph.D. diss., State University of New York at Stony Brook, 2002).

⁶ William George Paul, “The Shadow of Equality: The Negro in Baltimore, 1864 – 1911” (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin, 1972), 85, 87 – 88. African American women would not receive the right to vote until 1920 with the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment. Prior to 1870, African American men had not been able to vote in the state of Maryland since suffrage restrictions had been put in place in 1810. See Margaret Law Calcott, *The Negro in Maryland Politics, 1870 – 1912* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press), 3.

state of Maryland.⁷ Thereafter, six different African Americans were elected to the Baltimore City Council during the period from 1890 to 1931.⁸

In the period following the Civil War, educational opportunities for African Americans expanded as a number of public schools were begun in Baltimore, supplementing the education already provided by a handful of private schools. One key institution in the effort to provide African American children with an education was the Baltimore Association for the Moral and Educational Improvement of the Colored People, which established twenty-two schools for blacks in the city in the period from 1865 to 1867.⁹ In 1867, the city of Baltimore assumed control of these schools, marking the advent of the extension of public education to African Americans in the city. But this transfer of control of African American education to the city resulted in the dismissal of all African American teachers in 1868, and the city proved reluctant to provide adequate funding for the upkeep and maintenance of the existing schools or the construction of new ones, particularly construction of schools that provided education beyond the primary grades.¹⁰ During the period of

⁷ Calcott, *The Negro in Maryland Politics*, 58.

⁸ The African Americans who served on the Baltimore City Council and their terms were: Harry S. Cummings (1890 – 1892, 1897 – 1899, 1907 – 1919), Dr. John Marcus Cargill (1895 – 1897), Hiram Watty (1899 – 1905), Warner T. McGuinn (1919 – 1923, 1927 – 1931), William T. Fitzgerald (1919 – 1923), and Walter S. Emerson (1927 – 1931). Following the end of the terms of McGuinn and Emerson in 1931, another African American would not serve on the Baltimore City Council until 1955 with the election of Walter Dixon. Suzanne Ellery Greene, “Black Republicans on the Baltimore City Council, 1890 – 1931,” *The Maryland Historical Magazine* 74 (September 1979): 203-222.

⁹ Jeffrey R. Brackett, *Notes on the Progress of the Colored People of Maryland Since the War* (Baltimore: John Murphy & Company Printers, 1890), 84; Paul, “The Shadow of Equality,” 108.

¹⁰ In his study of Baltimore, William Paul emphasizes that even though the city of Baltimore did not provide adequate funding for African American education and white schools received more funding, both black and white schools suffered from some of the same problems, including the poor physical condition of school buildings and a lack of schools that extended beyond the primary grades.

Democratic rule in the state of Maryland (1870-1895), few changes were made in terms of governmental support of African American education, and the per capita expenditure for African American children never reached parity with that for whites, even though the amount of money spent on white students declined. In 1874, the state appropriated \$460,000 for its white schools and African American schools received \$100,000, while by 1890, though the appropriation for white schools had declined to \$400,000, the appropriation for African American schools ranged from \$100,000 to \$125,000 annually, depending on revenues. During the brief period of Republican control of the state that followed (1896-1900), slight increases were made in state appropriations for African American education, raising the amount of state funds allocated by \$25,000, but white schools also received the same increase, meaning that African American schools did not reach parity with white schools.¹¹

In the period immediately following the Civil War, important advancements were also made in the realm of labor. African Americans in Baltimore were employed in a wide variety of skilled and semi-skilled trades, more than in any other urban black community in the nation. They even outnumbered whites in a few trades such as ship caulkers, hod carriers, barbers, and brick-makers. The postwar decades also witnessed the rise of black-owned businesses, most notably the Chesapeake Marine Railway and Dry Dock Company, a black cooperative established by Isaac Myers in 1866. Three years later, Myers took the lead in another important development, the organization of the Colored National Labor Union (CNLU), the nation's first national

Paul also notes that though they received inadequate funds, the black public schools of Baltimore far exceeded those in the rest of Maryland in terms of quality. Paul, "The Shadow of Equality," 111 – 119.

¹¹ Calcott, *The Negro in Maryland Politics*, 64–65, 92–93.

black labor organization. However, the CLNU would only make limited advancements, becoming defunct by 1872.¹²

By the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, African Americans in Baltimore, like their counterparts across the South, were facing numerous challenges to their civil rights with the advance of Jim Crow.¹³ African Americans faced numerous attempts to restrict suffrage in Maryland. In 1901, Democrats pushed a law through the state legislature that eliminated the simple system of straight-ticket voting, but it was rendered ineffective through the efforts of white and black Republicans in setting up schools to teach illiterate black voters in order to ensure a Republican victory.¹⁴ This attempt to reduce black voting was followed by the introduction of three amendments to the state constitution that sought to restrict African American suffrage in Maryland: the Poe Amendment (1904), the Straus Amendment (1907), and the Digges Amendment (1911). Although all three of these attempts at formal disfranchisement failed, other informal and illegal measures were used to restrict black voting.¹⁵ African Americans faced even greater challenges in the labor arena as they were increasingly relegated to unskilled positions. For the most part, African American craftsmen were generally excluded from the city's industrial

¹² Paul, "The Shadow of Equality," 93, 137–138, 348.

¹³ For major works on the advance of racial segregation in the South beginning in the late nineteenth century, see Rayford W. Logan, *The Negro in American Life and Thought: The Nadir, 1877 – 1901* (New York: The Dial Press, 1954), and C. Vann Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955).

¹⁴ Paul, "The Shadow of Equality," 101–105.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 115–131; Eugene W. Goll, "The Poe Amendment's Defeat: Maryland Voters Reject the Negro Disfranchisement Movement, 1903 – 1905" (M.A. thesis, University of Maryland, College Park, 1966).

growth that occurred between 1875 and 1911. By 1910, almost all of the major skilled trades were in the hands of whites, and only in three trades could blacks be found in proportion to their share of the city population: foundry work, dressmaking, and barbering.¹⁶

With the dearth of published studies examining African Americans and the struggle for civil rights in the period from the Civil War to the beginning of the twentieth century, this work is a historiographical heir to two previous dissertations: “The Shadow of Equality: The Negro in Baltimore, 1864–1911” by William Paul and “The Baltimore Black Community, 1865–1910” by Bettye Collier Thomas. Paul’s study, which chronicles the history of black Baltimoreans in the first half century following emancipation, focuses on struggles to secure political rights, better jobs, decent housing, and increased educational opportunities. He argues that, by 1911, the year the final disfranchisement measure was defeated in Maryland, African Americans had achieved progress in the realm of civil rights when compared to other black urban communities in the South, but equality remained elusive. Covering roughly the same time period, Collier-Thomas’ dissertation focuses on the institutional structure of African American life in Baltimore. Her study reveals the presence of a myriad of religious, fraternal, and political organizations, which provided direction and stability for the race while providing leadership in the struggle for equality. In ending her study with 1910, the year that the Baltimore City Council passed a municipal residential segregation ordinance, Collier-Thomas argues that this act marked the “end of an era of protest” and a change in leadership of the struggle.

¹⁶ Ibid., 348, 362.

Building upon the works of Paul and Collier-Thomas, this dissertation moves forward chronologically, examining African American institutions and organizing in the period from 1910 to 1930 and the new, as well as some old, leaders and organizations at the forefront of the struggle for equality. However, my dissertation has a more expansive civil rights focus than its predecessors, delineating how newly formed African American institutions in Baltimore, including local branches of national organizations, were used to advance a wide-ranging program of civil rights. My work also moves beyond the local level to reveal how African Americans in Baltimore served not only as local actors in the struggle for civil rights, but as national actors as well.¹⁷

Employing an expansive definition of “civil rights,” this dissertation examines the strategies employed by black Baltimoreans as they mobilized and agitated for rights in various arenas. Fitting with more traditional definitions of civil rights activism, this dissertation explores political participation among African Americans in Baltimore through an examination of such actions as voting and holding political office, struggles over public education, and access to equal treatment in housing. Moving beyond these traditional civil rights arenas, my work also consider struggles for access to municipal and social services as well as struggles related to issues of labor and employment. In constructing the definition of “civil rights” used for this study, I am relying upon the work of Evelyn Nakano Glenn and her application of historian T. H. Marshall’s definitions of civil, political, and social rights to the United States setting. As articulated by Marshall and applied by Glenn, “civil rights” include

¹⁷ Paul, “The Shadow of Equality,” Bettye Collier-Thomas, “The Baltimore Black Community, 1865–1910” (Ph.D. diss., George Washington University, 1974).

freedom of speech and thought, the right to own property, and the right to enter into contracts; “political rights” include the right to exercise political power such as holding political office and voting; and “social rights” include the right to reasonable economic conditions, the right to security, and the right to enjoy a “civilized” existence according to society’s prevailing standards. Of these categories of rights, Glenn notes that social rights are the most important, because one needs these rights in order to exercise civil and political rights.¹⁸

Building upon Glenn’s discussion of rights, this dissertation collapses all three categories of rights into “civil rights,” emphasizing both the importance of these rights in relation to one another and their importance in the minds and lives of African Americans who struggled for rights in each of these categories as part of a broader struggle for equality. Traditional histories of the struggle for civil rights already combine “political rights” and “civil rights” under the rubric of “civil rights”; however, my dissertation expands this category to incorporate “social rights,” bringing in issues that affect one’s economic welfare and the ability to live according to society’s prevailing standards, including the right to be employed in all industries and access to municipal services that are crucial to one’s health and standard of living.

This dissertation engages and contributes to a number of trends in civil rights historiography. First, in line with other works on what is now termed “the long civil rights movement,” it expands the chronology of the Baltimore Civil Rights Movement, moving back in time to uncover its early-twentieth-century roots. As

¹⁸ Evelyn Nakano Glenn, *Unequal Freedom: How Race and Gender Shaped American Citizenship and Labor* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 18–19.

noted by historian Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, the popular narrative of the Civil Rights Movement has traditionally focused on the “classical” phase which begins in 1954 with the Supreme Court decision outlawing the “separate but equal” doctrine in *Brown v. Board of Education* and extends to the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Hall advocates a “longer and broader narrative” that is born in the New Deal era and extends through the late 1960s and 1970s. This longer chronology paints a fuller and more complex picture of the movement, which makes important links between race and class and the struggle for civil rights, exposes the centrality of women’s activism and gender dynamics, and uncovers civil rights activism in areas of the country beyond the South. This dissertation is part of the “Long Civil Rights Movement” historiography; however, its chronological boundaries extend even further than those advocated by Hall in order to reveal and emphasize the importance of early twentieth century civil rights activism in setting the stage for the modern Civil Rights Movement.¹⁹

¹⁹ Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, “The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past,” *Journal of American History* 91 (March 2005): 1233-1263. For examples of works that advance the idea of a “Long Civil Rights Movement,” see Shawn Leigh Alexander, *An Army of Lions: The Civil Rights Struggle Before the NAACP* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012); Kimberley L. Phillips, *Alabama North: African American Migrants, Community, and Working-Class Activism in Cleveland, 1915–45* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999); Laurie Green, *Battling the Plantation Mentality: Memphis and the Black Freedom Struggle* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007); Barbara Savage, *Broadcasting Freedom: Radio, War, and the Politics of Race, 1938–1948* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999); William Green, *Degrees of Freedom: The Origins of Civil Rights in Minnesota, 1865–1912* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015); Chanelle N. Rose, *The Struggle for Black Freedom in Miami: Civil Rights and America’s Tourist Paradise, 1896–1968* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2015); Jeffrey D. Gonda, *Unjust Deeds: The Restrictive Covenant Cases and the Making of the Civil Rights Movement* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015); Lionel Kimble, Jr., *A New Deal for Bronzeville: Housing, Employment, and Civil Rights in Black Chicago, 1935–1955* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2015); Stanley Keith Arnold, *Building the Beloved Community: Philadelphia’s Interracial Civil Rights Organizations and Race Relations, 1930–1970* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2014); Jeanne Theoharis, *The Rebellious Life of Mrs. Rosa Parks* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2013); Erik S. Gellman, *Death Blow to Jim Crow: The National Negro Congress and the Rise of Militant Civil Rights* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012); Eben Miller, *Born Along the Color Line: The 1933 Amenia Conference and the Rise of a National*

Uncovering the activism of black Baltimoreans during the 1910s and 1920s as part of a Long Civil Rights Movement remedies a historical silence in the existing literature, especially as it pertains to the latter decade. Historical textbooks and monographs tend to emphasize the Harlem Renaissance and the Great Migration when discussing African American history during the 1920s.²⁰ In “*We Return Fighting*”: *The Civil Rights Movement in the Jazz Age*, Mark Schneider argues that the struggle for civil rights deserves “equal billing” with these other historical movements. His work uncovers the wide range of battles, from opposition to segregation to anti-lynching, waged by the NAACP during the 1920s. Schneider’s central thesis is that, contrary to arguments made in previous studies, the NAACP was not a middle-class movement without a mass base, and he presents evidence from local chapters in the southern and western United States to support this claim. He

Civil Rights Movement (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); Kenneth Mack, *Representing the Race: The Creation of the Civil Rights Lawyer* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012); Jeanne Theoharis and Komozi Woodard, eds., *Freedom North: Black Freedom Struggles Outside the South, 1940–1980* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); Christina Greene, *Our Separate Ways: Women and the Black Freedom Movement in Durham, North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005); Martha Biondi, *To Stand and Fight: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Postwar New York City* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003); Patrick D. Jones, *The Selma of the North: Civil Rights Insurgency in Milwaukee* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009); Thomas J. Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the North* (New York: Random House, 2008).

²⁰ For leading studies of the Harlem Renaissance, see David Levering Lewis, *When Harlem Was In Vogue* (New York: Knopf, 1981); Nathan Irvin Huggins, *Harlem Renaissance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971); Cheryl A. Wall, *Women of the Harlem Renaissance* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995); Cary D. Wintz, *Remembering the Harlem Renaissance* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1996); David Krasner, *A Beautiful Pageant: African American Theatre, Drama, and Performance, 1910–1917* (New York: Palgrave, 2002). For leading studies of the Great Migration, see: Isabel Wilkerson, *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America’s Great Migration* (New York: Random House, 2010); Milton C. Sernett, *Bound for the Promised Land: African American Religion and the Great Migration* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997); James R. Grossman, *Land of Hope: Chicago, Black Southerners, and the Great Migration* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989); Joe William Trotter, Jr., ed., *The Great Migration in Historical Perspective: New Dimensions of Race, Class, and Gender* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991); Nicholas Lemann, *The Promised Land: The Great Black Migration and How It Changed America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991).

argues that the NAACP branches that existed during the 1920s were led by members of the black middle-class, but the rank and file was composed of working-class African Americans.²¹ My work reveals the presence of a vibrant civil rights movement during the 1920s that was led by the middle-class; in Baltimore, however, the local branch of the NAACP was not in the forefront. According to Prudence Cumberbatch in her work on the NAACP in Baltimore, one of the main reasons that the chapter suffered from inactivity during the 1920s was its failure to address working-class concerns. Her work traces the efforts of middle-class African Americans to incorporate working-class concerns into their political programs during the 1930s and 1940s, debating and trying numerous strategies to achieve this feat, including forming alliances with radical political organizations, engaging in interracial endeavors, and seeking redress and change through federal government policies.²² But the inactivity of the Baltimore NAACP in the 1920s should not be taken as a sign that the civil rights movement in the city was moribund. Rather, as this

²¹ Mark Robert Schneider, *“We Return Fighting”: The Civil Rights Movement in the Jazz Age* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2002), 3–5. Existing monographs that cover the Civil Rights Movement in the 1920s include Sheldon Avery, *Up From Washington: William Pickens and the Negro Struggle for Equality, 1900–1954* (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 1988); Conrey Bryson, *Dr. Lawrence A. Nixon and the White Primary* (El Paso: University of Texas at El Paso, 1974); Richard C. Cortner, *A Mob Intent on Death: The NAACP and the Arkansas Riot Cases* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1988); Claudine Ferrell, *Nightmare and Dream: Anti-Lynching in Congress, 1917–1922* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1986); Kenneth W. Goings, *The NAACP Comes of Age: The Defeat of Judge John W. Parker* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990); Darlene Clark Hine, *Black Victory: The NAACP and the Destruction of the White Primary, 1924–1944* (Millwood, NY: KTO Press, 1979); B. Joyce Ross, *J.E. Spingarn and the Rise of the NAACP, 1911–1939* (New York, Atheneum, 1972); Robert L. Zangrando, *The NAACP Crusade Against Lynching, 1909–1950* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1980); Kevin Boyle, *Arc of Justice: A Saga of Race, Civil Rights, and Murder in the Jazz Age* (New York: H. Holt Publishing, 2004).

²² Cumberbatch, “Working for the Race.”

dissertation demonstrates, a host of other organizations and leaders took the lead in a vibrant struggle.

This dissertation also contributes to a trend in civil rights historiography over the past few decades in which the focus has moved from national organizations such as the NAACP (or at least a focus away from the national offices of national organizations) to grassroots organizing and civil rights activism at the local level. Important works that paved the way for this historiographical shift included those by John Dittmer, William Chafe, and David Colburn, among numerous others.²³ More recent works include those written by Adam Fairclough and Paul Ortiz, both of which focus on civil rights activism at the state level in Louisiana and Florida, respectively.²⁴

This dissertation is heavily informed by the latter work, Ortiz's *Emancipation Betrayed*, which offers some important concepts and themes that have proven useful in studying Baltimore. A central principle of Ortiz's study is the concept of an "organizing tradition." Ortiz argues that an analysis of African American civil rights struggles in Florida in the period from Reconstruction to 1920 reveals that organization against discrimination was not automatic, rather it developed over time. Thus, the strategies and tactics employed by African Americans in the battle for

²³ John Dittmer, *Local People: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995); William H. Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights: Greensboro, North Carolina, and the Black Struggle for Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981); David R. Colburn, *Racial Change and Community Crisis: St. Augustine, Florida, 1877–1980* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985).

²⁴ Adam Fairclough, *Race and Democracy: The Civil Rights Struggle in Louisiana, 1915–1972* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1995); Paul Ortiz, *Emancipation Betrayed: The Hidden History of Black Organizing and White Violence from Reconstruction to the Bloody Election of 1920* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

equality formed the basis of an “organizing tradition.” My study of Baltimore also reveals the presence of an “organizing tradition” with roots in the late nineteenth-century that laid the groundwork for developments in later periods.

Emancipation Betrayed also addresses important themes in its analysis of often-ignored segments of the African American community, the working-class and women. Working-class African Americans figure prominently in Ortiz’s narrative as a result of his analysis of labor organizing and his creative use of records left by employers to uncover the resistance of the working class. Likewise, African American women figure prominently in his text, which includes an analysis of the ways in which black women organized for political power prior to 1920 and the effect of the extension of suffrage to African American women in 1920 on the civil rights struggle. My study similarly reveals the ways in which these segments of the African American population played critical roles in early twentieth-century civil rights organizing in Baltimore. Though not found in leadership roles, working-class African Americans contributed to the movement as defendants in test cases, voters in independent political movements, supporters of municipal service campaigns, and rank-and-file members of organizations engaged in the battle for civil rights. Similarly, African American women appear as activists in this dissertation in a number of organizations, particularly those engaged in securing educational improvements and greater access to social and municipal services.

Local studies such as that of Ortiz have complicated narratives of the Civil Rights Movement by emphasizing the importance of grassroots organizing and deemphasizing federal legislation, which did not necessarily result in immediate

changes at the local level. For example, in traditional historical accounts of the NAACP and its role in the struggle for civil rights, there has been a “top-down” approach that focuses on the organization through the lens of the national office and national leaders. In these narratives, the activities of the local branches are marginalized, and they are portrayed as simply implementing programs in response to directives from the national organization.²⁵ By undertaking local studies, historians have revealed how African Americans responded and acted on the ground, highlighting the importance of local conditions and situations in determining strategies, tactics, and overall ideology in the struggle for civil rights.

Because of its location in the border South, Baltimore offers a particularly attractive setting for a local study. As a city situated between two regions, the North and the South, Baltimore incorporated certain elements of each region and their histories. Like cities of the North, Baltimore was an industrial city with a diversified economy and rapidly expanding population following the Civil War. However, it was also southern in nature due to Maryland’s past as a slave state. Like cities of the South, Baltimore developed formal and informal segregation in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. But unlike African Americans in cities of the Deep South, black Baltimoreans freely exercised their political rights and enjoyed access to white-controlled institutions, which in turn informed the strategies and tactics they used in the struggle for civil rights. Thus, this dissertation makes an important

²⁵ For further discussion of historical debates on “top-down” and “bottom-up” approaches to the study of the Civil Rights Movement, see Steven F. Lawson and Charles Payne, *Debating the Civil Rights Movement, 1945-1968* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998).

contribution to civil rights scholarship by delineating how conditions in the border South influenced the trajectory of the movement in that region.²⁶

In addition to works on the Civil Rights Movement, this dissertation also engages the literature on Progressivism, a social and political movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Progressives developed a variety of reforms meant to remedy the problems created by the rapid industrialization and urbanization of the country. These reformers were generally members of the middle class and residents of urban areas. As revealed by my study of Baltimore, Progressives were active in this city and their reforms, particularly those within the realm of education and social welfare, were a critical component of the struggle for civil rights.²⁷ In this manner, my work engages the growing body of literature on African Americans and Progressivism. Historians have more readily made connections between

²⁶ Clarence Lang argues that historians of the Long Civil Rights Movement have, while widening the geographical scope of the movement, diminished the significance of region and place. His study of St. Louis emphasizes the importance of geographical location in studies of the movement, specifically the border South. This dissertation contributes to the historiography of the border South and the Civil Rights Movement. See Clarence Lang, "Locating the Civil Rights Movement: An Essay on the Deep South, Midwest, and Border South in Black Freedom Studies," *Journal of Social History* 47 (Winter 2013): 371-400. For existing works on the border South and the Civil Rights Movement, see Priscilla A. Dowden-White, *Groping Toward Democracy: African American Social Welfare Reform in St. Louis, 1910 – 1949* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2011); Clarence Lang, *Grassroots at the Gateway: Class Politics and Black Freedom Struggle in St. Louis, 1936 – 1975* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2009); Kenneth S. Jolly, *Black Liberation in the Midwest: The Struggle in St. Louis, Missouri, 1964 – 1970* (New York: Routledge, 2006); Catherine Foci and Tracy Elaine K'Meyer, *Freedom on the Border: An Oral History of the Civil Rights Movement in Kentucky* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2009); Luther Adams, *Way Up North in Louisville: African American Migration in the Urban South, 1930 – 1970* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010); Jack Glazier, *Been Coming Through Some Hard Times: Race, History, and Memory in Western Kentucky* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2013).

²⁷ For a study of Progressive reform in Baltimore, see James B. Crooks, *Politics and Progress: The Rise of Urban Progressivism in Baltimore, 1895–1911* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1968). Like other studies of Progressivism prior to the 1990s, Crooks' work focuses on members of the white middle-class and white elite as reformers and African Americans are absent from his narrative. The work of Dennis Halpin corrects this omission and examines black Baltimoreans as Progressive reformers, making an important contribution to the study of the Progressive movement in Baltimore. See Dennis P. Halpin, "Reforming Charm City: Grassroots Activism, Politics, and the Making of Modern Baltimore, 1877–1920 (Ph.D. diss., Rutgers University, 2012).

Progressivism and the struggle for civil rights in their examination of the NAACP and the National Urban League, both of which organizations are considered in my dissertation.²⁸ However, my work goes beyond these previous studies to engage scholarship on the role of middle-class African American women in the Progressive movement and how this connects to the struggle for civil rights. For example, the works of Jacqueline Rouse and Elizabeth Lasch Quinn have revealed how institutions like Lugenia Burns Hope's Neighborhood Union in Atlanta served as a vehicle through which African American women agitated for improved social and municipal services, particularly by forming alliances with middle-class and elite white women. My dissertation examines similar activities of middle-class black women in Baltimore, incorporating the important activities of middle-class African American women as leaders, organizers, and negotiators. In this manner, the dissertation emphasizes the connections between the literature on Progressivism and the movement for civil rights, showing that areas of African American activism generally viewed solely through the prism of Progressive reform should also be viewed as part of the struggle for civil rights.²⁹

²⁸ For discussions of the NAACP and the National Urban League as products of the Progressive Movement, see John Louis Recchiuti, *Civic Engagement: Social Science and Progressive Era Reform in New York* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007); August Meier and John H. Bracey, Jr., "The NAACP as a Reform Movement, 1909 – 1965: 'To Reach the Conscience of America,'" *Journal of Southern History* 59 (February 1993): 3-30; Nancy J. Weiss, *The National Urban League, 1910 – 1940* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974).

²⁹ Elizabeth Lasch Quinn, *Black Neighbors: Race and the Limits of Reform in the American Settlement House Movement, 1890 – 1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993); Jacqueline A. Rouse, *Lugenia Burns Hope: Black Southern Reformer* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1989). For an overview of the historiography of African Americans and the Progressive Movement and the efforts of historians to include African Americans in more recent decades, see Jimmie Franklin, "Blacks and the Progressive Movement: Emergence of a New Synthesis," *OAH Magazine of History* 13 (Spring 1999): 20-23.

The opening chapter of this dissertation examines the struggle African Americans waged against residential segregation beginning in 1910, when the city council enacted an ordinance mandating separation of the races in the realm of housing, the first such measure passed in the nation. This chapter argues that the local chapter of the NAACP coalesced around the issue of residential segregation and, through its African American legal team, waged a successful local battle while simultaneously prompting the national office of the NAACP to become involved in the issue on a nationwide scale. Most of this chapter focuses on the years from 1910 to 1917, when the Supreme Court ruled in the case of *Buchanan v. Warley* that municipal ordinances mandating residential segregation were unconstitutional.

Chapter 2 considers issues of voting rights, political office-holding, and the use of local/state political parties to advance the civil rights agenda of the African American community. At the center of this chapter is the 1920 campaign of W. Ashbie Hawkins for the U.S. Senate, the first African American to run for the Senate in Maryland. By the time of his campaign, running as an Independent, Hawkins had proven himself a tireless advocate for civil rights through over two decades of legal work. An examination of his campaign provides insight into the ways in which African Americans organized within Baltimore and, more specifically, within individual wards of the city, in the realm of politics. Furthermore, this chapter places Hawkins's campaign within a longer history of independent politics, and shows the process of political realignments moving from the late nineteenth-century through the end of the 1920s. This chapter also highlights the important role that African American women played in politics and how they made the transition into the

electorate, as the 1920 election marked the first time women were able to vote nationwide. Though Hawkins was unsuccessful in his bid for the U.S. Senate, his campaign was an important turning point as substantial numbers of African Americans in Baltimore moved away from the Republican Party, setting the stage for widespread membership in the Democratic Party in the 1930s.

Chapter 3 examines struggles for civil rights in the realm of education, one of the most important issues engaging African Americans in Baltimore, which brought together coalitions that crossed divisions of gender, class, and neighborhood. The chapter begins by placing the fight for equal rights in education during the 1910s and 1920s within a longer chronological context beginning with activism during the 1880s and 1890s by such groups as the Brotherhood of Liberty that fought for the hiring of African American women as teachers, and increasing city and state funding to construct new school facilities for African American children. Although West Baltimore is generally recognized as the hub of the African American community during the early twentieth century and is often the focus of studies focusing on civil rights activism, an examination of struggles in the realm of education sheds light on the activism of East Baltimoreans. By the 1920s, with the advent of the Federation of Parent Teacher Clubs, an organization that pulled together clubs based in black schools across the city, and the appointment of a Supervisor of Colored Schools, civil rights activism in the arena of education reached new levels of success. Using a survey of the city school system as a basis for reform, African Americans pushed for new school buildings, expanded educational opportunities, and African American representation on the city's school board.

The final two chapters of the dissertation evaluate two models of interracial cooperation within the local civil rights movement through two organizations: the Women's Cooperative Civic League and the Baltimore Urban League. Chapter 4 focuses on the Women's Cooperative Civic League, which was founded in 1912/1913 as the African American counterpart to the all-white Women's Civic League. Under the leadership of social worker Sarah Collins Fernandis, this organization agitated for a variety of reforms, including the provision of municipal and state funds to address poor sanitary conditions in black neighborhoods and provide clean milk for black children. Chapter 5 examines the Baltimore branch of the National Urban League, an interracial organization which was formed in 1924 following a survey of local working conditions conducted by the national office. During the 1920s, under the leadership of executive secretary R. Maurice Moss, the Baltimore Urban League (BUL) became involved in a variety of issues affecting African Americans, including improving housing and sanitation, increasing municipal recreational spaces, and expanding employment opportunities. Central to the BUL's work was the use of scientific social work, which provided the basis for the organization's civil rights activism. While expanding the terrain of issues traditionally examined in studies focusing on civil rights activism, these two chapters reveal that interracial activism greatly expanded in the years following World War I.

This dissertation uses a wide range of primary sources, including records of municipal government entities (Board of School Commissioners, City Council), journals of both local and national organizations (*Civic Courier*, *Crisis*, *Opportunity*), and records of national civil rights organizations (NAACP, National Urban League).

However, the most important source was the Baltimore *Afro-American*, which was established in 1892 by the Rev. William Alexander, who had migrated from Virginia to Baltimore in the decade following the Civil War. Five years later, the newspaper was purchased by John H. Murphy, a native of Baltimore and a former slave who had gained his freedom through service in the Union Army. By the mid-1890s, Murphy was employed as the foreman and manager of the *Afro-American*'s printing department. Murphy's purchase of the fledgling newspaper saved it from bankruptcy, and, through a merger in 1900 with the *Ledger*, another local black newspaper established by the Rev. George F. Bragg, Jr. in 1898, the *Afro-American* was placed on the path of growth and success. By 1910, the *Afro-American* had achieved a circulation of 2,910, and by the early 1930s, it had increased exponentially to 45,000, with distribution outside the city and editions in other cities along the East Coast.³⁰

Under the leadership of John H. Murphy and his son Carl, who assumed control in 1922 following his father's death, the *Afro-American* was a leading voice in the struggle for civil rights throughout the decades examined in this dissertation. Its articles, advertisements, and editorials provided a wealth of information necessary to complete this study. The *Afro-American* chronicled the living and working conditions of black Baltimoreans, provided extended commentary on racism and its manifestation in their lives, and detailed important information on the founding, leadership, membership, and activities of organizations engaged in the struggle for civil rights. The centrality of the *Afro-American* as a primary source in this study is

³⁰ For a history of the Baltimore *Afro-American* and its importance to the African American community and the struggle for civil rights, see Hayward Farrar, *The Baltimore Afro-American, 1892 – 1950* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1998).

evidenced in the quotation that constitutes the dissertation's main title, which is taken from a 1911 editorial:

Would you climb to better things in your own life, then you must struggle for them. Would you win a better home for your family, then you must fight for it. Would you win better recognition for your race, then you must step into the arena with the spirit to do battle with every comer.... The lesson of the ages comes, to us a race of sable sons, to strike for right, to strike with might, the God of Freedom leads the fight...³¹

Written toward the beginning of the period examined in this dissertation, the words of this editorial reflect the feelings of a besieged community facing a newly enacted ordinance that mandated residential segregation and a third attempt in the state legislature to deprive African Americans of the right to vote. In this editorial, the *Afro-American* urged black Baltimoreans to stand up for their rights as citizens and wage battle against those who would deprive them of those rights. As described in the ensuing pages of this dissertation, large numbers of African Americans in Baltimore answered the charge “to strike for right” and “to strike for might” at this critical point in the city’s history and beyond. Through a wide range of organizations and leaders and a variety of tactics, black Baltimoreans struggled to both preserve and extend their civil rights, revealing an important “organizing tradition” in black Baltimore’s battle for civil rights that has too long been ignored.

³¹ “Progress by Antagonism,” *Afro-American*, January 14, 1911.

Chapter One

“Thank God, Segregation Is Dead”: The Baltimore NAACP and the Battle against Residential Segregation

In early November 1917, the United States Supreme Court rendered a decision in the case of *Buchanan v. Warley*. First brought before the court in April 1916 by lawyers of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the case challenged the residential segregation ordinance of Louisville, Kentucky, enacted in 1914, which prohibited African Americans from moving into residential blocks in which more than 50 percent of the houses were inhabited by whites. The court ruled that the ordinance violated the due process clause of the Fourteenth Amendment and was therefore unconstitutional.¹ African Americans across the country celebrated this verdict from the nation’s highest court, but it was especially significant in Baltimore, the initial site of the struggle against municipal residential segregation. In the days following the decision of the nation’s highest court, Dr. Francis Nunez Cardozo, former president of the Baltimore branch of the NAACP and a member of the national NAACP executive committee, expressed joy over the recent outcome, proclaiming in a letter to James Weldon Johnson, field secretary in the national office of the NAACP, “Thank God,

¹ For further discussions of the Louisville segregation case, see Roger L. Rice, “Residential Segregation by Law, 1910-1917,” *Journal of the Southern History* 34 (May 1968): 179-199; Charles Flint Kellogg, *NAACP: A History of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People*, Volume I, 1909-1920 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1967), 184-187; George C. Wright, *Life behind A Veil: Blacks in Louisville, Kentucky, 1865-1930* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1985), 229-236; Patricia Sullivan, *Lift Every Voice: The NAACP and the Making of the Civil Rights Movement* (New York: New Press, 2009), 45-47.

segregation is dead.”² Members of the African American community of Baltimore undoubtedly shared Cardozo’s enthusiasm, for they had been battling ordinances mandating residential segregation since 1910 when the city council enacted the first legislation of this kind in the nation.

A close examination of the struggle of Baltimore’s African American community against residential segregation reveals its agonizingly slow death in the United States began not with the Supreme Court or the legal efforts of the national office of the NAACP, but with the work of members of the NAACP’s Baltimore branch, particularly its relentless and indefatigable legal team. By the time of the *Buchanan v. Warley* decision, the NAACP had been at the forefront of the struggle for civil rights for African Americans at the national level for almost a decade since its emergence from the interracial Niagara Movement in 1909, and many of its founders had a longstanding personal history of agitation for equal rights. But an examination of the program of the Baltimore branch of the NAACP during its first years of existence makes evident the role of local branches in helping to shape the programs and activities of the national office. In battling residential segregation, the Baltimore NAACP set an agenda for the national office, leading the organization to one of its first instances of success on the national level. Although the legal cases of the Baltimore branch in regard to residential segregation did not arrive at the steps of the Supreme Court, the struggle initiated by the

² Francis Nunez Cardozo to James Weldon Johnson, November 11, 1917, in Baltimore Branch File, Box I:G84, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.; hereafter cited as NAACP Papers.

Baltimore branch and the energy generated by that battle laid the groundwork for the eventual success of the NAACP in the Louisville case.³

A crucial element in the Baltimore NAACP's efforts to battle residential segregation was the presence in the city of a talented and capable cadre of African American lawyers who lent their time and expertise to the struggle against the city's discriminatory housing legislation. Men such as Warner T. McGuinn, George McMechen, William McCard, C. C. Fitzgerald, and, most notably, William Ashbie Hawkins, were instrumental in leading the local legal efforts which were either sponsored or supported by the NAACP. Moreover, as shown in the case of the Baltimore NAACP, the work of African American lawyers at the local level at times figured prominently on the national stage as well.⁴

Scholars generally trace the origins of the NAACP to the Niagara Movement, labeling this all-black movement as the precursor to the interracial NAACP, which was established in the wake of a race riot in Springfield, Illinois, in the summer of 1908. The Niagara Movement emerged a few years earlier, in 1905, as a national organization

³ For further discussion of historical debates on "top-down" and "bottom-up" approaches to the study of the Civil Rights Movement, see Steven F. Lawson and Charles Payne, *Debating the Civil Rights Movement, 1945-1968* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1998).

⁴ Historians August Meier and Elliott Rudwick provide an important analysis of the NAACP's use of white and African American lawyers at the national level. They argue that the principal burden of the national office's legal efforts was carried by white lawyers during the period prior to 1930. The 1930s, they argue, was a turning point for the national office's use of black lawyers, as the Howard University Law School redesigned its program and curriculum under the direction of the legendary Charles Hamilton Houston, enabling the school to produce a capable cadre of African American lawyers trained specifically in civil rights law. However, this focus on the national level obscures the importance of African American lawyers on the local level in NAACP-sponsored or NAACP-supported litigation. See August Meier and Elliott Rudwick, "Attorneys Black and White: A Case Study of Race Relations within the NAACP," in *Along the Color Line: Explorations in the Black Experience* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1976): 94-127. For newer work that examines early African American lawyers affiliated with the NAACP, see Kenneth W. Mack, *Representing the Race: The Creation of the Civil Rights Lawyer* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012).

engaged in the struggle for civil rights, occupying the space created by the recent failure of the Afro-American Council, a national black civil rights organization established in 1898.⁵ The Niagara Movement was organized under the direction of race leader and consummate man of letters W. E. B. DuBois, partly to combat the conservative stance and accommodationist policies promulgated by Booker T. Washington, the hugely influential leader whom many whites labeled the voice of the African American community.⁶ The Niagara Movement developed a radical and integrationist program, which focused on combating Jim Crow policies wherever they existed and securing for African Americans full civil rights, including suffrage, access to economic opportunities, and equal access to education and healthcare, among a host of other objectives. At its height in 1908, the movement boasted 450 members spread across the nation.⁷

Black Baltimoreans were involved in the development and work of the Niagara Movement from its beginnings. One of its twenty-nine founders was the city's Garnett Russell Waller, the only Marylander in this esteemed group of black leaders and intellectuals.⁸ Born on the Eastern Shore of Virginia in 1857, the Rev. Waller moved to

⁵ Angela Jones, "The Niagara Movement, 1905-1910: A Revisionist Approach to the Social History of the Civil Rights Movement," *Journal of Historical Sociology* 23 (September 2010): 453. For a history of the Afro-American Council, see Benjamin R. Justensen, *Broken Brotherhood: The Rise and Fall of the National Afro-American Council* (Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press).

⁶ For a discussion of the debate between W.E.B. Du Bois and Booker T. Washington, see Angela Jones, *African American Civil Rights: Early Activism and the Niagara Movement* (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2011), 119 – 148.

⁷ "Niagara Movement Declaration, Niagara Movement declaration of principles, 1905," W. E. B. Du Bois Papers (MS 312), Special Collections and University Archives, University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries (hereafter cited as Du Bois Papers); Niagara Movement, "Constitution and By-laws of the Niagara Movement As Adopted July 12 and 13, 1905, at Buffalo, N.Y.," Du Bois Papers.

⁸ The founders also included the the Rev. Dr. James Robert Lincoln Diggs of Virginia who was a native of Maryland and would eventually move to Baltimore around 1915, replacing the Rev. G. R. Waller as pastor of Trinity Baptist Church. Angela Jones, *African American Civil Rights*, 218.

Baltimore with his family at an early age. He studied at and obtained degrees from Lincoln University in Pennsylvania, the Newton Theological Institution in Massachusetts, and Virginia Union University in Richmond. In Baltimore, Waller served as founder and pastor of Trinity Baptist Church. In his role as a pastor, Waller was extremely influential and used his stature in the community to fight for the rights of African Americans, including working to increase the number of schools available to black children and battling disfranchisement amendments in the state of Maryland. In his role as a founder of the Niagara Movement and as a prominent figure in the struggle for civil rights in Maryland, the Rev. Waller logically served as president of the state's chapter of the organization.⁹

The work of the Niagara Movement at the national level was supported by a number of African American men in Baltimore in addition to Waller. Dr. Howard Young, who served as secretary and treasurer of the Maryland branch of the organization, also served on its national committees on crime and education. Young was joined on the Crime Committee by the Rev. George F. Bragg and on the Education Committee by local educator Harry T. Pratt. Other black Baltimoreans on national committees included the Rev. A. L. Gaines on the Health Committee, the Rev. John Hurst on the Committee on Civil Rights, and Heber Wharton and Howard Gross, both on the Committee on Economics. Lawyer William Ashbie Hawkins served on the Niagara Movement's Legal Committee and, in this role, worked on a number of cases involving violations of civil rights, most notably serving as co-counsel for fellow movement member Barbara Pope when she was charged with violating Jim Crow segregation policies on the Southern

⁹ "Rev. Waller, 84, Dies in Balto.," *Afro-American*, March 15, 1941, 18.

Railway in Virginia. The Committee on Students, which was designed to recruit and organize college students, was under the leadership Mason A. Hawkins, the principal of Baltimore's Colored High School. In his role with the Niagara Movement, Principal Hawkins helped to implement and develop the movement's strategy for attracting younger members, thereby establishing an important precedent for a number of mid-twentieth century civil rights organizations.¹⁰

Also active at the national level of the Niagara Movement, serving on the Committee on Ethics, was the Rev. Harvey Johnson, an esteemed Baltimore pastor and a race leader with a long history of fighting for civil rights.¹¹ Born a slave in Fauquier County, Virginia, in 1843, Johnson eventually made his way to Washington, D.C. after the Civil War where he attended the Wayland Seminary, graduating in 1872. That same year, the young minister relocated to Baltimore to assume the pastorate of the Union Baptist Church. Founded in 1852, Union Baptist was one of the most important religious institutions of the fledgling black Baptist population of the state of Maryland, with a membership just under 300. During the first five years of his leadership, Johnson more than quadrupled the number of members of the church. By 1914, Union Baptist boasted over 3,000 members, making it one of the largest black congregations in the city.¹²

¹⁰ "Secretaries and Committees of the Niagara Movement," April 1, 1907, Du Bois Papers. In the Pope case, Barbara Pope bought a first-class ticket on board the Southern Railway from D.C. to Pannonian Springs, Virginia. When she refused to move to a Jim Crow car upon entering the state of Virginia, Pope was arrested and fined \$10. The case was taken by the Niagara Movement, and Pope's conviction was appealed. The court ruled that the state of Virginia could not fine an interstate passenger who refused to accept Jim Crow accommodations. See "Membership Letter No. 4," Atlanta, GA, April 10, 1907, Du Bois Papers; "Testing Virginia's Separate Car Law," *Afro-American*, October 27, 1906, 1; "Pope Case Has Been Appealed," *Afro-American*, June 22, 1907, 5.

¹¹ "Secretaries and Committees of the Niagara Movement," April 1, 1907, Du Bois Papers.

¹² A. Briscoe Koger, *Dr. Harvey Johnson: Pioneer Civic Leader* (Baltimore, MD: The author, 1957), 1-3.

In addition to his religious work, Johnson proved instrumental in numerous struggles for civil rights for African Americans in Maryland, including a campaign to enable African Americans to obtain admission to the Maryland bar. In 1876, two African American lawyers, James Wolff and Charles S. Taylor, were denied admission to the state bar, even after the issue had been appealed to the state's highest court. Shortly thereafter, the Rev. Johnson became engaged in this battle, consulting with other "race men" in Baltimore, including the Revs. William M. Alexander, F. R. Williams. Ananias Brown, P. H. A. Braxton, and J. C. Allen. By the mid-1880s, Johnson had located a defendant and a white lawyer willing to once again challenge the discriminatory legislation in the courts. In March 1885, the case of Charles S. Wilson, a teacher in Sunnyside, Maryland, who was also a graduate of the Boston University Law School, proved successful in opening the Maryland bar to African American lawyers. The decision led to the 1885 admission of Everett J. Waring, a Howard University Law School graduate, as the first African American admitted to the bar in the state of Maryland.¹³

In June 1885, the same year as Waring's admission to the bar, Johnson met with five close friends who were also pastors in Baltimore, to discuss plans for establishing a

¹³ For further information on the admission of black lawyers to the Maryland bar, see David S. Bogen, "The First Integration of the University of Maryland School of Law," *Maryland Historical Magazine* 39 (1989): 39-49; David S. Bogen, "The Transformation of the Fourteenth Amendment: Reflections from the Admission of Maryland's First Black Attorneys," 44 *Maryland Law Review* 939 (1985); A. Briscoe Koger, *The Negro Lawyer in Maryland* (Baltimore, MD: Clarke, 1948); "Legal Lights of Baltimore," *Afro-American*, March 26, 1910, 6; "Lawyers Honor Sponsor," *Afro-American*, May 21, 1910, 4.

Everett J. Waring practiced law in Baltimore for over a decade and most notably served as attorney for the men indicted in the infamous Navassa Island case. "Everett J. Waring Dead," *Afro-American*, September 5, 1914, 1; John Cashman, "'Slaves under Our Flag': The Navassa Island Riot of 1889," *Maryland Historian* 24 (Fall/Winter 1993): 1-21.

local civil rights organization: the Rev. J. C. Allen (First Baptist Church), the Rev. P. H. A. Braxton (Calvary Baptist Church), the Rev. William M. Alexander (Sharon Baptist Church), the Rev. W. C. Lawson (Macedonia Baptist Church), and the Rev. Ananias Brown (Leadenhall Street Baptist Church). Together they formed the Mutual United Brotherhood of Liberty which held its first public session that fall with preeminent race leader Frederick Douglass as the featured guest speaker. The organization attracted a number of leading men of Baltimore's African American community as it confronted issues crucial to the city's black residents including jobs for black teachers, adequate educational facilities, and lynching.¹⁴

The civil rights agenda of the Brotherhood of Liberty revolved around using the courts to battle discrimination and effect social change. As stipulated in the organization's constitution, the Brotherhood sought "to use all legal means within [its] power to procure and maintain our rights as citizens of this our common country." In appealing to the courts to battle Jim Crow, the Brotherhood of Liberty employed an organizational strategy that would be central to the work of the Baltimore NAACP decades later. Thus, when viewed from the local level in Baltimore, the Niagara Movement was not the precursor of the NAACP, but instead the Brotherhood of Liberty can more appropriately be labeled as a precursor of both the Niagara Movement and the local branch of the NAACP.

¹⁴ William M. Alexander, *The Brotherhood of Liberty: Or, Our Day in Court* (Baltimore: Printing Office of J. F. Weishampel, 1891); *The Brotherhood of Liberty, Justice and Jurisprudence: An Inquiry Concerning the Constitutional Limitations of the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1889); "Legal Lights of Baltimore: Memory of the Great Fight for the Admission of Colored Lawyers to the Maryland Bar Recalled by the Large Number of Successful Attorneys Practicing in Baltimore," *Afro-American*, March 26, 1910, 6; "Lawyers Honor Sponsor: Rev. Dr. Johnson Is Remembered For His Labors In Having the Bar Opened to Colored Men," *Afro-American*, May 21, 1910, 4; "History of Brotherhood of Liberty: Lawyer McGuinn Delivers Address and Tells of Strenuous Efforts To Secure Rights of Freemen," *Afro-American*, March 7, 1914, 6.

By 1911, Harvey Johnson, the Brotherhood's main founder and a member of the Executive Committee of the NAACP, was an early advocate for the establishment of a chapter of the NAACP in Baltimore, and under his guidance, African Americans in Baltimore were among the first in the nation to organize one, chartering the organization's second branch in April 1912.¹⁵ Dr. Francis Nunez Cardozo, a local physician, was selected as president of the branch and the Rev. Garnett R. Waller, who had been active in the Niagara Movement and a protégé of Johnson, was chosen as president of the branch's Executive Committee.¹⁶ With this local branch of the NAACP, middle-class African American men and women in Baltimore had the opportunity to connect to a national movement for civil rights at a crucial moment in the city's history, when those in power were increasingly challenging African American rights to decent housing. Ultimately, the Baltimore branch of the NAACP emerged and solidified around the issue of the expansion of residential segregation, a process begun by the Baltimore city council two years earlier.¹⁷

¹⁵ The Baltimore branch of the NAACP was preceded by the New York City local branch. The Washington D.C. branch of the NAACP was established around the same time as the Baltimore branch but it was chartered after the Baltimore branch.

¹⁶ Koger, 16-17; "A New President Elected," *Afro-American*, November 29, 1913, 8. According to Koger, the Rev. Harvey Johnson recommended the Rev. Waller to serve as the first president of the Baltimore NAACP. Waller had been a member of Union Baptist Church as a young child and was baptized by Johnson.

¹⁷ See Charles Flint Kellogg, *NAACP: A History of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Volume I, 1909-1920* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1967). Kellogg's work is arguably the definitive study of the early NAACP. In his discussion of the founding of the Baltimore and Washington, D.C. branches of the NAACP, Kellogg argues that the rapid expansion of segregation in these cities hastened the founding of a branch of the NAACP. However, as a whole, Kellogg's work provides minimal discussion of the activities of the Baltimore branch and no discussion of its significance at the national level. Patricia Sullivan, *Lift Every Voice: The NAACP and the Making of the Civil Rights Movement* (New York: The New Press, 2009). Sullivan's work is the most comprehensive historical treatment of the NAACP for the period from its founding to the late 1950s, but it provides only a minimal expansion upon the work of Kellogg in examining the activities of the NAACP in the period prior to World War I.

The road to residential segregation began with the shifting geography of Baltimore as the African American population moved and expanded in the years following the Civil War. In the late 1860s and 1870s, thousands of African Americans migrated to Baltimore, primarily from rural Maryland, Virginia, and North Carolina. Beginning roughly around 1880, African American migration into Baltimore reached new levels, and during the two decades between 1880 and 1900, the city's African American population grew from 54,000 to 79,000, giving Baltimore the nation's second-largest African American population.¹⁸ In 1880, African Americans lived throughout the city of Baltimore, accounting for at least 10 percent of the population in three-quarters of the city's wards; however, no ward was more than 30 percent black in terms of population. The eight contiguous wards of the inner city located west and north of downtown Baltimore were at least 20 percent African American, accounting for more than half of the city's entire African American population.¹⁹

Throughout the city, African Americans tended to settle in "alley districts," areas with small, poorly built, two-story structures huddled close together and located on alleys and minor streets that were muddy, unpaved thoroughfares. For example, the Hughes Street District, located southwest of the Baltimore harbor near a major wharf, railroad

¹⁸ Cynthia Neverdon-Morton, "Black Housing Patterns in Baltimore City, 1885 – 1953," *Maryland Historian* 16 (Summer/Spring 1985): 25–39; Garrett Power, "Apartheid Baltimore Style: The Residential Segregation Ordinances of 1910 – 1913," *Maryland Law Review* 42 (1983): 289–328; Roderick Ryon, "Old West Baltimore," *Maryland Historical Magazine* 77 (Spring 1977): 54–69; Roger L. Rice, "Residential Segregation by Law, 1910 – 1917," *Journal of Southern History* 34 (1968): 179–199.

¹⁹ In 1880, the city of Baltimore was divided into twenty wards and two wards were added in 1888. In 1898, the city was reorganized into twenty-four wards and all twenty-four wards were renumbered in 1901. The final four wards were added to the city in 1918 with the city's final annexation, drawing land from Baltimore and Anne Arundel Counties. William G. Lefurgy, "Baltimore's Wards, 1797-1978: A Guide," *Maryland Historical Magazine* 75 (June 1980): 149.

yards, and heavy industry, was home to many of the city's African American laborers and unskilled workers.²⁰ The Biddle Alley District, another neighborhood representative of the living conditions of large numbers of African Americans, was a center of disease and poverty.²¹

As a consequence of the city's growing black population and the desire for better housing, members of Baltimore's African American community began to move in the northwest direction during the early 1880s, purchasing and renting homes and other dwellings in traditionally white neighborhoods.²² By 1890, the area around Pennsylvania Avenue near Eutaw Place in West Baltimore was home to more than half of Baltimore's African American population. African Americans moving into this area of the city initially moved into alley housing, displacing Bohemian and German residents. The African American working class was the first to settle this area around Pennsylvania Avenue, soon followed by members of Baltimore's black middle class, who occupied the area's best homes on the upper end of Druid Hill Avenue. These homes of Baltimore's "respectable, intelligent and thrifty colored citizens" elicited the admiration of countless black visitors to the city. This trend had accelerated by 1898, when the congregation of the historic Sharp Street Memorial Methodist Episcopal Church erected its new edifice at the corner of Dolphin and Etting streets. Other African American institutions that

²⁰ Baltimore Association for the Improvement of the Condition of the Poor, *Housing Conditions in Baltimore: Report of a Special Committee Submitting the Results of an Investigation made by Janet E. Kemp* (Baltimore: Federated Charities, 1907; reprint ed., New York: Arno Press, 1974), 12–19; Paul A. Groves and Edward K. Muller, "The Evolution of Black Residential Areas in Late Nineteenth-Century Cities," *Journal of Historical Geography* 1 (April 1975): 182, 187.

²¹ Neverdon-Morton, "Black Housing Patterns," 25.

²² *Ibid.*; W. Ashbie Hawkins, "A Year of Segregation in Baltimore," *Crisis* 3 (November 1911): 27; *Crisis* 1 (January 1911), 11.

relocated to Northwest Baltimore in the opening decade of the twentieth century included the Colored High School, which moved to the corner of Pennsylvania Avenue and Dolphin Street in 1901, and Johnson's Union Baptist Church, which erected its new building at the corner of Dolphin Street and Druid Hill Avenue in 1908. The relocation and construction of these institutions reflected the growing number of African Americans residing in this section of Baltimore and, in turn, motivated African Americans to move to the areas surrounding these institutions.²³

By 1910, Northwest Baltimore had become the principal African American neighborhood of the city, with a concentration of African Americans in the badly congested Biddle Alley district, the area bounded by Biddle Street on the south, Argyle Avenue on the west, Druid Hill Avenue on the east, and North Avenue to the north. This area was made up of a portion of the city's Fourteenth Ward to the north and the Seventeenth Ward to the south.²⁴ The city's Seventeenth Ward, located in the northwestern section of the city contiguous to the city's downtown district, was the hub of Baltimore industry and the financial sector. It possessed an African American majority with over 60 percent of its residents being African American, the only ward in the city with a black majority. Wards Eleven and Fourteen, also located in northwest Baltimore bordering Ward Seventeen, did not have a black majority but contained substantial numbers of African Americans- nearly a third of the population in Ward Eleven and almost 40 percent of the population in Ward Fourteen. Taken together, Wards Eleven,

²³ Hawkins, "A Year of Segregation," 27; Groves and Muller, "Evolution of Black Residential Areas," 182; Power, "Apartheid Baltimore Style," 295; Peter H. Henderson, "Local Deals and the New Deal State: Implementing Federal Public Housing in Baltimore, 1933 – 1968" (Ph.D. diss., Johns Hopkins University, 1993), 32 – 34; "Editorial," *Afro-American*, April 23, 1910, 4.

²⁴ Power, "Apartheid Baltimore Style," 295.

Fourteen, and Seventeen accounted for a third of the African American population of the entire city of Baltimore in 1910.

Overall, ten of Baltimore's twenty-four wards each contained at least 5 percent of the city's African American population. The wards located immediately east of downtown contained about 12 percent of the African American population; however, much smaller numbers of African Americans resided in the wards that constituted the city's eastern border, particularly those south and east of downtown. Another 6 percent of the African American population of the city resided in Ward Twenty-Two, which was located immediately to the south of downtown Baltimore; African Americans accounted for more than one-quarter of the population within this ward. Combined, the ten wards that made up the perimeter of the city in 1910 contained nearly one-third of the African American population, with the largest numbers found in Wards Fifteen and Sixteen in the west and Ward Twelve located north of downtown Baltimore. Yet the number of African American residents in these wards still paled in comparison to the growing African American community of Northwest Baltimore.²⁵

With this northwest movement, members of Baltimore's black middle class relocated to homes along the broad thoroughfares of Madison Avenue, McCulloh Street, and especially Druid Hill Avenue. One African American family that participated in this migratory pattern was that of lawyer George W. F. McMechen. In June 1910, McMechen moved with his wife Anna Mason McMechen, a former schoolteacher, and three young daughters, into a home at 1834 McCulloh Street. A Yale Law School graduate,

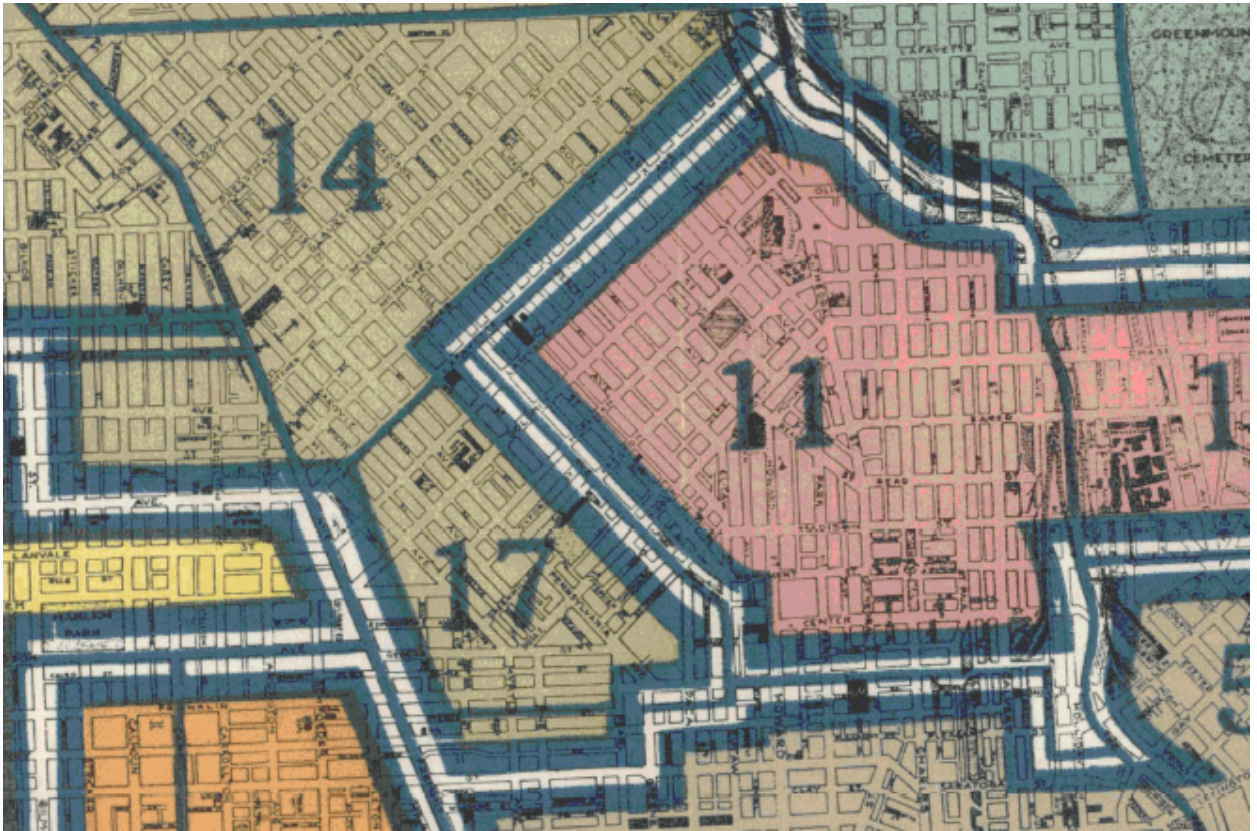
²⁵ Baltimore City, Maryland, *Census of Population, Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910* (National Archives Microfilm Publication T624, roll 556), Records of the Bureau of the Census, Record Group 29, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

Table 1.1 African American Population of Baltimore by Ward, 1910

Ward	Total Population	African American Population	African Americans as a Percentage of Population	Percentage of Total African American Population in City
1	22,841	180	0.79%	0.21%
2	22,887	364	1.59%	0.43%
3	22,317	1,624	7.28%	1.92%
4	16,834	4,119	24.47%	4.86%
5	20,319	5,350	26.33%	6.31%
6	28,073	2,839	10.11%	3.35%
7	26,579	2,768	10.41%	3.27%
8	32,161	1,156	3.59%	1.36%
9	22,953	1,095	4.77%	1.29%
10	21,431	3,160	4.77%	3.73%
11	20,570	6,673	32.44%	7.87%
12	27,610	4,523	16.38%	5.34%
13	25,559	604	2.36%	0.71%
14	22,130	8,392	37.92%	9.90%
15	30,079	6,473	21.52%	7.64%
16	25,564	4,852	18.98%	5.73%
17	20,718	12,738	61.48%	15.03%
18	20,047	4,498	22.44%	5.31%
19	22,882	2,652	11.59%	3.13%
20	27,751	643	2.32%	0.76%
21	20,260	2,744	13.54%	3.24%
22	17,609	4,958	28.16%	5.85%
23	18,168	2,327	12.81%	2.75%
24	23,143	17	0.07%	0.02%
Total	558,485	84,749	15.17%	100.00%

Source: Baltimore City, Maryland, *Census of Population, Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910* (National Archives Microfilm Publication T624, roll 556), Records of the Bureau of the Census, Record Group 29, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

Figure 1.1 Map of Wards 11, 14 and 17, Baltimore City



The Eleventh, Fourteenth, and Seventeenth Wards in Northwest Baltimore constituted the center of Baltimore’s black community. Collectively, these wards contained roughly one-third of the city’s black population in 1910.

Source: Frederick Stieff, *The Government of a Great American City* (Baltimore: H.G. Roebuck & Son, 1935). Digital copy made available by Baltimore City Archives, <http://baltimorecityhistory.net>

McMechen shared a law firm in Baltimore with another African American lawyer, W. Ashbie Hawkins, who was the actual owner of the residence on McCulloh Street, having purchased the dwelling the previous month.²⁶ By leasing this house, which was located ten blocks east of his former residence on Presstman Street, McMechen had crossed the eastern boundary of the “Negro district” and moved into the white enclave of Eutaw

²⁶ Baltimore City Superior Court (Block Book) MSA CE9, 162.

Place, a highly desired and fashionable neighborhood for white Baltimoreans with a large landscaped boulevard at its center.²⁷ Immediately thereafter, the McMechen family was subject to numerous incidents of harassment from “young ruffians” who opposed the entry of a black family into a white neighborhood.²⁸

On July 5, 1910, shortly after the McMechens moved to McCulloh Street, white residents of the neighborhood formed the Madison Avenue, McCulloh Street, and Eutaw Place Improvement Association to address the looming “threat” of a “Negro invasion.” In forming this organization, white Baltimoreans were drawing upon a local tradition of neighborhood associations that had persisted in the city for close to a generation. Since the 1880s, neighborhood associations had been formed across the city with the primary goal of petitioning the local government for funds to make municipal improvements within their respective neighborhoods. The earliest of these organizations in the Baltimore area was the suburban Catonsville Neighborhood Improvement Association, established in 1880 to pressure local officials to improve roads, lighting, drainage, the school system, and the police force. Within a few years, at least two similar organizations were established within the city of Baltimore itself: the Old Town Merchants and Manufacturers Association in 1884 and the West Baltimore Improvement Association in 1886. By 1900, there were more than thirty neighborhood associations within the city of Baltimore and its surrounding suburbs. Often, these associations developed out of the

²⁷ Hawkins, “A Year of Segregation,” 28; Power, “Apartheid Baltimore Style,” 298; “Baltimore Tries Drastic Plan of Race Segregation,” *New York Times*, December 25, 1910. The western boundary of the Eutaw Place was Druid Hill Avenue, located three blocks west of Eutaw Place.

²⁸ Hawkins, “A Year of Segregation,” 29.

need to address a single issue but soon developed an expanded program focused on municipal improvements.²⁹

The Madison Avenue, McCulloh Street, and Eutaw Place Improvement Association fit within this long tradition of neighborhood associations in that it was formed to address a single issue. However, unlike the earliest associations, the new Madison Avenue, McCulloh Street, and Eutaw Place Improvement Association was not concerned with municipal improvements. Instead, its primary aim was to prevent the further encroachment of African Americans into Northwest Baltimore neighborhoods inhabited by middle-class whites. It was certainly not the first of its kind, for it drew upon a recent history of neighborhood associations formed in Baltimore with the primary goal of preventing African Americans from moving into white neighborhoods.³⁰

Within the four years prior to the McMechen family's move to McCulloh Street and the subsequent formation of the Madison Avenue, McCulloh Street, and Eutaw Place Improvement Association, other white residents of Northwest Baltimore had already

²⁹ Joseph Arnold, "The Neighborhood and City Hall: The Origin of Neighborhood Associations in Baltimore, 1880-1911," *Journal of Urban History* 6 (November 1979): 6, 13-15.

³⁰ Rice, "Residential Segregation by Law, 1910-1917"; Gretchen Boger, "The Meaning of Neighborhood in the Modern City: Baltimore's Residential Segregation Ordinances, 1910-1913," *Journal of Urban History* 35:2 (2009); Carl Nightingale, "The Transnational Contexts of Early Twentieth-Century American Urban Segregation," *Journal of Social History* 39:3 (2006); Garrett Power, "Apartheid Baltimore Style: The Residential Segregation Ordinances of 1910 – 1913," *Maryland Law Review* 42 (1983). The aforementioned works on residential segregation begin with the relocation of George W.F. McMechen and his family as the main catalyst for the development of the Madison Avenue, McCulloh Street, and Eutaw Place Improvement Association which ultimately led to the development and passing the West Ordinance mandating residential segregation. In beginning with this story, these works are primarily depending upon two sources from the period: "Baltimore Tries Drastic Plan of Race Segregation," *New York Times*, December 25, 1910 and Hawkins, "A Year of Segregation." However, in using these sources and beginning with the move of the McMechen family to McCulloh Street, these secondary sources ignore the important actions of previous neighborhood associations, which highlight the fact that in the decade prior to 1910, at least two neighborhood associations in Baltimore had the prevention of African Americans relocating to their neighborhoods at the core of their agenda. The actions of these earlier neighborhood associations in the decade prior to 1910 reveal that the residential segregation laws that developed in Baltimore were not simply the response to one set of events but rather had a longer history and had been moving in this direction for years prior to December 1910.

formed at least two “improvement” associations with the goal of halting any further movement of African Americans into their neighborhoods. In the first instance, white residents of the Harlem Park neighborhood were propelled into action when a white real estate agent, Charles Morton, sold a building located at 604 North Gilmor Street to St. Mark’s Independent Colored Church, which intended to use the property as an orphan asylum for black children. Within days of the sale, whites in this neighborhood had formed the Harlem Park Protective Association under the leadership of Clarence M. Pitt, its president, to determine the quickest way possible to reverse the sale. The new association drew its membership from middle-class white men with ties to a number of the neighborhood’s major institutions, including the Harlem Park Methodist Episcopal, the Central Methodist Episcopal Church, and the Men’s League of the Harlem Park Church. In remarks printed in the *Baltimore Sun*, Louis P. Ranft, the association’s secretary, stated that “[i]t’s not the colored people we are against particularly. What we are striving to keep away are any objectionable tenants that will prove likely to depreciate property values.” Ranft thereby denied any prejudice on the part of the association and instead recycled a familiar economic motive used in the campaign to promote residential segregation.³¹

Ultimately, the indignation and protest of the white residents of Harlem Park prompted Morton, the real estate agent who brokered the deal, to have the sale annulled. However, within two weeks, the property had been sold again to an individual African

³¹ “For Orphan Asylum,” *Baltimore Sun*, March 14, 1906, 9; “Sale Raises a Storm,” *Baltimore Sun*, March 15, 1906, 14; “Mr. Morton Annuls Sale,” *Baltimore Sun*, March 16, 1906, 14; “Will Oppose Negroes,” *Baltimore Sun*, April 6, 1906, 12.

American buyer, Harry S. Cummings.³² Although Cummings was a graduate of the University of Maryland Law School with his own law firm and the first and only African American to serve on the city council, he was nonetheless an “objectionable tenant” in the eyes of the association.³³ For two years, the association remained unsuccessful in seizing the property from Cummings. During this period, some members of the association even advocated the enactment of legislation that would prevent African Americans from moving to blocks inhabited by whites, but their talk did not translate into action. Instead, a white resident of an adjoining property accumulated enough money to purchase the dwelling from Cummings. The Harlem Park Protective Association played a more direct role successful in seizing another property on Dolphin Street out of the hands of a black family, by forming a stock company to raise the sum needed to purchase the residence.³⁴

The second instance in which a neighborhood association was formed to prevent the settlement of black families in white neighborhoods occurred in September 1907, when nearly 100 white residents of Northwest Baltimore met at the Whatcoat Methodist Episcopal Church at Stricker and Presstman streets and formed the Neighborhood Improvement Association. Frederick C. Weber, chairman and vice president of the new association had at least been in attendance at some meetings of the Harlem Park Protective Association, if not a full member. Through the white press, Weber issued an

³² “For Orphan Asylum,” *Baltimore Sun*, March 14, 1906, 9; “Sale Raises a Storm,” *Baltimore Sun*, March 15, 1906, 14; “Mr. Morton Annuls Sale,” *Baltimore Sun*, March 16, 1906, 14; “Will Oppose Negroes,” *Baltimore Sun*, April 6, 1906, 12.

³³ Suzanne Ellery Greene, “Black Republicans on the Baltimore City Council, 1890 – 1931,” *Maryland Historical Magazine* 74:3 (September 1979): 205 – 206.

³⁴ “Feared Negro Influx,” *Baltimore Sun*, November 1, 1909, 12.

appeal to white property owners and renters for their cooperation in halting the “black pestilence” moving into various white neighborhoods in Northwest Baltimore, emphasizing the need to protect white women from the violence that Weber and his associates argued was sure to be perpetrated against them:

The hundreds of assaults upon weak and defenseless womanhood in recent years from Texas to Maryland by the Negroes should cause any man to hesitate from coddling or truckling to these outcasts. You may have daughters just entering the charmed circle of young womanhood, pure in thought and chaste in deed. You have a loving wife, as true in her womanly virtue as a woman can be, and you know that even now they need protection.

Through this rhetoric, Weber seized upon an oft-used and powerful weapon in the arsenal of white racists and segregationists. By calling white Baltimoreans’ attention to an alleged danger posed to white women as a result of the movement of black families into white neighborhoods, he appealed to a tried and true method of inspiring fear in the white community. And this method would continue to be used in the coming decade as segregationists in Baltimore struggled to develop and maintain municipally mandated separation of the races in living accommodations.³⁵

Whites who flocked to the association formed by the residents of McCulloh Street and the surrounding area in 1910 were surely building upon the work of the Harlem Park Protective Association and the Neighborhood Improvement Association, hoping to stem the tide of the “colored invasion.” Undoubtedly, these white Baltimoreans were galvanized into action not only by the movement of the McMechen family to McCulloh

³⁵ “To Check Negro Invasion: Residents of Northeast [Northwest] Baltimore Meet To Protect Themselves,” *Baltimore Sun*, September 27, 1907, 9; “Negro Invasion of Northwest Baltimore,” *Baltimore Sun*, October 3, 1907, 7; “The Negro Invasion in Northwest Baltimore,” *Baltimore Sun*, October 24, 1907, 7; “Has Plan to Bar Negroes: Mr. Dennis Would Insert Restrictions In Deeds,” *Baltimore Sun*, February 8, 1909, 10; “Aid to Negro Invasion,” *Baltimore Sun*, October 30, 1909, 15; “Feared Negro Influx: White Residents Combined To Keep Them Out Of Neighborhood,” *Baltimore Sun*, November 1, 1909, 12; “Negro Invasion Stirs Oak Street,” *Baltimore Sun*, June 25, 1910, 9.

Street and the “threat” of other African Americans doing likewise, but also by the heightened racial tension in the city. Nationally, racial tensions peaked following the defeat of white prizefighter Jim Jeffries by a black man, Jack Johnson, which had sparked race riots across the country, including Baltimore.³⁶ But even more important in elevating racial tension in Baltimore was the failing fight to disfranchise African Americans in Baltimore and throughout the state of Maryland. By 1910, two amendments to the state constitution that attempted to disfranchise the mass of African Americans had been defeated: the Poe Amendment in 1905 and the Straus Amendment in 1909. Beginning in 1910, white supremacists desperately worked to pass another disfranchisement measure, the Digges Amendment, but in 1911, it too was defeated.³⁷

Within days of the McMechens’ move, a mass meeting of white Baltimoreans met and formed the McCulloh Street, Madison Avenue, and Eutaw Place Improvement Association, then proceeded to draft a petition protesting the relocation of African American families into white neighborhoods. A committee consisting of John L. Blake, Julius Wyman, and the Rev. Paul A. Heilman, all residents of McCulloh Street who lived within two or three blocks of the McMechens, was appointed to present the petition to the

³⁶ “Views of the Afro American Press on the Johnson-Jeffries Fight,” *Afro-American*, July 16, 1910, 4. On Jack Johnson, his career, and the Johnson/Jeffries fight, see Thomas R. Hietala, *The Fight of the Century: Jack Johnson, Joe Louis, and the Struggle for Racial Equality* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2002); Geoffrey C. Ward, *Unforgivable Blackness: The Rise and Fall of Jack Johnson* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004); Al-Tony Gilmore, *Bad Nigger!: The National Impact of Jack Johnson* (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1975); Randy Roberts, *Papa Jack: Jack Johnson and the Era of White Hopes* (New York: Free Press, 1983). Gretchen Boger mentions this event as a possible source of the racial tension that motivated the formation of the Madison Avenue, McCulloh Street, and Eutaw Place Improvement Association. See Boger, “The Meaning of Neighborhood,” 236. However, the white and black press of this period in Baltimore did not provide widespread commentary on this event. When viewed from the local level, it is more appropriate to highlight the losing battle being waged by whites in Baltimore and across the state to disfranchise African Americans.

³⁷ The disfranchisement movement campaign is discussed in detail in Chapter 2.

mayor and city council. Local builder Michael Z. Hammen, who also lived on McCulloh Street, in the same block as the McMechen family, was elected president of the new organization.³⁸ Within a few weeks, the association had drafted a constitution and established a regular meeting schedule, with the intent of securing some legal action by the city that would halt the further movement of African Americans into Northwest Baltimore.³⁹ For these white Baltimoreans within the city's middle class, halting the "colored invasion" was of the utmost importance. Recognizing the intersection of class and geography and the manner in which Baltimoreans, both white and black, linked their status to spatial location within the city, white residents with a tenuous hold on middle-class status desperately needed to maintain their distance from the city's entire African American community.⁴⁰

Discontent among white Baltimoreans throughout the city increased during the remainder of the summer and into the fall as they increasingly agitated for a residential segregation ordinance, principally arguing that such a measure would ensure racial harmony and prevent the depreciation of property values, an often-used argument.⁴¹ By

³⁸ Petition to Mayor and City Council, Baltimore City Archives, Mahool Files, File 406 (July 5, 1910); "Negro Invasion Opposed: Residents Protest Against Sale of House to Colored Lawyer," *Baltimore Sun*, July 6, 1910. U.S. Census of 1910, NARA microfilm publication T624, roll 557, Baltimore, Maryland, 14th Ward, Enumeration District 223, 230, 235, Sheet 3A, 9B, 18A, accessed online at Ancestry.com, 5 January 2013.

³⁹ "To Oppose Negro Invasion: Association Formed For That Purpose Adopts Constitution," *Baltimore Sun*, July 20, 1910, 12.

⁴⁰ This argument is articulated by Gretchen Boger, who also argues that the trajectory of residential segregation in Baltimore differed from elite progressive reform and foreshadowed a trend in later movements towards residential segregation in which less affluent middle-class whites led the campaigns because of their tenuous hold on middle-class status. Boger, "The Meaning of Neighborhood in the Modern City," 238.

⁴¹ *Crisis* 1 (November 1910), 11.

mid-September, such an ordinance was ready to be submitted to the city council for discussion, and hopefully, approval. The ordinance's author was Milton Dashiell, a white lawyer who, until this point, had led an "undistinguished" career. Dashiell resided at 1110 McCulloh Street in the city's Eleventh Ward, only one block from the infamous black Biddle Alley district.⁴² On September 20, 1910, Councilman Samuel L. West introduced the ordinance into the First Branch of the city council. West himself was a resident of the city's Thirteenth Ward, but he lived only one mile north of the McMechens on McCulloh Street.⁴³ Popularly referred to as the "West Ordinance" or "West Segregation Law," the measure prohibited African Americans from moving into blocks in which more than half the residents were white, and vice versa. Punishments for violation of the ordinance included a fine of up to \$100 and imprisonment of up to one year.⁴⁴

Following the bill's introduction, a series of hearings was arranged by the city council, offering white Baltimoreans from across the city the opportunity to express their support of the pending legislation. A number of neighborhood associations pledged their unwavering support for the measure, including the Northwest Baltimore Improvement Association and the North Baltimore Improvement Association, both located in the highly contentious northwestern section of the city, as well as associations representing other sections of the city, such as the Peabody Heights Improvement Association, the Northeast Baltimore Improvement Association, and the recently formed Huntingdon

⁴² Power, "Apartheid Baltimore Style," 299.

⁴³ "Council Resumes Work," *Baltimore Sun*, September 20, 1910, 14; Boger, "The Meaning of Neighborhood," 239.

⁴⁴ *Ordinances and Resolutions of the Mayor and City Council of Baltimore Passed at the Annual Session, 1910-1911* (Baltimore: Meyer and Thalmeir Public Printers, 1911), Ordinance 610.

Avenue Improvement Association.⁴⁵ Neighborhood associations also expressed support for the ordinance through correspondence with the mayor, who received letters from both L. J. Taylor, secretary of the Central Improvement Association, and William Barrett of the Harlem Improvement Association, that voiced the approval of their respective organizations for the West Ordinance.⁴⁶

Not all white Baltimoreans favored the discriminatory ordinance, particularly white members of the Baltimore Socialist Party. Speaking before the city council, Charles Kemper, secretary of the party, labeled the legislation a “ridiculous” attempt to curb the economic advancement of African Americans in Baltimore. Jacob Levy, another white member of the Socialist Party and the owner of property in one of the contested areas, also condemned the measure, decrying it as an attempt to place economic interests above “human rights.”⁴⁷ But these white opponents remained in the minority.

Hearings before the city council also offered black Baltimoreans the opportunity to express their disapproval of the ordinance. A delegation dominated by African American ministers and physicians and led by A. T. Waller, a jewelry salesman and solicitor, spoke at the first hearing held for opponents of the measure. The roster of speakers included Niagara Movement founder G. R. Waller and John H. Murphy, founder and editor of Baltimore’s *Afro-American*. In their arguments against segregation, these

⁴⁵ “To Fight Invasion,” *Baltimore Sun*, October 1, 1910, 16; “West Plan Indorsed,” *Baltimore Sun*, October 11, 1910, 16; “Strong for West Plan,” *Baltimore Sun*, October 11, 1910, 16; “Delay for West Plan,” *Baltimore Sun*, October 17, 1910, 14; “Calls for West Report,” *Baltimore Sun*, November 19, 1910, 16.

⁴⁶ L.J. Taylor to J. Barry Mahool, December 14, 1910, Mahool Papers, File 451(1); William L.K. Barrett to J. Barry Mahool, January 19, 1911, Mahool Papers, File 406.

⁴⁷ *Crisis* 1 (November 1910): 7; “Segregation Opposed,” *Baltimore Sun*, October 4, 1910.

men labeled the legislation a “backward step” that would stunt and possibly even undo the progress the black community had made over the past four decades, specifically by forcing the “intelligent colored citizens” to live in a confined and congested area, and endure unsanitary conditions. The speakers, especially Murphy, also decried the argument that the presence of African Americans depreciated property values. In making these arguments, these leaders were especially advocating the rights of middle-class African Americans to move into neighborhoods befitting their economic status.⁴⁸

Within a few weeks, opponents of the West Ordinance had a second opportunity to express their views as more than 100 African American men and women from across the city converged on a second and final hearing for those who opposed the new measure. Once again, the roster of speakers was dominated by black ministers and physicians, including the Rev. G. R. Waller, who had spoken at the first hearing, the Rev. W. A. C. Hughes of Sharp Street Memorial Church, the Rev. A. L. Gaines of the Ministerial Alliance, and the Rev. George F. Bragg of St. James Episcopal Church. Among the speakers was also Emma Truxton, the only woman to address those gathered. Truxton, who served as president of the Federation of Colored Christian Women of Maryland, warned that the ordinance would damage “racial uplift” efforts, hearkening to arguments at the first hearing warning that the ordinance would halt the progress of the race. In their condemnation of the ordinance, the other male speakers also addressed many of the same issues brought before the first hearing.⁴⁹ By the end of the year, however, opposition proved futile. On December 20, 1910, following a tedious journey through both branches

⁴⁸ “Segregation Opposed,” *Baltimore Sun*, October 4, 1910, 9; “Colored Men Protest Against Passage of West Ordinance,” *Afro-American*, October 8, 1910, 4.

⁴⁹ “Negroes Rap West Plan,” *Baltimore Sun*, October 25, 1910, 10; “Second Hearing of West Ordinance,” *Afro-American*, October 29, 1910, 4.

of the city council, the segregation ordinance passed along party lines, with all Democrats voting for the measure and all Republicans against. Moving on from the council, the ordinance was quickly approved and signed by Mayor J. Barry Mahool, giving Baltimore the dubious distinction of being the first city in the nation to legislate residential segregation.

W. Ashbie Hawkins, the prominent African American attorney whose partner's move into a residence he owned on McCulloh Street had served as a catalyst for mobilization of the white community to mandate residential segregation, was among the first members of the African American community to initiate a campaign against the West Ordinance. Born in Lynchburg, Virginia, in 1862, Hawkins moved to Baltimore to attend Morgan College. In 1889, he matriculated to the University of Maryland School of Law; however, when the school was re-segregated the following year, Hawkins was forced to finish his professional training at Howard University in Washington, D.C. In 1892, he was admitted to the Maryland bar and set up practice in Baltimore. Along with his law partner George W. F. McMechen, the he had been instrumental in numerous cases involving the rights of African Americans in the city and state. For its role in the fight for equal rights for African Americans, the law firm was celebrated as "the Race's Advocate."⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Biography of W. Ashbie Hawkins, Baltimore Branch Files, Box I:G84, NAACP Papers; Frank Lincoln Mather, *Who's Who of the Colored Race: A General Biographical Dictionary of Men and Women of African Descent* (Chicago: The author, 1915). The University of Maryland School of Law was opened to African American students in 1887 and graduated its first two black students, Charles W. Johnson and future Baltimore City councilman Harry S. Cummings, in 1889. In that same year, Hawkins, along with another African American, John L. Dozier, were admitted to the law school, but they were forced out the following year when the school ended its brief experiment with integration. The school would not admit another African American until forced to do so by the 1935 court decision in *Murray v. University of Maryland*. See David S. Bogen, "The First Integration of the University of Maryland School of Law," *Maryland Historical Magazine* 1989.

With consummate faith in the judicial system and the ability of African Americans to receive fair verdicts, Hawkins issued a call to the African American community to fight the new ordinance. Recalling the success of African Americans in either dismantling or weakening legislation mandating disfranchisement and segregation in transportation, Hawkins believed that African Americans could be successful once again and pledged to contribute his professional skills to the battle without financial compensation. “[I]t is high time we were letting our enemies understand that we don’t purpose to be driven any further without vigorous protest,” Hawkins declared.⁵¹

Less than a week after its passage, Hawkins found an opportunity to challenge the West Ordinance when Catherine Dixon, a working-class black woman, and William V. Gallagher, a white man, were brought before Judge Alva H. Tyson at the Northwestern Police Station for violating the ordinance. Dixon and Gallagher were the first individuals to be prosecuted under the new ordinance. Gallagher, a Northwest Baltimore hardware merchant, had recently rented a house he owned located at 1623 Argyle Avenue, in a predominantly white block, to Dixon, a domestic servant. When the case was brought before the judge, Hawkins served as counsel for Dixon, while white City Councilman Henry A. Ulrich, who also opposed the segregation ordinance, represented Gallagher. Both attorneys requested a jury trial, and through this move, Hawkins hoped to challenge the West Ordinance in a larger forum so it could be evaluated and hopefully invalidated in a higher court. However, though Hawkins was successful in having his client’s case dismissed, he proved unsuccessful in his attempt to have the West Ordinance lifted. Judge Tyson refused to grant a jury trial, and, before a packed courtroom that included

⁵¹ *Afro-American*, December 24, 1910, 4.

African American leaders such as A. T. Waller and Rev. William Alexander as well as Milton Dashiell, the ordinance's author, the judge acquitted both defendants, ruling that neither Dixon nor Gallagher had broken the law, because their rental contract had preceded enactment of the new ordinance.⁵²

By the beginning of February 1911, barely a month after the West Ordinance's passage, more than twenty-five cases had been sent to court involving both whites and blacks who were charged with violating the law. Although the cases came from all areas of the city, many of them were concentrated in Northwest Baltimore. In one notable incident with consequences surely not intended by the ordinance's authors and supporters, a white man who had temporarily vacated his home while some repairs were completed discovered upon his return that he was subject to fine and imprisonment. In his absence, the block had become 51 percent black and he was therefore in violation of the law. Ultimately, the West Ordinance aroused the ire of a number of Baltimore's white citizens because of its interference with their ability to rent their property indiscriminately, particularly since white real estate agents often charged African Americans inflated prices. The ordinance also negatively affected some white businessmen when African Americans in the city stopped patronizing the businesses of whites who had either supported or offered no opposition to the West Ordinance. Conversely, African American merchants witnessed a rise in sales as a result of this boycott.⁵³

⁵² "Held Under West Law," *Baltimore Sun*, December 28, 1910, 14; "West Law Case Fails," *Baltimore Sun*, December 29, 1910, 7; "First Blow against the West Ordinance," *Afro-American*, December 31, 1910, 4.

⁵³ Hawkins, "A Year of Segregation," 29; "To Answer West Charges," *Baltimore Sun*, January 5, 1911, 9; "More Trouble with Segregation Law," *Afro-American*, January 7, 1911, 4; "West Segregation

Within a short period of time, Judges Harland and Duffy declared the law “ineffective and void” due to its vague wording. Segregationists wasted no time in retaining the services of an eminent white Baltimore lawyer, William L. Marbury, to assist in drafting a new version of the West Ordinance. By the spring, the draft was complete and the new legislation was presented to the city council and enacted on April 7, 1911. However, due to technical difficulties, the ordinance was lifted and reintroduced to the city council with a few minor amendments, becoming law on May 15, 1911 with the signature of Mayor Mahool. Using the language of Progressive social reform characteristic of the Mahool administration, the new legislation was described as “[a]n ordinance for preserving peace, preventing conflict and ill feeling between the white and colored races in Baltimore city, and promoting the general welfare of the city by providing, so far as practicable, for the use of separate blocks by white and colored people for residences, churches and schools.”⁵⁴ This third ordinance, the last official act of the Mahool administration, corrected the legal flaws of the initial ordinance by making the law inapplicable to “mixed blocks,” meaning blocks inhabited by both whites and blacks. Through this change, the new ordinance alleviated the concerns of a number of white landowners and real estate brokers who had opposed the first ordinance.⁵⁵

Even amidst the turmoil generated by the West Ordinance and as segregationists feverishly worked to ensure the legislation’s viability, African American institutions and

Law Still Causing Trouble among Baltimore’s Solons,” *Afro-American*, January 14, 1911, 5; “West Law At Issue,” *Baltimore Sun*, January 29, 1911, 11; “West Law Defective,” *Baltimore Sun*, February 5, 1911, 12; “To Act on West Cases,” *Baltimore Sun*, February 6, 1911, 4.

⁵⁴ Hawkins, “A Year of Segregation,” 29.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 29-30; “To Introduce New Segregation Law” *Afro-American*, February 18, 1911, 4; “West Law Is Passed,” *Baltimore Sun*, May 6, 1911, 11; Baltimore, Md., Ordinance 692 (May 15, 1911); Power, “Apartheid Baltimore Style,” 289, 304-305.

families in Baltimore continued to move into white neighborhoods, particularly in the contested neighborhoods of Northwest Baltimore. During the first week of January 1911, the historic Bethel A.M.E. Church, a black congregation dating back to the late eighteenth century, moved into its new home on the corner of Druid Hill Avenue and Lanvale Street, a building previously owned and occupied by the white congregation of St. Peter's Protestant Episcopal Church.⁵⁶ Though the congregation's transition to its new home was peaceful and without incident, individual black families did not fare as well and a number of them were met with violence. When one African American man leased a house on North Mount Street in a white neighborhood, his house was bombarded with bricks. On North Striker Street, similar violence was perpetrated against an African American that moved into a white neighborhood and the damage proved so extensive that the family was forced to move.⁵⁷ In the fall of 1911, violence against African Americans moving into white neighborhoods escalated when a "small race riot" erupted as a crowd of 300 whites assembled outside another African American residence. The mob broke all the house's windows, driving the family from the neighborhood. Inspired by the success of this mob, another mob attacked the residences of two African American families on Myrtle Avenue, accidentally damaging the residence of a white neighbor in the process.⁵⁸ Despite these incidents of violence, W. Ashbie Hawkins concluded that the segregation ordinance had adversely affected few African Americans and declared that no

⁵⁶ "Bethel Will Soon Move to New Home," *Afro-American*, November 26, 1910, 4; "Bethel AME Church Preparing to Move," *Afro-American*, December 31, 1910, 4; "Bethel AME Church Enters New Home under Auspicious Circumstances," *Afro-American*, January 14, 1911, 4.

⁵⁷ *Crisis* 2 (May 1911): 5.

⁵⁸ *Crisis* 3 (November 1911): 7-8.

“responsible Negroes” felt the immediate need to assume the “burden” of challenging the legislation’s validity.⁵⁹ By the following spring, however, the “responsible Negroes” would take a new stance on assuming the “burden” of a court challenge.

In April 1912, nearly a year after enactment of the third segregation ordinance, some of Baltimore’s leading African American citizens officially chartered a branch of the NAACP. The Baltimore branch was in existence as early as February of that year, working with another local NAACP affiliated organization of African American women, the Du Bois Circle, to plan a mass meeting⁶⁰. Held at Union Baptist Church during the first week of April, this mass meeting was the first public event of the newly formed branch. Presided over by William Ashbie Hawkins, a member of the local branch’s Executive Committee, the meeting featured addresses from Mary White Ovington, member of the Executive Board of the national organization and its first Executive Secretary; Dr. John O. Spencer, the white president of Baltimore’s black Morgan College; and W. E. B. Du Bois, the eminent race leader and editor of *Crisis*, the national publication of the NAACP.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Hawkins, “A Year of Segregation,” 30.

⁶⁰ “Du Bois Circle Will Hold Mass Meeting,” *Afro-American*, February 24, 1912, 3. The Du Bois Circle was established in 1906 and grew out of the Niagara Movement and preceded the national NAACP. For further information on its founding, see “Recognizing the 100th Anniversary of the Du Bois Circle,” *Congressional Record*, May 1, 2006; “Where Civility, History and Black Culture Meet,” *Baltimore Sun*, April 24, 2006.

As gleaned from newspapers and other available sources, the earliest that the Baltimore NAACP was in existence was February 1912. An article from the *Afro-American* in January 1912 on a visit of W.E.B. Du Bois to Baltimore for a mid-winter reception of the Baltimore Assembly makes no mention of a local branch and seems to suggest it was not in existence at this time. See “Dr. W.E.B. Du Bois A Visitor Here,” *Afro-American*, January 6, 1912, 3.

⁶¹ Advertisement, *Afro-American*, March 30, 1912, 5; “Miss Martha Greunig Addresses Local Organization,” *Afro-American*, March 23, 1912, 8; “Prominent Men to Speak at Big Mass Meeting,” *Afro-American*, April 6, 1912, 6; “Should Provide for Gifted Members,” *Afro-American*, April 13, 1912, 1; “The NAACP and the Segregation Law,” *Afro-American*, October 12, 1912, 4.

Almost immediately, the local organization became engaged in the battle against residential segregation, looking to the courts to remedy its grievances. A few African Americans were already challenging the city's residential segregation ordinance in court under the lead of none other than W. Ashbie Hawkins, who was already in contact with the national office of the NAACP and providing updates on his cases to Charles Ames Brooks, a white lawyer in New York City who served on the national office's Legal Aid Committee.⁶² Hawkins had been prosecuting two cases, one civil and one criminal, both dealing with the constitutionality of the West Ordinance and both involving the same working-class African American family, the Gurrys. In August 1911, John H. Gurry, a liveryman in a Baltimore stable, moved with his family, which consisted of his wife Carrie and their four children, to a residence at 581 Laurens Street in Northwest Baltimore. The Gurrys had rented the dwelling for use as a home for their family and as a space where religious services could be conducted by the King's Apostle Holy Temple Church, a congregation founded and pastored by Carrie Gurry. The church, which had been established the previous fall, initially met in the Gurrys' home, which, at that time, was located at 1921 Druid Hill Avenue, less than a quarter of a mile from the Gurrys' new Laurens Street residence. Through the spring and summer of 1911, the membership of the King's Apostle Holy Temple Church grew, and it was finally incorporated on July

⁶² *Crisis* 4 (May 1912): 22-23; Carle, "Race, Class and Legal Ethics in the Early NAACP," 113. Carle's work incorrectly identifies Charles (C.) Ames Brooks as an African American. Brooks was a member of an elite white New York/New Jersey family and the brother of famed author Van Wyck Brooks. See "C.A. Brooks Killed By Train in Jersey," *New York Times*, December 23, 1931; New Jersey State Census, 1895, Union County, City of Plainfield, Third Ward, page 44.

10, 1911, with Carrie Gurry and her husband John, a deacon in the church, as signers of the incorporation documents.⁶³

Shortly after they moved to Laurens Street, the Gurrys encountered opposition from the police who, citing the segregation ordinance's stipulation that required a permit from the Police Board before any dwelling could be used for church purposes, stopped church services being held at the residence. The police also charged that the block of Laurens Street inhabited by the Gurrys was located between Pennsylvania Avenue and Brunt Street, a "white block." Retaining the services of W. Ashbie Hawkins, the Gurrys and the church filed a bill of complaint with the local circuit court in an attempt to prevent police from enforcing the law and to continue services for the King's Apostle Holy Temple on Laurens Street.⁶⁴ Within two weeks, John Gurry found himself being arrested and presented before a grand jury for violating the segregation ordinance.⁶⁵

By early 1912, the Gurrys and Hawkins had achieved victory in their civil case, having received an injunction against the Police Board to prevent it from interfering with

⁶³ "KACWM History," King's Apostle Church World Ministries, http://kingsapostleonline.org/?page_id=20, accessed January 5, 2013; "King's Apostles Baptize" *Afro-American*, April 29, 1911, 5; U.S. Census of 1910, NARA microfilm publication T624, roll 558, Baltimore, Maryland, 16th Ward, Enumeration District 279, Sheet 2A, accessed online at Ancestry.com, 5 January 2013; U.S. Census of 1920, NARA microfilm publication T625, roll 664, Baltimore, Maryland, 15th Ward, Enumeration District 244, Sheet 1A, accessed online at Ancestry.com, 5 January 2013.

⁶⁴ "Attorney Hawkins To Test Segregation Law," *Afro-American*, August 12, 1911, 8; "They Appeal From West Law," *Baltimore Sun*, August 22, 1911, 7. It is not clear if the Gurrys secured the legal services of the Hawkins and McMechen firm on their own or if Hawkins approached them first concerning legal representation. It is possible that Carrie Gurry may have approached Hawkins first because she was familiar with him or may have even known him through her activities in Baltimore fraternal organization circles. Hawkins was Supreme Chancellor of the Knights of Pythias (see *Afro-American*, May 24, 1913, 2) and Carrie Gurry was secretary of the Naomi Court of the Grand United Order of the Nazarites (see *Afro-American*, April 25, 1908, 8).

⁶⁵ "West Law Again Involved," *Baltimore Sun*, August 20, 1911, 12; "Presented on West Law," *Baltimore Sun*, August 24, 1911, 14.

church services held by the King's Apostle Holy Temple Church on Laurens Street.⁶⁶ However, the criminal case against John Gurry proved more problematic. In October 1911, Hawkins took further action in that case by filing a demurrer to the indictment against his client. However, due to a series of delays engineered by the court, Gurry's case remained stagnant through the spring 1912.⁶⁷ At this moment, partially as a result of increased contact with the national office of the NAACP and the newly formed local branch, Hawkins decided to use Gurry as a test case for the ordinance. Undoubtedly, John Gurry's position in the community as a respected deacon, his wife's position as the pastor and founder of the King's Apostle Holy Temple Church, and the previous success in the courts with the corresponding civil case, made this case an attractive and logical test case for Hawkins and the NAACP. Thus, in conjunction with Charles Ames Brooks, Hawkins decided to move the case to trial as quickly as possible.⁶⁸ Simultaneously, the Baltimore branch of the NAACP appointed Hawkins as its official attorney and the branch officially decided to take responsibility for the Gurry case, which included providing financial assistance.⁶⁹

In the fall of 1912, Hawkins, along with his law partner George McMechen and a white attorney, Harry Heckheimer, appeared before Judge Thomas Ireland Elliott in a criminal court to argue against the segregation ordinance. The brief, prepared by

⁶⁶ "First Blow against Segregation Law: Judge Stump Overrules Demurrer against Injunction Filed against Police Board," *Afro-American*, January 27, 1912, 6.

⁶⁷ "Segregation Law Gets Another Knock," *Afro-American*, April 26, 1913, 1; "Hawkins Makes Masterful Argument," *Afro-American*, June 28, 1913, 1.

⁶⁸ "Segregation Law Gets Another Knock," *Afro-American*, April 26, 1913, 1; "Hawkins Makes Masterful Argument," *Afro-American*, June 28, 1913, 1.

⁶⁹ 1914 Secretary's Report, Baltimore Branch Files, NAACP Papers; *Afro-American*, June 28, 1913.

Hawkins, attacked the ordinance as discriminatory class legislation that deprived citizens of their right to life, liberty, and property and thereby violated the Fourteenth Amendment. Although Hawkins, the other lawyers, and the NAACP hoped to secure a quick verdict in the Gurry criminal case, their hopes were dashed when Judge Elliott reserved his judgment in the case and it was not granted another trial date until the following year, mainly as a result of the district attorney's success in securing repeated adjournments.⁷⁰ In April 1913, Hawkins was finally able to bring his case to criminal court once again and this time, Judge Elliott, who had previously reserved his opinion after hearing arguments in the same case, acquitted Gurry, declaring the residential segregation law invalid, but refraining from commenting on the law's constitutionality. Ireland noted that the law's fault lay in the vagueness of its definitions, declaring, "It is essential that the definition of a 'white block and a colored block' must be prescribed in a manner at once definite and beyond possible dispute."⁷¹ At the time the verdict was handed down, Hawkins was attending the NAACP's national conference and he was able to share this triumph with the entire association, which subsequently celebrated Hawkins's hard work.⁷²

Within days of the verdict in Gurry's case, Judge Elliott's decision had been appealed and Hawkins prepared to argue his case before the Maryland Court of Appeals. On June 24, 1913, Hawkins appeared in court to argue the case with the assistance of

⁷⁰ "Reserves Opinion in Segregation Case: Judge Elliott Hears Arguments For And Against Segregation In Baltimore," *Afro-American*, October 12, 1912, 1. *Crisis* 4 (August 1912): 177-178.

⁷¹ *Afro-American*, April 26, 1913, 1; "Great Victory for the Race," *Afro-American*, May 24, 1913, 2; *Crisis* 6 (July 1913): 127.

⁷² *Crisis* 6 (June 1913): 91; *Crisis* 6 (July 1913): 127-128.

Charles Ames Brooks of the national office of the NAACP. Hawkins's masterful argument, lasting over an hour, cited authority after authority to prove the unconstitutionality of the West Ordinance. Among his numerous arguments were the law's violation of the city charter's mandate that no ordinance cover more than one subject; the ordinance's attempt to place restraints upon an individual's right to contract and its attempt to violate the obligations of a contract, both of which were deemed unconstitutional in efforts to segregate the Chinese in the West; and the ordinance's failure to protect the health, morals, and safety of the community and its goal of promoting "unreasonable prejudices." In a supporting argument, Brooks argued that the West ordinance was discriminatory and unconstitutional in that it encroached upon individual rights. Among those arguing for the opposition were Attorney General Edgar Allan Poe and William L. Marbury, author of the ordinance. In his presentation before the court, Marbury conjured up images of black men and white women sitting together outside their homes as neighbors, thereby appealing to white men's fears of interracial sex in order to reinforce the "need" for the residential segregation ordinance.⁷³

Ultimately, Hawkins and the NAACP emerged victorious when, in August, the Maryland Court of Appeals unanimously sustained the decision of Judge Ireland and declared the West Ordinance unconstitutional. At the same time, the court offered advice on how to revise the law and thereby create a constitutionally sound residential segregation ordinance.⁷⁴ Yet still, the victory in the Gurry case proved an important victory to all involved in prosecuting the case. For the local and national offices of the

⁷³ *Afro-American*, June 28, 1913, 1.

⁷⁴ "West Measure Knocked Out," *Baltimore Sun*, August 6, 1913, 12; "Segregation Law Decided Invalid," *Afro-American*, August 9, 1913, 1.

NAACP, the Maryland decision represented the association's first victory against residential segregation, and for W. Ashbie Hawkins, the victory represented the culmination of nearly two years of diligent work and vindication of his lifelong conviction that the courts offered the best venue for African Americans to ensure their citizenship rights.

In the summer of 1913, Warner T. McGuinn, another one of Baltimore's black lawyers, joined Hawkins as an attorney for the Baltimore NAACP. McGuinn had been born in rural Virginia, but attended the public schools of Richmond and Baltimore. He graduated from Lincoln University in 1884, and following a period of study at Howard University Law School, matriculated to Yale Law School, graduating in 1887. That same year, McGuinn was admitted to the Kansas bar. By 1893, he had relocated to Baltimore entering into practice with Harry Cummings, a Baltimore city councilman and the first African American elected to office in the state of Maryland. By 1896, McGuinn had entered into an individual law practice.⁷⁵ McGuinn and Hawkins, while awaiting the decision in the Gurry case, prepared for another civil rights case involving segregation in public transportation.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ Mather, *Who's Who of the Colored Race*, 190.

⁷⁶ Secretary's Report of the Baltimore Branch, 1914, Baltimore Branch File, Box I:G84, NAACP Papers; "Victory for NAACP," *Afro-American*, June 20, 1914, 1; "Appeal to Be Argued," *Afro-American*, November 7, 1914, 4; "Jim Crow Law Valid Says Appeals Court," *Afro-American*, December 12, 1914, 1. This case involved James Jenkins, an African American man arrested for violating the separate car law on the Washington, Baltimore, and Annapolis Railroad. Hawkins and McGuinn were victorious in their initial case as the indictment against Jenkins was dismissed; however, by the end of 1914, the courts had ruled that the law was valid. But Jenkins was not tried again for violating the law.

Prior to this case, Hawkins had previously challenged discrimination in public transportation on the B.C.&A. Railroad. One of these cases involved Thomas W. Turner, a professor at Howard University in Washington, D.C. For more information on case involving Prof. Turner, see "Shocking Conditions on B.C.&A. Railroad," *Afro-American*, December 14, 1912, 1; "The B.C.&A. Must Not Discriminate," *Afro-American*, March 1, 1913, 1. For information on the other case, see "Complains to Public Service

Despite McGuinn's and Hawkins's move into challenging another facet of segregation, the work of Hawkins and the Baltimore NAACP against residential segregation remained important to the national office as revealed by the visit of three of the association's white leaders to the city in late October 1913. Before more than 1,000 people crowded into Baltimore's Bethel A.M.E. Church, Mary White Ovington, member of the Board of Directors and former NAACP Secretary; Joel E. Spingarn, Executive Committee member; and Oswald Garrison Villard, chairman of the Board of Directors; delivered addresses on the work and importance of the NAACP. Villard's speech was the highlight of the evening, attacking the attempt of Baltimore segregationists to formulate yet another ordinance mandating residential segregation. Villard denounced the ordinance unconstitutional and economically irresponsible. In response to Baltimore Progressives who promoted the measure as a way to ensure racial peace, he declared it bound to increase race hatred and friction. Villard compared Baltimore to Russia, attacking segregationist arguments that the ordinance's aim was to protect property values and highlighting that the use of this argument merely served to obscure the true motive behind the ordinance, racism. Villard argued that the Russians, in establishing ghettos of oppressed groups, had not "sunk so low" as Baltimoreans in hiding their true motives.⁷⁷

At the time of Villard's visit to Baltimore, the local branch of the NAACP, through its legal team, was in fact continuing the fight against residential segregation and its effects. Even before the Maryland Court of Appeals had rendered its decision in the

Commission," *Afro-American*, December 2, 1911, 4; "Attorney Hawkins Makes Appeal," *Afro-American*, February 17, 1912, 8; Editorial, *Afro-American*, March 2, 1912, 4.

⁷⁷ "Monster Mass Meeting," *Afro-American*, October 18, 1913, 8; "NAACP Work To Be Exploited," *Afro-American*, October 18, 1913, 2; "Reviving the Abolition Spirit," *Afro-American*, October 25, 1913, 1, 4.

Gurry case, ordinance author Milton Dashiell and other local officials eagerly began work on yet another segregation ordinance, which was introduced into the Second Branch of the city council by Councilman Francis P. Curtis.⁷⁸ Once the legislation was introduced, a number of “representative” African American men and women mobilized against the measure and gathered before the City Council Committee on Police and Jail to register their complaints in a hearing arranged by Harry S. Cummings, the sole African American on the city council.⁷⁹ In addition to these African American leaders, some leading white citizens registered complaints against the new measure, most notably William L. Marbury and Councilman Samuel West, both of whom had been involved in the movement for a municipal residential segregation ordinance since its beginnings in Baltimore. However, unlike black Baltimoreans, Marbury and West simply cautioned the city council to “go slow” and await a decision in the Gurry case before moving forward with the new legislation.⁸⁰

Once Judge Elliot rendered his decision in the Gurry case, Dashiell and his allies wasted no time in incorporating the advice of the Court for revising the legislation and making it constitutionally sound. However, despite the wishes of Mayor Preston and white segregations who clamored for a special session of the city council to be called in order to pass the legislation, the city council did not convene until September, at which time the council quickly passed the new legislation and the mayor signed the legislation

⁷⁸ *Journal of Proceedings of the Second Branch of the Baltimore City Council, 1913 – 1914* (Baltimore: Mayer and Thalmeir Public Printers, 1914).

⁷⁹ “Determined Protest against Segregation,” *Afro-American*, May 31, 1913, 1.

⁸⁰ “Go Slow, Says Marbury,” *Baltimore Sun*, May 16, 1913, 14; “Pleas for West Law: Its Advocates Urge Delay on the Curtis Measure,” *Baltimore Sun*, June 4, 1913, 5.

into effect. This ordinance, popularly known as the Curtis Segregation Law, corrected the errors and omissions of the previous legislation by defining a “block” as both sides of the longitudinal part of any street of the city lying between the two nearest cross streets completely and adding a clause that prevented any African American from building a home in a section of the city where no other African Americans lived. The new segregation measure also made provision for joint occupancy of a block by both whites and blacks provided that the Police Commissioners declared the street open to joint residences following receipt of a petition carrying the signatures of a majority of the residents of the block.⁸¹

The continued efforts of the city council to mandate residential segregation contributed to an atmosphere of heightened racial antagonism and as a consequence, African Americans and their residences across the city continued to be the targets of vandalism and other acts of mob violence.⁸² In one incident in late September 1913, concurrent with the passage of the new ordinance, a crowd estimated at 200 whites

⁸¹ “Special Session Soon,” *Baltimore Sun*, August 9, 1913, 11; “Dashiell Urges Action,” *Baltimore Sun*, August 10, 1913, 4; “Race Law In Council,” *Baltimore Sun*, September 16, 1913, 14; “To Demand Quick Action,” *Baltimore Sun*, September 20, 1913, 16; “Segregation Law Again,” *Afro-American*, September 20, 1913, 1; “Segregation In A Rush,” *Baltimore Sun*, September 21, 1913, 12; “Race Law In Effect,” *Baltimore Sun*, September 26, 1913, 14; *Crisis* 6 (July 1913): 127-128; *Crisis* 6 (September 1913): 241; *Crisis* (December 1913): 69-71.

⁸² In addition to the move to continue municipal residential segregation, the increasing racial antagonism in the city was buoyed by two other events in the fall of 1913. The first event was the unsuccessful attempt of Morgan College to relocate to the all-white neighborhood of Mt. Washington on the western border of the city. Ultimately, Morgan College would successfully relocate to another white neighborhood in 1917 on the northeastern border of the city. The second event was the murder of an African American chauffeur named George Murphy by his employer Charles Guth and Guth’s subsequent acquittal despite evidence that suggested he did not act in self-defense. On the relocation of Morgan College, see “Whites Trying to Bar Negroes,” *Afro-American*, October 4, 1913, 4; “Discuss Plans for Morgan College Site,” *Afro-American*, March 24, 1917, 1; “Whites Oppose Site For Morgan,” *Afro-American*, May 5, 1917, 1; “Poor Whites Still After Morgan College,” *Afro-American*, June 23, 1917, 1. For more information on the Guth-Murphy murder case: “The Guth Murder Case,” *Afro-American*, September 20, 1913, 4; “Citizens Want Grand Jury to Investigate,” *Afro-American*, September 27, 1913, 1.

assembled outside the residence of George Howe on Harford Avenue in Northeast Baltimore, where he lived with his wife and small children. After his house had been pummeled with bricks and its windows shattered, Howe confronted the mob with a double-barreled shotgun, firing shots into the crowd to scare the attackers away and in the process, accidentally wounded four young white men. In the chaos that ensued, Howe was struck a number of times by the mob and nearly lynched before being arrested. Following this arrest, the Baltimore NAACP immediately rushed to assist Howe, sending McGuinn and Hawkins to handle the case along with the assistance of William McCard, another one of the city's African American lawyers. Through the efforts of these lawyers in conjunction with the NAACP, Howe's bail was reduced from \$2,000 to \$500, and he was released from jail.⁸³ Immediately following the altercation, Howe was convicted on three charges of assault and sentenced to two months imprisonment for each charge. However, with the assistance of McGuinn and Hawkins acting on behalf of the NAACP, Howe appealed the conviction. Within two months, the legal team met with success when Howe was acquitted on the charge of assault with intent to kill and the remaining charges (three charges of assault and one charge of carrying a deadly weapon) were placed on the stet docket of the State's Attorney's office, postponing the case indefinitely.⁸⁴

Within a few months of Howe's acquittal, representatives of the NAACP from across the nation and the association's national officers converged on Baltimore for the

⁸³ "Negro Wounds 4 Boys," *Baltimore Sun*, October 1, 1913, 14; "Gets Jail Sentence for Defending His Home," *Baltimore Sun*, October 4, 1913, 1. The Howe incident came only a few days after another near riot in Northwest Baltimore where scores of white men armed with sticks, stones, and other projectiles attacked the home of an African American family who had recently moved into their residence at 1324 Mosher Street. See "Five Injured In A Near Riot," *Afro-American*, September 27, 1913, 8.

⁸⁴ "Race Trouble In Court," *Baltimore Sun*, November 12, 1913, 10; "Court Proceedings," *Baltimore Sun*, November 12, 1913, 13; *Crisis* 7 (January 1914): 140.

organization's Sixth Annual Conference. In choosing Baltimore as the site of this meeting, the furthest South an annual conference had ever been held to date, the national NAACP revealed the importance of the city as a site of struggle and the importance of highlighting the work of the local branch and its lawyers in the fight against residential segregation. Prior to this conference, black Baltimoreans had been afforded the opportunity to address this issue on a national level before the organization, most notably in a speech given by the Rev. Garnett R. Waller at the Association's national conference in Boston in 1912 and through a speech on "The Struggle for Land and Property" given by Hawkins at the organization's national conference in Philadelphia in 1913.⁸⁵ But with Baltimore as the seat of the Association's national conference in 1914, the fight against residential segregation came to the forefront. And just as Baltimore's fight against segregation had energized the national organization, the conference energized the African American community of Baltimore, creating even more interest in the NAACP.⁸⁶

At the 1914 annual conference of the NAACP, the plight of the African American community in Baltimore and the efforts of the local branch in battling housing discrimination took center stage as hundreds of members of the NAACP from across the country converged on the city for the three day meeting. A crowd of 2,000 filled the Lyric Theater for the conference's opening session. Over the course of the next three days, conference attendees listened to a number of addresses from prominent Baltimoreans detailing the discriminatory housing ordinances in the city and the battle against them by the Baltimore NAACP. Speaking on "The Color Problems of Baltimore,"

⁸⁵ "The NAACP and the Segregation Law," *Afro-American*, October 12, 1912, 4; "Welfare of the Race Subject of Conference," *Afro-American*, April 26, 1913, 1.

⁸⁶ "The Sixth Annual Conference," *Crisis* 8 (June 1914): 80-87.

the Rev. Garnett R. Waller praised “a most vigilant and militant attitude on the part of the Baltimore Branch” in its efforts combating segregation and other forms of discrimination. W. Ashbie Hawkins, the legal crusader of the Baltimore branch, spoke on “The Negro and the Court,” expressing his belief that the judicial system offered the most appropriate venue for securing justice for African Americans. Hawkins decried the need for African Americans nationwide to wake up from the “dream” that they had secured freedom and the full rights of citizenship through the Emancipation Proclamation and the Reconstruction Amendments. He issued a call for the African American community nationwide to realize that the struggle for full citizenship rights was not over and to take action through the courts against discriminatory legislation that threatened these rights.⁸⁷

NAACP members from outside Baltimore acknowledged the importance of the recent legal work of the Baltimore branch. In its annual report delivered at the conference, the Howard University branch of the NAACP in Washington, D.C. commented on its use of reports of activities of the Baltimore branch to encourage other black college campuses to establish branches of the NAACP. The Howard University branch had received favorable responses from students at Williams, Talladega, and Fisk Colleges. John E. Milholland, former treasurer of the national NAACP office, also commented on the success of the Baltimore NAACP in remarks given at the conference. He celebrated the perseverance of its members, describing them as “a people who stand upon their heels and will not submit without protest.”⁸⁸ Repeatedly, the national

⁸⁷ Sixth Annual Conference Proceedings, Annual Conference Files, Box I:B1, NAACP Papers; “Thousands Hear Pleas for Justice and a Square Deal,” *Afro-American*, May 9, 1914, 1; “Color Problems of Baltimore,” *Afro-American*, May 9, 1914, 1; “A Fair Deal in the Courts,” *Afro-American*, May 9, 1914, 1; “Notable Addresses by Leaders in New Abolition Movement,” *Afro-American*, May 16, 1914, 7.

⁸⁸ Sixth Annual Conference Proceedings, Annual Conference Files, Box I:B1, NAACP Papers.

conference of the NAACP confirmed the importance of the work of the Baltimore branch and encouraged its members to move forward in its challenges of residential segregation.

While the year 1914 marked the pinnacle of success for the Baltimore NAACP, it also marked a transition of the national NAACP office from a focus on Baltimore to a focus on the battle against residential segregation further south. Following the enactment of Baltimore's first ordinance mandating residential separation of the races, cities across the nation followed Baltimore's lead in enacting similar discriminatory housing legislation including Winston-Salem and Mooresville, North Carolina in 1912; and Birmingham, Atlanta, Richmond, and Norfolk in 1913.⁸⁹ The following year, with the enactment of a residential segregation ordinance in Louisville, Kentucky similar to the original West Ordinance in Baltimore, the national office of the NAACP strategically decided to make Louisville the center of the battle against residential segregation.⁹⁰ Moving quickly, the national office of the NAACP orchestrated a legal challenge to the ordinance only two months following the law's passage. The test case, organized by the national office of the NAACP, involved William Warley, president of the Louisville branch of the NAACP, and Charles Buchanan, a white real estate agent. Warley entered into a contract with Buchanan to purchase a residential lot located on a largely white block, but surrounded by residences inhabited by African Americans. The subsequent

⁸⁹ *Crisis* 15 (December 1917): 69.

⁹⁰ *Crisis* 8 (September 1914): 236. For a discussion of the NAACP's decision to make Louisville the strategic point for the battle against residential segregation, see Roger Rice, "Residential Segregation by Law," and Susan D. Carle, "Race, Class, and Legal Ethics in the Early NAACP." Carle argues that Louisville was chosen as the strategic site of the battle against residential segregation due to the ability of the national office to wield greater power and influence in Louisville. Rice argues that the high level of interracial cooperation against the ordinance in Louisville made the city the perfect site for a national battle against residential segregation.

court case for violation of the Louisville ordinance placed Buchanan, the white real estate agent, as the plaintiff contesting the constitutionality of the ordinance and it placed Warley, the African American, as the individual defending the ordinance.

The NAACP's selection of Louisville as the site of the national battle can be attributed to lessons learned in the battle against residential segregation in Baltimore. Since the Louisville ordinance closely resembled the original Baltimore ordinance, the NAACP decided to quickly mount a legal challenge, thereby attacking the legislation before it could be transformed or rewritten to alleviate the concerns of Louisville whites as had been done in Baltimore. By April 1916, the national office of the NAACP had achieved its goal of challenging residential segregation on the nation's ultimate legal stage when the case of *Buchanan v. Warley* arrived at the steps of the Supreme Court with Moorfield Storey, national president of the NAACP, arguing against the constitutionality of the Louisville ordinance.

While the national office of the NAACP switched its focus to Louisville, the Baltimore NAACP and its lawyers continued to search for ways to legally challenge residential segregation. Within months of the passage of the Curtis Law, Howard Young, an African American physician and a member of the local NAACP, offered his recently purchased dwelling in a white block at 1117 Myrtle Avenue for use as a test case; however, the branch's Legal Redress Committee declined the offer and issued a formal statement in the *Afro-American* outlining the policy of the local NAACP for selecting test cases that were not "frame ups." As Dr. Young's purchase and occupation of the house on Myrtle Avenue seemed to have the sole purpose of testing the new legislation, it did

not fit the committee's stated criteria at that time.⁹¹ Though the NAACP was unable to locate an appropriate test case in late 1913, by the following year as the segregation legislation passed its first anniversary, two cases challenging the ordinance were making their way into the local courts with the assistance of the NAACP. The first case involved a working-class woman, Mary G. Lilly, a laundress who was charged with violating the law for moving into a white block when she moved into a house at 12 S. Pine Street. However, the block only contained two houses of which one was occupied by a white family. Represented by W. Ashbie Hawkins, Lilly's case undoubtedly proved to be an attractive test case for it afforded the NAACP the opportunity to challenge how "white" and "colored" blocks were determined under the segregation legislation. The second case involved W. A. C. Hughes, a Washington, D.C. minister, who owned a grocery store and dwelling located at 1929 Etting Street in a block inhabited solely by African Americans and made arrangements to lease this building to a local Jewish man and his family. When the lessee made an attempt to move into this dwelling, the police informed him that he could run the store but the law prevented him from moving into the residence. Representing the Rev. Hughes, Hawkins and two other African American lawyers, Cornelius C. Fitzgerald and W. C. McCard, filed an injunction against the mayor, city council, and the Board of Police Commissioners to prevent them from enforcing the segregation law. This case offered the NAACP the opportunity to challenge residential

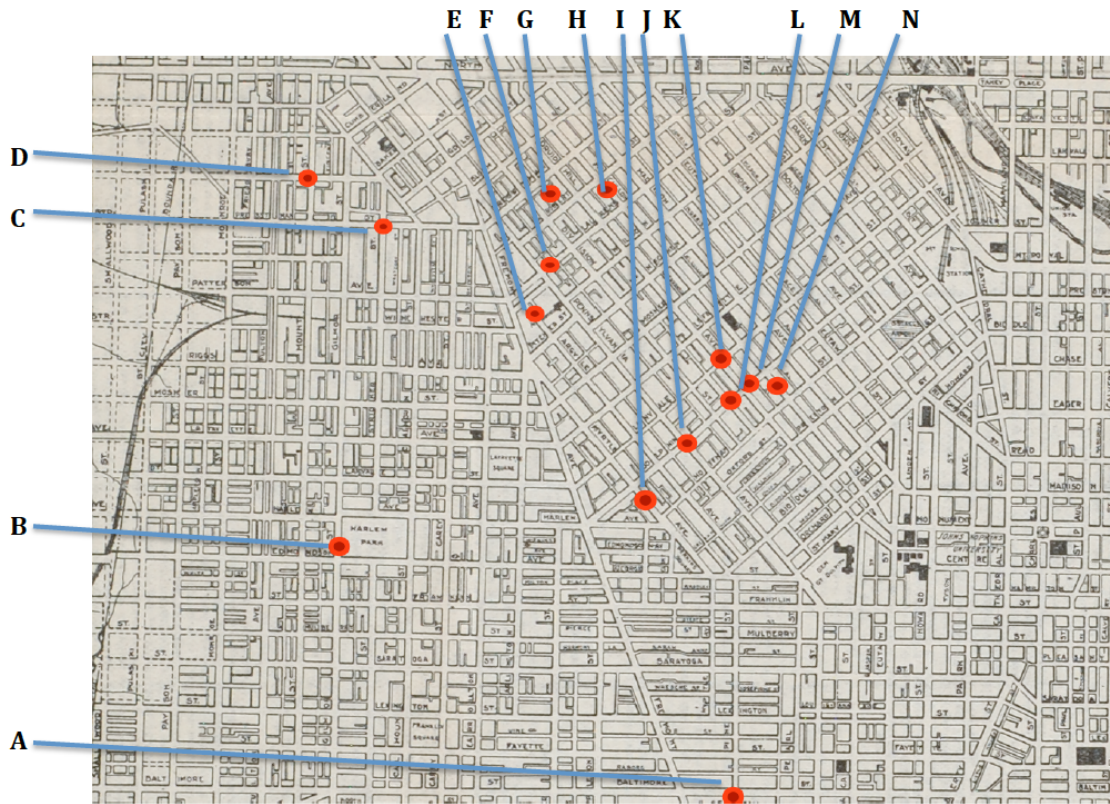
⁹¹ "Dr. Young Will Expect All to Help," *Afro-American*, December 6, 1913, 1; "Letter to the Editor," *Afro-American*, December 13, 1913, 4.

segregation in their city in a new way by highlighting the manner in which it could interfere with a citizen's right to contract.⁹²

By 1915, Hawkins and McGuinn had identified yet another case through which they hoped to challenge and defeat the city's newest iteration of a segregation ordinance. In this case, Thomas S. Jackson had been indicted on the charge of moving into a "white block" by occupying a dwelling at 1633 Baker Street and levied a fine of \$500 per the stipulations of the ordinance. Also charged in this case was Charles Morton, a white real estate agent who had sold the residence to Jackson and had a long history of selling property in white neighborhoods to African Americans as his actions in 1906 had prompted the formation of the Harlem Park Protective Association. The residence, located at the southwest corner of Baker and Mount streets in Northwest Baltimore, possessed two entrances, one facing Baker Street, a white block, and the other facing Mount Street, a colored block. Hawkins along with Fitzgerald and McCard, and with the backing of the Baltimore NAACP, sought justice through the courts by representing Jackson. This case, like the previously selected cases, proved attractive as a test case because it offered a new and different angle with which to challenge the law as a result of the confusion in determining the exact address of the dwelling as Jackson and Morton both argued that the home's main entrance was on Mount Street and thus did not violate the segregation ordinance. In the local criminal court, demurrers against the indictments of both men were overruled and Jackson was ultimately found guilty. From here, the case moved to the Maryland Court of Appeals where Jackson was still represented by

⁹² "Segregation Law To Be Tested," *Afro-American*, October 3, 1914, 4; "Segregation To Be Attacked," *Afro-American*, October 10, 1914, 1; "Segregation Is Roundly Scored," *Afro-American*, October 17, 1914, 1; "Segregation Case In Court," *Afro-American*, January 9, 1915, 1.

Figure 1.2 Map of Important Sites in the Battle against Residential Segregation



A	Mary Lilly residence	H	George W.F. McMechen residence
B	St. Mark's Independent Colored Church/Harry S. Cummings Property	I	Bethel A.M.E. Church
C	Whatcoat Methodist Episcopal Church (white)	J	Union Baptist Church
D	Thomas Jackson residence	K	Sharp Street Methodist Episcopal Church
E	Catherine Dixon residence	L	Milton Dashiell residence (white)
F	John and Carry Gurry residence	M	Colored High School
G	W. A. C. Hughes store/residence	N	Howard Young residence

These institutions and residences show that it was the movement of African Americans into Northwest Baltimore that figured most prominently in the local battle against residential segregation.

Source: *Map of Baltimore* (Baltimore: Young Men's Christian Association of the Johns Hopkins University, 1906.) Digital Copy made available via JSCHOLARSHIP, Sheridan Library, Johns Hopkins University.

Hawkins along with the assistance of his law firm partner, George McMechen. However, despite Hawkins's previous success, the case of *Maryland v. Jackson* stalled in this court in the beginning months of 1916 as the Maryland Court of Appeals waited for the U.S. Supreme Court to hear and decide upon the Louisville segregation case. Thus, the legal activity of the Baltimore NAACP against residential segregation came to a standstill as Hawkins and McMechen anxiously awaited the outcome of *Buchanan v. Warley*.⁹³ But Hawkins would not stand idly by while the Supreme Court repeatedly delayed hearing and ruling on the case. Hawkins, now president of the Baltimore branch of the NAACP, filed a brief with the Supreme Court on behalf of the branch attacking the segregation ordinance and detailing the efforts of the Baltimore NAACP, specifically his own efforts, since the beginning of the struggle against residential segregation six years earlier.⁹⁴

The Supreme Court finally rendered its decision in *Buchanan v. Warley* in November 1917, declaring the Louisville ordinance invalid and legally-imposed residential segregation unconstitutional.⁹⁵ African Americans in Baltimore rejoiced over

⁹³ "Segregation Case Argued," *Baltimore Sun*, April 2, 1915, 4; "Segregation Act Held Valid," *Baltimore Sun*, April 8, 1915, 5; "Upholds Segregation Law," *Afro-American*, April 10, 1915, 1; "Segregation Law to Go to Court of Appeals," *Afro-American*, April 24, 1915, 1; "Waiting on the Supreme Court," *Afro-American*, March 18, 1916, 1; *Crisis* 11 (January 1916), 142; *Afro-American*, March 1, 1918, 1; *Crisis* 15 (April 1918), 284. As Jackson's case went before the Maryland Court of Appeals and stalled, another similar case developed in Baltimore involving an African American lawyer, Clarke L. Smith, who was charged with violating the segregation ordinance when he moved into a home located at the corner of McCulloh Street, a white block, and Presstman Street, a colored block. See "Lawyer Stirs Negrophobes," *Afro-American*, August 7, 1915, 1.

⁹⁴ *Buchanan v. Warley*, 245 U.S. at 68-69.

⁹⁵ Legal scholar David Bernstein argues that this case was one of the most significant decisions of the era prior to the Modern Civil Rights Movement, primarily because it prevented state and local governments from passing more pervasive segregation legislation; it hindered the efforts of white Americans to prevent African Americans from moving into white neighborhoods; the case marked a transition to more favorable verdicts from the Supreme Court in cases involving African Americans and the Fourteenth Amendment. See David E. Bernstein, *Rehabilitating Lochner: Defending Individual Rights Against Progressive Reform* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011).

the news of the Supreme Court victory and its implications for their city. Responding to the Court's decision and the NAACP's victory, the *Afro-American*, the black newspaper in the city, declared, "[t]he joy in Bunkville when home run Casey came to bat in the final inning of a famous game with the bases loaded, is nothing compared with the rejoicing in Baltimore." It proudly proclaimed, "Segregation in [the] U.S. is Dead," engaging Warner T. McGuinn to write an article for the newspaper explaining the particulars of the Supreme Court decision.⁹⁶ And in the wake of the Supreme Court victory, the *Crisis*, the national publication of the NAACP, lauded W. Ashbie Hawkins for his role in the residential segregation battle, highlighting the importance of the Baltimore NAACP in initiating this fight that would eventually lead to a national victory for the NAACP:

We are thankful; and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and The Crisis, in turn, pause to raise their hats to one man who bore the burden in the heat of the day, initiated the fight against segregation, carried it victoriously up through the state courts, and filed a brief in the Supreme Court case- William Ashbie Hawkins, the attorney of our Baltimore branch.⁹⁷

For black Baltimoreans, this initial battle against residential segregation finally ended in February 1918 when the Maryland Court of Appeals handed down its opinion in the case of *Maryland v. Jackson*, ruling that the Baltimore ordinance was invalid due to its similarity to the Louisville ordinance. The Maryland Court of Appeal's opinion declared, "It is thus definitely settled, upon highest authority, that the right of the individual citizen

⁹⁶ *Afro-American*, November 17, 1917, 1 and 4.

⁹⁷ *Crisis* 15 (December 1917): 61.

to acquire or use property cannot be validly restricted, by State or municipality, on the ground of his color.”⁹⁸

Thus, following over seven years of struggle, African Americans in Baltimore celebrated the death of municipal residential segregation. Though the Baltimore branch of the NAACP and its lawyers would not have the opportunity to take their case against residential segregation to the nation’s highest court, the work of African Americans in Baltimore laid the groundwork for the Supreme Court victory. Through the work of Hawkins and others of the Baltimore NAACP, the national office of the organization became enthralled in the fight against legislation mandating the separation of the races in residential areas. The legal campaign waged in Baltimore energized the NAACP, setting its national agenda in the struggle for civil rights by elevating the importance of combating residential segregation. In this manner, events on the local level greatly influenced those on the national level as officials of the national NAACP worked successfully with the Baltimore NAACP and ultimately took the lessons learned from the situation in Baltimore to orchestrate a win in Louisville. And in this entire process, African American lawyers, particularly W. Ashbie Hawkins, black men who since have been relegated to historical obscurity, played a prominent role. Through their tireless work and unrelenting efforts, the national office of the NAACP achieved one of its first moments of success on a national stage before the Supreme Court.

⁹⁸ “Segregation Act Invalid,” *Baltimore Sun*, February 28, 1918, 5; “Segregation in Baltimore Gets Final Internment,” *Afro-American*, March 1, 1918, 1; 132 Md. At 312, 103 A. at 910.

Chapter Two

“A Vote for the Man and Not the Party”: Independent Politics and Electoral Realignments

On the evening of November 1, 1920, following a whirlwind campaign that had taken him across the state of Maryland in only a little over a month, William Ashbie Hawkins entered the hall of the St. Peter Claver Catholic Church in Baltimore for the closing rally of his historic campaign for the United States Senate, the first African American in the state to run for such office. Filled to capacity, the rally was led by some of Hawkins's staunchest supporters, including members of his campaign committee such as lawyers J. Steward Davis and W. Norman Bishop, and prominent civic and fraternal leader Jennie Ross, all of whom joined Hawkins on the platform to speak that evening. Rising to his feet to the sound of a brass band, Hawkins was greeted with thunderous applause that persisted for three minutes. Once the crowd's enthusiastic cheers subsided, Hawkins, though fatigued and hoarse following weeks of strenuous campaigning, took his place behind the podium and proceeded to speak for an hour. In his remarks, he emphasized the significance of his campaign and noted that his election would pave the way for "race representation" in legislative bodies at both the state and national levels.

Although Hawkins spoke with an air of certainty that his campaign would end with his election to the United States Senate the following day, he undoubtedly realized that he would likely be defeated by either his Republican or Democratic opponent. In fact, only a few hours earlier, in addressing a crowd assembled a few blocks away for a meeting of the Roosevelt Republican Club, Hawkins had proclaimed, "I do not expect to be elected, but if you will make a good showing, you will prove to the country that there

are voters in Maryland, whose race loyalty is above party affiliation.” In this one statement, Hawkins articulated one of the most important results of his campaign: a clear manifestation of the willingness of a segment of the African American population, especially in Baltimore, to separate itself from its traditional affiliation with the Republican Party in order to advance a civil rights agenda, thus revealing how political affiliations were fixed, yet also malleable on the local level.¹

Viewed from a national perspective, a history of African Americans and United States party politics confirms that following the Civil War, African Americans flocked en masse to the Republican Party as the party of Lincoln and emancipation, and presumably the political party that offered them the best opportunity to exercise their new rights as citizens of the nation. Beginning in the 1870s, once the Fifteenth Amendment guaranteed African American men the right to vote, it seemingly became even more important for the white leaders of the Republican Party to address the concerns of the black electorate, particularly considering the party’s often precarious position.² Yet white Republicans were not consistent in their attempts to court the African American vote, and some even advocated building a coalition with independent white voters in order to construct a “lily-white” party unconcerned with issues important to the black community. But even with the inconsistency of the Republican Party, most African Americans remained steadfast in

¹ “Rousing Meeting Closed Campaign,” *Afro-American*, November 5, 1920, 8.

² Richard Sherman, *The Republican Party and Black America: From McKinley to Hoover, 1896-1933* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1973), 1. From the mid-1870s to the mid-1890s, Republicans only controlled two Congresses and two Democrats served as President. Thus, the Republican Party did not possess a firm control of political power on the national level.

their loyalty to the “Party of Lincoln” through the beginning decades of the twentieth century, at least when viewed through the prism of national politics.³

National black loyalty to the Republican Party was finally broken in the 1930s amidst the economic turmoil of the Great Depression when the African American community proved to be the most vulnerable and hardest hit. As a result of the New Deal and the leadership of President Franklin D. Roosevelt in response to the nation’s dire economic condition, African Americans almost completely abandoned their previous steadfast political affiliation with the Republican Party so that by 1936, most were members of the Democratic Party. In her seminal work on black defection from the Republican Party, *Farewell to the Party of Lincoln*, Nancy Weiss argues that African Americans became Democrats because of the New Deal’s economic benefits and in spite of the New Deal’s failure to incorporate a civil rights agenda.⁴ Interestingly, the prologue of Weiss’s book begins in Baltimore with the story of twenty-one year old Clarence Mitchell, Jr., who, in the summer of 1932, registered to vote as a Democrat, thereby breaking with family tradition as members of the Mitchell family, like the majority of black Baltimoreans, were loyal members of the Republican Party. Decades later in his recollections of how other African Americans in his community received his decision to join the Democratic Party, Mitchell remembered some saw it as a “traitorous act,” for “anybody who wasn’t a Republican was somehow or other a kind of questionable

³ Ibid., 2 – 3.

⁴ Nancy Weiss, *Farewell to the Party of Lincoln* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983), xiii – xv. In making this argument, Weiss is refuting the argument of Harvard Sitkoff argues that the New Deal’s positive record on race led African Americans to join the Democratic Party. See Harvard Sitkoff, *A New Deal For Blacks: The Emergence of Civil Rights as a National Issue* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978).

character.”⁵ In Weiss’s work, this tale is placed within the national context in order to illuminate the steadfast nature of African American loyalty to the Republican Party, while highlighting both the relatively short period of time in which African Americans made the transition from Republican to Democrat and the severity of the economic conditions that precipitated the shift. However, when placed within a local context, Mitchell’s story and indeed the story in general of African Americans’ transition to the Democratic Party becomes much more complicated, particularly considering the political affiliations and activities of a considerable number of black Baltimoreans in the preceding decade.

This chapter examines the election of 1920 and the political movements that both preceded and followed it in Baltimore, to reveal that African American membership in the Republican Party prior to the 1930s did not translate into blind allegiance to the party and its politicians at all times and did not preclude African Americans from negotiating and affiliating with politicians of other political parties in order to address civil rights issues, specifically in local politics. From the late nineteenth century through the 1920s, African Americans in Baltimore used independent political movements to express their dissatisfaction with a range of issues and as a means to improve conditions for the black community. In the ensuing pages of this chapter, I examine the independent political insurgency and changing political affiliations of black Baltimoreans in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the developments that shaped African American

⁵ Weiss, *Farewell to the Party of Lincoln*, 3–4. Clarence Mitchell, Jr. was a 1928 graduate of Douglass High School and a 1931 graduate of Lincoln University. Mitchell began his career in Baltimore as a reporter for the *Afro-American*. In 1945, he became the first labor secretary of the NAACP and he became head of the Washington office in 1950. Denton L. Watson, *Lion in the Lobby: Clarence Mitchell, Jr.’s Struggle for the Passage of Civil Rights Laws* (New York: Morrow, 1990).

participation in the election of 1920, including the emergence of a new group of voters following the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment, and the ramifications of the election itself in local electoral politics.

In the years immediately following the end of the Civil War, African Americans in Maryland, in a manner similar to the black population across the country, eagerly and quickly affiliated themselves with the Republican Party and began participation in the civic life of the state in earnest, demanding full citizenship rights. By the end of 1865, black Marylanders had organized a Colored State Convention in Baltimore with over 150 delegates in attendance representing black leaders in Baltimore as well as black communities from every county in the state. At the convention, black leaders demanded that they receive the right to vote, in addition to agitation for the repeal of discriminatory legislation in education and apprenticeship.⁶ Two years later, the Republican Party relented in the face of the black community's consistent agitation and finally opened its doors to African Americans, offering a modicum of political involvement within the organization as over sixty black men from Baltimore along with delegates from various counties in the state gathered in the city for the Republican State Convention in May 1867. At the convention, black men were given opportunities to address the convention and sat in racially integrated delegations. Following the convention, the state Republican Party appointed five black men from Baltimore and several others representing various counties in the state as delegates to the Republican State Central Committee. However, full political participation in the party and state politics remained elusive as African Americans were excluded from party primaries, ward meetings, and conventions through

⁶ Richard Paul Fuke, *Imperfect Equality: African Americans and the Confines of White Racial Attitudes in Post-Emancipation Maryland* (New York: Fordham University Press), 150.

the remainder of the decade. And on the State Central Committee, though black men were granted membership, they served only as “consulting” members with very limited political power.⁷

As the 1860s came to a close, the Republican Party still refused to fully acknowledge African Americans as black suffrage seemed unsure nationwide. Thus, a number of more radical black Republican leaders in Baltimore organized a black border state convention in the city in August 1868, drawing representatives from the border states of Delaware, West Virginia, Kentucky, Missouri, and Tennessee, as well as delegates from other areas of the country, including New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Connecticut, and Iowa. Through the convention, the black radical leaders in Baltimore hoped to build a national black coalition to pressure the Republican Party into actively advocating black suffrage. Upon the heels of this convention, the Colored Republican City Executive Committee was established in Baltimore under the leadership of Dr. H. J. Brown who was selected to serve as the committee’s chairman. Brown, a member of Baltimore’s black elite, was born in Baltimore in 1830 and had trained in Philadelphia for a career in medicine. After residing in the North during the Civil War, Brown and his family returned to Baltimore at the war’s end, and he became immensely involved in the fight for black suffrage and the full rights of citizenship in the city and state, often clashing with black conservative Republicans. Under Brown’s leadership, the Colored Republican City Executive Committee continued the push for black suffrage in

⁷ William Paul, “The Shadow of Equality: The Negro in Baltimore, 1864 – 1911” (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin, 1972), 85 – 88, 186. In 1873, of the twenty members from Baltimore on the State Central Committee of the Republican Party, only two were African American. As late as 1890, there were only six African Americans from the entire state on the committee, which was made up of 117 members. African Americans were completely excluded from membership on the committee from 1880 to 1893. In Baltimore, no African Americans served on the Republican City Executive Committee until the 1880s and by 1890, still only three of the committee’s twenty-four members were African American.

addition to agitating for federal appointments for African Americans and full African American participation in the local and state party organization. This committee led to the establishment of the Colored Republican State Central Committee, a statewide organization with potential for increased independent black political activity in the city and state. However, without the vote, African Americans found themselves able to exert little pressure on the Republican Party.⁸

With the ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment, African American men in Maryland voted for the first time in congressional elections in 1870 and in a state election the following year. However, the increased number of Republican voters gained through the extension of suffrage to African American men did not reverse political power, as the Democratic Party retained the control it had enjoyed since 1867 in the state of Maryland. This remained true for the city of Baltimore as well, where the majority of votes went to the Democratic Party in every gubernatorial, congressional, and presidential election from 1870 to 1895. And, with one exception, the city sent an exclusively Democratic delegation to each session of the Maryland General Assembly during this same time period. Accordingly, Republican Party leaders felt no urgency in addressing demands for civil rights from the African American community and, fearful of alienating the support of independent Democrats, the party continued to offer African Americans only token membership on the State Central Committee and rejected demands that the party endorse African American men as candidates for the Baltimore City Council.⁹ Despite the unwillingness of the Republican Party to address the majority of the black community's

⁸ Paul, "The Shadow of Equality," 90–92.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 97, 181 – 182.

demands in the years immediately following ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment, most African Americans remained loyal to the party, partially due to the influence of conservative black leaders such as Isaac Myers who had an extensive personal history of fighting for black civil rights, and also due to the fact that by 1875, two specific issues had been addressed: the exclusion of African Americans from federal juries and discrimination on streetcars.¹⁰

Although most of the black population in Maryland did remain loyal to the Republican Party in spite of its wavering and often nonexistent commitment to civil rights, a substantial number of African Americans in the state, particularly in Baltimore, remained militant in their critiques and challenge of the party during the first two decades of enfranchisement. As early as 1872, some blacks advocated the formation of an independent black political party and some even went as far as opposing the re-election of the Republican candidate for U.S. president, former Union general Ulysses S. Grant, and instead forming clubs which endorsed the candidacy of Horace Greeley, candidate of the newly formed Liberal Republican Party.¹¹ During this same time period, some African Americans were so disgusted with the Party of Lincoln that they considered leaving the Republican Party entirely and affiliating, at least for an election season, with the Democratic Party. Black Democratic ward clubs were organized in Baltimore roughly every two to four years between 1870 and 1893. The number of African Americans defecting to the Democratic Party during the latter part of the nineteenth century certainly remained relatively small in proportion to the rest of the black electorate; however, in

¹⁰ Ibid., 100 – 102.

¹¹ Ibid., 98.

some instances their numbers may have proved reasonably substantial. In 1876, for example, when African American voters in the city began throwing their support behind Democratic presidential candidate Samuel Tilden, ignoring violence perpetrated against the black community the previous year by white Democrats, the Republican Party was so alarmed that it arranged for preeminent black leader Frederick Douglass to travel to Baltimore and address the defectors, urging them to remain loyal Republicans.¹²

During the 1880s, African American militants began to pave the way for considerable independent political action in Baltimore. At the opening of the decade, they established the Colored Republican Central Club with Dr. H. J. Brown as president. The organization maintained a dual goal of registering African American voters while advising them of their lack of full political power within the constraints of the Republican Party. This same year, four African Americans ran as candidates for the city council, in spite of the Republican Party's refusal to endorse them. All the African American candidates, as well as all of the white Republican candidates, lost to the Democrats in the election. However, the black candidate in the city's Tenth Ward, George E. Briscoe, polled more votes than the Republican candidate, certainly buoying the work of the black radicals. The following year, under the leadership of Brown and Joseph E. Briscoe, chairman of the local Colored Advisory Committee, African Americans continued to push the Republican Party to action, calling for a convention to be held in the city to discuss the party's relationship with the black community. Also in 1881, African Americans in two city wards ran on independent tickets for election as delegates to various Republican Party nominating conventions following the party's refusal to place African American names on the official ticket. Further independent action continued

¹² Ibid., 190.

through the remainder of the decade as in 1882, 1885, and 1886, a total of five other African Americans ran as independents for seats on the city council. Also in 1886, an African American ran as an unendorsed Republican candidate for the Congressional seat of the Fourth District, which encompassed the city of Baltimore.¹³

In 1890, following two decades of increasing black independent political action, the Republican Party finally endorsed the candidacy of an African American for the city council. The black candidate, Harry Sythe Cummings, was a native Baltimorean and the grandson of Baltimore County slaves who had attended the city's public schools before matriculating to Lincoln University, a historically black institution in Pennsylvania, from which he graduated in 1886. Three years later, Cummings was one of the first two African Americans to receive a law degree from the University of Maryland and he was admitted to the Baltimore bar that same year.¹⁴ The local Republican Party's reversal in its endorsement policy regarding African Americans may have partially been the result of the return of the Republican Party to power in the White House in 1888 with the election of Benjamin Harrison. This fortuitous change on the national level led to an increased effort to meet some African American demands, particularly patronage and more representation in city conventions.¹⁵ However, the primary motivation for the party's endorsement of an African American candidate was probably the changing demographics of Baltimore's Eleventh Ward where Cummings placed his bid for a council seat. In early 1890, the state legislature initiated a redistricting plan that added two black districts to the

¹³ Ibid., 191, 197 – 198

¹⁴ Suzanne Ellery Greene, "Black Republicans on the Baltimore City Council, 1890 – 1931," *Maryland Historical Magazine* 74 (September 1979): 205 – 206.

¹⁵ Paul, "The Shadow of Equality," 213 – 214.

already primarily Republican and partially black Eleventh Ward. As a result of this redistricting, African Americans now made up the majority of eligible voters in a city council ward. Thus, the Republican Party made the logical decision to support an African American candidate for this council seat once Cummings filed to run for office in the Republican primary. Cummings successfully defeated white fellow Republican George W. Brooks in the primary election and went on to obtain a seat in the city council representing the Eleventh Ward by defeating Joseph A. Gillis, the Democratic Party's nominee.¹⁶

With the election of Cummings, the beginning of the 1890s seemed to signal for a number of African Americans a renewed opportunity to make important advancements through the Republican Party, especially as the party gained greater political power as the decade progressed. By the mid-1890s, Republicans had formed a coalition with independent Democrats and urban reformers and stood poised to seize political control from the Democratic Party across the state, which had been under the control and manipulation of party bosses I. Freeman Rains in Baltimore and U.S. Senator Arthur P. Gorman since the 1870s. Working with the Baltimore Reform League, an organization led by Baltimore's professional and business elite that had been established in 1885, the Republicans and their allies challenged Democratic rule, assailing the Democratic Party's

¹⁶ Greene, "Black Republicans," 205. The city of Baltimore possessed a bicameral city council until 1923. The First Branch contained two representatives from each ward. At this time in the city's history, city council members were elected to one-year terms. From 1899 to 1905, First Branch council members were elected to two-year terms. Beginning in 1907, council members have been elected to serve four-year terms. Cummings won reelection in 1891 but lost by a mere five votes to the white Democratic candidate in 1892, even though the voter registration lists indicated a black majority in the Eleventh Ward. Cummings returned to the City Council from 1897 – 1899 and then once again from 1907 until his death in 1917. During the latter time period, Cummings represented the Seventeenth Ward. Due to redistricting in 1899, the majority of African American voters were no longer in the Eleventh Ward, but the Fourteenth Ward. The Fourteenth Ward was renumbered to the Seventeenth Ward in 1901 without any boundary changes.

fraudulent tactics that had ensured their control in the state, as well as attacking the wide range of societal problems created by these corrupt practices such as poor housing and public health facilities.

The new Republican coalition yielded its first fruits in Baltimore in the election of 1894, which resulted in a Republican majority in the First Branch of the city council. The following year, the Republican Party gained statewide control with the election of Republicans to the offices of mayor of Baltimore and governor of Maryland in addition to the election of huge Republican majorities in the State House of Delegates.¹⁷ This election also witnessed the return of an African American to the Baltimore City Council in the person of Dr. John Marcus Cargill, a Howard University graduate who was one of approximately a dozen black physicians in the city in the 1890s and a leader in the movement to establish the city's black Provident Hospital. With Harry Cummings' loss of his council seat in 1892, there had been no black member on this municipal legislative body for two years. In the election of 1895, African American voter registration in the black Eleventh Ward soared, outnumbering whites in the ward by nearly 600 voters, therefore ensuring Cargill's victory. For the black community, the 1895 election not only represented the ascendancy of Republicans to statewide power, but also tangible evidence with Cargill's win that seemed to suggest that African Americans would share in this power.¹⁸

¹⁷ Paul, "The Shadow of Equality," 258–259, 262.

¹⁸ Greene, "Black Republicans," 205–206. Beginning with Cargill's election in 1895, African Americans would win seats on the city council in every election until 1931, with the exception of the elections of 1905 and 1923. Cargill only served briefly on the city council, returning to his medical practice full time in 1897.

In Baltimore, some tangible progress was realized by the African American community under Republican rule, specifically in the realm of municipal employment. Prior to 1896, no African American had been hired by the municipal government in any capacity, but the Republican leaders now extended employment opportunities to African Americans resulting in over \$200,000 in wages annually being infused into the black community. However, the positions given to African Americans were generally menial: laborers, janitors, custodians, elevator operators, sanitation workers.¹⁹ And though these positions still marked an important departure from Democratic rule of the city and state, Republicans still excluded African Americans altogether from federal patronage.

Moreover, the black community still struggled to make gains in civil rights in other areas, particularly in education as manifested by the work of John Marcus Cargill on the city council. Appointed to serve on the Committee on Education, Cargill proposed a number of important measures aimed at improving the state of black education in Baltimore. He proved successful in pushing legislation through the council that paved the way for a more advanced curriculum at the Colored High School and legislation that placed the Colored Manual Training School on a level comparable to that of similar white city institutions. But most of Cargill's educational measures and actions intended to assist the black community were defeated, including his attempt to have a young African

¹⁹ Bettye Collier Thomas, "The Baltimore Black Community, 1865–1910" (Ph.D. diss., George Washington University, 1974), 381; Paul, "The Shadow of Equality," 263. There were three exceptions of African Americans being appointed to non-menial positions by 1899: one African American was appointed as a clerk in the office of the Register of Wills; Warner T. McGuinn, an attorney, was appointed as a clerk for the State Liquor Board; and Malachi Gibson, another black attorney, was appointed as a clerk in the House of Delegates.

American man attend the Maryland Institute on scholarship and his attempt to have the first African American appointed to the Board of School Commissioners.²⁰

Cargill's most significant piece of educational legislation involved his fight to have teaching vacancies in African American schools filled by African American teachers. His proposed legislation would have allowed for this hiring of black teachers even at schools where white teachers were still members of the faculty. Prompted by fear of reprisals from the white community, white Republicans on the city council cooperated with Democrats to modify Cargill's proposal, instituting instead a plan of gradual replacement of white teachers, which would ensure that no interracial faculties ever existed in the city school system. The version of the ordinance that was passed stipulated that as white teachers resigned from black schools they would be replaced with temporary white instructors. Once a black school was completely staffed by these temporary white instructors, the entire faculty could be replaced at one time with black teachers, thus alleviating concerns of racial intermingling of the faculty. This legislation placed unfair restrictions on African Americans not applicable to whites, stating that no more than one-fifth of the teachers hired in one year could be black and instituting a two-year residency requirement. Ultimately, this piece of legislation satisfied the long-term educational goals of Cargill and the black community, but it still continued unequal treatment and in the short term and greatly limited the hiring of African American teachers.²¹

By 1897, the Republican Party's failure to accede to the numerous demands of the African American community and its maintenance of the status quo as it pertained to

²⁰ Greene, "Black Republicans," 207 – 208.

²¹ Greene, "Black Republicans," 208; Paul, "The Shadow of Equality," 264 – 65.

black civil rights angered black militants and precipitated the largest black independent political movement to date in Baltimore. In March, a group of these black radicals gathered at the Samaritan Temple at Saratoga and Calvert streets for a meeting of the Colored Citizens Committee of One Hundred. This multi-generational gathering included younger militants such as George Motley Lane, a thirty-one year old Virginia born lawyer, and William Ashbie Hawkins, another one of the city's young lawyers and editor of *The Educational Era*, the official journal of the Maryland Progressive State Colored Teachers Association. The meeting also included older black leaders, most notably Dr. H. J. Brown, a seasoned veteran of political struggles in the city and state since the end of the Civil War. Brown urged the African American community to take action at the polls in order to break free from the "degrading political slavery" which held the race captive. In his fiery remarks, he even suggested that the black community consider voting for Democratic candidates, considering the poor treatment Republicans had given the black community: "Under the present ostracism what difference does it make to us whether Democrats or Republicans are elected....," he asked. "We get nothing from the Republicans, who get all our votes, and we can get no less from the Democrats."

The consensus of those gathered at the Samaritan Temple was not to completely abandon the Republican Party, but rather to force the party to nominate three black legislative candidates from those wards in the city with large African American populations. By May, at its third mass meeting, the Colored Citizens Committee of One Hundred convened once again at Samaritan Temple with discussions focused on formulating an independent ticket consisting of African American candidates for various local and state offices. Black radicals vowed that if Republican Party officials did not

agree to incorporate some of these candidates into the party's ticket for the upcoming midterm election, they would leave the party.²²

With the increasing black unrest in the Republican Party from the spring into the summer, William T. Malster, a Republican hopeful for the office of mayor in Baltimore, quickly seized upon the opportunity to turn the tumultuous political situation to his advantage. Malster, president of the Columbian Iron Works and Dry Dock Company, had unsuccessfully made a bid to be the Republican candidate for the mayoralty in 1895. Now, Malster hoped that African American support would allow him to effectively challenge those in control in the party and propel him to victory in the Republican primary that summer. In order to gain this much needed support, Malster promised the black radicals that African Americans would be selected as legislative candidates for the fall election if they promised to not run an independent ticket. Malster's promises of racial representation were particularly successful with black Republican Party stalwarts like Harry S. Cummings, who hoped to regain his seat on the city council in the fall election. Malster further engendered black support for his candidacy by appointing a few members of the race to serve as delegates to nominating conventions. However, in the wake of his win in the Republican primary, Malster's promises quickly began to unravel as his vow to place three black candidates on the ticket for seats in the Maryland House of Delegates dwindled to one black candidate and eventually to none, arguing that African American candidates had to be sacrificed in order to ensure the continued support of independent Democrats and white Republicans statewide.²³

²² “ ‘Something That Is Worthy’: The Campaign of 1897, Part I,” Maryland State Archives, accessed July 1, 2013, <http://msa.maryland.gov/msa/stagser/s1259/121/6050/html/12417610.html>.

²³ Ibid.

Outraged that Malster had reneged on his promise, the Committee of One Hundred and the movement it represented were reinvigorated and plans were quickly reinstated to run an independent black ticket. Prominent pastors like Ernest Lyon and John Hurst used their pulpits to rail against the Republican Party and urge support for this movement spearheaded by black radicals.²⁴ Reflecting the multi-generational character of the leaders of the movement, the independent black ticket that developed was a mixture of younger radicals and older veterans of Baltimore's political struggles. The ticket was led by the young lawyer George Motley Lane who was put forth as the candidate for the office of mayor in Baltimore. Lane surely expressed the sentiments of his fellow radicals when he stated, "many of us arrested our blind adherence to the name of the Republican party because the principles of Lincoln had ceased to be a virtue and become a political mockery."

With less than two months remaining before the election, Lane and his fellow black candidates on the independent slate began traversing the city to campaign for the upcoming election. However, not all African Americans supported their endeavor for men such as Harry Cummings and a number of pastors of the city's larger churches remained steadfast in their commitment to the Republican Party and its candidate. Additionally, Malster also campaigned among the black community, even bringing P.B.S. Pinchback, the former governor of Louisiana and the first African American to hold such a position, along with him to help garner black support for his candidacy.²⁵

²⁴ " 'I Am For Justice': The Campaign of 1897, Part 2," Maryland State Archives, accessed July 1, 2013, <http://msa.maryland.gov/msa/stagser/s1259/121/6050/html/12417620.html>.

²⁵ " 'Because of the Principles of Lincoln Had Ceased To Be A Virtue': The Campaign of 1897, Part 3," Maryland State Archives, accessed July 1, 2013, <http://msa.maryland.gov/msa/stagser/s1259/121/6050/html/12417630.html>.

Ultimately, the hopes of the black independents were dashed only a few weeks prior to the election when the petition papers submitted to the Board of Elections to have their names placed on the ballot were deemed invalid because they did not have the required number of signatures.²⁶ The elimination of the black independent ticket effectively removed the threat of widespread black defection, and Malster defeated his Democratic opponent to win the office of mayor.

Malster's betrayal of the black militants during the election of 1897 certainly generated greater disgust with the Republican Party among the African American community, but it is not clear how many African Americans voted against him in the election. But two years later, African Americans received another chance to express their dissatisfaction with the Republican Party and particularly Malster as the Republican mayor sought re-election. In the pages of the African American newspaper the *Ledger*, its editor, the Rev. George Freeman Bragg, urged the black community to eschew the idea that Republicans were the only political party that could address the needs and goals of the race.²⁷ However, many African Americans were undoubtedly wary of turning their backs on the Republican Party in light of the racist language emanating from the Democratic Party during the 1899 election season and the promise of some of its politicians to disfranchise blacks. But a considerable number, though not the majority, still seemed to decide to cast their lot with the Democratic Party as an estimated 5,000 black men cast their votes for Thomas Hayes, the victorious Democratic candidate for

²⁶ “ ‘Much Higher Than Money or Trivial Consideration’: The Campaign of 1897, Part 4,” Maryland State Archives, accessed July 1, 2013, <http://msa.maryland.gov/msa/stagser/s1259/121/6050/html/12417640.html>.

²⁷ In light of the racist appeals of the Democratic Party, the *Ledger* reversed its argument and urged the black community to vote for the Malster ticket. Paul, “The Shadow of Equality,” 269 – 270.

mayor in Baltimore. With the 1899 election, the Democrats were ushered back into power not only in Baltimore, but across the state as well, obtaining control of the office of governor and both houses of the Maryland General Assembly.²⁸

The return of Democrats to control of the state of Maryland created a new political crisis for African Americans across the state as the Democratic Party began to seek ways to fulfill the promise made by some of its leaders during the 1899 election to disfranchise black voters. In 1901, the state legislature passed a new election law, supposedly aimed at eliminating all illiterate voters, both black and white that prohibited straight ticket voting by eliminating the grouping of candidates by political party. The law stipulated that all candidates be listed alphabetically underneath the title of the office they sought with their political party affiliation listed beside their name. Additionally, the legislation removed all party emblems from the ballot, prohibited the provision of assistance to all voters except those who were physically disabled, and stipulated that ballots could be deemed invalid if they contained any marks other than the approved cross mark.²⁹ This new law had the potential to wreak havoc on the voting strength of the Republican Party as it disproportionately affected African Americans. Forty-eight percent of the black voting population outside the city of Baltimore was illiterate. In Baltimore, illiteracy levels among African Americans were lower, but still roughly one-quarter of the black voting population was illiterate.³⁰ With the new legislation in effect, Democrats

²⁸ Margaret Law Calcott, *The Negro in Maryland Politics, 1870 – 1912* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1969), 99 – 100.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 105; Paul, “Shadow of Equality,” 271.

³⁰ Paul, “The Shadow of Equality,” 272. Seven percent of the native white population and 10 percent of the naturalized voting population were illiterate in the state of Maryland. In the city of Baltimore, the numbers were much lower as only 1.4 percent of native whites were illiterate and only seven percent of naturalized whites.

viewed the 1901 election as a guaranteed opportunity to greatly weaken the Republican Party and increase their political power in the state. However, black and white Republicans took swift action to counteract the potential negative effects of the disfranchisement measure by opening schools for illiterate black voters and teaching them to recognize the word “Republican.” As a consequence, though Democrats did increase their representation in the state legislature, Republicans also made substantial gains in representation in the House of Delegates, and in Baltimore, the Republican Party won overwhelming control of the city council. The following year, the Republican Party continued to make gains, seizing control of four of the six Congressional seats contested during the election.³¹

Disappointed by their initial effort to disfranchise African American voters, Democrats began to formulate plans to develop and pass an amendment to the state constitution, which would achieve their goal of limiting the suffrage of black Marylanders.³² The leader of the first disfranchisement campaign was the party’s state leader, U.S. Senator Arthur P. Gorman, who sought the assistance of John Prentiss Poe, a Baltimore lawyer and dean of the University of Maryland Law School, to draft the first amendment. The Poe Amendment, as it came to be called after its author, proved to be the most serious threat to African American suffrage in Maryland of any of the disfranchisement amendments introduced during the first decade of the twentieth century.³³ The first clause of the proposed amendment granted suffrage to all persons in

³¹ Calcott, *The Negro in Maryland Politics*, 105; Paul, “The Shadow of Equality,” 273.

³² Calcott, *The Negro in Maryland Politics*, 109 – 110.

³³ *Ibid.*, 115.

Maryland eligible to vote on or before January 1, 1869, and male descendants of those individuals who would reach the age of twenty-one by 1906. This clause virtually eliminated the entire African American population of Maryland from being eligible as blacks in the state did not receive the right to vote until the passage of the Fifteenth Amendment in 1870. In addition to this grandfather clause, the proposed amendment included an understanding clause which stipulated that persons unable to qualify to vote under the first clause could become eligible to vote if they were able to explain a section of the state constitution to the satisfaction of a voting registrar. After 1906, the grandfather clause would expire, and all individuals coming of voting age thereafter would be subject to the stipulations of the understanding clause.³⁴

By the time the Poe Amendment was introduced into the state legislature in February 1904, African Americans in Baltimore had already mobilized to wage war against the measure through a new organization, the Suffrage League, which had been established at a meeting of 400 black men and women held at the city's historic Bethel A.M.E. Church in late January. Leaders of the movement included the Rev. William Moncure Alexander, president of the new organization, in addition to the Rev. Harvey Johnson, Harry S. Cummings, W. Ashbie Hawkins, and the Rev. George F. Bragg, all veterans of the fight for full political participation for black Marylanders.³⁵ The organization immediately went to work, establishing its headquarters at the black YMCA; forming finance, promotion and publicity, and judiciary committees; and using the black

³⁴ Paul, "The Shadow of Equality," 274 – 275.

³⁵ "The Forum: Our Suffrage Question," *Afro-American*, February 6, 1904. The Rev. Harvey Johnson was first offered the presidency of the new league but declined and chose to sit on the organization's board. William Alexander was elected president after Johnson declined.

press under the leadership of newspaper publisher John H. Murphy to advertise the work of the League and generate support within the black community.³⁶ Within two weeks, the League was holding meetings at churches throughout the city and coordinating with Baltimore's black clergymen to use their pulpits as forums for attacking the measure and organizing their black parishioners across the city.³⁷

Over the course of the year, the Suffrage League fortified its program and extended its influence beyond the environs of Baltimore to encompass African Americans across the state and affiliate itself with similar organizations established by blacks in these areas.³⁸ In June 1905, the organization convened a statewide convention in Baltimore at Bethel A.M.E. Church with close to 100 delegates in attendance representing Baltimore and ten counties across the state. The convention, which was presided over by the Rev. Alexander, featured a main address from Cummings, the only

³⁶ "Suffrage League: Meeting of the Board of Managers," *Afro-American*, February 6, 1904, 4. The Finance Committee consisted of Hiram Watty (chairman), the Rev. John Hurst, the Rev. A. L. Gaines, the Rev. William Alexander, the Rev. I. L. Thomas, the Rev. N. M. Carroll, and the Rev. Harvey Johnson. The Committee on Promotion and Publicity consisted of John H. Murphy (chairman), the Rev. George F. Bragg, the Rev. R. H. Armstrong, the Rev. G. R. Waller, the Rev. C. W. Mossell, T. J. Hilliard, and J. H. Smith. The Judiciary Committee consisted of W. Ashbie Hawkins (chairman), Harry S. Cummings, W. C. McCard, Cabel Calloway, A. T. Luca, the Rev. J. T. Jenifer, and R. H. Bolding. Though the leadership consisted of men, women undoubtedly were involved in the work of the Suffrage League and there is evidence that at least one woman, Emma Truxton, delivered public addresses on the work of the League. See "Suffrage League Meets," *Afro-American*, March 12, 1904, 8.

³⁷ "Negroes Begin An Agitation," *Baltimore Sun*, February 28, 1904, 16; "From Negro Pulpits," *Baltimore Sun*, February 29, 1904, 6; "Negroes Hold Meeting," *Baltimore Sun*, March 2, 1904, 12.

³⁸ In February 1904, black communities in at least two other parts of the state had established suffrage organizations as well: Alleghany County and the Eastern Shore. See "Big Meeting Held in Easton in Interest of the Suffrage," *Afro-American*, February 6, 1904 and "Alleghany Afro-Americans: Organize and Send Protest To Their Representatives in Annapolis," *Afro-American*, February 20, 1904, 1. The program of the Suffrage League not only focused on the Poe Amendment, but attacking Jim Crow as well, particularly in the form of recent legislation in Maryland which legalized separate accommodations in public transportation. In the fall of 1904, W. Ashbie Hawkins, chairman of the League's Judiciary Committee, took up the case of two African American men charged with violating this new law on the Pennsylvania Railroad: W.H. Hart of Washington, D.C. and James Griffin of Baltimore. See "True Bills Found," *Afro-American*, October 1, 1904.

black member of the city council.³⁹ Throughout the summer and into the fall, the Suffrage League continued its work against the Poe Amendment, holding protest meetings across Baltimore, raising money for the campaign, distributing anti-amendment literature, providing instruction to illiterate black voters on voting procedures, and assisting black men with registering to vote. Reporting to national black leader Booker T. Washington, who worked behind the scenes to combat disfranchisement in Maryland and arranged for out of state donations to aid in the movement, Harry S. Cummings wrote: “Our Suffrage League is down to good, hard, and earnest work and we shall endeavor to reach every one of the 53,000 colored voters of the State and not only explain to them the seriousness of the situation, but instruct them how to vote against the proposed Amendment.”⁴⁰ Through the diligent work of the League, 80 percent of eligible black voters were registered to vote by the eve of the election.⁴¹

The African American community was joined in its fight against the Poe Amendment by a large number of white Marylanders, especially among the immigrant population of the state, whose voting rights were also threatened by this legislation. Organizations like the Maryland Foreign-Born Citizens League were established to work to combat the amendment among immigrants, particularly in Baltimore, in a manner

³⁹ “Suffrage League State Conference,” *Afro-American*, May 13, 1905; “To Fight Poe Amendment,” *Baltimore Sun*, June 9, 1905, 12; “Suffrage League State Conference: Delegates Present From All Sections of the State,” *Afro-American*, June 10, 1905.

⁴⁰ Louis R. Harlan, *Booker T. Washington: The Wizard of Tuskegee, 1901 – 1915* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1983), 82.

⁴¹ “Negroes Work Against Amendment,” *Baltimore Sun*, September 28, 1905; “Opposes the Amendment,” *Baltimore Sun*, October 4, 1905, 7; “Suffrage League Holds Meeting,” *Baltimore Sun*, October 6, 1905, 12; “Suffrage League Meets,” *Baltimore Sun*, October 11, 1905, 12; “Colored League Holds Meeting,” *Baltimore Sun*, October 19, 1905, 12; Paul, “The Shadow of Equality,” 275.

similar to the Suffrage League working among the African American community.⁴² Foremost among the white leaders of the anti-amendment movement was Charles J. Bonaparte, a Baltimore lawyer and a member of the city's elite who moved within the highest circles of the Republican Party, having been appointed by President Theodore Roosevelt to serve on the Board of Indian Affairs in 1902, the head of the President's campaign in 1904 in Maryland, and nominated to serve as Secretary of the Navy in 1905.⁴³ Bonaparte stood at the head of a coalition of Republicans, independents, and reform Democrats who opposed the Poe Amendment. Whereas Gorman and other Democratic leaders made strictly racist appeals which argued that African Americans were unfit to participate in the political process and touted the amendment as an opportunity to remove the "threat" posed by the black electorate, Bonaparte generally crafted his anti-amendment arguments in non-racial terms and labeled the measure as a threat to all Marylanders.

Cognizant of the work of the Suffrage League, Bonaparte reached out to its leaders and urged them to be less visible in their anti-amendment campaign, seemingly in an effort to neutralize Democrats' racial arguments. For Bonaparte, and certainly for most white leaders in the movement against the Poe Amendment, there was minimal or no concern for the loss of African American civil rights, but instead, concern for the loss of

⁴² Gordon Shufelt, "Jim Crow Among Strangers: The Growth of Baltimore's Little Italy and Maryland's Disfranchisement Campaigns," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 19 (Summer 2000): 55.

⁴³ Jane L. Phelps, "Charles J. Bonaparte and Negro Suffrage in Maryland," *Maryland Historical Magazine* 54 (December 1959): 332 – 333. Bonaparte's elite status in Baltimore was due to his wealth and his familial connections as the grandnephew of Napoleon Bonaparte. Locally, he was a member of the Baltimore Reform League and the Society for the Prevention of Vice, and the Charity Organization Society. On the national level, he was one of the founders of the National Civil Service Reform League and a member of the National Municipal League, for which he served as president in 1908. Bonaparte served as the Attorney General of the United States from 1906 to 1909.

rights for white Marylanders. Thus, active interracial cooperation was not sustained during the 1905 anti-disfranchisement campaign.⁴⁴ However, working independently, these groups soundly defeated the amendment in the fall of 1905 by a two-to-one margin in Baltimore; in the state as a whole, it was defeated by a majority of 34,058 votes with anti-amendment forces leading in eighteen of Maryland's twenty-three counties.⁴⁵

Three years later, not deterred by the defeat of the Poe amendment, Maryland Democrats, now under the leadership of Governor Austin Crothers, set to work crafting another state constitutional amendment that would disfranchise African American voters. This time, the party consulted and collaborated with reform Democrats, immigrants, and independents in hopes of allaying the fears created by the Poe Amendment and addressing its shortcomings. The resulting measure, known as the Strauss Amendment after its author, Attorney General Isaac Lobe Strauss, designated six classes of citizens who were entitled to the right to vote. Like the Poe Amendment, it included a grandfather clause with the same stipulations, but it also included a naturalization clause that extended the right to vote to foreign-born citizens naturalized between 1869 and the date of ratification, and to their lineal male descendants. But whereas previous disfranchisement plans had included an expiration date to ensure their constitutionality, neither the grandfather clause nor the accompanying grandfather clause possessed such a date. Another provision of the Strauss Amendment was an education clause that granted the franchise to Marylanders who were able to fill out a voter registration application with their basic vital and employment information as well as write out the full names of

⁴⁴ "Negroes Hold Meeting," *Baltimore Sun*, March 2, 1904; "A Great Meeting," *Afro-American*, March 5, 1904; Shufelt, 54 – 55; Phelps, 333, 337, 341.

⁴⁵ Paul, "The Shadow of Equality," 277–278; Calcott, *The Negro in Maryland Politics*, 125; "Twas A Glorious Victory," *Afro-American*, November 11, 1905.

the president of the United States, the governor of Maryland, one justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, one justice of the Maryland Court of Appeals, and either the mayor for residents of Baltimore or one of the county commissioners for the county in which the applicant resided. Finally, the amendment qualified anyone to vote who owned or paid property taxes on property assessed at \$500 or more.⁴⁶

Many of the same individuals and organizations that had taken the lead in the battle against the Poe Amendment, resumed their work in combating the Strauss Amendment. However, the Suffrage League proved much slower in mobilizing its leaders and the black community as the organization had gradually dissolved following the defeat of the Poe Amendment.⁴⁷ As members of the state legislature prepared to vote on the new amendment in February 1908, African American leaders in the anti-disfranchisement movement traveled to Annapolis to speak before the House Committee on Amendments to the Constitution. This delegation of fifteen black men consisted mostly of African American preachers and businessmen and included many leaders of the Suffrage League such as the Rev. William Alexander, John H. Murphy, and City Councilman Harry S. Cummings.⁴⁸ However, it would take another month for the Suffrage League to officially reorganize, electing Alexander to continue to serve as the League's president.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Calcott, *The Negro in Maryland Politics*, 126 – 127; Paul, “The Shadow of Equality,” 278 – 279.

⁴⁷ “The Forum,” *Afro-American*, April 6, 1907.

⁴⁸ “Protested Vigorously,” *Afro-American*, February 15, 1908.

⁴⁹ “Suffrage League Is Reorganized,” *Afro-American*, March 21, 1908. W. Ashbie Hawkins was nominated to serve as President but turned down nomination.

In the months following reorganization, the Suffrage League held a limited number of meetings and took few concrete steps to combat the new threat to African American voting rights. John H. Murphy, the editor of the *Afro-American*, who had previously served as the chairman of the League's publicity committee and used his newspaper to publicize the League and generate support for the organization, now used his newspaper to lambast the League for its failure to act and to hold planning meetings that could be attended by the masses and not just the black elite.⁵⁰ It was not until the beginning of the following year that the Suffrage League mobilized black anti-amendment forces across the state as well as within the city of Baltimore, using many of the same tactics used in the fight against the Poe Amendment.⁵¹ During the two months prior to the 1909 fall election, the Suffrage League sponsored numerous meetings urging black Baltimoreans to get out and vote in addition to opening voter schools across the city to educate black voters on a scale seemingly greater than had been executed a few years earlier.⁵² As a result of the work of the Suffrage League as well as a number of white organizations across the state, the Strauss Amendment was decisively defeated with 106,069 Marylanders voting against the amendment over the 89,808 who voted in favor of the measure.⁵³

⁵⁰ "Why This Gum Shoe Method?," *Afro-American*, May 15, 1909, 4; "Must Get Down to Business," *Afro-American*, May 22, 1909, 4; "Wake Up," *Afro-American*, August 7, 1909, 4.

⁵¹ "Suffrage League Is Getting Busy," *Afro-American*, February 13, 1909.

⁵² "A Rousing Meeting at Sharp Street Church," *Afro-American*, September 18, 1909; "Suffrage League Open Voters Schools," *Afro-American*, October 23, 1909; "Suffrage League of Maryland," *Afro-American*, October 30, 1909.

⁵³ Paul, "The Shadow of Equality," 279 – 282; Shufelt, "Jim Crow among Strangers," 60 – 69. White organizations that opposed the Strauss Amendment included the Baltimore Reform League, which had been involved in the battle against the Poe Amendment, and the Association of Citizens Opposed to the Amendment, a newly formed Republican organization. Independent Democrats also formed part of the anti-amendment forces, but there were considerably less than in 1905. The loss of these Independent

Undeterred by their second defeat in less than five years, Democrats under the leadership of Governor Austin Crothers promptly framed another disfranchisement amendment in the beginning of 1910. This new amendment, known as the Digges Amendment, was drafted by state senator William J. Frere and House of Delegates member Walter M. Digges, both of whom represented Charles County, a Republican stronghold with a large African American population. Unlike the previous two amendments, this measure was designed to disfranchise African Americans alone as it granted suffrage to all white male citizens of the state of voting age but stipulated that all other male citizens, i.e., black men, must have owned and paid taxes on at least \$500 worth of real or personal property for at least two years prior to the time they registered to vote. Concurrent with approving the Digges Amendment for placement on the ballot in the election of 1911, the state legislature passed a series of bills mandating an all-white statewide voter registration, which ensured that only white Marylanders would vote in the election. However, amidst nationwide skepticism and outrage, Governor Crothers vetoed the whites-only voter registration provision, thus allowing all Marylanders to vote on the Digges Amendment in November 1911.⁵⁴

Fresh from victory in defeating the Strauss Amendment a few months earlier, the Suffrage League was already mobilized to continue the battle against disfranchisement and other Jim Crow measures passed by the Maryland legislature. The organization immediately went to work, planning to send a delegation to the state capital of Annapolis

Democrats as well as some members of the immigrant population, particularly Germans, is reflected in the decrease in the margin of victory in 1908.

⁵⁴ Calcott, *The Negro in Maryland Politics*, 131 – 132; Paul, “The Shadow of Equality,” 282 – 283. “Fears Digges Plan: Southern Congressmen See Danger In Disfranchisement Act,” *Baltimore Sun*, March 27, 1910; “Senators Against It,” *Baltimore Sun*, March 28, 1910; “Will Upset Government and Cause Chaos,” *Baltimore Sun*, April 7, 1910; “Many Urge Veto,” *Baltimore Sun*, April 8, 1910.

and drafting correspondence denouncing the measure to be sent to members of the state legislature.⁵⁵ The Suffrage League was joined in this battle by white Republicans, including the Baltimore Reform League, a familiar ally, which requested a hearing with the governor on the constitutionality of the amendment.⁵⁶ However, just as the number of whites engaged in the anti-disfranchisement movement had decreased from 1905 to 1909, it decreased again, as independent Democrats and immigrants, groups that had formerly been part of this coalition, now either supported the measure or didn't actively campaign against it since the amendment only affected the black community.⁵⁷

Following approval for the Digges Amendment to be placed on the ballot in 1911 and as the Suffrage League underwent a change in leadership, activity within Baltimore's black community combating the measure waned.⁵⁸ Not until the late spring and summer of 1911 did the Suffrage League re-emerge to lead African Americans in the anti-disfranchisement movement. With Rev. William Alexander still serving as president of the organization, the League made plans to increase the involvement of African American women in the campaign, enlist the leaders of black churches, secret societies, and ward clubs to obtain the support of their membership, and once again establish voter

⁵⁵ "Will Make Protest," *Afro-American*, January 29, 1910; "Colored Men Protest: Ask the Legislature Not To Adopt Digges Plan," *Afro-American*, March 29, 1910.

⁵⁶ "Opposes Digges Bill: Reform League Asks Governor For A Hearing," *Baltimore Sun*, April 6, 1910.

⁵⁷ According to Gordon Shufelt, immigrants in Baltimore adopted the racial views of mainstream white society, explaining their unwillingness to support anti-disfranchisement movements when only blacks were affected. See Shufelt, "Jim Crow among Strangers," 71 – 72.

⁵⁸ "Suffrage League Holds Meeting," *Afro-American*, April 16, 1910; "The Suffrage League," *Afro-American*, April 30, 1910. In the change of leadership of the Suffrage League, the Rev. William Alexander, who had been president of the organization in 1904 since its founding, stepped down from the presidency citing lack of support from the membership. See "Steps Down From Presidency," *Afro-American*, April 30, 1910.

education schools across the city.⁵⁹ By the fall of 1911, the work of the Suffrage League among the black community was supplanted by a new black organization, the Auxiliary Republican Committee, which had been established with the assistance of the State Central Committee of the Republican Party. The committee was under the leadership of Ernest Lyon, a Baltimore pastor and former Minister to Liberia. Lyon was joined on the executive committee by the Rev. A. L. Gaines, treasurer; Dr. W. A. C. Hughes, secretary; H. E. Macbeth, chairman; and John H. Murphy, chairman of the press committee, a position he had previously held with the Suffrage League.⁶⁰ Operating from its headquarters in Northwest Baltimore, the Auxiliary Republican Committee set to work in the fight against the Digges Amendment, urging African Americans to provide financial support for the movement and instructing them to go to the polls to vote against the amendment and to vote for all Republican candidates who were “the standard bearers of manhood suffrage, the purity of the ballot and clean administration of the affairs of the Commonwealth.”⁶¹

To further the goal of defeating the amendment and supporting the Republican Party- no doubt influenced by the Party’s role in helping to establish the organization- the committee formed the Anti-Digges Amendment League. Composed of several hundred women under the leadership of Eliza Davage Cummings, mother of black city

⁵⁹ “Will Call Meeting,” *Afro-American*, May 20, 1911; “Rev. Alexander Sounds Note of Warning,” *Afro-American*, July 1, 1911; “Suffrage League Gets Busy,” *Afro-American*, July 15, 1911; “Dr. Alexander Sounds Warning,” *Afro-American*, September 23, 1911. Though Alexander had resigned from the presidency the previous spring, by the summer of 1911, he was listed once again as president of the Suffrage League.

⁶⁰ “Goldsborough and Victory the Slogan,” *Afro-American*, October 21, 1911; “Leaders in the Fight Against the Digges Disfranchising Amendment,” *Afro-American*, November 3, 1911.

⁶¹ “The Committee’s Appeal to the Voters of Maryland,” *Afro-American*, October 28, 1911.

councilman Harry S. Cummings, the League sent women to canvas black neighborhoods of the city, circulating literature and urging black men to vote in the upcoming election.⁶² This work was supplemented with mass meetings at a number of the city's larger churches across the city and culminated with a "monster mass meeting" at John Wesley M.E. Church in Northwest Baltimore which featured speeches from African American leaders in the movement such as Ernest Lyon, Harry Cummings, and W. Ashbie Hawkins, as well as white leaders in the Republican Party, including J. B. Hanna, chairman of the Republican State Central Committee; John J. Hanson, chairman of the Republican City Committee; and William F. Broening, candidate for State's Attorney.⁶³ A few days later, Maryland voters went to the polls and delivered a sounding defeat of the Digges Amendment by a vote of 89,920 to 46,220. This defeat was certainly a result of the efforts of the Auxiliary Republican Committee and its allies, but it also resulted from the Democratic Party's failure to aggressively push disfranchisement in the 1911 election. From the beginning stages of development of this measure in 1910, its inherent unconstitutionality had generated nationwide outrage, which included the disapproval of Democrats, while making the amendment an easy target for Republicans; and as the election neared, Maryland Democrats realized that they needed to place the full weight of

⁶² "Women Will Help To Get Out Voters," *Afro-American*, October 28, 1911. African American women had participated in the anti-amendment movement since its beginning, but based upon the surviving historical record, the Anti-Digges Amendment League is seemingly the first organization solely comprised of black women to be involved in the movement.

⁶³ Mass meetings were held at the following churches: Whatcoat Methodist Episcopal, Shiloh Baptist, Enon Baptist, Psalmist Baptist, Centennial M.E., John Wesley M.E. Additionally one meeting was held in the Sparrows Point neighborhood of South Baltimore. See Advertisements, *Afro-American*, October 28, 1911; "Colored Men United Against Digges Bill," *Afro-American*, November 3, 1911.

their political power behind the campaign of Arthur P. Gorman, Jr. for governor of the state, and not behind the Digges Amendment.⁶⁴

With the defeat of the Digges Amendment and the gubernatorial victory of Phillips Lee Goldsborough, Maryland's second Republican governor in a forty-year period, the election of 1911 marked the end of the disfranchisement era. However, the intense racism generated during this era extended beyond disfranchisement schemes and extended far beyond the first decade of the twentieth century, most notably laws mandating segregation on public transportation across the state and residential segregation legislation in Baltimore.⁶⁵ And in spite of the assistance of white Republicans in the anti-disfranchisement movement, a number of African Americans still expressed discontent over the lack of progress in the realm of civil rights under Goldsborough's

⁶⁴ Calcott, *The Negro in Maryland Politics*, 132; Paul, "The Shadow of Equality," 283. Secondary literature, including the works of Calcott and Paul, generally discuss the Digges Amendment as the last and seemingly pathetic attempt by Maryland Democrats to push disfranchisement through the state legislature. From this standpoint, virtually no detail is given on African American mobilization against the amendment, which exhibits a failure of previous scholarship to appropriately place this historical episode within a longer chronological struggle for voting rights. From the historian's perspective as one removed from the era, the Digges Amendment seemed doomed from its earliest stages of development. However, the fight against the amendment was particularly crucial for the African American community as this measure solely affected the state's black voters and from their viewpoint in 1910–1911, its defeat was not a guarantee. Therefore this brief discussion of the fight against the Digges Amendment seeks to restore the contemporary significance of this measure while emphasizing the organizing tradition against disfranchisement. Additionally, my discussion of this movement also reveals an important change in the anti-disfranchisement movement, specifically the establishment of the Auxiliary Republican Committee. Whereas the fight against the Poe and Strauss Amendments was led by the Suffrage League, the fight against the Digges Amendment was led by this new organization, which used many of the same techniques and had many of the same members as the Suffrage League; however, this new organization had more direct ties to the Republican Party than the Suffrage League. This direct connection is significant to analyzing the African American community's overall relationship with the Republican Party and how it connects to the campaign of W. Ashbie Hawkins that emerges at the beginning of the next decade.

⁶⁵ Jim Crow legislation on public transportation in Maryland developed alongside disfranchisement. For more detail see Calcott, *The Negro in Maryland Politics*, 133 – 134. The advancement of Jim Crow in Maryland corresponded to its advancement across the South as African Americans' civil rights were taken away through various legal and illegal means. Unlike the rest of the South however, African Americans in Maryland managed to successfully fight against Jim Crow measures and maintain their voting rights. For a discussion of Jim Crow in the South during this time period, see C. Vann Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955).

leadership. The African American community in Baltimore and statewide had given its full support to ensure his election; however, as his term progressed, it became clear that Goldsborough and the Republican Party were still not fully committed to addressing black grievances.⁶⁶

Within less than a year, black Baltimoreans manifested their disgust with Republicans on the national level as Republican president William H. Taft sought re-election in 1912. In accordance with his conciliatory approach to the white South and his desire to strengthen the Republican Party in that region, President Taft did little for the African American community, contrary to his campaign promises. His attitude and policies supported suffrage limitations for African Americans in southern states and he made few black federal appointments. Initially, many African American leaders in Baltimore who disapproved of Taft's re-election did not advocate abandoning the Republican Party. Instead, they threw their support behind another Republican, former president Theodore Roosevelt, who had put in a bid to return to the White House.⁶⁷ Prominent black lawyer W. Ashbie Hawkins endorsed Roosevelt, criticizing Taft for his "Southern policy" and his failure to show "friendliness" to the black community. Similarly, veteran leader Dr. H. J. Brown also endorsed Roosevelt, going as far as to vow to support the likely Democratic nominee, New Jersey Governor Woodrow Wilson, if

⁶⁶ Goldsborough's tenure as governor was mostly unfruitful for African Americans because the Democratic Party maintained control of the state legislature. But, during his term, Goldsborough managed to weaken the discriminatory Wilson ballot law, reducing the number of Maryland counties that abided by this legislation from eleven to five by 1914. The law was not repealed statewide until 1918. See Calcott, *The Negro in Maryland Politics*, 133.

⁶⁷ Sherman, *The Republican Party and Black America*, 93–112.

Taft won the Republican primary.⁶⁸ And though a considerable number of white Republicans in Maryland also advocated Roosevelt's presidential bid, among African Americans in Baltimore, such support signified discontent not only with Taft but with Maryland Republicans as well for the leading Republican in the state, Governor Phillips Lee Goldsborough, had early announced his support for Taft's re-election and remained a staunch advocate throughout his campaign.⁶⁹ In rejecting Taft, black Baltimoreans once again showed an unwillingness to toe the party line, an unwillingness that reached even greater proportions as the election drew closer.

Black defection from the Republican Party increased during the summer of 1912 following Theodore Roosevelt's loss of the party's nomination and the subsequent formation of the Progressive Party with Roosevelt as its candidate for president. Though this new party adopted a "lily-white" policy in the South and its national platform failed to address any racial issues, Progressives still seemed to offer a viable alternative for African Americans nationwide, particularly in Baltimore where Roosevelt had won every ward in the primary election.⁷⁰ Within a few months of the founding of the Progressive Party, black Baltimoreans formed the City-Wide Roosevelt Organization under the leadership of Joseph P. Evans, a local barber and a fraternal leader who had served in many different capacities as a Mason and a member of the Galilean Fisherman, and one

⁶⁸ "W. Ashbie Hawkins Opposed to Taft," *Afro-American*, March 9, 1912; "Against Taft for Renomination," *Afro-American*, March 9, 1912; "Sentiment Strong for Roosevelt," *Afro-American*, May 4, 1912.

⁶⁹ "Governor For Taft," *Baltimore Sun*, January 26, 1912; "Taft Men Organized," *Baltimore Sun*, October 3, 1912; "Has No Apology To Make," *Baltimore Sun*, October 29, 1912; "Makes Plea for Taft," *Baltimore Sun*, November 1, 1912.

⁷⁰ Sherman, *The Republican Party and Black America*, 110-111; "Clean Sweep For Teddy Roosevelt," *Afro-American*, May 11, 1912. Roosevelt won the state of Maryland as well.

who also served as a delegate to both the Republican and Progressive Party national conventions that summer. W. Ashbie Hawkins, who had earlier vowed to support Roosevelt as the Republican candidate, also assumed a leadership role in this new organization as one of its vice presidents. Other leaders who abandoned the Republican Party to support Roosevelt included W.A.C. Hughes and John H. Murphy, both of whom had served on the executive committee of the Auxiliary Republican Committee the previous fall, and with the latter opening the doors of his newspaper business to serve as a headquarters for the new organization.⁷¹

The Democratic Party also attracted African American voters nationwide in the election of 1912 who formed the National Democratic League of which Dr. H.J. Brown was a member, serving on its executive committee and fulfilling his previously stated promise to back Wilson over Taft. During the National Democratic Convention, which was held in Baltimore, the League held a convention in the city and paraded down Druid Hill Avenue, one of the city's main black thoroughfares.⁷² But Democratic attempts to court the black vote proved far less successful than the Progressive Party as an estimated 75 percent of African Americans in Baltimore voted for Roosevelt. In both the Fourteenth and Seventeenth Wards, which comprised Northwest Baltimore and the center of the city's black community, Roosevelt received a plurality of the votes, which was particularly significant in the Seventeenth Ward where black city councilman Harry S. Cummings wielded influence and actively campaigned for Taft. Across Maryland outside

⁷¹ "City-wide Roosevelt Organization Started," *Afro-American*, September 21, 1912; "Hold Last Rites for Joseph Evans, Masonic Leader," *Afro-American*, October 6, 1934; "Progressive Campaign Now On In Earnest," *Afro-American*, September 28, 1912.

⁷² "Colored Democrats Meet In This City," *Afro-American*, June 29, 1912; For more on Democrats courting the black vote, see Sherman, *The Republican Party and Black America*, 109.

Baltimore, an estimated 30 percent of African Americans voted for Roosevelt and the Republican Party polled a reduced vote in every county in the state.⁷³ Though both Roosevelt and Taft ultimately lost in the election to the Democratic candidate, the election of 1912 served notice to the Republican Party both locally and nationally of black dissatisfaction with Republican neglect as an unprecedented number of African Americans turned against the party.⁷⁴

With the election of Woodrow Wilson as President, increasing numbers of blacks in Baltimore seemed to cast their lot with the Democratic Party. Within weeks of the election, plans were already underway to establish a black Democratic club in the city's Seventeenth Ward with an initial membership of 300.⁷⁵ But over the course of the following year, it became clear to African Americans across the country that supporting the Democratic Party, at least on the national level, had been a grave error. During the first year of his administration, Wilson extended racial segregation in a number of government departments in Washington, D.C., most notably in the Bureau of Engraving and Printing, the Treasury, and the Post Office; he curtailed presidential appointments of African Americans, dismissing nearly two dozen and pressuring others to resign; and he condoned increasing racial discrimination in the civil service.⁷⁶ And with the Democratic

⁷³ "Colored Voters Rebuke Organization," *Afro-American*, November 9, 1912; "President Taft Endorsed," *Afro-American*, March 23, 1912; "A Glance at Maryland's Taft Band Wagon," *Afro-American*, April 13, 1912. Cummings was joined in leading Republican forces in the black community by Ernest Lyon who served as president of the Lincoln Republican Auxiliary and A. L. Gaines; see October 5, 1912.

⁷⁴ Sherman, *The Republican Party and Black America*, 111.

⁷⁵ "Colored Democrats May Organize Club Here," *Afro-American*, November 23, 1912.

⁷⁶ Sherman, *The Republican Party and Black America*, 113 – 116.

Party in control of the 63rd and 64th Congresses, a multitude of discriminatory legislation was introduced on an unprecedented level.⁷⁷

Through the end of the 1910s, African Americans in Baltimore who remained politically active and did not succumb to a spirit of political apathy, worked within the Republican Party and supported the majority of its candidates though they may not have been completely satisfied with the party as a whole.⁷⁸ By the end of the decade with the spring municipal election of 1919, some whites within the local Republican Party seemingly realized they needed the African American vote if the party had any hope of seizing control of the mayoralty from Democratic incumbent James H. Preston.⁷⁹ Concurrently, black Baltimoreans felt compelled to support the Republican Party to end Preston's eight-year regime, which had yielded few tangible advancements for the city's black community. During his tenure in office, Preston provided little assistance for black schools; failed to equalize salaries for teachers in Baltimore's Colored High School with those of white teachers in other city schools; refused to provide swimming pools for the black community even though swimming pools had been constructed for white city residents; and advocated residential segregation even following the Supreme Court's

⁷⁷ Ibid., 117.

⁷⁸ On African American support of Ovington E. Weller in his unsuccessful bid for the office of Governor in the election of 1915, see "G.O.P. Notifies O.E. Weller," *Afro-American*, October 2, 1915 and "G.O.P. Loses By Small Margin," *Afro-American*, November 6, 1915. For African American support of Joseph Irwin France in his successful bid for the U.S. Senate in 1916, see "The Afro American for Dr. France," *Afro-American*, April 29, 1916; "Colored Voters of Maryland Must Help Elect Dr. France to United States Senate," *Afro-American*, October 21, 1916; "France Makes Splendid Run," *Afro-American*, November 11, 1916. One exception is African American support of James Preston for re-election as mayor in the Spring election of 1915. See "Colored League Endorses Preston," *Afro-American*, March 13, 1915 and "Preston Sweeps City By More Than 16,000," *Afro-American*, May 5, 1915.

⁷⁹ "3,019 Colored Voters Registered," *Afro-American*, April 11, 1919; "16,296 Colored Voters Eligible In Baltimore City," *Afro-American*, April 18, 1919.

ruling which declared municipal residential segregation ordinances unconstitutional and illegal.⁸⁰

To defeat Preston in the 1919 municipal election, the Republican Party unanimously selected Maryland State's Attorney William F. Broening as its candidate. A native of South Baltimore, Broening obtained his law degree from the University of Maryland Law School and immediately following graduation in 1897, he was elected to serve on the city council for a two-year term representing the city's Twenty-Second Ward. From 1902 – 1904, Broening served as a member of the state House of Delegates and in 1911, he was elected to his first term as State's Attorney and re-elected to this office in 1915.⁸¹ To the African American community, Broening seemed to be an acceptable candidate sympathetic to their concerns. As a member of the state legislature, Broening had played an instrumental role in the defeat of the state's first law mandating segregation on public transportation and he had been a vocal opponent of disfranchisement in the campaign against the Digges Amendment.⁸² During the course of his mayoral campaign, Broening promised a "square deal" for all Baltimoreans regardless of race as well as making a vow to fill vacancies on the city's school board with individuals "representative of every section of [the] city." However, this vague campaign platform failed to specifically address African American concerns and confront the city's racial issues; yet African Americans interpreted Broening's promises as the candidate's

⁸⁰ "Segregation O.K. Says Preston," *Afro-American*, March 3, 1917; "Segregation Fever Again in the Air," *Afro-American*, July 5, 1918; "No More Preston," *Afro-American*, January 31, 1919; "Mayor Preston Is For Whites Only," *Afro-American*, March 28, 1919.

⁸¹ "A Story of Upward Climb," *Afro-American*, October 30, 1915; Wilbur F. Coyle, *The Mayors of Baltimore* (Reprinted from *The Baltimore Municipal Journal*, 1919), 229–233.

⁸² *Ibid.*

willingness to do this exact thing and the *Afro American* urged the black community to “vote the full Republican ticket.”⁸³

Working as a part of the Republican Party in the 1919 election was also crucial for the African American community as it attempted to regain black representation on the city council, which had ended two years earlier with the unexpected death of Harry S. Cummings midway through his term.⁸⁴ Running as the Republican candidate for a seat representing the city’s Fourteenth Ward, which now boasted a slim black majority, was black lawyer Warner T. McGuinn. A graduate of Yale Law School, McGuinn had been a law partner of Harry S. Cummings and deeply immersed in Republican Party politics. Following the Republican Party takeover in the election of 1895, McGuinn’s loyalty to the Party was rewarded with a position as clerk of the Board of Liquor License Commissioners. Through the first two decades of the twentieth century, McGuinn was an active proponent of civil rights for the African American community, particularly through his role in the battle against residential segregation with the local NAACP.⁸⁵

Whereas McGuinn was the only African American candidate and the ultimate winner of the Republican nomination in the Fourteenth Ward council contest, five African American men vied for the nomination in the Seventeenth Ward, hoping to assume the seat previously held by Harry Cummings in the city’s largest black majority ward. The leading candidates were lawyer William L. Fitzgerald and pharmacist Dr. Howard E. Young, but following the primary election, Fitzgerald emerged victorious as

⁸³ “It Is Up To You, Mr. Voter,” *Afro-American*, May 2, 1919; “Mr. Voter, You Did It,” *Afro-American*, May 9, 1919; “Starting Right,” *Afro-American*, May 23, 1919.

⁸⁴ “Death Comes to Harry S. Cummings,” *Afro-American*, September 8, 1917.

⁸⁵ “Warner T. McGuinn To Run in 14th Ward,” *Afro American*, January 31, 1919; Greene, 214. For more detail on McGuinn’s role in the residential segregation battle, see Chapter 1.

the ward's Republican candidate for the city council.⁸⁶ A native of Tennessee, Fitzgerald relocated to Baltimore following his graduation from Howard Law School in Washington, D.C. in 1898. Specializing in real estate law, Fitzgerald operated a real estate business and diligently worked to increase African American ownership of homes and investment properties in Baltimore. Fitzgerald possessed numerous social connections in the city's black community through his memberships in a number of fraternal organizations, the Bethel A.M.E. Church, and the Y.M.C.A.⁸⁷

With the support of African Americans, the Republican Party made significant gains in the spring municipal election. William F. Broening won the office of mayor, defeating two-term incumbent James H. Preston and ending twelve years of Democratic rule. Broening received the majority of the votes in seventeen of the Baltimore's twenty-eight wards with the Fourteenth and Seventeenth Wards, areas where African Americans outnumbered white residents, giving him the largest majorities.⁸⁸ Black Republicans Warner T. McGuinn and William Fitzgerald were also successful in their bids for seats on the city council, restoring African American representation on the council and

⁸⁶ In the fall of 1917, the city council held a special election within the council to fill the seat left vacant by Cummings. This election resulted in the election of white Baltimore Democrat and businessman Charles Carland to represent the Seventeenth Ward. Carland was nominated by Councilman Samuel West who had pushed the first residential segregation ordinance through the City Council in 1910, which became known as the West Ordinance. Carland's election marked the first time a white man had represented the Seventeenth Ward since 1905 when lawyer Oregon Milton Dennis defeated black incumbent Hiram Watty. See "Two Elected to Council," *Baltimore Sun*, October 2, 1917. Other candidates in the Seventeenth Ward: Louis H. Davenport, John W. Martin, Alexander Williams. "To the Voters of the 17th Ward," *Afro-American*, February 7, 1919; "Endorsement," *Afro-American*, February 7, 1919; "Political Fights in 14th and 17th Wards Getting Hot," *Afro-American*, March 21, 1919; "McGuinn and Fitzgerald Named in Primary Election," *Afro-American*, April 4, 1919.

⁸⁷ Greene, "Black Republicans," 214; "William L. Fitzgerald," *Afro-American*, March 28, 1919.

⁸⁸ "Broening Led By 9,229," *Baltimore Sun*, May 10, 1919. Broening obtained 63% of the vote in the Fourteenth Ward and 66% of the vote in the Seventeenth Ward. In the Fourteenth Ward, though African Americans possessed a slight majority, whites slightly outnumbered them as registered voters by a count of 150.

marking the first time in the city's history that two African Americans would serve on the body at the same time. Though Republicans still did not control the city council, the election did mark a significant increase in their numbers in the First Branch of the council, more than doubling their numbers and their proportion on this portion of the legislative body.⁸⁹

Following the election, black Baltimoreans began to push the city's new mayor to fulfill his campaign promise to address the needs of all Baltimoreans and to specifically fulfill his promise of ensuring fair representation for all citizens on the school board by appointing an African American to fill one of the four vacant seats.⁹⁰ When city school superintendent Charles J. Koch publicly opposed the appointment of an African American as well as the possibility of racially integrated meetings with teachers, twenty-three of the city's ministers representing the African Methodist Episcopal denomination under the leadership of Bishop John Hurst, forwarded a petition to Mayor Broening demanding Koch's removal and declaring him "unfit" for his position. But the ministers' petition was met with no response and by the end of 1919, leaders in the black

⁸⁹ "Republican Mayor and Two Colored Councilmen Elected," *Afro-American*, May 9, 1919; "Successful Candidates in Tuesday's Election," *Afro-American*, May 19, 1919; Greene, 213. Following the 1915 municipal election, the First Branch was comprised of twenty Democrats and four Republicans. Republican representation increased after the 1919 election to nine Republicans with nineteen Democrats. Two of these Republican seats came from two of the four new wards added to the city in 1918. Republican representation in the Second Branch of the city council remained at about 25% from 1915 to 1919. There were six Democrats and two Republicans in 1915 and eight Democrats and three Republicans in 1919. See "Preston Sweeps City By More Than 16,000," *Baltimore Sun*, May 5, 1915 and "New Council Sworn In," *Baltimore Sun*, May 21, 1919.

⁹⁰ "Mayor and City Solons Sworn," *Afro-American*, May 23, 1919. The only African American to serve on the school board was the Rev. Frank Eggleston during the term of Mayor William T. Malster, 1897-1899.

community were seriously questioning Broening's ability to provide a "square deal" for all Baltimoreans and these doubts extended to the entire Republican Party.⁹¹

In the opening months of 1920, dissatisfaction with the Republican Party among leading black Republicans intensified as these leaders became more vocal about possibly withdrawing their support from the entire party. Partially in response to these black leaders, Republican officials decided to call a statewide meeting in Baltimore to halt the "rising tide" against Ovington E. Weller, the leading aspirant for the Republican nomination for the U.S. Senate who would in a few months become the party's official candidate for this position in the fall election. A native of Baltimore County, Weller was a lawyer and businessman who had served as the chairman of the State Roads Commission and treasurer of the Republican National Senatorial Committee. During the 1915 election, Weller had garnered the support of Baltimore's black community in his unsuccessful run for the office of Governor of Maryland. In the fall election, the Republican Party hoped Weller would defeat the Democratic incumbent, John Walter Smith, the former Governor of the state who had served in the U.S. Senate since 1908. If Weller emerged victorious in the election, both of Maryland's senators in the United States would be members of the Republican Party.⁹²

⁹¹ "Citizens Ask Mayor to Remove Superintendent Koch," *Afro-American*, September 19, 1919; "Mayor Broening," *Afro-American*, December 26, 1919.

Black Baltimoreans frustration with the entire Republican Party was also due to the unsuccessful gubernatorial campaign of Harry Nice in the fall of 1919 in which the candidate failed to address black concerns. See "J.H. Murphy and W.T. McGuinn Give Straight Talk to G.O.P.," *Afro-American*, January 2, 1920.

⁹² *Biographical Dictionary of the United States Congress 1774 – 1989, Bicentennial Edition* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1989), 2026; Frank F. White, Jr., *The Governors of Maryland, 1777–1970* (Annapolis: The Hall of Records Commission, 1970), 227 – 230. The state's other Republican senator in the United States Congress was Joseph Irwin France whose term began in 1917 following his victory in the 1916 fall election. For biographical information on Irwin, see Sally Ingram, "The Political Career of Joseph I. France of Maryland" (MA thesis, University of Maryland, 1955).

At this early January meeting organized by the Republican Party, John H. Murphy, publisher and editor of the *Afro-American*, and City Councilman Warner T. McGuinn, spoke out against the unfair treatment that the African American community of the state of Maryland had received at the hands of the Republican Party. For Murphy and McGuinn, the actions of Baltimore's Republican mayor were particularly egregious as Broening continually ignored the concerns of black Baltimoreans in the realm of education, concerns black leaders felt he had promised to address in his mayoral campaign the previous year.⁹³ Through the course of the first six months of 1920, African American leaders in Baltimore continually pressed Mayor Broening to take action and appoint an African American to serve on the city's school board. In addition to representation on the school board, African Americans agitated for increasing the number of black appointments to municipal positions such as foremen, laborers, and health wardens; the construction of a new black high school; and hiring black doctors, dentists, and nurses to work in the city's black schools.⁹⁴ Whereas the mayor and other white city leaders seemed to completely ignore black leaders' calls for an appointment on the school board, minimal steps were taken in some of these other areas of concern. To "satisfy" black agitation for increasing the number of municipal appointments offered to the black community, two African American men were appointed as foremen in the Water

⁹³ "J.H. Murphy and W.T. McGuinn Give Straight Talk to G.O.P. Leaders," *Afro-American*, January 2, 1920, 1.

Concurrently, African American leaders were agitating for more representation as delegates for the Republican National Convention. See "Want Colored Delegates," *Afro-American*, January 30, 1920.

⁹⁴ "Colored Voters Had Power In Old Days," *Afro-American*, January 9, 1920, 4; "Will Not Commit Himself," *Afro-American*, January 16, 1920, 1; "Colored Voters Had Power In Old Days," *Afro-American*, January 9, 1920, 4; "Colored Republicans Show Dissatisfaction With Scant Recognition," *Afro-American*, January 16, 1920, 4; "Few Jobs So Far," *Afro American*, April 9, 1920, 7.

Department to oversee African American laborers and one African American man was hired to work as a chauffeur in one the of the city departments. And to address concerns related to the school system, City Health Commissioner C. Hampson Jones appointed two black doctors and four black nurses to work in Baltimore's black schools. However, these doctors and nurses were not provided with financial compensation for their services, forcing black institutions to band together to help raise the necessary funds to enable them to continue to work in the schools.⁹⁵ As African Americans met with very limited success in having these issues addressed, black leaders spanning multiple generations in the city grew more dissatisfied with the Republican Party and conversations concerning finding an alternative to the Republican Party began to surface.

A critical turning point in African American discontent with the local Republican Party arrived early in the summer of 1920 as Republicans convened for their national convention in June in Chicago. Both of the city's black councilmen, McGuinn and Fitzgerald, traveled to Chicago to attend the convention with the promise from fellow council members that they would wait until their return before dealing with an ordinance authorizing African American constables in the Fourteenth and Seventeenth Wards. However, upon McGuinn and Fitzgerald's departure, Democratic members of the council met and struck an agreement with Republican members to revise the aforementioned ordinance, replacing the names of the objectionable "nigger constables" with white constables. And even though McGuinn was able to return to Baltimore before the ordinance had passed, the compromise had seemingly already been cemented and the

⁹⁵ "Appointed Foremen in Water Department," *Afro-American*, March 19, 1920; "Few Jobs So Far," *Afro-American*, April 9, 1920; "Two Physicians and Six Nurses Appointed in Schools," *Afro-American*, February 27, 1920; "Plan Campaign to Pay Nurses," *Afro-American*, March 19, 1920; "\$4,000 Campaign Starts April 10th," *Afro-American*, March 26, 1920.

ordinance easily passed the local legislature. In the aftermath of this betrayal, McGuinn met with fellow Republicans on the council and vowed to work against the party in the fall election.⁹⁶

As the summer progressed, discontent among black Republicans accelerated, prompting many leaders to weigh political alternatives for the African American community in the fall election. The A.M.E. Preachers' Meeting, an organization comprised of about forty pastors in the city passed a resolution condemning local Republicans and reserving the right to support Independent candidates in the upcoming election. One of the organization's members, C. Harold Stepteau, pastor of the Allen A.M.E. Church in Northwest Baltimore, began to work with other black leaders to plan a series of mass meetings across the city to discuss ways to rebuke the local Republican Party and formulate plans for a statewide gathering in the city. Moving forward with these plans in August, the first mass meeting was held at the Y.M.C.A. with the Rev. Stepteau presiding. At this meeting, the majority of those in attendance agreed to support Republican presidential nominee, Warren G. Harding, but they also agreed to support an independent candidate to oppose Weller and the other local Republican candidates.⁹⁷ By this time, a substantial number of leaders in the African American community had settled on selecting an African American to run against Ovington E. Weller in the race for the U.S. Senate. In mid-August, a group of fifty black leaders assembled at Trinity Baptist

⁹⁶ *Journal of Proceedings of First Branch of City Council of Baltimore*; "McGuinn Thru With Local G.O.P.," *Afro-American*, June 11, 1920; "Republicans Join Democrats to Bar Colored Constables," *Afro-American*, June 11, 1920. Though McGuinn returned from Chicago to fight against the ordinance, Councilman Fitzgerald did not return directly to Baltimore for which he was criticized in the *Afro-American*. See "While the Cats Were Away," *Afro-American*, June 18, 1920.

⁹⁷ "Ministers Against Local Republicans," *Afro-American*, July 2, 1920; "Shows Mayor in Poor Light," *Afro-American*, July 30, 1920; "Statewide Meeting May Name Colored Candidates," *Afro-American*, August 6, 1920; "Broening Handed Severe Censure," *Afro-American*, August 13, 1920.

Church intent on choosing a nominee to oppose Weller. Those assembled included men of the younger generation such as lawyers W. Norman Bishop and J. Steward Davis as well as veteran political leaders in the black community such John H. Murphy and the Rev. George F. Bragg. As a result of this meeting, the Independent Republican League was formed and William Ashbie Hawkins was selected to run as the League's candidate in the Senate race.⁹⁸ The League subsequently adopted a resolution urging the African American community to support their campaign:

The sustaining of our honor and self-respect constitutes the overshadowing issue in the present campaign, and we call upon every loyal member of the black group, throughout the entire State, to cast their suffrage for W. Ashbie Hawkins, the fearless champion and exponent of the principles of liberty, equality, and fraternity; and thus administer a stinging rebuke to those who would insult and outrage the manhood of black citizens.⁹⁹

And as articulated in this document, the League hoped to garner support not just from black Baltimoreans, but from blacks across the state with the goal of damaging the state and local Republican Party organization for its failure to address African American concerns.

A consummate "race man" with over three decades of history fighting for the civil rights of African Americans on both the local and national levels, Hawkins was a logical choice to run for the U.S. Senate. Born in Virginia, Hawkins arrived in Baltimore in the early 1880s where he met and married his wife and pursued an education at Centenary Biblical Institute (later Morgan College), graduating in 1885. Thereafter, he pursued his professional training at the University of Maryland Law School until he was expelled in 1891 when the school re-segregated after a brief experiment with integration. Hawkins

⁹⁸ "W. Ashbie Hawkins to Run for U.S. Senate," *Afro-American*, August 20, 1920.

⁹⁹ "Negroes Pick Nominee To Oppose O.E. Weller," *Baltimore Sun*, August 17, 1920.

finished his law training at Howard University, graduating in 1892. After several years as a public school teacher, he was admitted to the Maryland bar in 1897 and set up his law practice in Baltimore along with his brother-in-law, George W.F. McMechen, a graduate of Yale Law School. The law firm proved instrumental in numerous cases involving the rights of African Americans in the city and state. Hawkins possessed a consummate faith in the judicial system and the ability of African Americans to receive fair verdicts. This philosophy guided Hawkins as he took the lead on a number of pivotal cases regarding African American civil rights through his own law practice in addition to those he represented on behalf of the Maryland Suffrage League and the Legal Committee of the Niagara Movement. The zenith of Hawkins's legal career came with his work in conjunction with the local and national NAACP to defeat residential segregation, which originated in Baltimore in 1910. In conjunction with his legal activity, W. Ashbie Hawkins had been involved in numerous political movements both within and outside of the Republican Party. The most notable in terms of local politics was his involvement with the Committee of One Hundred in the fall of 1897, the most significant independent movement among black Baltimoreans to date. Thus, Hawkins's experience and history of political activism had more than adequately prepared him to be at the forefront of another independent movement.¹⁰⁰

Following Hawkins's selection to run for the U.S. Senate against Weller, the Independent Republican League immediately set to work on his campaign, forming an

¹⁰⁰ Biography of W. Ashbie Hawkins, Baltimore Branch Files, Box I:G84, NAACP Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.; Frank Lincoln Mather, *Who's Who of the Colored Race: A General Biographical Dictionary of Men and Women of African Descent* (Chicago: published by author, 1915); David S. Bogen, "The First Integration of the University of Maryland School of Law," *Maryland Historical Magazine* 84 (1989): 39 – 49; " 'Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea': The Campaign of 1897," Maryland State Archives, accessed July 1, 2013, <http://msa.maryland.gov/msa/stagser/s1259/121/6050/html/12417600.html>.

executive committee under the leadership of young lawyer J. Steward Davis. Born in Harrisburg, PA, Davis was a relative newcomer on the local political scene. A veteran of World War I, he was the first African American to obtain a law degree from Dickinson College in Carlisle, PA in 1914.¹⁰¹ Other members of the Executive Committee included lawyer W. Norman Bishop, Secretary; physician E. Mayfield Boyle, Vice-Chair; and William H. Langley, Treasurer, all of whom represented the younger generation of leadership in Baltimore.¹⁰² The committee began the campaign by soliciting campaign funds, establishing a headquarters in Northwest Baltimore, and most importantly at this stage, collecting the 500 signatures needed for Hawkins's name to be placed on the ballot. By the end of September, the committee had collected over 800 signatures from across the state and submitted the necessary paperwork to the Secretary of State in Annapolis thereby successfully placing their candidate's name on the ballot, a feat not accomplished by black independents in 1897. Now Hawkins joined five other candidates in the race for the U.S. Senate seat from Maryland, which included the two frontrunners, the Republican candidate Ovington E. Weller and the Democratic incumbent John Walter Smith, in addition to George Iverson, a Democrat running as an independent; Frank N.H. Lang, representing the Labor Party; and William A. Toole, representing the Socialist Party. In Hawkins's acceptance speech days later before a crowd at the Sharp Street Methodist Episcopal Church, he expressed his feelings of pride and honor at being

¹⁰¹ "Marylanders Who Have Made Their Mark No. 18," *Afro-American*, March 11, 1921; "Davis and McGuinn Form Partnership," *Afro-American*, June 24, 1921.

¹⁰² Robert W. Coleman, *The First Colored Professional, Clerical, Skilled and Business Directory of Baltimore City*, 8th ed. (Baltimore: Published by author, 1920 – 1921), 138. The complete list of members of the Independent Republican League's executive committee: Jennie H. Ross, Mrs. H.K. Young (Estelle), Mrs. Helen Cooper, Ms. Ida Hilton, Arthur M. Bragg, Harry A. Vodery, Harry Queen, Dr. Walter Jackson, Carl J. Murphy, Dr. Thomas, Linwood Koger, Leo Stevens, William Proctor, Daniel Richardson, Truly Hatchett, Hugh M. Burkett, and the Rev. John Offer Custis.

selected as the “standard bearer” for the African American community representing a multi-generational coalition of “intelligent citizenship.”¹⁰³

But even before Hawkins was officially placed on the ballot for the fall election, Republicans on both the local and national levels began to worry about the potentially “disastrous” effect his campaign could have on the Republican Party. Leaders in the State G.O.P. worried that at least 5,000 to 10,000 African Americans would “bolt” the party and cast their votes for Hawkins and possibly lead to an independent movement with long-term repercussions for the Republican Party, forcing them to offer previously unimagined concessions to the African American community in the coming years.¹⁰⁴ Hoping to end the revolt against the local Republican organization and his administration, Mayor Broening initiated a political conference with McGuinn and Fitzgerald, the city’s two black councilman, in a vain attempt to end Hawkins’s campaign.¹⁰⁵ On the national level, white Republicans were also concerned that the independent movement would harm the election of Senator Warren G. Harding and Calvin Coolidge, the Republican candidates for President and Vice President. In early October, Harding arranged a meeting with a group of African American leaders in Baltimore to discuss this concern while on a scheduled campaign visit to the city. Among those present included John H. Murphy, a representative of the independent movement; Republican Party stalwarts the

¹⁰³ “To the Negroes of Maryland,” *Afro-American*, August 20, 1920; “Voters Contribute to Hawkins’ Campaign,” *Afro-American*, August 20, 1920; “All Ready for Acceptance Speech,” *Afro-American*, September 24, 1920; “Hawkins’ Name On Ballot,” *Baltimore Sun*, September 29, 1920; “Hawkins’ Name on Ballot,” *Afro-American*, October 1, 1920; “of Hon. W. Ashbie Hawkins Accepting Nomination for the United States Senate as an Independent Republican Candidate,” *Afro-American*, October 1, 1920.

¹⁰⁴ “State G.O.P. Believed To Have Ended Mix-Up,” *Baltimore Sun*, September 16, 1920; “Politicians Stirred By Negro’s Campaign,” *Baltimore Sun*, October 11, 1920.

¹⁰⁵ “Mayor Meets Negroes In Political Conference,” *Baltimore Sun*, September 25, 1920.

Rev. Ernest Lyon and Councilman Fitzgerald; and black leaders representing other areas of the state including Jeremiah Hawkins of Prince George's County and Mannie St. Clair of Cambridge on the Eastern Shore. The group laid blame for the independent movement on the actions of Broening and Weller, but assured Harding that the movement would not hinder support for him across the state.¹⁰⁶ Though not present at this meeting, William Ashbie Hawkins and members of the Executive Committee of the Independent Republican League similarly vowed to support Harding and Coolidge throughout their campaign, emphasizing that the "this Independent fight we are making is local."¹⁰⁷

By the beginning of October, Hawkins and his team had begun to campaign in earnest, holding an inaugural open-air rally on Orleans Street in East Baltimore's Sixth Ward. Attended by an estimated one thousand people, the rally featured speeches, a brass band, and a parade including a Boy Scout troop and several hundred marchers winding through a route traversing numerous city wards in East Baltimore. The rally was organized under the leadership of the executive committee of the Independent Republican League, specifically committee members Harry Queen and undertaker Harry Vodery, the latter of whom resided on Orleans Street in the Sixth Ward and had assisted in the formation of an organization supporting Hawkins in the ward over a month earlier.¹⁰⁸

Both Vodery and Queen helped to establish another Hawkins organization in the city's

¹⁰⁶ "Harding Meets Local Men," *Afro-American*, October 1, 1920. Mannie St. Clair of Cambridge, MD was tapped as a leader in the state to ensure African American votes for the Republican Party. See "Maryland Committee Named," *Afro-American*, September 24, 1920.

¹⁰⁷ "In the Race to Stay," *Afro-American*, September 17, 1920.

¹⁰⁸ Campaign parade route wended through the Third, Fourth, Fifth, Sixth and Seventh Wards in East Baltimore. "Hawkins Busy With Negroes Lining Up Vote For Senate," *Baltimore Sun*, October 6, 1920; "Crowds Hear W.A. Hawkins," *Afro-American*, October 8, 1920. "Hawkins to Stump State," *Afro-American*, September 3, 1920; "The Hawkins Banner Flown," *Afro-American*, September 10, 1920; U.S. Census of 1920, NARA microfilm publication T625, roll 660, Baltimore, Maryland, 6th Ward, Enumeration District 78, Sheet 1130, accessed online at Ancestry.com, 15 May 2014.

Eleventh Ward, which mainly consisted of areas of Northwest Baltimore. Daniel B. Snowden, a working-class foundry laborer and fraternal leader, headed this body with over thirty members and weekly meetings on Tuesday evenings. A similar organization in support of Hawkins's campaign was established in Southeast Baltimore in the city's Third Ward. Banners in these areas of the city visually signaled the presence of these organizations to the entire community and joined the main headquarters of the campaign on Druid Hill Avenue in the Seventeenth Ward, where a banner flew with pictures of Hawkins alongside those of Harding and Coolidge, once again emphasizing the local nature of this independent insurgency and the desire to support the national Republican ticket.¹⁰⁹

Through the month of October and into November, Hawkins traversed the city to increase support for the independent movement, lambasting the local Republican Party and urging African Americans to vote for him in the fall election. In East Baltimore, Hawkins spoke before a crowd of 200 gathered at St. Matthew's Methodist Episcopal Church in the Twelfth Ward. Before another crowd gathered at the People's Church in the Sixth Ward in the center of East Baltimore's black community, Hawkins recounted the history of African American support of the Republican Party and addressing critics who felt they would be "throwing away" their votes if they cast them for Hawkins, he asserted that "a vote for principle, for truth and for honesty is never thrown away."¹¹⁰ In Northwest Baltimore, the heart of the city's African American community, Hawkins

¹⁰⁹ "Sidelights of Hawkins Candidacy," *Afro-American*, October 8, 1920.

¹¹⁰ "200 Hear Hawkins at St. Matthew's Church," *Afro-American*, October 16, 1920; "Tells Audience He Have Voted For Every Republican Candidate For Presidency Save One," *Afro-American*, October 22, 1920.

spoke before crowds at a number of the city's larger black churches as early as mid-September through October, including Friends Baptist Church, St. James Episcopal Church, St. Peter Claver Catholic Church, and Enon Baptist Church. At these meetings, similar to those held in East Baltimore churches, Hawkins and other speakers criticized the local Republican Party, specifically the actions of Mayor Broening, and urged the black community to "break the chains of political slavery" and serve the state organization with a "stinging defeat."¹¹¹ Hawkins's campaigning also extended to African Americans residing in more recently annexed areas of the city in South Baltimore, including the Southeast Baltimore neighborhood of Sparrows Point in the Twenty-Sixth Ward, and Mt. Winans in Southwest Baltimore in Ward Twenty-Five where the movement was led by Charles Parker who formerly ran as an independent candidate for the state legislature in 1897.¹¹² And though the majority of Hawkins's addresses before large audiences in the city occurred in churches, he also addressed smaller gatherings including meetings of the Pile Drivers and Dock Builders Union, the Roosevelt Republican Club, and World War I veterans in the American Legion, building the support of African Americans of all classes.¹¹³

But even though half of Maryland's black population of voting age resided within Baltimore, central to an effective independent campaign was enlisting the support and votes of African Americans statewide as political participation among African Americans

¹¹¹ "Republicans Scored By Negro Candidate," *Baltimore Sun*, September 17, 1920; "Criticizes Weller's Statement," *Afro-American*, September 24, 1920; "Crowds Hear W.A. Hawkins," *Afro-American*, October 8, 1920; "Hawkins Urges Negroes To Break Political Chains," *Baltimore Sun*, October 15, 1920.

¹¹² "Hawkins Pushes Campaign," *Baltimore Sun*, October 10, 1920; "Hawkins Busy With Negroes Lining Up Vote For Senate," *Baltimore Sun*, October 6, 1920; "Throw Pepper At Big Rally," *Afro-American*, October 29, 1920; "Probable Candidate for Congress," *Afro-American*, June 28, 1913.

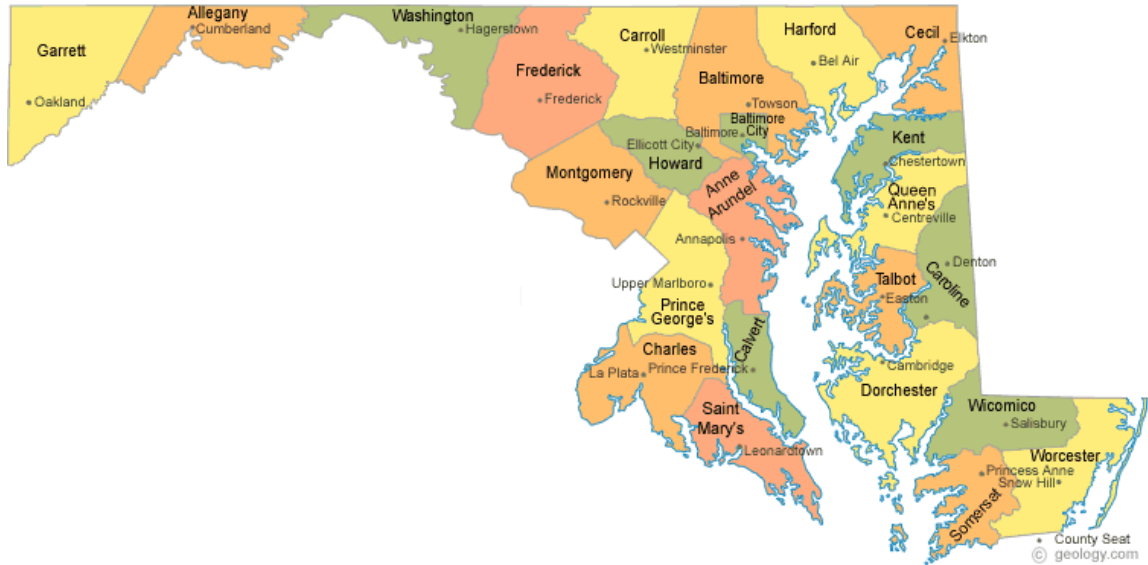
¹¹³ "Must Stand True to the Race," *Afro-American*, November 5, 1920.

in the counties of the state had been consistently higher than that of black Baltimoreans for decades.¹¹⁴ In Western Maryland, which possessed less than 5 percent of the state's African American voting age population, black leaders in the Republican Party in the towns of Frederick and Hagerstown campaigned on Hawkins's behalf. Hawkins and members of his campaign committee toured the region at least twice during the course of the campaign. In Northern Maryland, another area of the state with a relatively small black population, Hawkins and his committee spoke before packed audiences in both Bel Air in Harford County and Westminster in Carroll County. In Charles County in Southern Maryland, an area of the state with a much larger black population, Hawkins visited the town of Pomonkey, addressed a crowd of 150 voters assembled at the Willing Helpers' Hall in LaPlata, and benefited from the recruitment efforts of black leaders in the town of Malcolm. In the areas of the state closest to Washington, D.C., which also boasted a considerable black population, Hawkins met with limited success in his campaign efforts. When he attempted to hold a rally at a church in the town of Seat Pleasant in Prince George's County, Weller sympathizers persuaded trustees of the church to close their doors to Hawkins. But Hawkins did address an audience in Lincoln, Maryland and in the city of Rockville, he spoke before a crowd of 400 amidst ecstatic shouts of his name.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁴ Calcott, *The Negro in Maryland Politics*, 141. Calcott's analysis of registration and election data from 1870 to the mid 1910s, reveals that political participation for both blacks and whites was consistently lower than in the counties, but even more so for the city's black population.

¹¹⁵ "Hawkins Busy With Negroes Lining Up Vote For Senate," *Baltimore Sun*, October 6, 1920; "How Much Are You Paid?," *Afro-American*, November 12, 1920; "Tells Audience He Has Voted For Every Republican Candidate For Presidency Save One," *Afro-American*, October 22, 1920; "Hawkins At Westminster," *Afro-American*, October 29, 1920; "Charles Countians For Hawkins," *Afro-American*, October 22, 1920; "Hawkins at LaPlata," *Baltimore Sun*, October 31, 1920; "Charles Countians For Hawkins," *Afro-American*, October 22, 1920; "Salisbury's Biggest Audience Came Out To Hear Ashbie Hawkins On Tuesday," *Afro-American*, October 16, 1920. Frank Kent, ed. *The Maryland Almanac* 1:5 (Baltimore, MD: George W. King Printing Co., 1921).

Figure 2.1 Map of Maryland Counties and County Seats



Source: <http://geology.com/county-map/maryland.shtml>

Outside of the city of Baltimore, Hawkins spent the most time campaigning in the towns and cities of the Eastern Shore of the state where, along with the state's southern counties, slavery had been concentrated, leaving behind a sizeable black population. And also along with the state's southern counties, this region boasted a particularly high level of political participation among the African American population from the 1870s through the early decades of the twentieth century.¹¹⁶ Thus, support from black Marylanders on the Eastern Shore was central to the independent movement, and Hawkins and his supporters proved persistent in their efforts despite numerous attempts to sabotage his campaign. When Hawkins was scheduled to visit Chestertown in Kent County, members of the Republican State Central Committee initiated a house-to-house canvass of black neighborhoods, urging black residents not to attend the scheduled Hawkins meeting at

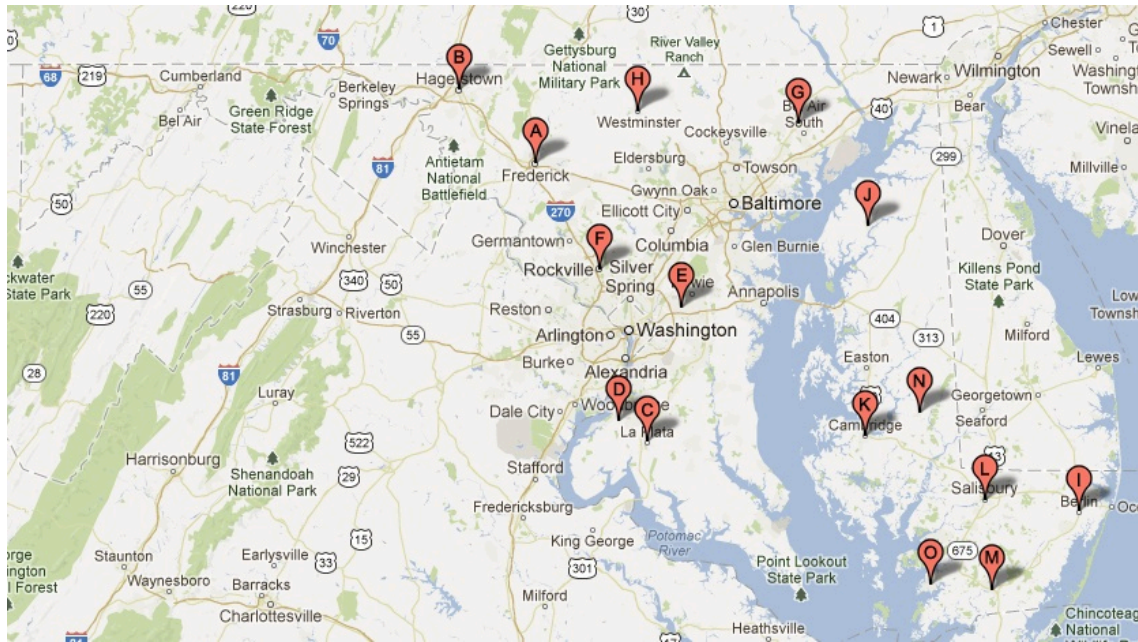
¹¹⁶ Calcott, vii. The counties of the Eastern Shore are Kent, Queen Anne's, Talbot, Caroline, Dorchester, Wicomico, Worcester, and Somerset Counties.

James Methodist Episcopal Church and then attempted to persuade the trustees of the church to close its doors to the candidate. However, they proved unsuccessful and the political meeting at James M.E. Church under the pastorate of William H. Johns was “packed to the doors” with an additional 500 people gathered outside of the church to listen to Hawkins as he railed against the Republican Party and its failure to provide blacks with jobs in Baltimore and across the state, urging those assembled to “shake off the shackles of slavery” and not vote for the party.¹¹⁷ In Salisbury, the largest city on the Eastern Shore located in Wicomico County, Hawkins addressed another standing room only crowd that overflowed into the street at John Wesley Methodist Episcopal Church, where organizers persisted with their plans for a meeting in spite of threats made against their lives.¹¹⁸ Traveling to Cambridge in Dorchester, County with Baltimore realtor and campaign committee member H.M. Burkett, Hawkins spoke before an audience of close to 1,500 assembled in a local theatre, but the meeting was interrupted when men thought to be employed by local Republicans sifted snuff and cayenne pepper from the theatre’s balcony, eliciting fits of coughing and sneezing from the crowd below. However, once police were called and the “rowdies” were escorted from the theatre, the Hawkins rally continued, lasting until midnight. In the town of Berlin in Worcester County, black and white Republican leaders were the most successful in hindering Hawkins campaign and

¹¹⁷ “Jobs Refused Negroes Says Hawkins In Kent,” *Baltimore Sun*, September 30, 1920; “Crowds Hear W.A. Hawkins,” *Afro-American*, October 8, 1920; “Not Out For Money,” *Afro-American*, October 16, 1920.

¹¹⁸ “Salisbury’s Biggest Audience Came Out To Hear Ashbie Hawkins On Tuesday,” *Afro-American*, October 16, 1920.

Figure 2.2 Hawkins Campaign Visits outside Baltimore City, September–November 1920



Map Legend

A	Chase, MD (Baltimore County)	J	Cambridge, MD (Dorchester County)
B	Chestertown, MD (Kent County)	K	Berlin, MD (Worcester County)
C	LaPlata, MD (Charles County)	L	Fairmount, MD (Somerset County)
D	Easton, MD (Talbot County)	M	Bowie, MD (Prince George’s County)
E	Pomonkey, MD (Charles County)	N	Frederick, MD (Frederick County)
F	Lincoln, MD (Prince George’s County)	O	Rockville, MD (Montgomery County)
G	Catonsville, MD (Baltimore County)	P	Bel Air, MD (Harford County)
H	Hagerstown, MD (Washington County)	Q	Pockomoke City, MD (Worcester County)
I	Westminster, MD (Carroll County)		

Source: Google Maps/Batchgeo.com

made sure that all schools and churches remained closed, forcing Hawkins to hold an outside rally with a crowd of over 500 gathered in the night air.¹¹⁹ But Hawkins also addressed audiences in other towns located on the Eastern Shore without incident including Fairmount in Somerset County, Pocomoke City in Worcester County, and Hurlock in Dorchester County.¹²⁰

Though Hawkins traveled across the state generating widespread support among Maryland's black community, the majority of his supporters remained in Baltimore. In the city, a number of veterans in the struggle for civil rights threw their support behind the Hawkins campaign, particularly among the black clergy. One of Hawkins's supporters was the Rev. Harvey Johnson, pastor of the Union Baptist Church who had been active in civil rights struggles in Baltimore and Maryland for four decades, which included working to have African American lawyers admitted to the state bar. Along with other ministers of the Baptist Conference, Johnson passed a resolution pledging support to Hawkins's campaign at a meeting held at his church, emphasizing that the independent movement was more than just a political movement, but rather "a movement for human rights and human liberty."¹²¹ Another supporter, the Rev. George F. Bragg used his pulpit at St. James Methodist Episcopal Church to urge his parishioners to vote for the independent candidate and opened the doors of his church for a Hawkins rally. Bragg urged black Baltimoreans to break their allegiance to the Republican Party, proclaiming

¹¹⁹ "Plot To Bomb Ashbie Hawkins," *Afro-American*, October 22, 1920; "Pepper Causes Sneezing At Meeting of Negroes," *Baltimore Sun*, October 24, 1920; "Throw Pepper At Big Rally," *Afro-American*, October 29, 1920.

¹²⁰ "Hawkins Pushes Campaign," *Baltimore Sun*, October 10, 1920; "Throw Pepper At Big Rally," *Afro-American*, October 29, 1920.

¹²¹ "Ministers Endorse Hawkins," *Afro-American*, October 1, 1920; "Baptist Ministers Endorse Hawkins," *Afro-American*, October 1, 1920.

that “we vote for individuals and not for parties” and emphasizing that Hawkins was the proper “individual” for whom they should cast their vote as one who “stands unflinchingly of the highest and purest Republican principles.”¹²² Hawkins also earned the support of Bishop John Hurst of the A.M.E. Church who publicly vowed that all five members of his household would vote for Hawkins.¹²³

Also hugely influential as supporters of the Hawkins’s campaign were John H. Murphy, president and publisher of the *Afro-American* and Carl Murphy, his son and the newspaper’s editor. The paper’s early motto “Independent In All Things, Neutral In None,” reflected the personal politics of these Murphy men, which naturally manifested itself in their support of the Hawkins campaign, declaring that “the Afro is for Hawkins morning, noon, and night.”¹²⁴ Just as had been the case during the battle against disfranchisement during the previous two decades when the elder Murphy had served as chairman of the press and publicity committees for the Suffrage League and Auxiliary Republican Committee, the *Afro-American* played a pivotal role in publicizing the independent movement, advertising Hawkins speeches and rallies, and urging African Americans to vote for him in the upcoming election. Following the paper’s advertisement that Bishop John Hurst of the A.M.E. Church and his family would provide five votes for Hawkins, an informal contest was initiated where readers would write to the newspaper’s staff and publicly declare the number of votes their household would cast for Hawkins in

¹²² “Dr. Bragg Preaches Strong Sermon,” *Afro-American*, October 29, 1920; “The People’s Forum: Rev. George F. Bragg, Jr. Declares He Will Vote The ‘Straight’ Republican Ticket, Which Includes The Name of W. Ashbie Hawkins,” *Afro-American*, October 29, 1920.

¹²³ “Hurst Family For Hawkins,” *Afro-American*, October 1, 1920.

¹²⁴ “He Is Worried About Hawkins,” *Afro-American*, October 22, 1920; Hayward Farrar, *The Baltimore Afro-American, 1892 – 1950* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1998), 57.

the November election.¹²⁵ Through the newspaper's editorial section, the Murphys were able to provide extended commentary and advocacy for the campaign. Numerous letters to the editor were reprinted that pledged support for the independent movement, including one from E. Mayfield Boyle, Vice-Chair of the Executive Committee of the Independent Republican League who offered twenty reasons that Hawkins should be elected to Congress as a "real REPRESENTATIVE of the race."¹²⁶

In addition to letters from the newspaper's readership, John and Carl Murphy used the newspaper to publicize their personal support for the campaign. Declaring that "now is the time," John Murphy, who had been present at the meeting where Hawkins was selected to run for the United States Senate, urged African Americans to vote for Hawkins which he was convinced would lead to better treatment of the black community from both Republicans and Democrats and pave the way for advancements in the struggle for civil rights. Carl Murphy, who served as a member of the Executive Committee of the Independent Republican League, also advocated support of Hawkins's campaign, denouncing the "lily-whiteism" and discrimination perpetuated by the Republican Party and its candidate for the U.S. Senate, Ovington E. Weller: "A vote for Weller is a vote for continued segregation, continued Jim Crow cars, continued political slavery. A vote for Hawkins is a vote for the new emancipation, for one hundred percent Americanism, and

¹²⁵ "Bevans Matches Bishop Hurst," *Afro-American*, October 8, 1920; "Matches Bishop Hurst," *Afro-American*, October 16, 1920; "Matches Bishop Hurst," *Afro-American*, October 22, 1920.

¹²⁶ For letter to the editor from Boyle see "Why Every Negro Should Vote For W. Ashbie Hawkins for the United States Senate," *Afro-American*, October 16, 1920. For additional letters to the editor see "Will Support the Colored Candidate For Senator," *Afro-American*, August 23, 1920; "Hawkins For Senate and Debs for President," *Afro-American*, September 24, 1920; "Hughes Out For Ashbie Hawkins," *Afro-American*, September 24, 1920; "End of Weller and Reactionary Republicans of Maryland Is In Sight," *Afro-American*, October 8, 1920; "Letter to the Editor," *Afro-American*, October 22, 1920; "Will Give Weller Solemn Referendum At Polls On Tuesday," *Afro-American*, October 29, 1920.

for equal rights for all.” As reflected in their words and the words of others promoted in the *Afro American*, there was no other choice for the Murphys than to vote for W. Ashbie Hawkins as part of their commitment to improving the conditions of African Americans in Baltimore and across the state.¹²⁷

Another element central to the success of the burgeoning independent movement was the support of African American women, the newest members of the black electorate who had just received the right to vote with the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment in August 1920, representing the culmination of a national suffrage movement extending back into the mid-nineteenth century. Since the movement’s incipency, African American women had been active in the fight for the right to vote.¹²⁸ In the period following the Civil War, native Baltimorean Frances Ellen Watkins Harper was a prominent leader in the women’s rights movement, affiliating with a number of organizations controlled by white female reformers including the American Woman Suffrage Association and the International Council of Women, and often the lone African American voice within these organizations. In 1896, Harper helped to establish the National Association of Colored Women (NACW), serving as vice president of this new organization, which provided African American women with an institutional platform to address a range of civil rights issues, including the right to vote.¹²⁹ By the 1910s, African

¹²⁷ “Now Is The Time: Harding, Coolidge, Hawkins,” *Afro-American*, October 29, 1920; “The Senatorial C[a]mpaign,” *Afro-American*, October 22, 1920.

¹²⁸ Rosalyn Terborg-Penn, “Discontented Black Feminists: Prelude and Postscript to the Passage of the Nineteenth Amendment,” in *Decades of Discontent: The Women’s Movement, 1920 – 1940*, ed. Lois Scharf and Joan M. Jensen (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1983), 261.

¹²⁹ Bettye Collier Thomas, “Frances Ellen Watkins Harper: Abolitionist and Feminist Reformer, 1825–1911,” in *African American Women and the Vote*, ed. Ann D. Gordon and Bettye Collier-Thomas (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997), 49.

American women were initiating their largest suffrage campaigns on the national level through middle-class organizations like the NACW, the National Federation of Afro-American Women, the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, and the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, all of which included African American women in Baltimore.¹³⁰

Suffrage work on the national level was supplemented by the work of African American women in a number of local organizations. In Baltimore, this work was done most extensively through the Colored Women's Suffrage League. This body of middle-class black women was established in the fall of 1915 in Northwest Baltimore under the leadership of Estelle Young, a prominent clubwoman and the wife of local pharmacist Dr. Howard Young, who was a forerunner in the 1919 election for the city council.¹³¹ Through the late 1910s, the Suffrage League under Young's leadership as president held rallies and mass meetings with guest speakers designed to mobilize the black community to fight for the franchise for African American women and to expose the hypocrisy and counter the racist arguments of whites who "feared" granting "Dinah" the right to vote, yet possessed no qualms in trusting the care of their children to African American

¹³⁰ Terborg-Penn, "Discontented Black Feminists," 262.

¹³¹ "Join Suffrage Movement," *Afro-American*, October 2, 1915; "Mrs. Estelle Young Dies In Baltimore," *Afro-American*, August 20, 1938. The Colored Women's Suffrage League was often referred to by this name but it was also referenced to in the press as the Woman's Suffrage Club and the Woman's Progressive Suffrage Club. Its officers included a number of middle-class clubwomen who were the wives of prominent leaders in the black community including Marjorie Hawkins, wife of the Colored High School's principal Mason A. Hawkins; Minnie Gaines, the wife of the Rev. A.L. Gaines; and K. Bertha Hurst, the wife of the A.M.E. Bishop John Hurst. Collectively, these women were active in a number of local organizations, including the Maryland Federation of Christian Women, the Du Bois Circle, the Women's Cooperative Civic League, and the Independent Order of St. Luke. These women also held leadership positions in other organizations. Hawkins and Gaines both served on the executive committee of the local branch of the NAACP and Hurst served as chairman of the Finance Committee of the YWCA and president of the Executive Board of the Day Nursery.

women.¹³² By the spring of 1920, in anticipation of the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment, the League worked with Baltimore ministers to declare May 2nd as “Suffrage Sunday” when black ministers across the city would urge African American women to register and “vote intelligently” from their pulpits. And following the amendment’s ratification, the League initiated “citizenship meetings” at the YWCA on Thursday evenings with the aim of educating black women on the registration process and mobilizing them to vote in the upcoming election.¹³³

With the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment, the black electorate in Maryland had the potential to nearly double with the addition of nearly 69,000 African American women. Of this number, 36,711 resided in the city of Baltimore with the potential to also nearly double the city’s black electorate.¹³⁴ In late September, Baltimoreans began the process of voter registration with African American women flocking en masse to place their names on the city’s voter rolls with lines of black women so long in the Fourteenth and Seventeenth Wards, areas of the city with black majorities, that it was speculated that some women had to be turned away to return at a later date. And among those in line were African American women of all classes and generations, even including

¹³² “Demands Suffrage For All Women Or For None,” *Baltimore Sun*, March 28, 1912; “Suffragettes To Meet,” *Afro-American*, October 30, 1915; “Women Hold Annual Session,” *Afro-American*, November 6, 1915; “Suffragettes Hold Big Mass Meeting,” *Afro-American*, December 11, 1915; “To Hold Suffrage Meeting,” *Afro-American*, February 17, 1917; “Suffrage Club Closes,” *Afro-American*, June 9, 1917.

¹³³ “May 2 is Suffrage Sunday,” *Afro-American*, April 23, 1920; “Plan Meeting To Aid Women,” *Afro-American*, September 3, 1920; “A Word To the Women Voters,” *Afro-American*, September 17, 1920.

¹³⁴ *U.S. Bureau of the Census, Fourteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1920, Volume III, Population 1920: Composition and Characteristics of the Population By States, Prepared Under the Supervision of William C. Hunt* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1922), 429-430; “63,899 Colored Women Are Eligible to Vote in Maryland,” *Afro-American*, August 20, 1920; “Maryland Has 75,000 Women Eligible To Vote,” *Afro-American*, October 1, 1920.

octogenarians and nonagenarians who were carried to the polls from the Old Folks Home of Bethel A.M.E. Church.¹³⁵

In describing the scene at the polls, the *Baltimore Sun* attempted to mock black women and paint a demeaning portrait of them as a class of women unprepared for the right to vote:

Susan Toodles, colored, registered in that precinct at 1008 Druid Hill Avenue, and Susie is typical, though less intelligent-looking women than she limped through the questionings and painfully scrawled their names on the books. Poorer dressed women too, for Susie Toodles wore a ruffled gown of white and a glittering brooch of rhinestones, and about her neck was a decorative string of globules that are to the “pearl family” what young T.R. says Franklin Roosevelt is to the Roosevelt family. “Maverick” is the word. Susie’s were “maverick pearls”...Susie Toodles knew her book. She was out of there in less than five minutes, a registered woman- a Republican, like the men... No free thinking was evident there among the women.

Responding to this demeaning caricature, Sarah Collins Fernandis, a black social worker and leader of the Women’s Cooperative Civic League, wrote the newspaper, lambasting it for “ridiculously chronic[ing]” the registration of African American women in the person of the fictional character “Susan Toodles” and relying upon “old-time phrases of race prejudice” in its description. Fernandis expressed her immense joy over the large numbers of her black “sisters” who had gone to register and emphasized that their actions represented the willingness and eagerness with which black women were ready to fulfill their “sacred duties and responsibilities of citizenship.” But even though “Susan Toodles” was clearly meant to ridicule African American women, the caricature also unintentionally exposed the pride and serious nature with which black women regarded the right to vote and the registration process. For “Susie Toodles” and probably other

¹³⁵ “Women Spring Big Surprise,” *Afro-American*, September 24, 1920. In the counties of Maryland, voter registration was supplemental for men (young men just coming of age or men just coming into the state or transferring) and all new registration for women. But in Baltimore, the fall registration was all new for both men and women.

black women as well, it was not out of the ordinary to wear one's "finery" for such an important occasion. Also, the speed with which she moved through the registration process was also echoed by white election judges in the registration offices of the Fourteenth and Seventeenth Wards who remarked that "negro women went through the process of registering as though they had studied nothing else for weeks." Lastly, the article's dismissal of African American women as not possessing any "free thinking" because of their registration as Republicans, does not fit with the image of women who have studied "for weeks." It fails to acknowledge the political sophistication of African American women and ignores the fact that registration as a member of the Republican Party did not necessarily mean that one was going to vote the straight Republican ticket. In leaving the polls where she most likely registered as a Republican, one black woman, Mary Downs, informed the press that she was excited to have the opportunity to not vote for the Republican candidate for the U.S. Senate, but to vote for Hawkins, the independent candidate and "a man of our race," and Downs even mused that one day she would have the opportunity to vote for an African American for the office of President.¹³⁶

At the end of the first two days of voter registration, 6,323 African American women had registered to vote, representing 17 percent of the number of black women eligible to register, whereas only 11 percent of white women in Baltimore who were eligible to vote had registered. In wards like the Fourteenth and Seventeenth where African American women were more organized, their registration numbers nearly equaled those of black men, and their eagerness to register served as an important

¹³⁶ "Women Out In Throngs To Register As Voters," *Baltimore Sun*, September 22, 1920; "A Colored Woman Rejoices in the Way Her Sisters Have Flocked to the Registration Offices," *Baltimore Sun*, September 27, 1920; "Sidelights of the Hawkins Candidacy," *Afro-American*, October 8, 1920.

Table 2.1 Baltimore City Population By Ward, Race and Gender, 1920

Ward	Black Males	Black Females	All Males	All Females
1	80	82	16,797	16,460
2	161	142	10,688	10,135
3	990	852	10,294	8,976
4	2,411	2,294	8,185	6,802
5	3,351	3,189	9,249	8,355
6	1,690	1,626	15,353	15,724
7	2,539	2,499	16,233	16,805
8	849	794	18,235	19,057
9	641	861	14,789	16,298
10	2,026	1,424	10,302	9,923
11	3,179	3,831	9,417	11,959
12	2,219	2,556	16,608	19,495
13	256	392	15,938	17,722
14	5,813	6,759	11,370	13,831
15	3,778	4,101	22,770	25,364
16	2,976	3,318	16,538	18,898
17	7,583	8,101	10,232	10,404
18	2,720	2,864	9,871	10,312
19	2,050	2,190	11,322	12,356
20	363	482	17,919	18,932
21	1,373	1,331	9,863	9,560
22	2,581	2,360	7,907	7,101
23	1,293	1,223	8,440	8,159
24	37	3	13,331	11,253
25	961	843	9,434	7,926
26	301	270	19,857	17,016
27	621	962	16,966	19,187
28	47	84	3,652	4,256

Source: *U.S. Bureau of the Census, Fourteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1920, Volume III, Population 1920: Composition and Characteristics of the Population By States, Prepared Under the Supervision of William C. Hunt* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1922), 429 – 430.

Table 2.2 Registered Voters in Baltimore City By Race and Ward, 1920

WARD	African American Registered Voters	White Registered Voters
1	49	8,831
2	105	4,651
3	450	2,676
4	1,538	2,648
5	1,949	2,191
6	980	8,770
7	1,871	9,841
8	428	13,586
9	400	13,005
10	795	5,848
11	2,780	5,948
12	1,491	13,845
13	189	12,626
14	5,185	5,159
15	2,634	16,457
16	1,486	12,837
17	5,596	1,600
18	1,769	5,320
19	1,473	7,518
20	268	13,073
21	907	5,323
22	1,363	2,618
23	649	4,752
24	0	6,501
25	547	3,717
26	53	11,022
27	525	14,420
28	17	3,039

Source: Frank Kent, ed., *The Maryland Almanac*, Vol. 1, No. 5 (Baltimore, MD: George W. King Printing Co., 1921), 116.

impetus for getting African American men to the polls.¹³⁷ By the second week of October, voter registration had ended in Baltimore with a final tally of 35,497 registered black voters, which more than doubled the number of African Americans registered to vote the previous year. This number represented 14 percent of the city's electorate and nearly mirrored the proportion of African Americans in the city's population marking a very slight improvement from the previous year.¹³⁸ This registration marked a more substantial improvement for the Republican Party as African American women made up more than one-third of the Republican enrollment and Republicans won in registration in the heavily black populated Fifth, Eleventh, Fourteenth, and Seventeenth Wards. But despite these gains, the Democratic Party maintained its lead in registered voters in the city. Likewise, across the state of Maryland, though the Republican Party led in registration in ten counties and led in county registration overall by 3,000, which was partially due to the addition of African American women to the electorate, the Democratic Party still maintained an overall lead of 14,000 voters with the Eastern Shore remaining solidly in the Democratic camp.¹³⁹

¹³⁷ "Women Out In Throngs To Register As Voters," *Baltimore Sun*, September 22, 1920; "Nearly 29,000 Women Register In Two Days," *Baltimore Sun*, September 23, 1920; "Women Spring Big Surprise," *Afro-American*, September 24, 1920; "Ward 17 Leads In Registration," *Afro-American*, October 8, 1920.

¹³⁸ In 1919, 17,379 black men registered to vote of 27,120 who were eligible and the number registered represented 11.7% of the electorate. For the final number of registered voters in 1920, no breakdown by gender is available but the total number of 35,497 represents 14% of the city's electorate and African Americans were 13% of the entire city's population at this time period. Thus, the number of African Americans registered to vote increased from the previous year and marked an approximate 2% increase in the African American proportion of the city's entire electorate. However, voter registration overall did decrease from 1919 to 1920. In 1919, 64% of African American men of voting age registered, but in 1920, only 48% African Americans of voting age registered to vote. *Fourteenth Census*, 429 – 430; Frank Kent, ed., *The Maryland Almanac* 1 (Baltimore, MD: George W. King Printing Company, 1921), 116.

¹³⁹ "Registration Results Encouraging G.O.P.," *Baltimore Sun*, September 24, 1920; "Woman Registration Is Heavy In Counties," *Baltimore Sun*, September 29, 1920; "172,089 Registered," *Afro-American*, October 7, 1920; "Democrats Keep Lead In Final Registration," *Baltimore Sun*, October 13,

But the importance of African American women in the 1920 election and Hawkins's campaign extended beyond the fact that they were now able to vote; they were also crucial to the movement's success because of their role in political organizing, a realm by no means foreign to them. Even though African American women weren't granted the right to vote with the ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment, they still remained extremely active in the political realm in black communities across the nation through attending political meetings; organizing political organizations; and helping, and at times forcing, African American men to make political decisions.¹⁴⁰ African American women in Baltimore shared this same political history as a constant presence at political meetings, assisting in political campaigns, and in one of their most notable moments, waging the battle against disfranchisement through the Anti-Digges Amendment League. And only a month before the Nineteenth Amendment went before Congress for approval in 1919, African American women in the city's Fourteenth Ward were especially active

1920; "Shore For Cox," *Baltimore Sun*, October 23, 1920; "G.O.P. Ahead By 3,000 In County Registration," *Baltimore Sun*, October 29, 1920. Republicans led in registration in the following ten counties: Allegheny, Calvert, Carroll, Charles, Frederick, Garrett, Prince George's, St. Mary's, Somerset and Washington. Somerset County was the only county on the Eastern Shore where Republican registration exceeded Democratic registration, but the number of registered Democrats still outnumbered registered Republicans in the county due to the fact that voter registration in the counties was only supplemental and not all new registration as it was in Baltimore City.

¹⁴⁰ Here I am relying upon the work of historian Elsa Barkley Brown who argues that African American women and men viewed the right to vote as a collective right and not an "individual possession." She further argues that historians' focus on voting has often obscured the ways in which African American women were particularly active and influential in both external and internal political realms prior to the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment. See Elsa Barkley Brown, "Negotiating and Transforming the Public Sphere: African American Political Life in the Transition from Slavery to Freedom," in *Time Longer Than Rope: A Century of African American Activism*, ed. Charles Payne et al. (New York: New York University Press, 2003), 77–80. For more on how African American women, both nationally and in other locales, made the transition to full voting rights see Ann D. Gordon et al., eds., *African American Women and the Vote, 1837–1965* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997); Rosalyn Terborg-Penn, *African American Women in the Struggle for the Vote, 1850 – 1920* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998); Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow: Women and the Politics of White Supremacy in North Carolina, 1896 – 1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Lisa G. Materson, *For the Freedom of Her Race: Black Women and Electoral Politics in Illinois, 1877 – 1932* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009).

in Warner T. McGuinn's campaign for the city council, "threatening" men to get out and vote and canvassing voters by foot and automobile throughout the spring campaign.¹⁴¹

With the right to vote, African American women assumed more leadership roles and overall more visibility in political organizing as manifested by their work in W. Ashbie Hawkins's campaign for the U.S. Senate. In late September in East Baltimore's Fifth Ward where African Americans were almost the majority of the population in the ward, close to fifty black women met and organized the Hawkins Independent Republican League at the residence of Mamie White, a middle-aged cook and boarding house operator. White was elected to serve as the new organization's president, assisted by Sarah Cornelia Ralph in the office of vice-president. Ralph was a member of Baltimore's middle-class and the sister of Harry A. Vodery, a member of the Independent Republican League's executive committee, and she resided with her brother on Orleans Street, the site of the opening rally of Hawkins's campaign.¹⁴² During this same period of time, 400 black women gathered at First Baptist Church, also located in the Fifth Ward, the center of East Baltimore's black community, and formed a political organization. Though this organization was not explicitly organized to support Hawkins's campaign, many of the speakers at the organization's founding meeting were staunch supporters of the independent movement and urged the women to support the campaign. In one speech to the women on that day, Edna Reid, wife of a Baltimore doctor and active in the

¹⁴¹ "Hanna Warns Negroes," *Baltimore Sun*, November 3, 1911; "Successful Candidates in Tuesday's Election," *Afro-American*, May 19, 1919.

¹⁴² "Hawkins Female League Organizes," *Afro-American*, October 1, 1920; "Harry Albert Vodery," *World War I Selective Service System Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918* (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration); U.S. Census of 1920, NARA microfilm publication T625, roll 659, 660, Baltimore, Maryland, 5th Ward, 6th Ward, Enumeration District 58, 78, Sheet 783, 1130, accessed online at Ancestry.com 11 February 2014.

women's club movement and civic circles, warned the women that none would be able to "keep her self respect unless she voted for Hawkins." A third organization, the Citywide Independent League, was established in Northwest Baltimore at Sharp Street Methodist Episcopal Church with 500 women in attendance at the organization's initial meeting and speeches given by leaders in the Independent movement, including J. Steward Davis; Carl Murphy; and Mamie White, who had recently helped to establish a similar independent organization in East Baltimore.¹⁴³

Beyond these organizations, African American women also played a pivotal role in the movement's main organization, the Independent Republican League. One African American woman, Ruth Sewell, worked in the League's main office, and four African American women served as members of the League's executive committee, including Estelle Young, president of the Colored Women's Suffrage League, and Jennie Howard Ross, president of the Fourteenth Ward Community Club, a black female civic organization. As the national head of the Courts of Calanthe of the Knights of Pythias, a fraternal organization, Ross was intimately connected to Hawkins, the Supreme Chancellor, the highest ranking official, of the Knights of Pythias; and due to her extensive fraternal and civic connections on both the local and national levels, her support of Hawkins was a boon to the campaign. She gave numerous addresses on behalf of Hawkins's campaign within and outside of the city of Baltimore. According to Ross, as stated in one of these speeches, the independent movement was central to African American political progress:

The political emancipation of the race will come only when colored voters put up the same united and independent front as those who made woman suffrage

¹⁴³ "Four Hundred Women Organize," *Afro-American*, October 1, 1920; "Salisbury's Biggest Audience Came Out To Hear Ashbie Hawkins On Tuesday," *Afro-American*, October 16, 1920.

possible. It will be the greatest pleasure of my life and a heritage to hand down to my son, that my first vote was cast for a colored candidate for the United States Senate.

Using familiar campaign rhetoric, which linked loyalty to the Republican Party to images of slavery, Jennie Ross' words re-emphasized the need for independent action as a means of escaping the oppression of continued loyalty to a political party wholly unconcerned with African Americans' civil rights. Simultaneously, she tailored her message to black women by linking the present campaign with the women's suffrage movement and accentuating the role of black women in the private sphere as mothers and their important role in shaping the civic and political consciousness of their children, particularly their sons.¹⁴⁴

With the addition of African American women to the electorate and their increasing role of importance in campaign leadership and political organizing, Hawkins's campaign targeted African American women in order to secure as many of their votes as possible. In addition to the work of members of his campaign committee, Hawkins personally addressed a number of women's meetings across the city of Baltimore.¹⁴⁵ Alongside these speeches, the *Afro American* under the leadership of the Murphy family was an often-used tool in reaching out to African American women. The newspaper's editorial page regularly featured letters urging African Americans to support the independent movement, including letters from black women targeted at black women.

¹⁴⁴ "In the Race to Stay," *Afro-American*, September 17, 1920; "Women Eager To Enter Politics," *Afro-American*, September 24, 1920; "Four Hundred Women Organize," *Afro-American*, October 1, 1920; "Tells Audience He Has Voted For Every Republican Candidate For Presidency Save One," *Afro-American*, October 22, 1920; "Mrs. Jennie Ross Out For Hawkins," *Afro-American*, September 24, 1920; Coleman, 138.

¹⁴⁵ "Hawkins Busy With Negroes Lining Up Vote For Senate," *Baltimore Sun*, October 6, 1920; "Crowds Hear W.A. Hawkins," *Afro-American*, October 8, 1920.

One such letter from Eliza Cole, a resident of the Seventeenth Ward, cited W. Ashbie Hawkins's role in the fight against residential segregation as a reason African American women should cast their votes for him.¹⁴⁶ The Woman Suffrage Advisory Association, an organization headquartered in Northwest Baltimore under the leadership of the Rev. S.R. Hughes also appealed to African American women across the state through the pages of the *Afro-American*:

Congratulations upon your victory of enfranchisement. This high privilege and recognition of womanhood, should stir every woman to activity in this present campaign. Providence has opened the door of opportunity and stands at the open door pointing every woman to duty and responsibility. The ballot, a weapon of protection to self and home is in your hands; not to use it would ingratitude to God and disloyalty to humanity. We advise every colored woman to register early and be at the polls on the day of the election between 1 and 2 p.m., and cast your ballot for Harding and Coolidge and Hawkins.

Through this advertisement, the Association gave African American women important logistical information for election day, while appealing to a sense of Christian virtue and the woman's traditional role as caretaker of the home, to further motivate them to vote and support the independent movement. And as emphasized by Hawkins throughout the campaign, the Association echoed the "local" nature of the movement and urged support of the national Republican ticket.¹⁴⁷ These written appeals to African American women in the newspaper were supplemented by visual images. One such image featured three unnamed women and an infant, presumably members of the middle class as indicated by their simple yet refined dress. In the center of the portrait sat an elderly woman with a distinct air of dignity with the infant, clad in a long white gown, sitting on her lap. On the elderly woman's right side stood a middle-aged woman and on her left side, a younger

¹⁴⁶ "Notice to Women," *Afro-American*, October 29, 1920.

¹⁴⁷ "To the Colored Women Voters of the City and State," *Afro-American*, October 8, 1920.

woman, presumably her daughter and granddaughter, respectively. Above the image were printed the words: “Four Generations; Three Will Vote For Hawkins.” Through this simple yet powerful image, the press seemed to capture the historical importance of the election as the moment when African American women would first be able to exercise the right to vote and the moment when an African American could possibly be elected to the United States Senate from Maryland, a feat heretofore unaccomplished. And in maintaining the women’s anonymity, the image suggested they were representative of countless others who would travel to the polls to vote for the first time and cast their ballots in support of W. Ashbie Hawkins.¹⁴⁸

By the first week of November, the work of W. Ashbie Hawkins and the Independent Republican League among African American women and men in Baltimore and across the state came to an end as Marylanders went to the polls to cast their votes. Hawkins issued final words to voters of the state through the pages of the *Afro-American*, which had played such a central role in his campaign: “The Independent Republican League with an imperfect organization, hastily formed, and with meager funds, has made a clean cut fight, and its campaign is going to tell in an awakening of the Negroes of Maryland to the value and importance of their votes.” Acknowledging the movement’s shortcomings in terms of funding as well as length and manner of organization, Hawkins could still celebrate the integrity and perseverance which characterized the movement. Hawkins forecasted that the movement would enable African Americans across the state to realize their political power and that in casting “a respectable vote for him,” even if it

¹⁴⁸ “Four Generations; Three Will Vote For Hawkins,” *Afro-American*, October 16, 1920.

did not result in his election to the United States Senate, African Americans would receive greater political recognition across the state.¹⁴⁹

To the dismay of supporters of the independent movement, once Election Day had passed and all votes had been counted, Hawkins did not emerge victorious, polling 6,538 votes, less than 2 percent of the total number of votes cast statewide in the entire election. Weller emerged as the winner in the senatorial contest with a total of 184,999 votes, representing 48 percent of the total number of votes cast across the state, defeating the Democratic incumbent Senator John Walter Smith who polled 167,200 votes, 43 percent of the votes cast in the election.¹⁵⁰ Weller's victory was part of a national Republican landslide, much to the surprise of Democrats in Maryland and across the country, in which Harding and Coolidge emerged victorious with over 60 percent of the popular vote, and the Republican Party seized control of both houses of Congress. In the election of 1920, Republicans registered appreciable gains in every southern state and with the exception of Kentucky, won every border state, including Maryland, where Harding defeated his Democratic opponent by over 52,000 votes.¹⁵¹

Viewing the results of the election on the surface level, the final tally seems to reveal a complete and utter loss for Hawkins and easily leads to the conclusion that the Independent movement was wholly unsuccessful. However, a deeper analysis of the results and the election's aftermath reveals the futility of the success/failure binary in adequately capturing the significance of Hawkins's campaign. A deeper analysis of

¹⁴⁹ "We Have Disproved Every Charge," *Afro-American*, October 29, 1920.

¹⁵⁰ *Maryland Almanac* 1, 108.

¹⁵¹ "Election Day Dawns, All Eyes On Women," *Baltimore Sun*, November 2, 1920; "National Republican Landslide Gains Momentum," *Baltimore Sun*, November 4, 1920; Sherman, *The Republican Party and Black America*, 142–143.

Weller's victory in Maryland in comparison to that of Harding, the Republican candidate for President, shows that Weller's margin of victory was less than half of Harding's for whereas Harding defeated his Democratic challenger by an excess of 50,000 votes, Weller only defeated his Democratic challenger by 17,799 votes. Across the state, Senator Smith defeated Weller in twelve of the state's twenty-three counties and actually polled 559 votes more than the senatorial contest champion in the counties. However, in the city of Baltimore, Weller clearly and soundly defeated Smith by a margin of 18,358 votes. But this large margin of victory can most likely be explained by the split in the Democratic vote precipitated by the campaign of George D. Iverson, Jr., a member of the Democratic Party who ran as an Independent and as a "wet" candidate, one who did not support the Volstead Act and the Eighteenth Amendment, in opposition to Senator Smith, a "dry" candidate. Iverson polled over 21,000 votes in the election with 88 percent of those votes coming from the city of Baltimore. Thus, it is reasonable to assume that had Iverson not run for the U.S. Senate, the majority of his votes would have gone to the Democratic incumbent, John Walter Smith. This reasonable assumption coupled with the also reasonable assumption that the majority of Hawkins's votes would have gone to the Republican candidate in his absence from the senatorial race, leads one to conclude that it is highly probable that Weller would have lost the election or at least barely won the election, if the Democratic Party had not been split over the issue of Prohibition. This conclusion brings into sharper focus the significance of Hawkins's 6,538 votes in the fall election.¹⁵²

¹⁵² *Maryland Almanac* 1, 108; "Iverson Loses Appeal to Get Name On Ballot," *Baltimore Sun*, April 23, 1920; "Senator Smith Makes Phenomenal Run," *Baltimore Sun*, November 4, 1920; "Senator Elect Weller," *Baltimore Sun*, November 4, 1920; "Senator Smith and Congressman Coady," *Baltimore*

Table 2.3 Election Results By County, U.S. Senate Race for Maryland, 1920

County	William Ashbie Hawkins (Ind.)	Ovington E. Weller (Republican)	John Walter Smith (Democrat)	Frank N.H. Lang (Labor)	William A. Toole (Socialist)	George D. Iverson, Jr. (Ind.)
Alleghany	69	8,550	6,306	191	962	81
Anne Arundel	107	4,666	4,600	49	115	224
Baltimore	346	8,525	9,616	129	195	683
Calvert	26	1,511	1,046	9	22	121
Caroline	45	2,393	2,941	16	45	46
Carroll	56	4,877	4,461	29	28	97
Cecil	43	2,614	3,434	25	24	115
Charles	87	2,400	1,658	20	45	71
Dorchester	80	3,582	4,089	10	28	53
Frederick	70	8,588	7,695	80	91	127
Garrett	7	2,140	955	37	58	23
Harford	135	3,085	2,095	47	42	128
Howard	39	2,230	2,391	32	17	56
Kent	124	2,351	2,745	17	40	139
Montgomery	69	4,993	6,440	35	84	31
Prince George's	94	5,797	4,802	77	82	130
Queen Anne's	38	1,959	3,317	6	48	57
St. Mary's	60	1,802	1,643	18	38	41
Somerset	79	3,103	2,887	8	11	23
Talbot	71	2,898	3,136	8	30	42
Washington	127	6,997	7,146	65	354	94
Wicomico	57	3,590	4,932	38	50	71
Worcester	33	2,702	3,577	21	35	34
Baltimore City	4,676	93,646	75,288	1602	4,115	18,861
Total	6,538	184,999	167,200	2,569	6,559	21,348

Source: Frank Kent, ed., *The Maryland Almanac*, Vol. 1, No. 5 (Baltimore, MD: George W. King Printing Co., 1921), 108.

Sun, November 4, 1920; "Drys Claiming Solid Front In Next Congress," *Baltimore Sun*, November 5, 1920; "George D. Iverson, Jr.," *Baltimore Sun*, October 14, 1948.

Statewide, Hawkins polled fifth in the senate race with almost 4,000 votes more than the Labor Party candidate Frank N. H. Lang and just twenty-one votes behind Socialist candidate William A. Toole. In the counties of the state, Hawkins received small percentages of his overall vote with 4 percent coming from the counties of Western Maryland, 6 percent coming from the counties of Southern Maryland, 8 percent coming from the counties of the Eastern Shore, and 9 percent coming from Northern Maryland, suggesting that the areas outside the city where Hawkins campaigned the hardest were the least responsive, underscoring the local nature of the movement. Though African Americans across Maryland were dissatisfied with their treatment within the Republican Party, the independent movement was deeply rooted in local dissatisfaction among Baltimoreans with the Broening administration.¹⁵³

The overwhelming majority of Hawkins's votes, 72 percent, came from the city of Baltimore, where he polled 4,676 votes, more votes than both Frank N.H. Lang and William A. Toole. Over 40 percent of Hawkins's votes in the city of Baltimore came from the Eleventh, Fourteenth, and Seventeenth Wards in Northwest Baltimore, the hub of the African American community, where he ranked third in number of votes, coming in behind Weller and Smith. Residents of the Fourteenth Ward gave Hawkins his largest number of votes with 1,004, which may have been partially due to the fact that City Councilman Warner T. McGuinn had earlier vowed to work against the Republican Party, though no evidence exists that he actively campaigned for or against either

¹⁵³ *Maryland Almanac* 1, 108; The counties of Western Maryland include Garrett, Alleghany, Washington, and Frederick Counties. The counties of Southern Maryland include Montgomery, Howard, Anne Arundel, Prince George's, Calvert, Charles, and Saint Mary's Counties. The counties of Northern Maryland include Carroll, Baltimore, Harford, and Cecil Counties. The counties of the Eastern Shore include Kent, Queen Anne's, Talbot, Caroline, Dorchester, Wicomico, Worcester, and Somerset.

"Hawkins Got 5,770," *Afro-American*, November 5, 1920. This number is inaccurate because it does not reflect the final tally but only the initial tally in the days immediately after the election.

Table 2.4 Election Results by Ward in Baltimore City, U.S. Senate Race for Maryland, 1920

Ward	Hawkins	Weller	Smith	Lang	Toole	Iverson
1	29	3,269	2,043	64	143	1,242
2	29	1,556	1,092	38	92	643
3	37	928	695	16	208	243
4	167	1,706	979	21	61	185
5	169	1,734	606	19	226	168
6	111	3,498	2,450	52	411	915
7	234	4,585	2,446	79	376	1,383
8	91	5,278	3,884	116	208	1,665
9	58	4,503	4,822	83	89	1,424
10	82	1,743	2,415	29	110	785
11	316	3,171	3,171	20	40	258
12	162	4,953	6,233	77	87	874
13	78	4,691	4,242	96	245	625
14	1,004	4,309	2,525	16	81	288
15	321	6,963	6,796	75	265	1,035
16	223	4,934	5,473	63	120	779
17	623	3,701	702	17	37	159
18	176	2,301	2,163	37	109	510
19	163	3,196	2,657	68	155	656
20	69	4,905	4,211	116	270	1,096
21	90	2,780	1,117	69	92	583
22	98	1,719	909	25	44	186
23	52	2,205	1,306	47	73	447
24	23	2,360	1,692	101	123	533
25	86	1,677	1,100	41	67	207
26	53	4,598	2,404	107	215	1,057
27	128	5,355	5,856	92	145	798
28	4	1,028	1,299	18	23	117
Total	4,676	93,646	75,288	1,602	4,115	18,861

Source: Frank Kent, ed., *The Maryland Almanac*, Vol. 1, No. 5 (Baltimore, MD: George W. King Printing Co., 1921), 108.

Hawkins or Weller. Republicans still won the majority of votes in the 14th ward, registering a final count of 4,309, but Weller's plurality represented a vast decrease from Broening's plurality the previous year. In the Fifth, Sixth, Seventh, and Tenth Wards,

which comprised the heart of East Baltimore's black community and the home of at least one independent movement organization, Hawkins received 13 percent of his total votes in the city. And across Baltimore, when the number of votes for Hawkins in individual wards is examined in relation to the number of African Americans registered to vote in those wards, and assuming that most of those who voted for Hawkins were African American, the independent candidate received 7 to 9 percent of the black vote in four city wards, 10 to 20 percent of the black vote in fifteen city wards, and 21 to 29 percent of the black vote in four city wards. Hawkins polled 41 percent of the black vote in the Thirteenth Ward, 59 percent of the black vote in the First Ward, and 100 percent of the black vote in the Twenty-Sixth Ward, one of the newly annexed areas of the city with a small black population. In Ward Twenty-Four, an area with no registered black voters, Hawkins polled twenty-three votes, revealing that some white Baltimoreans did cast their vote for him; however, remaining cognizant of the history of the independent movement and the racial climate of this period, it is safe to assume that both within Baltimore and across Maryland, the majority of individuals who cast their vote for W. Ashbie Hawkins were African American.¹⁵⁴

When examining the obstacles before the Independent movement and the forces working against Hawkins in his campaign, the number of votes he polled seems particularly impressive. Over the course of a campaign lasting approximately just six weeks, Hawkins managed to raise \$650, a significant amount of money considering it came from the African American community; but this amount dramatically paled in

¹⁵⁴ *Maryland Almanac* 1, 108. On white support, see "State Political Pot Is Boiling," *Afro American*, August 27, 1920. The Fourteenth Ward ranked second behind the Seventeenth Ward in plurality of votes given to Broening in 1919, but in 1920, it ranked ninth, while the 17th Ward still ranked first.

comparison to Weller's "war chest," which exceeded \$9,000, an amount collected over the course of a campaign that extended back into the previous year.¹⁵⁵ With its vast financial resources and the powerful political backing of the entire local and state Republican organization, Weller's campaign and his supporters had the ability to deter African Americans from supporting the independent movement, including the use of "strong arm" or intimidation methods, particularly on the Eastern Shore; and circulating rumors that Hawkins was not running with the race's interests in mind, but rather because he was on the Democratic Party's payroll; and in one instance, having an African American doctor fired from his position within the black public schools for publicly supporting Hawkins. Bribes were also proffered in hopes of securing African American support of Weller's candidacy and even Hawkins was offered \$20,000 to withdraw from the race. But refusing money and a meeting with Will Hays, chairman of the National Republican Committee, Hawkins adamantly proclaimed, "I am in the fight to stay."¹⁵⁶

The most significant impediment to Hawkins's campaign was the unwillingness of the mass of African Americans to turn their backs on the Republican Party. As articulated by J.H. Roades, a resident of the Fourteenth Ward, some blacks felt support of

¹⁵⁵ "Hawkins War Chest Only \$643.17," *Afro-American*, October 29, 1920; "Cost of Being A Candidate," *Afro-American*, October 29, 1920. The *Afro-American* alleged that Weller's campaign spent close to \$28,000, a much larger amount than the \$9,050 reported by the office of the Clerk of the Senate in Washington, D.C. See "Senator Weller Spent \$27,932.87," *Afro-American*, December 10, 1920.

¹⁵⁶ On use of intimidation on the Eastern Shore, see "Big Smith Majority Forecast On Shore," *Baltimore Sun*, October 24, 1920. For charges of Democratic plot, see "A Statement In Behalf of W. Ashbie Hawkins," *Baltimore Sun*, September 21, 1920; "Hawkins Makes Counter Charges," *Afro-American*, October 1, 1920; "Letter to the Editor," *Afro-American*, October 8, 1920; "Meeting at Perkins Square," *Afro-American*, October 8, 1920; "Not Helping Hawkins," *Afro-American*, October 8, 1920; "Kelly's Statement Spread Broadcast," *Afro-American*, October 16, 1920. On firing of doctor, see "Dr. Jackson Kicked Out," *Afro-American*, October 16, 1920; "Jackson Turn Down Resented," *Afro-American*, October 22, 1920. On bribery, see "In the Race to Stay," *Afro-American*, September 17, 1920; "The Bribers," *Afro-American*, September 24, 1920; "Jennie Ross Out For Hawkins," *Afro-American*, September 24, 1920.

the independent movement would prove to be a “great injury” to the Republican Party and feared a Republican backlash against the black community. While others, though disappointed with the actions of the local Party organization, still felt that the “Party of Lincoln” offered the best opportunity for African American political advancement and that Weller should not be “penalized for Broening’s failures.”¹⁵⁷ Thus, Weller benefitted from African American loyalty and from the influence and extensive campaigning of a number of Baltimore’s pastors. Among the black Baltimoreans who were leaders in the state campaign for Weller were the Rev. A.L. Gaines, pastor of Trinity A.M.E. Church, and the Rev. Ernest Lyon, pastor of John Wesley Methodist Episcopal Church and former Minister to Liberia, both of whom were longtime Republican Party stalwarts. Other African American leaders who canvassed the state along with Gaines and Weller, were individuals who had previously spoken out against the Republican Party, including Joseph Evans, who had led the Progressive Party campaign in support of Theodore Roosevelt in 1912, and the Rev. C. Harold Stepteau, pastor of Allen A.M.E. Church, who had been a leader among those contemplating independent action in the summer of 1920.¹⁵⁸ In advocating support of Weller for the U.S. Senate, these African American leaders also attacked the motives and character of W. Ashbie Hawkins through speeches and through a circular of which 5,000 free copies were distributed on a daily basis that portrayed Hawkins as a perennial enemy of the Republican Party. By the end of the campaign, plans were underway to produce a second circular that continued with the

¹⁵⁷ “Letter to the Editor,” *Afro-American*, October 22, 1920; “Weller Meeting at Wilson Bank,” *Afro-American*, September 10, 1920.

¹⁵⁸ “Maryland Committee Named,” *Afro-American*, September 24, 1920; “Tide Turns To Hawkins,” *Afro-American*, October 22, 1920.

“vilification” of Hawkins by highlighting the candidate’s separation from his wife in order to alienate women voters.¹⁵⁹

In addition to the campaigning of African American male leaders, the Republican Party also benefitted from the work of African American women who were extremely active in political organizing just as they were in Hawkins’s campaign. Emma Truxon, a Baltimore clubwoman, was among those who traveled across the state campaigning for Ovington Weller. Within the city, the most extensive political organizing and campaigning among black women occurred in the Seventeenth Ward, the home of City Councilman William Fitzgerald, a loyal Republican and staunch Wellerite in spite of the failure of the Party in relation to African Americans, specifically the failures of Mayor Broening. Women worked within the Seventeenth Ward Republican Club with leaders appointed for each precinct of the ward, but eventually formed their own party organization in the ward.¹⁶⁰ Ultimately, the Seventeenth Ward gave Weller his largest majority in the city with 70 percent of the votes cast in this ward going to the Republican candidate, just as voters in the ward had given Mayor Broening the largest majority of votes in the city the previous year in the spring municipal election.¹⁶¹

Leaders and supporters of the independent movement responded to Hawkins’s defeat in a variety of ways. Many lamented the fact that the African American community did not fully support a member of their own race and as articulated by Bertha

¹⁵⁹ “Fitzgerald Holds Weller Meeting,” *Afro-American*, October 16, 1920; “Weller Leaders Denounced,” *Afro-American*, October 29, 1920; “Exposed!,” *Afro-American*, October 29, 1920; “Plans Last Moment Circulars,” *Afro-American*, October 29, 1920.

¹⁶⁰ “Fitzgerald Holds Weller Meeting,” *Afro-American*, October 16, 1920; “Tide Turns To Hawkins,” *Afro-American*, October 22, 1920; “State Political Pot Is Boiling,” *Afro-American*, August 27, 1920; “Hall Organizes 17th Ward Women Workers,” *Afro-American*, September 24, 1920; “School For Women,” *Afro-American*, September 24, 1920.

¹⁶¹ *Maryland Almanac* 1, 108.

K. Hurst, wife of A.M.E. Bishop John Hurst, the failure of “our people” to “stand more loyally behind Mr. Hawkins.” Jennie Ross, who had campaigned extensively on Hawkins’s behalf and served on the Independent Republican League executive committee, expressed extreme disappointment with the outcome of the senatorial contest, taking the results as a sign that “the colored voters have not yet realized the necessity of political freedom,” relying upon familiar rhetoric from the campaign. But other supporters of the movement, though disappointed with the loss, still expressed satisfaction with the “good showing” made by Hawkins in receiving over 6,000 votes statewide, which, in the words of Dr. Howard E. Young, “fully justified the efforts” of the independent movement and confirmed that it “ought to be continued by intelligent self-respecting Negroes of the State.” In accordance with the words of Young, some even speculated that Hawkins’s campaign had paved the way for a future victory by an African American candidate. Vashti Murphy, whose husband and father-in-law had played a pivotal role in the movement through their publicity of the campaign in the pages of the *Afro-American*, noted the personal and collective “significan[ce]” of Hawkins’s run in the local community where the candidate was able to poll votes “in every ward and nearly every precinct of the city.”¹⁶² Similarly, the Murphy men celebrated the campaign in editorials in the pages of the *Afro-American*, declaring it a “political milestone” and commending those involved for initiating a “grand and glorious fight” which ushered a new and younger generation onto the political landscape. And for Hawkins, the campaign confirmed the presence of thousands of African Americans in the state from differing classes and generations who were willing to repudiate the actions of the Republican Party

¹⁶² “What They Say About the Result,” *Afro-American*, November 5, 1920.

and demand political recognition: “One thing, if no other, which this elections settles is that there are at least 5,000 colored voters in Maryland who are forever free from the dictation of the bosses of the Republican party and I am proud to be one among that number.”¹⁶³

In the days and weeks following the election, leaders and workers in the independent movement did not remain stagnant and immediately began preparations for a statewide convention that would strengthen and extend their movement and began taking steps to place African American candidates in the race for executives in the Fifth and Seventeenth Wards and for seats in the state legislature the following fall.¹⁶⁴ The movement continued to be bolstered by the failure of Baltimore’s Republican mayor to address African American concerns, particularly in the realm of education and in providing African Americans with municipal employment.¹⁶⁵ In April 1921, African Americans from across the state gathered in Baltimore’s Lyceum Hall for the Independent Republican League’s first formal convention, adopting a constitution and electing J. Steward Davis, W. Norman Bishop, and William H. Langley to continue in their previous positions with the League as president, secretary, and treasurer, respectively. Hugh Burkett, formerly a member of the organization’s executive committee, and Mamie White, who had served as president of the Hawkins Independent

¹⁶³ “Distinct Gains Are Apparent,” *Afro-American*, November 5, 1920; “Hawkins Thanks Voters,” *Afro-American*, November 5, 1920.

¹⁶⁴ “Negroes Are Planning Another State Party,” *Baltimore Sun*, November 5, 1920; “Suggests Conference To Put Up Colored Legislative Candidates in 1921,” *Afro-American*, November 12, 1920; “League To Issue State-Wide Call,” *Afro-American*, November 19, 1920; “Independents Get Ready For Big Drive,” *Afro-American*, March 4, 1921.

¹⁶⁵ “Poor Bill,” *Afro-American*, January 14, 1921; “All Ready for Independent Republicans,” *Afro-American*, April 8, 1921.

Republican League in the Fifth Ward, were both elected to serve as vice-presidents. Elected to serve on the executive committee were W. Ashbie Hawkins; representatives from Talbot County and Dorchester County on the Eastern Shore, Charles County in Southern Maryland, and Frederick County in Western Maryland; and individuals representing all of the city of Baltimore as well as individuals solely representing nine of the city's wards, including movement veterans such as Harry Queen, Harry Vodery, and Jennie Ross. The new constitution provided for an eventually expanded executive committee consisting of a vice president for each ward of the city and each county of the state in addition to ten other persons selected without regard to location. At the convention, League members discussed plans to agitate for better schools in the counties, equal pay for black teachers, and equal accommodations for African Americans on trains and steamboats.¹⁶⁶

As the year progressed, further organization among black independents seemed to come to a halt; however, the spirit and influence of the independent movement was clearly felt in the fall election. In spite of previous plans, no black independent candidates ran for seats in the state legislature or any other contested positions within the city government; however, African Americans, who had now registered their largest number of voters in the city's history, made abundantly clear their dissatisfaction with the Republican Party, through either staying at home or voting for Democratic candidates. Levi Thompson, Republican candidate for Clerk of the Criminal Court in Baltimore, and Andrew Henderson, the Republican candidate for Clerk of the Circuit Court of Baltimore,

¹⁶⁶ "Ints Offer Olive Branch," *Afro-American*, March 18, 1921; "Politicians Coming to Convention," *Afro-American*, March 25, 1921; "All Ready for Independent Republicans," *Afro-American*, April 8, 1921; "Independent Republicans In Annual Session," *Afro-American*, April 15, 1921.

both received notably fewer votes in wards where a substantial number of black voters resided and lost their bids in the election. In the city's Fifth Ward, a ward where African Americans almost equaled whites and where Republicans maintained a majority in voter registration, the Democratic candidates for the aforementioned offices won substantial majorities.¹⁶⁷ Statewide Democrats swept the election winning majorities in both houses of the state legislature with twenty-one Democrats serving as State Senators out of a total of twenty-seven and seventy Democrats serving as Delegates in the 106 member House of Delegates in the next Legislature. In Baltimore, Democrats won all contested city offices with pluralities ranging from 12,000 to 19,000 votes.¹⁶⁸ Shocked at the results of the election, local Republicans began to consider addressing the grievances of the African American community to ensure the loyalty of black voters. Following the election, Maryland's Republican Senators Joseph France and the newly elected Ovington Weller sent a letter to President Harding describing the "acute situation" in the state and noting that its "gravity was manifested in the candidacy of a colored Republican for United States Senator last year and an after effect was noted in the 1921 election just passed," reflecting the opinion of state party leaders who linked the recent Republican losses to the independent movement of the previous year. France and Weller urged the President to appoint African American men in Maryland to federal offices, emphasizing that "[t]he cheerful and loyal adherence of the colored element has been and is essential to its

¹⁶⁷ "37,475 Voters Registered In Baltimore," *Afro-American*, October 21, 1921; "Candidates To Be Voted On At Election In Baltimore Tomorrow," *Baltimore Sun*, November 7, 1921; "Republicans Stunned By Election Results," *Afro-American*, November 18, 1921; "Democrats Sweep City and State," *Baltimore Sun*, November 9, 1921; "Votes By Ward on All City-Wide Candidates," *Baltimore Sun*, November 9, 1921; "Registration in the City By Wards," *Baltimore Sun*, October 16, 1921.

¹⁶⁸ "Democrats Sweep City and State," *Baltimore Sun*, November 9, 1921; "The Result in Maryland," *Baltimore Sun*, November 10, 1921.

maintenance and progress.” More concrete attempts to appease the black community in Baltimore were taken in early 1922 when Galen L. Tait, former Republican State Party chairman and Collector of Internal Revenue, appointed four African American men to work in the Internal Revenue division.¹⁶⁹

In spite of the actions of some leaders in the state Republican Party to “satisfy” African American voters, their actions proved “unsatisfactory” for many in the black community and independents continued to contemplate running their own candidates and supporting Democratic candidates throughout the remainder of 1922.¹⁷⁰ But the African American community more clearly registered its discontent with the Republican Party in the spring municipal election the following year when Mayor William F. Broening sought re-election running against former Democratic mayor William Preston, running as an independent, and Howard Jackson, the Democratic Party candidate.¹⁷¹ For black Baltimoreans, Broening’s tenure in office was an extreme disappointment particularly in light of their widespread support of his candidacy in 1919. He had failed to address a number of grievances of the black community including equalizing teacher salaries and improving black public schools, and the previous year, Broening had ignored African American protests and permitted the Ku Klux Klan to parade through the city.¹⁷² Many

¹⁶⁹ “The Republican Letter,” *Afro-American*, December 23, 1921; “Tait Appointments Cause Much Talk,” *Afro-American*, January 6, 1922.

¹⁷⁰ “Colored Independent Voters Here Look To Democrats,” *Afro-American*, April 28, 1922; “Senator France Shows His Power,” *Afro-American*, June 16, 1922; “Colored Vote Will Divide In Senate Race,” *Afro-American*, July 21, 1922; “Colored Voters Standing Pat,” *Afro-American*, July 28, 1922; “Voters Lining Up For France and Garrett,” *Afro-American*, August 4, 1922.

¹⁷¹ “Jackson Enters Mayoralty Fight,” *Baltimore Sun*, January 6, 1923; “Preston Statement of Candidacy,” *Baltimore Sun*, February 6, 1923; “Preston Seeks Mayoralty as Independent,” *Baltimore Sun*, February 6, 1923.

¹⁷² “Negro Democrats Meet,” *Baltimore Sun*, April 24, 1923; “Ku Klux Klansmen Parade City Streets Garbed in Full Regalia,” *Baltimore Sun*, October 29, 1922.

who had been involved in the independent movement adamantly refused to support a second term for Broening. Citing the mayor's failure to attend to the needs of his African American constituents, J. Steward Davis declared "to return Broening to the City Hall is tantamount to sending Cole Blease and Vardaman to the United States Senate. I would prefer to see the grand Cyclops of the Ku Klux Klan in the White House than see the impossible Broening in the City Hall." In proclaiming Broening worse than two of the country's most vehemently racist politicians and to an organization dedicated to the subordination of African Americans, Davis emphasized the insufferability of a second term for Broening and the need for African Americans to unite in favor of a candidate who would advance an agenda amenable to black civil rights.¹⁷³

Disappointed in Broening's tenure as mayor and distrustful of Preston, the independent candidate for mayor who had supported residential segregation during his previous terms in office, significant numbers of African Americans now contemplated casting their votes for the Democratic Party's candidate. Born in Baltimore County, Jackson had entered the city political scene in 1907 when he was elected to serve on the city council. He served in this position until 1909 when he was elected Registrar of Wills.¹⁷⁴ During the course of his campaign, Jackson directly addressed African American voters, promising them a "square deal," which encompassed allowing all

¹⁷³ "Three Candidates Now Up For Mayor," *Afro-American*, February 16, 1923. Cole L. Blease served as Governor of South Carolina (1911–1915) and U.S. Senator from South Carolina (1925–1931). James K. Vardaman served as Governor of Mississippi (1904–1908) and U.S. Senator from Mississippi (1913–1919). Both men were white supremacists and infamous for their racist rhetoric advocating lynching and vowing to not support African American education. See Bryant Simon, "The Appeal of Cole Blease of South Carolina: Race, Class, and Sex in the New South," *Journal of Southern History* 62:1 (1996); William F. Holmes, *The White Chief: James Kimble Vardaman* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1970).

¹⁷⁴ Jackson, Howard W. "The Mayor of Baltimore," in *The Government of a Great American City*, comp. Frederick Philip Stieff (Baltimore, MD: H.G. Roebuck & Son, 1953), 48–58.

qualified Baltimoreans to obtain civil service employment regardless of race and providing improved and adequate educational facilities for African American children.¹⁷⁵ Motivated by Jackson's campaign promises, a desire to rebuke the local Republican organization, and the continued momentum of the 1920 Independent movement, almost 100 African Americans gathered in February 1923 to establish the City-Wide Jackson Club, a political organization dedicated to securing the election of the Democratic candidate to the office of mayor. The new organization was established under the leadership of black banker and real estate broker Truly Hatchett who had served on the executive committee of the Independent Republican League during Hawkins's 1920 campaign for the United States Senate. Serving as the organization's president was J. Howard Payne, a young African American lawyer trained at Howard University who had also been involved in the Independent movement in 1920, traveling outside of Baltimore to campaign on behalf of Hawkins. Subsidiary organizations in support of Jackson were established in the Fourteenth and Seventeenth Wards.¹⁷⁶ Relying upon the familiar mediums of mass meetings and the press, the City-Wide Jackson Club broadcast its message of supporting the Democratic Party and emphasized the need for a "split vote" within the African American community. Henry F. Arnold, a member of the club and advertising editor for the *Afro-American* clearly articulated this message in a letter printed in the *Baltimore Sun*: "The Democratic Party will never extend our people any

¹⁷⁵ "Howard W. Jackson Promises Colored Voters Square Deal," *Afro-American*, March 2, 1923.

¹⁷⁶ "City-Wide Jackson Club is Formed," *Afro-American*, March 23, 1923; "Split In Negro Vote Seen By Politicians," *Baltimore Sun*, April 26, 1923; "Crowded Meeting Cheered Democrats," *Afro-American*, April 27, 1923; "Tells Audience He Has Voted For Every Republican Candidate" *Afro-American*, October 22, 1920; "Truly Hatchett," *Afro-American*, May 2, 1920; Robert W. Coleman, *The First Colored Professional, Clerical, Skilled and Business Directory of Baltimore City*, 7th Edition (Baltimore, MD: Published by author, 1919 – 1920), 95.

consideration so long as we lift our heels against it. The sequence is we must vote for the man and not the party, if we expect to get consideration and become a potent factor in America.” For the black supporters of Howard Jackson’s candidacy, this political moment offered African Americans the opportunity to sever their traditional ties to the Republican Party in order to awaken both Republicans and Democrats to the political significance of black votes and to urge members of both parties to acquiesce to black demands.¹⁷⁷

With the assistance of African American voters, the Democratic Party delivered a stinging defeat to William F. Broening who polled nearly 25,000 votes behind the victorious Howard W. Jackson and only roughly 10,000 votes ahead of former mayor William Preston. Obtaining only 31 percent of the votes cast in the election, Broening lost over 10,000 votes from the amount he received in 1919, when he polled 54 percent of the ballots in that mayoral race. An analysis of the results in a number of the wards with large black populations reveals that substantial numbers of African Americans either refrained from voting or cast their votes for Jackson. In the Fourth Ward, an area encompassing the hotel district of downtown Baltimore and where African Americans comprised over one-third of the population, Jackson won the majority of votes, obtaining 56 percent of votes in the ward compared to only 29 percent for Broening. More significantly, Jackson obtained the majority of votes in the Fifth Ward where African Americans nearly equaled whites, receiving nearly half of the votes cast in that ward with

¹⁷⁷ “Negro Speakers Urge Voters to Back Jackson,” *Baltimore Sun*, April 18, 1923; “A Representative of the Colored People Urges Voters of His Race,” *Baltimore Sun*, April 25, 1923; “Negroes Urge Split Vote,” *Baltimore Sun*, April 28, 1923; “The Negro Vote,” *Baltimore Sun*, April 29, 1923; “Says Colored Voters Are No Longer To Be Deceived By The Old Political Bunk,” *Baltimore Sun*, May 6, 1923; “Death Punctuates Career of Veteran Newspaper Man,” *Afro-American*, November 3, 1934.

Broening polling only 43 percent. The majority black Fourteenth and Seventeenth Wards gave Broening his largest majorities as they had done during his first mayoral election, but his margin of victory decreased significantly in both wards, from 65 percent in 1919 to 48 percent in 1923 in the Fourteenth Ward and from 76 percent to 67 percent in the Seventeenth Ward. Broening also received very minimal increases in the number of votes in these wards, especially in the Fourteenth Ward where he barely increased his number of votes by one hundred, a poor showing considering that the electorate in 1923 included women as it had not in 1919. Overall, in addition to those who simply stayed home and refused to vote in the election, an estimated 7,000 to 10,000 African Americans cast their ballots for the Democratic victor.¹⁷⁸

Elated and optimistic in the wake of the Democratic victory, African American independents made plans to permanently split from the Republican Party and form Democratic organizations that would mobilize greater numbers within the African American community to support the Democratic Party in the fall election. Building upon the City-Wide Jackson Club and the Seventeenth Ward Democratic Club, a city-wide African American Democratic organization was established at the home of Truly Hatchett within days of the election and plans were formulated to establish branches of

¹⁷⁸ “Jackson Wins By 24,205,” *Baltimore Sun*, May 9, 1923; “Democrats Are Cheered Over Victory in City,” *Baltimore Sun*, May 10, 1923; “Thousands of Colored Voters Help to Elect Howard W. Jackson, Democrat Mayor of Baltimore,” *Afro-American*, May 11, 1923; “Election Brought New Mayor Third Victory,” *Afro-American*, May 11, 1923. The election also resulted in the loss of black representation on the city council as both McGuinn and Fitzgerald narrowly lost their bids for re-election as Republicans representing the Fourth District following the reorganization of the city council earlier in the year in a plan pushed by Democrats. The new plan divided the city into 6 districts with 3 individuals from each district to serve on the now one branch city council. For reorganization, see “10,000 Colored Voters in New 4th Councilmanic District,” *Afro-American*, January 12, 1923. On McGuinn and Fitzgerald’s loss in fall election, see “Councilmanic Vote- Fourth District,” *Afro-American*, May 11, 1923.

the organization in all city wards with sizeable black populations.¹⁷⁹ Through the summer and into the fall under the leadership of men such as Truly Hatchett and J. Steward Davis, African Americans were brought into the Democratic fold and urged to support the fall re-election of Albert C. Ritchie, Maryland's Democratic governor. A native Virginian, Ritchie had obtained his undergraduate education from Johns Hopkins University and received his law degree from the University of Maryland Law School, graduating in 1898. From 1903–1910, Ritchie served as Assistant City Solicitor for the City of Baltimore and prior to his election as governor, he had served as Maryland's Attorney General from 1915–1919. As emphasized by African Americans like Hatchett and Davis who supported Ritchie's re-election, the Governor had addressed a number of African American needs during his tenure in office: increased the number of black high schools in Maryland from three to nine, raised salaries of black teachers in rural areas, required every county to provide an eight month school year for children of all races, refused to allow the Ku Klux Klan to hold public meetings in state-owned buildings, dismissed the offensive state school superintendent M. Bates Stephens, constructed a \$250,000 hospital for black tuberculosis patients, and appointed African Americans to serve as notary publics.¹⁸⁰ In November, Governor Ritchie won his bid for re-election by over 40,000 votes and becoming the first governor in the state's history to be elected to a second term. The election was labeled as the largest "defection" of African American voters from the

¹⁷⁹ "Democrats Will Form City-Wide Club," *Afro-American*, May 11, 1923; "Democrats Plan A State Organization," *Afro-American*, May 18, 1923; "Independents Plan Permanent Split From Republicans," *Afro-American*, June 15, 1923.

¹⁸⁰ "Democrats Plan 17th Ward Club," *Afro-American*, July 27, 1923; "Democrats Organizing," *Afro-American*, September 21, 1923; "17th Ward Democrats Organize Club," *Afro-American*, September 28, 1923; "To the Colored Voters of Maryland," *Afro-American*, October 26, 1923; Frank F. White, Jr., *The Governors of Maryland, 1777–1970* (Annapolis: The Hall of Records Commission, 1970), 257–263; "Why the Afro Is For Ritchie," *Afro-American*, November 2, 1923.

Republican Party across the state. And in Baltimore, thousands of African Americans cast their votes for the governor, garnering Ritchie more votes in black wards than Jackson had received earlier in the year and allowing Ritchie to obtain the majority of the vote in the city's Fourteenth Ward. In the wake of the election, J. Steward Davis expressed his satisfaction with the split of the African American vote evident in the election. "The division of the colored vote is the best thing that ever happened," he declared. "There is not any question about the colored people voting for the man and not the party."¹⁸¹

The year 1923 proved to be the height of African American support of the Democratic Party in Baltimore during the 1920s; however there were independents who still advocated support of Democratic candidates through the remainder of the decade.¹⁸² But not until the following decade would the mass African Americans in Baltimore abandon their membership in the Republican Party and register as Democrats. But as revealed by this analysis of the 1920 senatorial campaign of W. Ashbie Hawkins for the United States Senate and its political genealogy extending back to the radical leaders of the 1880s and to its political heirs manifested in the 1923 elections, black Baltimoreans, though fixed in their allegiance to the Republican Party on the national level, were not necessarily fixed to this same allegiance on the local level. In their struggle for civil rights, thousands of African Americans in Baltimore viewed the franchise as a tool of negotiation. For them, municipal and state elections afforded the opportunity to force political action through either electing individuals into office, regardless of political

¹⁸¹ "Ritchie Wins By Over 40,000 Plurality," *Afro-American*, November 9, 1923; "What They Think of the Election," *Afro-American*, November 16, 1923.

¹⁸² For support of Democratic candidate in election for U.S. Senate in 1926, see "Prominent Ministers Endorse the Hon. John Phillip Hill," *Afro-American*, September 4, 1926; For support of Democratic candidate for mayor in 1927, see "They Endorse Curran," *Afro-American*, April 30, 1927; "Endorsement of Hon. William Curran," *Afro-American*, April 30, 1927.

affiliation, who would best serve the interests of the black community, or damaging those political parties and individuals who reneged on their promises to provide a “square deal” for all citizens regardless of race.

Chapter Three

The Campaign for Equality in Education

In 1929, African Americans in Baltimore celebrated the fortieth anniversary of the admission of black teachers into the city's public school system. Following a struggle waged by black Baltimoreans that had lasted for two decades, Colored School Number Nine opened in 1889 in Northwest Baltimore on the corner of Carrollton and Riggs Avenues as the first black school in the city to have a faculty entirely composed of African Americans.¹ To commemorate this milestone in the black community, teachers and students from every black school in the city contributed various types of classroom work for a grand display in the boys' gymnasium of the recently constructed Frederick Douglass Senior-Junior High School. Over the course of the first week of June, between twenty-five and thirty thousand people visited the exhibit, witnessing firsthand the "history and progress of race public school education." The exhibit included the schoolwork of African American students from all grade levels ranging from elementary school to those enrolled in the normal school, as well as the work of students enrolled in classes for those with mental and physical disabilities. As they walked through the gymnasium, visitors looked upon "handwork," charts, graphs, shop work, maps, art, home economics displays, and academic work, supplemented in the evenings by live vocational exhibits in the adjoining vocational school buildings.² At the end of the week,

¹ "First Colored Faculty at School No. 9, Now No. 111," *Afro-American*, March 9, 1929.

² *One Hundredth Annual Report of the Board of School Commissioners to the Mayor and City Council of Baltimore for the Scholastic Year Ending August 31, 1929 and Fiscal Year Ending December 31, 1929* (Baltimore, MD: No publisher indicated, 1930), 100; "Schools Plan 40th Anniversary," *Afro-*

with the close of the exhibit, the fortieth anniversary celebration culminated with a formal program under the auspices of the School Master's Club, a professional organization for African American male educators, held in the Douglass High School auditorium with music provided by the school orchestra and the Madison Street Presbyterian Church choir, and a keynote address from Dr. David Ward, the white superintendent of schools in Wilmington, Delaware.³

In the years since the admission of African Americans to the city's teaching force, the numbers of African American students and teachers had grown tremendously and the state of African American education had been greatly improved. In 1889, there were 6,749 black students enrolled in twenty Baltimore City schools, primarily on the grammar and elementary levels as no junior high schools existed in the city at this time and the African American high school had only been established a few years earlier. And at this time, only School Number Nine in Northwest Baltimore, with a staff of twelve teachers and 651 pupils, had a completely African American faculty. Forty years later, as a result of the explosive growth of Baltimore's black population, the number of African American students in the city school system had more than tripled to 20,280 students, attending thirty-five schools, including elementary schools, junior high schools, one high school, a normal school, two vocational schools, and a parental school. And every one of these schools was completely staffed by African Americans in a city that now boasted

American, June 1, 1929; "651 Pupils to 20,280 is 40 Year Increase," *Afro-American*, June 8, 1929; "Colored Teachers 40th Anniversary and Exhibit," *Afro-American*, June 15, 1929.

³ "Teachers Celebrate 40th Birthday," *Afro-American*, May 25, 1929; "Dr. Ward Addresses Schoolmasters Club," *Afro-American*, June 15, 1929.

The School Master's Club was established in 1913. Its mission was "to unite the male teachers and officials of the schools of Baltimore into closer sympathy, to encourage professional growth among them, and to study the social and economic phases of education as they affect the community." See "Labor Leader at Schoolmasters Club," *Afro-American*, January 16, 1915.

over 600 black public school teachers. These schools fell under the control of African American principals, vice-principals, assistant supervisors, and at the top of this hierarchy, an African American serving in the position of Supervisor of Colored Schools and later Director of Colored Schools, a post created in 1922.⁴

Table 3.1 Number of African American Schools, Students, & Teachers, 1910 – 1930

School Year	Number of African American Schools	Number of African American Students	Total Number of Students	Number of African American Teachers
1910 – 1911*	16	12,240	75,366	201
1911 – 1912	Information not available	Information not available	72,105	Information not available
1912 – 1913	17	11,554	73,820	258
1913 – 1914	17	12,088	85,555	268
1914 – 1915	17	12,170	79,625	278
1915 – 1916	18	12,497	81,169	286
1916 – 1917	17	12,064	79,599	284
1917 – 1918	16	12,626	81,631	290
1918 – 1919**	24	13,376	94,835	317
1919 – 1920	25	14,356	96,573	339
1920 – 1921	26	15,521	100,361	368
1921 – 1922	28	16,197	103,492	396
1922 – 1923	28	17,526	106,531	418
1923 – 1924	30	18,266	105,372	443
1924 – 1925	31	19,325	109,109	468
1925 – 1926	35	19,820	110,315	Information not available
1927 – 1928	35	21,822	114,510	Information not available
1928 – 1929	35	22,392	115,265	605
1929 – 1930	37	23,466	117,472	650

*Figures for this year cover the calendar year of 1910 and not the school year.

**Figures for this school year include African American schools brought into the city system with the annexation of 1918.

Source: *Directory of Public Schools*

⁴ William Paul, “The Shadow of Equality: The Negro in Baltimore, 1864 – 1911” (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin), 247; “651 Pupils to 20,280 is 40 Year Increase,” *Afro-American*, June 8, 1929; *One Hundredth Annual Report of the Board of School Commissioners*, 100.

But these advancements in African American education did not come easily and were not without constant struggle on the part of various individuals and organizations within the black community. As noted by historian Bettye Collier Thomas, following the establishment of African American schools as part of the city school system after the Civil War, the main avenues of struggle for African Americans in the realm of education through the first decade of the twentieth century were acquiring schools, improving educational facilities, hiring African American teachers, and providing industrial education.⁵ From 1910 – 1930, black Baltimoreans continued along these same lines of struggle, abandoning the hiring of African American teachers as a primary issue having already achieved this goal, but expanding their areas of educational concerns to include fighting for African American representation on the school board and within the school administration, and expanding opportunities for professional development for black teachers. With this agenda during the 1910s, Baltimore’s black community met with sporadic and minimal success in securing gains in education as the state of education for all Baltimoreans, regardless of race, suffered.

However, the 1920s proved to be a critical turning point for African American education as a number of critical developments converged, bringing about substantial educational gains for the African American community. In 1921, the Baltimore City school board contracted a team of educational experts under the leadership of education reformer George D. Strayer to conduct a scientific survey of the Baltimore City Public Schools. The resulting massive three volume report, in documenting the multitude of deficiencies within the city’s school system and offering recommendations for

⁵ Bettye Collier Thomas, “The Baltimore Black Community, 1865 – 1910” (Ph.D. diss., George Washington University, 1974), 348.

improvement, marked the Baltimore school system's most extensive foray into Progressive era educational reform. For African American educational activists, the report's condemnation of the state of African American schools represented outside confirmation of issues and changes they had been advocating for decades and it quickly became the foundation for continued activism pressing for educational reform. The report and the climate of serious reform that it created was especially important for the Federation of Parent-Teacher Clubs, an organization established in 1923 which brought together parent-teacher organizations spread out across the city in African American schools to more effectively campaign for improvements in black education. One year earlier, at the urging of the black community and based on recommendations of the Strayer survey, the School Board created the position of Supervisor of Colored Schools, later transformed into the Director of Colored Schools, a position with expanded power and influence. Throughout the 1920s, the Federation and the Director of Colored Schools stood at the helm of African American educational activism and reform, using the Strayer survey as a foundation upon which to effectively campaign for advancements in the city's segregated educational system.⁶

⁶ Angela D. Johnson, "The Strayer Survey and the Colored Schools of Baltimore City, 1923 – 1943," (M.A. thesis, Morgan State University, May 2012). In her thesis, Angela Johnson argues that the Strayer survey's recommendations served as the foundation for "monumental changes" to African American education in Baltimore from 1923 – 1943. In making this argument, she largely focuses on the mere existence of the survey and its recommendations and largely ignores African American activism connected to the survey. Her work acknowledges the role of the Supervisor of Colored Schools (later Director of Colored Schools), though at times erroneously, in making these changes but does not make any mention of the Federation of Parent-Teacher Clubs or any other organizations or individuals in the African American community. This chapter argues that the Strayer survey was an important foundation for reform in the 1920s, but the report's recommendations required the agitation and activism of a range of black Baltimoreans in order to ensure that these changes were actually realized and did not simply remain on paper.

Segregated schools for African Americans as part of Baltimore's system of public education began in 1867 when the city incorporated schools already in operation for African American children under the auspices of the Baltimore Association for the Moral and Educational Improvement of the Colored People into its system. White Baltimoreans established this organization in 1864 with a commitment to provide public education to African Americans in the city and across the state of Maryland. With the takeover by the Baltimore school board, the Association's twenty-two schools for the black community were consolidated into fifteen schools and provided with desks, chairs, and other school supplies.⁷ With the city assuming control of African American schools, educational opportunities for the black community were greatly expanded and from 1867 to 1900, the black student population grew from 901 to 9,383 students across the city as the population of the city expanded as well. Concurrently, various leaders and organizations in Baltimore's black community focused on the state of black public education and continuously pushed the city government for changes to improve black schools.

At the forefront of the struggle to improve the state of public education for African Americans was the Brotherhood of Liberty, a civil rights organization established in June 1885 by a group of African American ministers under the leadership of the Rev. Harvey Johnson, pastor of Baltimore's Union Baptist Church. Through the 1880s and the 1890s, the Brotherhood of Liberty and its subsidiary organization, the Maryland

⁷ Collier Thomas, "The Baltimore Black Community," 298–309, 325 – 326; Paul, "The Shadow of Equality," 108–109. For a discussion of African American education prior to the Civil War, see Bettye Gardner, "Ante-bellum Black Education in Baltimore," *Maryland Historical Magazine* 71:3 (Fall 1976): 360–366; Brian Courtney Morrison, "Selected African American Educational Efforts in Baltimore, Maryland During the Nineteenth Century," (Ph.D. diss., Morgan State University, 2008), 28–124. For a discussion of the founding and activities of the Baltimore Association for the Moral and Educational Improvement of the Colored People, see Richard Paul Fuke, *Imperfect Equality: African Americans and the Confines of White Racial Attitudes in Post-Emancipation Maryland* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1999), 88–106.

Educational Union, worked alongside a number of other African American organizations to agitate for educational reform, including the Colored Advisory Committee, the Maryland Protective League, and the Central Colored Prohibition Club. Together, these organizations held meetings to raise funds, and drafted and sent petitions for improvements to the city council and school board.⁸ The most important gain for the African American community in the realm of education prior to 1900 that was effected under the leadership of the Brotherhood of Liberty was the hiring of African American teachers. When the School Board ignored requests from the African American community to establish a new school in Northwest Baltimore, which would eventually become the center of the city's black community, the Brotherhood, working with its ally organizations, formulated a plan to convert a black church in that section of the city into a school and use its enrollment figures to prove the need for a new school for black children and one staffed exclusively by black teachers. As a result of this plan, which proved successful, the School Board purchased a lot at Carrollton and Riggs Avenues where in 1889, Colored School Number Nine opened its doors as the first school in the city to employ an all African American faculty.⁹ In its first year, the school enrolled 651 pupils and it was staffed by twelve African American teachers who were primarily either recent graduates of the Colored High School or veteran teachers of Baltimore County

⁸ Collier-Thomas, "The Baltimore Black Community," 320–323. For more detail on the Brother of Liberty, see Chapter 1.

⁹ Collier Thomas, "The Baltimore Black Community," 324–325; Paul, "The Shadow of Equality," 234–239. When the city assumed control of black schools operated by the Baltimore Association for the Moral and Educational Improvement of the Colored People in 1867, both black and white teachers staffed these schools, though the latter group predominated in the teaching force. However, by the following year, all African American teachers were dismissed from the Baltimore City school system.

schools that had been brought under control of the city with its 1888 annexation of land from that area.¹⁰

In addition to the hiring of African American teachers, other educational gains for the black community during the last three decades of the nineteenth century included the expansion of black schools from solely primary schools to include grammar schools and night schools, and the establishment of the Colored High School in 1883 and the Colored Polytechnic Institute (Colored Manual Training School) in 1892.¹¹ However, despite these gains, the state of black public school education still remained dismal as schools suffered from overcrowding, inadequate equipment or lack thereof, poor ventilation, serious safety concerns including a range of fire hazards, and severely unsanitary conditions. In 1899, city officials labeled the primary school for African Americans located on Biddle Street near Pennsylvania Avenue in Northwest Baltimore the most

¹⁰ The original faculty of Colored School Number Nine was composed of George Biddle, head of the boys' department; Garrison D. Trusty; Roberta B. Sheridan; Ellen L. Anderson; Mary E. Taylor (later Mrs. Mary E. Rodman); Mary J. Camper; Fannie L. Barbour, head of the girls' department; Nannie B. Grooms; Gertrude C. Deader; Violet B. Thompson; Fannie D. McCabe; and Mamie Neale. Taylor, Deaver, Thompson, McCabe, and Neale were all June 1889 graduates of the Colored High School. Biddle, Trusty, Sheridan, Barbour, and Grooms had all served as teachers in areas of Baltimore County that were annexed by the city in 1888. Thus, these African Americans were already employed by the city before the opening of Colored School Number Nine. And of this latter group, Roberta Sheridan holds the distinction of being the first African American to be appointed a teacher by the city when she was assigned to serve in a black school in Waverly, a newly annexed section of the city. But it would not be until the fall of 1889 that an entire school would be staffed by African American teachers within the old boundaries of Baltimore and not newly annexed areas, which had already had black schools with black teachers. Thus, the African American community celebrated this date as the beginning of the city hiring African American teachers. "Baltimore County Schools," *Baltimore Sun*, August 30, 1883; "Colored High School," *Baltimore Sun*, June 29, 1889; "The Public Schools Are Open Again," *Baltimore Sun*, September 3, 1889; "Schools Have Been Provided for Colored Children in Baltimore For Many Generations," *Afro-American*, December 5, 1914; "First Colored Faculty at School No. 9, Now No. 111," *Afro-American*, March 9, 1929; Joseph L. Arnold, "Suburban Growth and Municipal Annexation in Baltimore, 1745–1918," *Maryland Historical Magazine* 73 (June 1978), 109–128; Morrison, 187–197.

¹¹ Collier-Thomas, "The Baltimore Black Community," 315, 326, 328–329, 338–340; Paul, "The Shadow of Equality," 115–116, 230, 233, 319–325. The Colored High School was the first high school for African Americans in the state of Maryland until the founding of Stanton High School in Annapolis in Anne Arundel County in the late 1910s. See "700 Pupils Now In State High School," *Afro-American*, June 23, 1922.

“unfit” school in the city. Unsanitary conditions at this school were exacerbated by the presence of windows that afforded poor ventilation, overflowing toilets located on the school grounds and the adjacent property, and manure left to dry in the rear of the school building by city authorities.¹² White schools were plagued by many of the same deplorable issues as the city maintained a random and ineffective school construction program on a minimal budget; and with each passing decade through the end of the nineteenth century, school conditions worsened.¹³ But in comparing the state of education between the races, schools for black children were much worse than those for their white counterparts due to racial prejudice, the control of the city government by the Democratic machine, and the lack of African American representation in positions of power on the school board and city council.¹⁴

With substantial changes in the governance of the Baltimore City school system at the turn of the twentieth century, the African American community realized a number of improvements for black schools. Since the early 1880s, a reform movement had been gaining momentum in Baltimore and by 1895, the movement succeeded in placing a Republican reform government in power, displacing the Democratic machine that had

¹² Collier-Thomas, “The Baltimore Black Community,” 324–325, 328–330.

¹³ Paul, “The Shadow of Equality,” 118–119; 242–243.

¹⁴ The Democratic Party machine led by Raisin and Gorman controlled politics for most of the period from 1871–1906. See Joseph L. Arnold, “The Last of the Good Old Days, 1920 – 1950,” *Maryland Historical Magazine* 71 (Fall 1976), 444. During the period prior to 1898, Baltimore City Schools were largely under the control of the city council as the school board could only make recommendations. The city council was responsible for appointments to the school board with members of the First Branch generally selecting the individual to serve on the board representing their ward. Prior to the election of Harry S. Cummings in 1890, no African American served on the city council. Following Cummings’ election, only one African American was elected to serve on the board, but only for a brief period. See Andrea R. Andrews, “The Baltimore School Building Program, 1870 to 1900: A Study of Urban Reform,” *Maryland Historical Magazine* 70:3 (Fall 1975), 263–264.

dominated city politics and government since the Civil War. Under the new Republican administration, a new city charter was approved in 1898, which instituted tremendous changes in the structure and function of the school board. Prior to 1898, the school board consisted of one individual representing each city ward, a man generally appointed by the First Branch councilman for that ward and often a man who had played an important role in that councilman's election campaign. As a body, the school board possessed limited power as it only made recommendations to the city council, which possessed complete control over the city budget and had the power to make appropriations for school equipment, books, salaries, and the construction of school buildings. In addition to appropriating funds for school construction, the city council also made the final decision on the number, size, location, and amount of money to be spent for buildings. Thus, it was the responsibility of school board members to bring the needs of the residents of their wards to the attention of the city council. But often, members of the school board viewed their position as a means of furthering their political career and a steppingstone to election to the city council rather than an avenue for making serious improvements to the city school system.

The new city charter of 1898 eliminated the ward-based School Board, replacing it with a nine-member body appointed by the mayor to serve for six-year terms and with appointments staggered so that one-third of the membership of the school board retired every two years. The new school board was no longer focused on administrative details and now more concerned with policymaking for the city school system. Simultaneously, the power of the city council was drastically reduced for this legislative body no longer had the authority to decide on the number, location, size and cost of individual schools.

Instead, the superintendent and school board along with the building superintendent made recommendations on new buildings and repairs to the Board of Estimates, a new governing body consisting of the Mayor, City Solicitor, Comptroller, President of the Second Branch of the City Council, and the City Engineer, a mixture of elected officials and professional appointees. Under the new charter, reformers hoped to lessen the power of political machines and place individuals on the school board and Board of Estimates who were removed from ward-based politics and more attune to citywide concerns.¹⁵

The educational changes wrought by the City Charter of 1898 paved the way for Progressive reforms under the leadership of James H. Van Sickle who arrived in Baltimore in the summer of 1900 to assume the position of superintendent of city schools. Van Sickle came to Baltimore from Denver where he had served as a superintendent and he boasted an impressive educational record having served as a charter member of the Colorado Educational Council, president of the Colorado State Teachers' Association, vice-president of the National Council of Education, and a regular contributor to various locally and nationally circulated educational journals.¹⁶ From the beginning of his tenure, Van Sickle managed the schools of Baltimore guided by Progressive principles, which emphasized increasing training opportunities for children, introducing new and modern administrative techniques, and overall providing an education centered on the student. For Progressive reformers in the realm of education like Van Sickle, public education to date was inadequate and inefficient and they were

¹⁵ Andrews, 263 – 274. Andrews argues that though the new structure of the school board may have eliminated some problems, it also created new problems. Specifically, it virtually closed the line of communication between members of the school board and parents in the city wards as the ward-based board members were replaced by remote officials with fewer or no ties to individual wards.

¹⁶ "New School Head," *Baltimore Sun*, April 19, 1900.

focused on eliminating graft and introducing more scientific techniques into education. Progressive reforms realized in Baltimore with Van Sickle as superintendent included instituting new administrative techniques and opening sixteen kindergartens throughout the city. He created a system of school supervision in which individual schools were supervised by an assistant principal and several schools grouped together were supervised by a principal known as a group principal who reported directly to the office of the superintendent. Immense changes were also made for teachers including opening a new training school, re-organizing the teaching staff, and creating promotional examinations. And with an increase in standards for the city's teachers, Van Sickle dismissed some sixty teachers who were deemed "unfit" to serve in that capacity.¹⁷

As a result of Van Sickle's leadership and the atmosphere of reform during his regime, African Americans experienced a number of important changes in public education. In March 1896, prior to Van Sickle's administration, black city councilman John Marcus Cargill introduced legislation to eliminate all white teachers from black schools, creating a completely segregated school system with black schools staffed exclusively by black teachers. In its original form, the new legislation met with resistance from both Democrats and Republicans on the city council. A modified version finally was enacted which provided for the turning over of African American schools to African American teachers provided that a school's entire faculty was replaced at one time, eliminating the discomfort and fear of many whites of interracial faculties. The legislation in its modified form also stipulated that no more than one-fifth of teachers appointed in the city in a given year be African American and placed a two-year

¹⁷ Robert S. Wolff, "Racial Imaginings: Whiteness, Schooling, and Society in Industrial Baltimore, 1860 – 1920," (Ph.D. diss., University of Minnesota, 1998), 170–183.

residency requirement upon African American teachers, a requirement not applicable to whites.¹⁸ In 1898, the East Street School became the first school to take on an African American faculty following the new legislation, but the gradual replacement of white teachers in black schools remained slow until Democrats returned to power at the beginning of the twentieth century and James H. Van Sickle assumed the position of superintendent of Baltimore City schools. With this change in control of the city government and city schools, the rate of turnover of black schools greatly increased so that by 1902, African Americans were hired to teach in over half of the city's black public schools and by 1907, all African American schools were under the control of African American teachers and principals.¹⁹ This black control of African American schools was further extended by Van Sickle's appointment of two African Americans to serve as group principals under the new system of supervision in the city school system.²⁰ Additionally, during Van Sickle's tenure, manual training facilities were established at black and white schools; the Colored Manual Training School was consolidated with the Colored High School; the teacher training program in the Colored High School was extended from two to three years, and by 1909, it was removed from the high school with the establishment of a separate normal school for African Americans; and improvements

¹⁸ Suzanne Ellery Greene, "Black Republicans on the Baltimore City Council, 1890 – 1931," *Maryland Historical Magazine* 74:3 (September 1979): 208.

¹⁹ Collier Thomas, "The Baltimore Black Community," 333–334.

²⁰ In 1910, the city's African American elementary schools were divided into two groups and Heber E. Wharton and Harry T. Pratt were appointed group principals. These two men joined Joseph H. Lockerman who already served as principal for the Colored High School and the Colored Training School. Within months of his appointment, Heber Wharton died and veteran educator George B. Murphy was selected to assume his position as a group principal. See "An Advance in the Right Direction," *Afro-American*, January 22, 1910; "Group Principals Appointed," *Afro-American*, January 29, 1910; "The Departure of Heber E. Wharton," *Afro-American*, May 7, 1910; "Elected Group Principal," *Afro-American*, May 28, 1910.

and additions were made to the physical plant of African American schools throughout the city.²¹ By 1911, the end of Van Sickle’s tenure as superintendent, the city offered African Americans the same levels of education offered to the white community with the main distinction occurring in the area of curriculum as academic training for the black community above the grammar level was severely limited.²²

Table 3.2 African American Schools in Baltimore, 1910

School Number and/or Name	Street Location	Year Main Building Erected
Colored High School	Pennsylvania Avenue & Dolphin Street	1893
Colored Training School	Pennsylvania Avenue & Dolphin Street	No date given
School 100	Mount & Saratoga Streets	1896
School 101*	Jefferson Street near Caroline Street	1855
School 103	Division Street near Lanvale Street	1877
School 105	Rogers Avenue near Lexington Street	1874

²¹ Paul, “The Shadow of Equality,” 331–332; Wolff, “Racial Imaginings,” 195–198; “The Baltimore Black Community,” Collier-Thomas, 346. The Colored Manual Training School was consolidated with the Colored High School in 1901 and Hugh M. Browne, a professor at Hampton Institute and a follower of Booker T. Washington, including Washington’s emphasis on industrial education. Thus, an emphasis was placed on manual training for all students in the Colored High School. By 1905, some leaders in the black community were complaining that too much emphasis was being placed on manual training. In 1913, the school board considered eliminating academic coursework completely from the Colored High School, but black city councilman Harry S. Cummings successfully combated this measure, warning that black Baltimoreans would vehemently oppose such an action. See Paul, “The Shadow of Equality,” 326–328.

²² Paul, “The Shadow of Equality,” 332. Many teachers felt threatened by Van Sickle’s reforms and he never gained widespread support among Baltimore’s politicians, which paved the way for his ousting from the position of superintendent. In 1911, James Preston, the Democratic candidate for mayor, won on a platform that promised to bring the school system back under popular control. Soon after taking office, Preston removed three members of the school board and replaced them with individuals who opposed school reform and who quickly voted to remove Van Sickle from his position. See Wolff, “Racial Imaginings,” 227–230.

School 106	Hill Street near Sharp Street	1893
School 107	Biddle Street near Pennsylvania Avenue	1870
School 107 Branch**	617 West Biddle Street	No date given
School 108	Caroline Street near Bank Street	1867
School 109	Fremont Avenue & King Street	1843
School 109 Branch**	Mount Olivet Lane near Leeds Street	No date given
School 110	Waesche Street near Fremont Avenue	1877
School 111*	Bond Street and Ashland Avenue	1864
School 111 Branch**	801 North Bond Street	No date given
School 112	Carey and Chappell Streets or Carey and School Streets	1897
School 112 Branch**	2018 - 2022 Pennsylvania Avenue (2nd and 3rd floors)	No date given
School 113	Girard Avenue and Sherman Place (Federal and Carter Streets)	1895
School 115	Merryman's Lane near York Road, Waverly	1889
School 116	Druid Hill Avenue near Biddle Street	1841
School 118	Gold and Calhoun Streets	1905
School 118 Branch**	Garrison Road, Calverton Road and Edmondson Avenue	No date given

*Schools 101 and 111, though separate buildings, were considered one school.

** Branches, though located in separate areas, are considered part of another school.

Source: *Directory of Public Schools*

Though a number of improvements had been made during the first decade of the twentieth century under the leadership of James H. Van Sickle, African American public education still suffered from many of the same problems that plagued black schools in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, especially inadequate school facilities and overcrowding due to the need for additional schools. Of the four oldest school buildings operated by the city at the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, three of these schools were attended by African Americans. Each of these buildings possessed a multitude of deficiencies including small windows and classrooms, poor ventilation, rooms heated by antiquated stoves, poor access to building exits, no water supply located in the buildings, and old and unsanitary privies located in small school yards. The school situation for African American children was particularly dire for those residing in Northwest Baltimore, the emerging center of the city's black community, where large numbers of students were housed in rented dwellings poorly adapted for educational purposes and overcrowding necessitated the establishment of a number of half-time classes. And in spite of these problems, of the seven new school buildings and seven additions to old buildings erected from 1911 – 1915, no buildings or additions were erected for African Americans.²³ And as the African American population of the city increased with each passing year, the problems in African American schools only became worse and the black community's calls for new and improved school facilities intensified.

²³ *Eighty-Second Annual Report of the Board of School Commissioners to the Mayor and City Council of Baltimore for the Fiscal Year Ending December 31, 1910* (Baltimore, MD: Meyer & Thalheimer Public Printer, 1911), 202; *Eighty-Third Annual Report of the Board of School Commissioners to the Mayor and City Council of Baltimore for the Fiscal Year Ending December 31, 1911* (Baltimore, MD: Meyer and Thalheimer Public Printer, 1913), 84–85.

In the spring of 1912, African American residents of East Baltimore mobilized to agitate for a new school building in their section of the city by forming the Colored Citizens' Equitable Improvement Association of East Baltimore. The new association; which drew its membership from educators, parents, clergymen, and other leaders in East Baltimore; held its first meeting at School Number 101 on Jefferson Street, whose principal, William Gibson, served as the new organization's first president. The Equitable Improvement Association held regular meetings to mobilize blacks in East Baltimore to fight for improvements in public education, namely a new school building. To achieve its goal, the Association worked to build awareness of the dire state of educational facilities in East Baltimore and sent committees to City Hall to urge those in power to live up to their campaign promises and devote recently appropriated funds to the construction of a new school which could replace the buildings for School Number 101 on Jefferson Street, School Number 111 on Ashland and Bond streets, and the School Number 111 Branch on Madison Avenue and Bond Street.²⁴ As was the situation with schools for black children across the city, the buildings in use in East Baltimore possessed numerous attributes that should have either been improved or prohibited their use as school buildings, including small rooms, poor ventilation and heating, and foul smelling privies. School Number 101, one of the oldest school buildings in the city, had been erected nearly six decades earlier in 1855 and only contained six classrooms, two of which had been added on to the original building in 1870. In his 1905 report, the Supervisor of School Buildings had

²⁴ "Better School Building Wanted," *Afro-American*, May 18, 1912; "Still Fighting For New School," *Afro-American*, May 25, 1912; "East Baltimore Citizens Organize," *Afro-American*, June 1, 1912; "East Baltimore Citizens Urge Better Conditions," *Afro-American*, January 18, 1913; "Big Meeting at First Baptist Church," *Afro-American*, February 22, 1913; "Association Holds Meeting," *Afro-American*, March 15, 1913; "Public Meeting of Improvement Association," *Afro-American*, May 31, 1913.

recommended that the building “be vacated as soon as practicable.” Though larger and newer than School Number 101, School Number 111 was still close to fifty years old with only ten classrooms, some of which were very small, and in 1910, the school board labeled the school as “very defective” and “unfit.” School Number 111 Branch, a rented building, was deemed to be in an even worse state than the main building and cited as an example of the type of structure that should not be rented for school purposes.²⁵

Within a year of its organization the Equitable Improvement Association succeeded in forcing the city to address the need for a new school building for black children in East Baltimore. In May 1913, the Board of Estimates approved an ordinance for the purchase of a lot for the erection of a new school building for the cost of \$120,000.²⁶ However, once the ordinance was approved, progress on the new building slowed as it took over six months before an architect was commissioned for the project and once the initial plans for a three-story, twenty-four room building were completed, disagreements over the plan among city officials caused further delays.²⁷ In the midst of these delays, the Equitable Improvement Association maintained regular contact with city government officials in order to track the status of the new building as well as to advocate for certain additions, most notably an unsuccessful request for public baths at the new school to accommodate members of East Baltimore’s black community who had to make the trek to Argyle Avenue in Northwest Baltimore if they desired to use the city’s only

²⁵ “East Baltimore Citizens Organize,” *Afro-American*, June 1, 1912; *Eighty-Second Annual Report of the Board of School Commissioners*, 175, 202.

²⁶ “New School for East Baltimore,” *Afro-American*, May 24, 1913; Cite ordinance.

²⁷ “To Have New School Building,” *Afro-American*, January 24, 1914; “Building Plans Are Completed,” *Afro-American*, April 11, 1914; “Disagreements Over Plan Causes Delay,” *Afro-American*, March 6, 1915.

public bath for African Americans. Simultaneously, the Association expanded its program beyond securing a new school building to address a multitude of issues affecting the welfare of the city's African American children, which in turn hindered their access to public education.²⁸ Finally, late in the summer of 1915, construction of the new school at the corner of Jefferson and Caroline streets was begun and completed by the following spring. In the fall of 1916, the Paul Laurence Dunbar School opened its doors to the African American community in East Baltimore, an advance in black public education realized through the diligent efforts of black Baltimoreans under the leadership of the Equitable Improvement Association. The only new school constructed for African Americans in the 1910s, this modern facility boasted twenty-four classrooms, an assembly hall, teachers' rooms, and rooms specifically designated for manual training and cooking classes.²⁹

Lacking an organization comparable to the Equitable Improvement Association of East Baltimore, African Americans in Northwest Baltimore, home of the majority of the

²⁸ "Public Meeting of Improvement Association," *Afro-American*, May 31, 1913; "Bathing Facilities in New School House?," *Afro-American*, February 14, 1914; "Third Public Meeting A Success," *Afro-American*, March 14, 1914; "Equitable Association Elects New Officers," *Afro-American*, October 24, 1914; "Improvement Club Meets," *Afro-American*, February 5, 1916; "Equitable Association Holds Monthly Meeting," *Afro-American*, March 4, 1916; "Improvement Association Would Better Community," *Afro-American*, April 1, 1916; "Successful Meeting of Equitable Association," *Afro-American*, May 6, 1916.

²⁹ "Old School Building Removed," *Afro-American*, August 21, 1915; "Impressive Dedication of New Dunbar School," *Afro-American*, November 11, 1916; "Tablet Presented to Dunbar School," *Afro-American*, December 2, 1916; *Eighty-Sixth Annual Report of the Board of School Commissioners to the Mayor and City Council of Baltimore for the Scholastic Year Ending June 30, 1915* (Baltimore, MD: No publisher given, 1916), 4; *Eighty-Eighth Annual Report of the Board of School Commissioners to the Mayor and City Council of Baltimore for the Scholastic Year Ending June 30, 1917* (Baltimore, MD: King Brothers City Printer, 1918), 9–10.

Figure 3.1 School Number 111



SCHOOL NO. 111—BOND STREET AND ASHLAND AVENUE

School Number 111, located on Bond Street and Ashland Avenue in East Baltimore, was labeled “very defective” and “unfit” by the Board of School Commissioners in 1910.

Source: Page 159, 1910 *Board of School Commissioners Report*

Figure 3.2 Paul Laurence Dunbar Elementary School



ILLUSTRATION NO. 12

One of the superior buildings for colored children—with many commendable features. The site of such a building should be a full square and the building should be planned for extensions. Note the annex to the rear.

The work of the Colored Citizens’ Equitable Improvement Association of East Baltimore resulted in the opening of the Paul Laurence Dunbar Elementary School in 1916, the only new school constructed for African Americans in Baltimore in the 1910s.

Source: *Strayer Survey*, Volume 1, Page 71

city's black population by the 1910s, endured an even more protracted struggle to force the city to build a new school for African Americans in their section of the city. The explosive growth of the black population in Northwest Baltimore exacerbated the need for additional schools and often resulted in overcrowding which resulted in establishing half-time classes for the students in these schools. Overcrowding was particularly a problem in School Number 103 on Division Street near Lanvale Street, a sixteen classroom building erected in 1877 that had only recently been turned over to the African American community in March 1911 and quickly became overcrowded by the end of the year. And overcrowding proved even worse in School Number 112 located on Carey and Chappell streets, an eighteen classroom building erected in 1897. By the beginning of the 1915-1916 school year, even though School Number 112 had acquired additional space through two portable buildings and an annex rented in a room located above a paint shop, the overcrowding persisted and seventeen part-time classes had to be formed to accommodate the ever-expanding student body.³⁰ To relieve the overcrowding in Northwest Baltimore and in response to the agitation of various individuals and civic bodies in the African American community, the school board denied the request of white citizens to have School Number 100 on Mount and Saratoga streets, the only new school built in nearly two decades for African Americans prior to 1916, turned over for use by white school children. Additionally School Number 91 on Argyle Avenue was transferred to African American students even amidst the outcry of white Baltimoreans whose

³⁰ *Eighty-Third Annual Report of the Board of School Commissioners to the Mayor and City Council of Baltimore for the Fiscal Year Ending December 31, 1911* (Baltimore, MD: Meyer and Thalheimer Public Printer, 1913), 84–85; “Schools Crowded to Overflowing,” *Afro-American*, September 18, 1915; “Poor School Accommodation,” *Afro-American*, October 9, 1915.

children attended the school.³¹ However, these actions by the school board did not fully address the needs of the African American community, which continued its agitation through the 1910s for new school buildings to be constructed in Northwest Baltimore. Not until 1919 was an ordinance approved for a new school building in this section of the city and it would take another two years before the new school was built and opened for African Americans on the corner of Laurens and Calhoun streets.³²

In addition to calls from the black community for new and improved school facilities, there were also demands for African American representation on the city school board. From the beginning decade of the twentieth century during the tenure of James Van Sickle as the city's school superintendent, leaders in the African American community had been pushing for black representation on the city school board. Proponents of black school board representation advanced the argument that only a black man could adequately represent and serve the interests of the African American population due to firsthand knowledge of the "real strivings of the colored people, their

³¹ "Will Fight to Keep Mount Street School," *Afro-American*, September 30, 1911; "Medical Association Presents Proof," *Afro-American*, October 28, 1911; "Protest Against Changing School," *Afro-American*, October 28, 1911; "Still Want Mount Street School," *Afro-American*, October 7, 1911; "Mayor Urged To Veto Ordinance," *Afro-American*, November 18, 1911; Editorial, *Afro-American*, November 25, 1911; "White Residents Make Protest," *Afro-American*, September 21, 1912; "Strikers Fail to Change School 91," *Afro-American*, September 28, 1911; *Eighty-Fourth Annual Report of the Board of School Commissioners to the Mayor and City Council of Baltimore for the Scholastic Year Ending June 30, 1913* (Baltimore, MD: Meyer and Thalheimer City Printer, 1914), 59–60.

³² "Makes Request for New School," *Afro-American*, June 21, 1913; "Schools Need Attention," *Afro-American*, September 27, 1913; "Want New School In Fourteenth Ward," *Afro-American*, March 13, 1915; "May Get New School," *Afro-American*, April 17, 1915; "School Ordinance Fails," *Afro-American*, May 15, 1915; "Schools To Open Tuesday," *Afro-American*, September 11, 1915; "\$135,000 For New School," *Afro-American*, November 4, 1916; "Saturday, October 13, 1917," *Afro-American*, October 20, 1917; "To Get New 24-Room School Building," *Afro-American*, November 10, 1917; "Council Approves School Ordinance," *Afro-American*, May 23, 1919; "Parents League Before Board of Estimates," *Afro-American*, October 31, 1919; "Work Starts on School," *Afro-American*, January 28, 1921; *Ninety-Second Annual Report of the Board of School Commissioners of Baltimore City to the Mayor and City Council for the Scholastic Year Ending August 31, 1921* (Annapolis, MD: Capital-Gazette Press, 1922), 6.

hopes, and fears, their peculiar environments and handicaps.”³³ African American leaders and parents continued their agitation for African American representation in the administration of the city schools through the first two decades of the twentieth century, either advocating for an African American member of the school board or the appointment of an African American as assistant superintendent in charge of African American schools.³⁴

By 1919, with the election of Republican William F. Broening to the office of mayor, ending twelve years of Democratic rule; and the election of two African American Republicans to the city council, the first time two African Americans had simultaneously served on this legislative body; black leaders and parents saw an opportunity for their educational goals to be attained and intensified their calls for black representation on the school board. Mayor Broening was flooded with petitions from various individuals in the black community demanding either representation on the school board or the appointment of a black supervisor of black schools. African American organizations such as the A.M.E. Ministers’ Meeting, the East Baltimore Welfare Association, and the Business Men’s Exchange petitioned the mayor to fill at least one of three existing vacancies on the school board with an African American, urging Broening to fulfill promises made during and following his mayoral campaign to

³³ “The School Board and the Colored Schools,” *Afro-American*, December 23, 1905; “Who Represents the Negroes,” *Afro-American*, October 3, 1903; “A Very Warm School Question,” *Afro-American*, February 20, 1909.

³⁴ “Colored Citizen For Board of School Commissioners,” *Afro-American*, August 14, 1915; “Want Colored Superintendents,” *Afro-American*, January 12, 1918; “Turn Down Plea for Supervisor,” *Afro-American*, February 16, 1918.

fill the vacancies on the school board with individuals representative of every section of the city.³⁵

In addition to letters and petitions, the mayor was visited by delegations of leading men in the African American community, including Bishop John Hurst of the A.M.E. Church and Carl Murphy of the *Afro-American*, who bolstered their arguments for African American representation with letters of support from city and school board officials in New York City, Atlantic City, and Washington, DC, all cities with African Americans serving on their school boards.³⁶ These petitions and delegations from the African American community agitated for representation using arguments similar to those editorialized in the pages of the *Afro American*:

No man can represent the black people of Baltimore on the School Board who has not a vital interest in those schools. He must be interested in the school buildings because his children attend sessions in them; he must be interested in the teachers because his children are dependent upon them; he must be interested in the curriculum because it means that his children will become good or poor citizens as the result of their years of study... On each \$100 of property owned and rented by colored people in Baltimore, colored people pay fifty-seven and one-half cents taxes for the maintenance and ADMINISTRATION of the public schools... Black men then have the legal right to determine how this money shall be spent as white men... In this administration, [we] expect Mayor Broening to redeem his post election pledge to place a colored member of the School Board.

Using familiar rhetoric from the struggle over the past two decades, black Baltimoreans saw African American representation as their right as citizens and taxpayers. By placing

³⁵ “Many Things Wrong With Local Schools,” *Afro-American*, May 30, 1919; “Taking it to the Mayor,” *Afro-American*, June 6, 1919; “Bishop Hurst Urges Colored Member for School Board,” *Afro-American*, June 13, 1919; “What They Say About A Colored Member on School Board,” *Afro-American*, June 13, 1919; “Why A Colored Member?,” *Afro-American*, June 13, 1919; “One Step for the Mayor,” *Afro-American*, June 20, 1919; “Mayor Considering School Question,” *Afro-American*, June 20, 1919; “Business Men to Ask for School Board Member,” *Afro-American*, July 4, 1919.

³⁶ “Member of School Board Act of Justice,” *Afro-American*, July 18, 1919; “Colored School Board Members a Success in Other Cities,” *Afro-American*, July 18, 1919; “Will Not Commit Himself,” *Afro-American*, January 16, 1920; “To Leave it Up to the Mayor,” *Afro-American*, January 30, 1919.

an African American on the school board, they hoped it would guarantee that one who was intimately attune to the desires and needs of the community would have the platform and power needed to address grievances and realize changes in the administration and operation of African American schools. By the turn of the decade, this list of changes included establishing junior high schools, vocational schools, and a parental school; hiring black physicians and nurses to work in black schools; increasing and equalizing teacher salaries; and building new schools, particularly a replacement for the Colored High School.³⁷

Despite consistent agitation on the part of black Baltimoreans throughout 1919 and into the summer of 1920, Mayor Broening and other city officials made minimal attempts to address educational issues important to the African American community.³⁸ And the issue of the utmost importance to the African American community, black representation on the school board was wholly ignored as Mayor Broening appointed white Baltimoreans to fill the existing board vacancies. When confronted on the issue, the

³⁷ "Black Representatives, Black People," *Afro-American*, June 4, 1920; "Junior High Schools Needed," *Afro-American*, November 12, 1920; "Parental School Movement Started," *Afro-American*, April 2, 1920; "Physicians Still Angry," *Afro-American*, January 2, 1920; "Call on the Mayor," *Afro-American*, January 23, 1920; "A.M.E. Ministers Oppose Bill," *Afro-American*, February 6, 1920; "School Board Proposes to Discriminate," *Afro-American*, October 16, 1920; "Fields Upholds Unequal Salaries," *Afro-American*, October 22, 1920; "Salary Question Is Up Again," *Afro-American*, November 19, 1920; "That New High School," *Afro-American*, January 26, 1918; "Would Turn Over Western High School," *Afro-American*, June 28, 1918; "Proposed Loan Will Cover New High School," *Afro-American*, February 13, 1920.

³⁸ One educational issue that African Americans succeeded in having addressed was the appointment of two black physicians and six black nurses to work in the city's African American schools by City Health Commissioner C. Hampson Jones. However, the city, citing lack of funds, did not provide salaries for these positions, prompting members of the black community to hold a drive to secure salary funds. By August 1920, six months after their appointment, the city's Board of Estimates finally appropriated funds to cover the salaries through the end of the year. See "Two Physicians and Six Nurses Appointed in Schools," *Afro-American*, February 27, 1920; "Plan Campaign to Pay Nurses," *Afro-American*, March 19, 1920; "\$4,000 Campaign Starts April 10th," *Afro-American*, March 26, 1920; "City To Pay School Nurses," *Afro-American*, August 20, 1920; "Nurses and Doctors on City Pay Roll," *Afro-American*, September 17, 1920.

mayor stated that he had not appointed any African Americans to the school board because he favored appointing an African American to the position of superintendent or supervisor of black schools; however, the mayor's words rang hollow as no such position materialized with each passing month.³⁹ However, one major change in the administration of Baltimore's schools that was favorable to a considerable number of members of the African American community was the school board's firing of Charles H. Koch, Superintendent of Public Schools. Koch, who had been a vocal opponent of former superintendent James Van Sickle through his position as head of the Public School Teachers Association was appointed First Assistant Superintendent following Van Sickle's firing in 1911 and actually served as de facto superintendent from 1911–1915 under Van Sickle's replacement, Francis Soper, who suffered from poor health. Koch officially replaced Soper as superintendent in 1915. As the individual who oversaw the administration of the city's schools during the 1910s, a decade with minimal progress for black schools, the mass of African Americans did not view Koch favorably. Anti-Koch sentiment intensified in 1919 when the superintendent publicly spoke out against African American representation on the school board, proclaiming that the black community should be more concerned with securing representation on the city's street cleaning force. This statement drew the ire of numerous black organizations calling for the removal of the superintendent for his demeaning words and clear lack of concern for the welfare of African American schoolchildren.⁴⁰

³⁹ "No School Board Member," *Afro-American*, July 9, 1920; "Mr. Broening's Lily White Government Continued," *Afro-American*, August 13, 1920.

⁴⁰ Wolff, 235 – 236; "Separate Meeting for Colored Teachers," *Afro-American*, September 12, 1919; "Citizens Ask Mayor to Remove Superintendent Koch," *Afro-American*, September 19, 1919; "Heads of the School System," *Afro-American*, October 3, 1919.

When the School Board finally fired Koch in 1920, Henry S. West, the principal of the Maryland State Normal School in Baltimore County, was hired as his replacement. A native of Baltimore and a graduate of Baltimore City College High School and Johns Hopkins University, West had previously served as principal of the city's white and all-female Western High School and as an assistant superintendent during the regime of James Van Sickle.⁴¹ As a condition of accepting the position, West insisted that the city contract experts to conduct a survey of its school system in order to effectively evaluate its strengths and weaknesses. For Progressives, the school survey had become a staple of educational reform in the first few decades of the twentieth century helping to utterly transform the urban educational landscape while spreading educational standards and professional practices on an unprecedented national scale. Under the leadership of university and foundation scholars and their investigative teams, the school survey movement entailed using the tools of scientific inquiry and qualitative analysis to evaluate all facets of educational systems including administration and structure, the training and compensation of teachers, the condition of school facilities, curriculum, and student progress. The detailed reports resulting from these surveys offered a critical foundation for educational reform.⁴²

⁴¹ Wolff, "Racial Imaginings," 235–236; "New Superintendent Has Had Long Career," *Baltimore Sun*, July 13, 1920.

⁴² There were school surveys as early as the 1840s in Boston and Rhode Island, but the school survey of Boise, Idaho conducted in 1910 is generally cited as the beginning of the modern school survey movement in which new "objective" measures and criteria were used to evaluate educational systems under the direction of "objective" experts in the field from a different locale. Wolff, "Racial Imaginings," 233, 237; David Tyack and Elizabeth Hanson, *Managers of Virtue: Public School Leadership in America, 1820–1980* (New York: Basic Books, Inc. Publishers, 1982); Tracy L. Steffes, "A New Education for a Modern Age: National Reform, State-Building, and the Transformation of American Schooling, 1890–1930," (Ph.D. diss, University of Chicago, 2007), 75–78; Lynn Dumenil, "'The Insatiable Maw of Democracy': Antistatistism and Education Reform in the 1920s," *Journal of American History*, 502.

Prior to 1920, the school survey had been utilized on two occasions to examine schools in Baltimore, but only to a very limited extent. The first survey of Baltimore schools was conducted in February 1911, following a request of the Baltimore school board for the Commissioner of Education in the Department of the Interior, Elmer Ellsworth Brown, to visit the city with his own team to investigate and make a report of school conditions. The subsequent investigation was admittedly “not exhaustive” and solely focused on the educational aspects of the school system, specifically the city’s elementary schools. Commissioner Brown and his team of investigators neglected administrative and business components of the school system, and produced a report that primarily focused on a comparison of the Baltimore educational system with that of other major U.S. cities.⁴³ Overall, the report rated the Baltimore school system as “positively favorable” and moving in the “right direction,” particularly in light of the changes instituted under the new city charter of 1898, which were praised by the committee as an important step in removing local and partisan politics from the school board. However, the report still noted numerous areas of much needed improvement, most notably increasing financial compensation and improving training for the city’s teachers; and improving the conditions of the city’s school buildings, which suffered from a range of “evils” that had been plaguing the school system for decades including an abundance of fire hazards, poor heating and ventilation, and the lack of adequate classroom space. African American teachers and schoolchildren shared the need for these areas to be

⁴³ United States Bureau of Education, *Report of the Commission Appointed to Study the System of Education in the Public Schools of Baltimore*, Bulletin 1911, No. 4, Whole Number 450 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1911), 5–8, 16–17, 34. The report compared the school system of Baltimore to school systems in the following cities: Buffalo, Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit, Los Angeles, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, New Orleans, Newark, St. Louis, San Francisco, Washington, D.C.

improved as cited in the report, but the commission admittedly did not investigate the issues or circumstances that were unique to the African American population.⁴⁴

Three years later, the General Assembly of Maryland appropriated funds for a survey of the public school system of the state, including elementary and secondary schools, as well as public institutions of higher education. But the survey that resulted from this commission, published in 1916, did not cover the school system of Baltimore City.⁴⁵ Of greater relevance to black Baltimoreans was a mammoth two-volume survey of African American education sponsored by the Phelps Stokes Fund in cooperation with the United States Bureau of Education. The survey, originally conceived in 1912 and published in 1917, covered all private schools for African Americans in the South in addition to all black schools above the elementary grades, both public and private.⁴⁶ This study was conducted under the leadership of Dr. Thomas Jesse Jones, a white sociologist trained at Columbia University who had previously worked as an instructor of economics and an Associate Chaplain at the all-black Hampton Institute in Virginia.⁴⁷ Due to the

⁴⁴ Ibid., 8–15.

⁴⁵ Abraham Flexner and Frank P. Bachman, *Public Education in Maryland: A Report to the Maryland Educational Survey Commission* (New York: The General Education Board, 1916), vii–viii.

⁴⁶ United States Bureau of Education, *Negro Education: Study of the Private and Higher Schools for Colored People in the United States*, Bulletin 1916, No. 38 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1917), x–xi. The survey covered all the states of the former Confederacy as well as Washington, D.C. and the border states of Delaware, Kentucky, Maryland, Oklahoma, Missouri, and West Virginia.

⁴⁷ Jones was chosen to lead this investigation after convincing friends to aggressively lobby for his selection by the General Education Board. In selecting Jones, the Board completely ignored African American scholar W.E.B. Du Bois, a more logical choice as one who had decades of experience in this realm. Du Bois and other African American leaders severely critiqued the survey, which resulted from this investigation because it recommended increasing vocational education for African Americans over the classical or liberal education found in many African American educational institutions, particularly those in higher education. This recommendation reflected Jones' ethnocentrism and racial bias, which manifested itself throughout his career in education where he emphasized his belief in the inability of African

limited scope of the study, the only public school for black Baltimoreans that was covered was the Colored High School. However, the report still stressed the need for more educational facilities and better-trained teachers in Baltimore and across the state of Maryland across all educational levels.⁴⁸

The school survey undertaken in Baltimore beginning in the fall of 1920 was the first extensive and comprehensive study of the entire school system of the city. It was conducted under the leadership of George Drayton Strayer, Professor of Educational Administration at the Teachers College of Columbia University, the recognized leader of the school survey movement. By the end of the 1910s, having completed extensive research and published numerous articles and books urging various types of educational reform, Strayer had established himself as one of the most powerful individuals in American education from whom the nation's largest cities sought guidance in selecting superintendents and overhauling their school systems.⁴⁹ With an appropriation of \$25,000 from the city council, Strayer initiated his survey of the Baltimore City school system in October 1920, assisted by N.L. Engelhardt and Edward S. Evenden, fellow faculty members at the Teachers College, and a team of over 100 assistants, which included Columbia University graduate students. Concluding in June 1921, the Baltimore school

Americans and other minorities to possess the same intellectual capabilities as individuals of European descent. As an instructor and chaplain at Hampton, he had campaigned to have the school's history curriculum abandoned because he viewed it as too intellectually demanding, preferring a vocational education as something more appropriate for the needs of the student body. See Donald Johnson, "W.E.B. Du Bois, Thomas Jesse Jones and the Struggle for Social Education, 1900–1930," *Journal of Negro History* 85:3 (Summer 2000): 79–80, 86; Carter G. Woodson, "Thomas Jesse Jones," *Journal of Negro History* 35:1 (January 1950): 107–109.

⁴⁸ *Negro Education*, 319, 321–323.

⁴⁹ Angela D. Johnson, "The Strayer Survey and the Colored Schools," 23–24; Wolff, "Racial Imaginings," 237–238.

survey resulted in the publication of an exhaustive three-volume report, popularly known as the Strayer Report, which would serve as a blueprint for transforming the city's public school system through the 1920s and 1930s.⁵⁰

The first volume of the report, *Survey of the Public School Building and a School Building Program for Baltimore, Maryland*, evaluated the current state of the city's 155 school buildings, painting a dismal picture of the physical plant of Baltimore schools and offering a ringing indictment of the city's entire school system. In summarizing some of the system's major defects, the report noted the failure of the city to discard old buildings and a range of ills that plagued both older and newer school buildings, including the presence of a multitude of fire hazards and the absence of fire escapes or the use of flammable wooden fire escapes; poor or inadequate lighting; the absence of playgrounds and playrooms at the majority of school buildings; insanitary conditions such as dilapidated outhouses and toilets; a multiplicity of heating systems in buildings which often posed fire hazards; and the absence of "special rooms" such as libraries, auditoriums, and gymnasiums. The report castigated Baltimore officials for these conditions as well as for failing to develop a building program which used population trends to predict future educational needs of the city and to determine the size and location of new school buildings.⁵¹

⁵⁰ George Drayton Strayer, N.L. Engelhardt and Edward S. Evenden, *Report of the Survey of the Public School System of Baltimore, Maryland*, v. 1 (Baltimore, MD: Board of Public School Commissioners, 1921), 2, 19; Johnson, 24; *Ninety-First Annual Report of the Board of School Commissioners to the Mayor and City Council for the Scholastic Year Ending June 30, 1920* (Baltimore, MD: No publisher indicated, 1921), 4–5.

⁵¹ Strayer, *Report of the Survey*, v. 1, 20–22.

To describe conditions and make assessments, Strayer and his team relied upon the building scorecard, a rating system developed by Strayer and his colleagues and

Table 3.3 African American Schools in Baltimore, 1920

School Number and/or Name	Street Location	Year Main Building Erected
Colored High School	Pennsylvania & Dolphin	No date given
Colored Training School	Mount & Saratoga	1904
School No. 100, Frederick Douglass	Mount & Saratoga	1904
School No. 101, Paul Laurence Dunbar	Jefferson and Caroline	1916
School No. 102	Bond and Jefferson Streets	1884/1890
School No. 103	Division St. near Lanvale	1877
School No. 105	Rogers Ave. near Lexington	1874
School No. 106, Booker T. Washington	Hill St near Sharp	1893
School No. 106, Branch		1869
School No. 107	Biddle St near Pennsylvania Ave	1870
School No. 108	Caroline St. near Bank	1867
School No. 109	Fremont and King	1843
School No. 109, Branch	Mount Olivet Lane near Leeds St	1870
School No. 110	Waesche St near Fremont Ave	1867
School No. 112, Robert Browne Elliott	Carey and School Sts.	1896
School No. 113, Benjamin Banneker	Federal and Carter Sts.	no date given

School No. 115	Merryman's Lane near York Road, Waverly	1889
School No. 116	Druid Hill Ave near Biddle	1850
School No. 118	Gold and Calhoun	1872
School No. 118, Branch	Exact location not given	1872
School No. 327, Arlington	Exact location not given	no date given
School No. 328, Brooklyn	Exact location not given	1895
School No. 329, Canton	Exact location not given	1868
School No. 330, Fairfield	Exact location not given	1916
School No. 331, Lauraville	Exact location not given	1889
School No. 332, Morrell Park/Mt. Winans	Exact location not given	1889
School No. 333, Roland Park	Exact location not given	1879
School No. 334, Mt. Washington	Exact location not given	1920
School No. 335, Govans	Exact location not given	no date given

Source: *Directory of Public Schools*

graduate students at Teachers College in the mid 1910s. The scorecard designated point values to different aspects of the school building and its environs. The Strayer-Engelhardt Score Card used in the Baltimore school survey allocated a maximum of 125 points for the building site; 165 points for the building; 280 points for service systems for the

building, which mainly referred to heating; 290 points for the building's classrooms; and 140 points for special rooms, including libraries, auditoriums, and offices; amounting to 1,000 points in total. Each building was evaluated by at least three surveyors and the median of their scores was used to determine the final overall score for a particular building.⁵² Schools which scored between 900 and 1,000 points were deemed "highly satisfactory." Those which scored between 700 and 900 points were deemed "less satisfactory," which may have been the result of a variety of reasons, including an inadequate site, fire hazards, or the absence of special rooms. Those schools scoring between 500 and 700 points were designated as being in need of "extensive alterations" in one or more areas in order to bring the school up to acceptable standards while a score between 400 and 500 points indicated that a school building was in a condition that was "not satisfactory" and would require "great difficulty" in order for the school to be brought up acceptable standards. Finally, schools assigned scores below 400 points were described as those that should be abandoned for they had "outlived their usefulness and [were] ready to be placed upon the scrapheap."⁵³

The overwhelmingly low scores tabulated by Strayer and his team for the school buildings of Baltimore exposed the poor conditions of all of the city's schools, but those schools attended by the city's African American population were shown to be in the worst condition. No school obtained a score over 800 and no school for African American students obtained a score over 700. Only three schools scored between 701 – 800, all white; and just eleven schools scored in the 601 – 700 range and only one black

⁵² Ibid., 23.

⁵³ Ibid., 26 – 27.

school was counted in that number. The majority of Baltimore schools received much lower scores, and schools for African American students were disproportionately represented in these numbers. Seventy-three Baltimore schools received scores of 400 or lower and of this number, roughly a third of them were black schools. While nearly half of white schools scored above 400, only one-fifth of black schools scored above 400. Most of the city's white schools received scores in the 301 – 500 range, while the majority of the city's black schools scored considerably lower receiving scores in the 101 – 300 range.⁵⁴

The scores for the city's five high schools reflected the scoring trends manifest in the evaluation of the city's other schools, which revealed the overwhelmingly inferior status of African American schools. The Colored High School, the only high school for African Americans in the entire state, ranked the lowest with a score of 309 points. Strayer's team was particularly critical of this building due to its cramped quarters and the limited amount of space available for athletic activities. The presence of a portable building on the site, which housed the school's Commercial Department, was also problematic because it limited the ability for building expansion on the site.⁵⁵ According to Strayer and other progressive educational reformers, the ideal school site should be large enough for a playground space and for a building situated away from street noise and debris with proper placement on the site to ensure adequate natural light.⁵⁶ Consequently, the Strayer report recommended that an entirely new high school be built

⁵⁴ Ibid., 27.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 36, 42 – 43.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 39.

for Baltimore's African American community and that this school also serve as a junior high school for no such school existed for African Americans in the city at that time.

With this new building, it was forecasted that a larger percentage of black Baltimoreans would remain in school beyond the sixth grade.⁵⁷

The scores and assessments of African American elementary schools painted an even bleaker picture of the state of schools within the black community. Of the lowest twenty scoring elementary schools, over half were schools attended by African Americans with seven of these schools ranking in the lowest ten.⁵⁸ The condition of African American schools in the areas most recently annexed by the city in 1918 were especially dire as six of the schools ranking in the lowest twenty were located in these areas. School Number 335 in the Govans neighborhood was described as a “tumble-down hall,” School Number 328 in Brooklyn was labeled “a makeshift proposition,” and School Number 327 in Arlington was declared “unfit for school purposes.” In fact, Strayer's team declared that all seven of the black schools located in the 1918 annex were unfit and should be replaced “as soon as possible.”⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Ibid., 222, 234. As of 1919, there were two junior high schools in Baltimore, both for white students.

⁵⁸ Ibid., pp. 31–35, 70–71, 180. One African American school, Dunbar Elementary School, which had been constructed in 1915 following the battle waged by African Americans in East Baltimore, ranked as one of the best schools in the city with a score of 665 points and it was the only African American school in the top ten of the ranking. Still, Strayer's survey criticized the school for its “inadequate site” which did not provide enough space for future additions. It was also criticized for poor washing facilities and drinking fountains.

⁵⁹ Ibid., pp. 185–186. The African American schools located in the 1918 annex were: School Number 327, Arlington; School Number 328, Brooklyn; School Number 329, Canton; School Number 331, Lauraville; School Number 332, Morrell Park; School Number 334, Mt. Washington; and School Number 335, Govans.

Similar recommendations were made for many black schools located within the old boundaries of the city as these schools suffered from many of the same conditions that plagued black schools located in the 1918 annex. The Strayer Report proclaimed that School Number 105 “ha[d] nothing to commend it,” School Number 107 was “totally inadequate for school purposes,” School Number 109 had “no redeeming elements,” and School Number 116 “present[ed] a very unfortunate housing spectacle.”⁶⁰ The report provided more extensive commentary on School Number 112 located in Northwest Baltimore in the center of Baltimore’s ever expanding black community. Though the school ranked third overall among African American elementary schools with a score of 473 points, the congested conditions of this school were condemned, which was indicative of conditions across the city as over 3,500 African American children attended school in “makeshift classrooms,” such as portable buildings and rented stores and churches; and over 2,000 black students were only able to attend school on a half-time basis due to these conditions. School Number 112’s congestion was described as among the worst in Baltimore and necessitated the use of two annexes, which were both cited as examples of “the poorest type of building structures which are today being utilized by Baltimore for school purposes.” In one of these annexes, close to 300 students attended school in rooms located above a paint store, which posed a serious threat to their safety due to the close proximity of a variety of flammable materials:

The location of school children in buildings which present a maximum of fire hazard is, under no circumstances, to be considered advisable... Baltimore, at least, should compel the removal of all paints, varnishes, oils, greases and similar combustible materials from the store of this building before compelling children to attend school in the two upper stories.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 181 – 184.

Due to the extreme safety issues in addition to other faults, Strayer's team recommended "immediate abandonment" of this rented annex.⁶¹

Moving away from the condition of the city's school buildings, the second volume of the Strayer Report examined a number of different aspects of the Baltimore school system, including an evaluation of the city's teaching corps and the progress and achievements of the city's student body, as well as the overall organization of the public school system. This volume contained a number of important recommendations that applied to the entire school system, but had particular importance for the city's black population.⁶² The volume recommended that kindergartens be made standard in every city elementary school. The expansion of kindergartens in Baltimore had remained at a standstill for most of the 1910s and the time of the survey, only three African American elementary schools had kindergarten classes compared to twenty-six kindergarten classes in white schools.⁶³ The volume also recommended the expansion of junior high schools in the city of which none existed for African American students.⁶⁴ One recommendation

⁶¹ Ibid., 35, 45–46, 65–67, 74, 183.

⁶² George Drayton Strayer, N.L. Engelhardt and Edward S. Evenden, *Report of the Survey of the Public School System of Baltimore, Maryland*, v. 2 (Baltimore, MD: Board of Public School Commissioners, 1921), v–vii.

⁶³ The first public school kindergarten in Baltimore was established in 1901. By 1914, there were 22 in operation in the city. Ibid., 191; Frances M. Berry, "Growth and Development of Kindergartens in Baltimore," *Baltimore Bulletin of Education* 3:1 (September 1924): 13.

⁶⁴ The first junior high schools in the nation were established in 1909 and 1910 in California, but the first junior high schools in Baltimore were not established until 1919. They were created to address the withdrawal of students from public education following the sixth grade and in order to segregate the sixth, seventh, and eighth grades. At the time of the Strayer Survey, there were only two junior high schools in the city and both were for white students. Strayer, Volume Two, v – vii; Louisa Adams Mann, "The Beginning of Junior High Schools in Baltimore," *Baltimore Bulletin of Education* 6:7 (April 1928): 153–155; David E. Weglein, "The Baltimore Junior High Schools," *Baltimore Bulletin of Education* 7:6 (March 1929): 123–124.

Figure 3.3 Yard of School Number 112



ILLUSTRATION NO. 8

School No. 112 presents one of the most congested situations in the city. The approximately 1,500 children attending No. 112 cover the playground. The cheap structures at the rear should be razed and a real playground provided.

This photograph of the students of School Number 112 gathered in the yard of the school shows the overcrowding that plagued this particular school and made it one of the worst overcrowding situations in the city.

Source: Strayer Survey, Volume 1, Page 47

Figure 3.4 Annex to School Number 112



ILLUSTRATION NO. 16

No emergency should cause the housing of 215 children over a paint store. Dark congested rooms containing hot unprotected stoves add to the danger in this annex to School No. 112.

Overcrowding at School Number 112 in Northwest led to the housing of students in an annex located above a paint store, an extremely dangerous situation condemned in the Strayer Report.

Source: Strayer Survey, Volume 1, Page 75

made in this volume aimed specifically at the African American community was the “immediate” establishment of a parental school for African American boys.⁶⁵ Another recommendation which also specifically addressed the needs of the African American population and was probably the most important recommendation of this volume for African Americans, was the creation of the position of Supervisor of Colored Schools:

The colored people of Baltimore have a separate community life in their homes, churches, and schools. A supervisor of colored schools, directly responsible to the Superintendent of Schools, would have a type of contact with this group in the community that is not possible for one of another race. If a supervisor thoroughly acquainted with the needs of this group and well trained in the field of school supervision were selected, it is believed that much improvement in the organization and work of the colored schools might be effected.

In making this recommendation, the survey echoed the demands of a number of leaders within the African American community in the years prior to the survey that an African American be placed in a position of power within the administration of the city schools in order to give the black community a voice in the administration of those schools attended by their children.⁶⁶

Like the second volume, the third and final volume of the Strayer Report tackled a number of different aspects of the Baltimore public school system. This particular volume covered the curriculum of city schools, the state of kindergartens, and education in the fields of home economics and vocational education. A number of the recommendations made in this volume reiterated those made in earlier volumes of the survey, particularly the expansion of kindergartens and junior high schools in the public

⁶⁵ Strayer, Volume Two, 57, 64.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 18.

school system and the poor state of the building housing the Colored High School.⁶⁷ In the last section of the volume which focused solely on vocational education, the report offered new recommendations for the African American community with a discussion of trades that should be taught in African American schools and the recommendation that an industrial school for African Americans be established in a “readily accessible” location in the city.⁶⁸

From the very beginning, African American leaders were enthusiastic about the potential of the survey to help the city’s black schoolchildren. A committee consisting of City Councilman William L. Fitzgerald and a number of other black educational activists cooperated with Strayer and his team in the completion of the survey. The committee arranged for Strayer and his colleagues to share their results with African American parents prior to publication of the report and met with Strayer at the school administration building to hear firsthand his recommendations for African American schools.⁶⁹ The work of this committee in sharing the information presented in the survey with a wider black audience in Baltimore was immensely bolstered by the *Afro-American*. From late winter through the beginning of the summer of 1921, the newspaper carried articles and editorials which reprinted sections of the report detailing the conditions in African

⁶⁷ George Drayton Strayer, N.L. Engelhardt and Edward S. Evenden, *Report of the Survey of the Public School System of Baltimore, Maryland*, v. 3 (Baltimore, MD: Board of Public School Commissioners, 1921), 112, 115–116, 147.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 241–243.

⁶⁹ “Will Discuss Colored Schools,” *Afro-American*, January 14, 1921; “To Treat All Schools Alike,” *Afro-American*, April 15, 1921.

American schools and urging city officials to follow the recommendations for black schools set forth in the report.⁷⁰

One of the earliest recommendations of the Strayer survey to be fulfilled was the appointment of an African American to serve as the supervisor of the city's African American schools, a movement that predated the survey and originated with the election of William Broening as mayor. In the wake of the completion of the survey, multiple individuals and organizations within the African American community worked to have this recommendation come to fruition, including making sure that the position was funded at an appropriate salary in order to attract the most qualified candidates.⁷¹ In September 1922, Francis M. Russell, the principal of Cincinnati's Douglass High School, was hired to serve in the capacity of supervisor for all the city's black elementary schools and the Colored Training School, despite protests from various black delegations urging that Russell be given control of all of the city's black schools, including the Colored High School, at the rank of Assistant Superintendent.⁷² A graduate of the University of Cincinnati with over two decades of experience in education in both Kentucky and Ohio, Russell finally arrived in Baltimore in December; however,

⁷⁰ "Survey Shows Up City Schools," *Afro-American*, February 18, 1921; "School Board to Do Something," *Afro-American*, June 23, 1922; "A Trade School for Baltimore," *Afro-American*, June 30, 1922.

⁷¹ "School Board Busy Seeking Supervisor," *Afro-American*, March 17, 1922; "Want Colored Head of Schools," *Afro-American*, May 19, 1922; "Organizations to Petition Board for a School Head," *Afro-American*, May 26, 1922; "Colored Head of Colored Schools," *Afro-American*, May 26, 1922; "Why We Need A Supervisor," *Afro-American*, June 2, 1922; "School Board Seeks Man For A Supervisor," *Afro-American*, June 9, 1922; "Finding a Supervisor," *Afro-American*, June 16, 1922; "\$3,000 Salary Too Little for a Supervisor," *Afro-American*, August 11, 1922.

⁷² "Frank Russell Named Head of City Schools," *Afro-American*, September 22, 1922; "New Supervisor is Expected Here Soon," *Afro-American*, October 6, 1922; "New Supervisor of Schools," *Afro-American*, October 13, 1922; "No Asst. Superintendent To Be Named," *Afro-American*, May 12, 1922; "Report of the Superintendent," *Ninety Third Annual Report of the Board of School Commissioners of Baltimore City to the Mayor and City Council for the Scholastic Year Ending August 31, 1922 and the Fiscal Year Ending Dec. 31, 1922* (Baltimore, MD: no publisher indicated, 1923), 190.

Russell's brief tenure in this position was plagued with problems from the beginning. Russell worked for over a year without a permanent and adequate office and he was denied both a clerical assistant and the funds to repair the automobile provided to him by the city. But the most serious problem effecting Russell's ability to complete his job and fulfill the expectations of the African American community was his limited authority. White supervisors in the city schools still maintained control over the music, drawing, industrial education, home economics, and kindergarten departments; and Russell even lacked the authority to call meetings of teachers and principals of black schools without first receiving permission from the superintendent. As a supervisor, Russell's position was not executive in nature and was only "concerned with the supervision of the work of teachers, methods of teaching and the general improvement of teachers in service." By the summer of 1924, frustrated by his lack of authority and inability to meet the demands and needs of Baltimore's black community, Russell resigned from his position.⁷³

Taking the lead in securing Russell's replacement and ensuring that the authority of the Supervisor position was expanded was the newly established Federation of Parent-Teacher Clubs. This organization was founded in early 1923 pursuant to a call from Francis Russell and under the leadership of the small committee of African Americans

⁷³ "New Supervisor of Colored Schools Arrives in the City," *Afro-American*, December 15, 1922; *Minutes of the Board of School Commissioners*, April 4, 1924, 103; "School Board and Dr. West Embarrass Sup. Russell," *Afro-American*, June 27, 1924; "Many Regret Supervisor Russell's Resignation," *Afro-American*, August 29, 1924; "Board Accepts Resignation," *Afro-American*, August 29, 1924; "Russell's Leaving Timely," *Afro-American*, August 29, 1924; "Supervisor Russell Resigns," *Afro-American*, August 29, 1924; "West Suppresses Russell's Letter of Resignation," *Afro-American*, September 5, 1924. In the hierarchy of organization following the Strayer Survey, positions of authority descended from Superintendent to Assistant Superintendents to Directors to Supervisors to Principals. Thus, the Supervisor was two grade levels below the Assistant Superintendents and one grade beneath the position of Director. As a Supervisor, Russell was on the same level as the city's supervisors of industrial education and household economics, and the six supervisors of white elementary schools. See "Delegation Meets School Board," *Afro-American*, February 22, 1924; "Director Wood," *Afro-American*, July 2, 1927.

who had worked closely with George Strayer's team in ensuring that African American schools were covered in his 1920-1921 survey and that the results were made known to the black community. The Federation united the various individual Parent-Teacher clubs from the city's black public schools under the umbrella of one organization, thereby ensuring a broad citywide membership with greater power to appeal to the city government in matters related to African American education. The Federation also aimed to establish and maintain a close working relationship with the recently established all white Public School Association in order to give further weight to their efforts. The organization was governed by an executive board and a council with two representatives from each African American school, convening meetings at a different school each month across the city. Within two years of its founding, the Federation boasted a broad cross-class membership of over 10,000 with branches at twenty seven black schools across the city.⁷⁴

Laura Dickerson Wheatley was unanimously elected to serve as the Federation's first president, a position that she held into the early 1930s. As a former educator and a consummate race woman with an extended personal history in the realm of education reform, Wheatley was a logical choice for the presidency. Following graduation from high school and the Teachers' Training School in Louisville, Kentucky, Wheatley taught in the city's public school system. Soon thereafter, Wheatley relocated to Baltimore where she obtained a degree from Morgan College and married local physician Edward Wheatley. Unable to continue teaching due to Baltimore's restrictions on married women

⁷⁴ The Federation of Parent-Teacher Clubs initially only included the city's black elementary schools; however, by 1927, the Colored High School and Coppin Training School were part of the Federation. "Plan School Association," *Afro-American*, February 9, 1923; "Mrs. Wheatley Heads the Parent-Teachers," *Afro-American*, May 25, 1923; "School Federation Outlines Program," *Afro-American*, May 16, 1925; "Parent Teacher Federation Meets," *Afro-American*, March 12, 1927.

in the profession, Wheatley instead focused her energies on efforts to secure better educational services for African American children in the city throughout the 1910s. She successfully worked to have African American children admitted to the Spelling Bee given by the *Baltimore News*; campaigned to have School Number 118 located in West Baltimore on Argyle Avenue transferred from white students to black students; served as a spokesman for African American parents before the school board in efforts to secure a new high school; and secured physical improvements at various African American schools in the city. In addition to her activities in improving Baltimore's educational resources for African American children, Wheatley was also involved in other avenues of the struggle for civil rights. As chairman of the Neighborhood Improvement League, she pressured the city government to provide municipal improvements, including street paving and installing streetlights, in black neighborhoods. And in 1921, Wheatley was elected executive director of the local branch of the NAACP following an immensely successful membership campaign under her leadership, which resulted in bringing 2,000 members into the nearly defunct organization. A proven leader with the ability to bring about change for the African American community, Laura D. Wheatley continued to be a leading force in the realm of education as head of the newly formed Federation.⁷⁵

As the Federation coalesced and developed its initial agenda, it found a tremendous asset in Strayer's 1920-1921 survey of the Baltimore public school system and among the Federation's initial campaigns was securing an African American to head

⁷⁵ Robert W. Coleman, *The First Colored Professional, Clerical and Business Directory of Baltimore City* (Baltimore: Published by author, 1927), 4 – 5; Untitled, *Afro-American*, February 9, 1923; "Mass Meeting at AMES," *Afro-American*, October 3, 1919; "Parents League Formed," *Afro-American*, October 17, 1919; "Made Executive Secretary," *Afro-American*, March 4, 1921; "Teachers Hear Mrs. Wheatley," *Afro-American*, October 17, 1925.

all of the city's black schools as recommended in the survey.⁷⁶ Using familiar arguments in the battle for representation in the administration of African American schools, the Federation petitioned the School Board, declaring that:

[o]nly colored people are capable of feeling the present needs of colored people and we must therefore depend upon a colored representative to present our needs and to adequately serve our interests. To do this effectively, an assistant superintendent of colored schools is needed. A colored supervisor has but little authority and a very limited sphere of action where the problems of the colored schools are concerned and we find it impossible to have success trying to influence the action of the school board from the outside alone.”

By not only pushing for an African American to supervise the city's black schools, but also for one in the position of Assistant Superintendent, an executive position with increased power above that of a supervisor and directly beneath the superintendent in the school system's hierarchy, the Federation hoped to address the failures manifest in the tenure of Francis Russell.⁷⁷ Through the fall of 1924 and into the following spring, Federation leaders pressed the School Board and the mayor, through petitions and meetings, to appoint an African American to serve as an Assistant Superintendent with a commensurate salary, in addition to advocating for increased African American representation on the city's school board.⁷⁸

The Federation's demands were partially satisfied by the summer of 1925 with the appointment of Francis M. Wood to the post of Supervisor of Colored Schools, the

⁷⁶ “Readers Discuss School Program,” *Afro-American*, June 29, 1923. Strayer, *Report of the Survey*, v. 2, 18.

⁷⁷ “Federation Asks For Assistant Superintendent,” *Afro-American*, September 19, 1924.

⁷⁸ “Parent-Teachers at City Hall,” *Afro-American*, March 7, 1924; “To Ask Status of New Supervisor,” *Afro-American*, April 25, 1925; “Asks School Board for Special Meeting,” *Afro-American*, May 2, 1925; “School Federation Outlines Program,” *Afro-American*, May 16, 1925; “Director of Colored Schools Asked,” *Afro-American*, May 16, 1925; “Three Delegations Clash in School Board Meeting,” *Afro-American*, May 23, 1925.

position recommended in the Strayer survey and previously held by Francis Russell, but two grades below the desired Assistant Superintendent position advocated by the Federation.⁷⁹ A native of Kentucky, Francis Wood came to Baltimore with close to three decades of service in the realm of African American education in his home state. At the time of his appointment, he served as the president of his alma mater, the State Normal School in Frankfurt, Kentucky. Though some black Baltimoreans objected to Wood's appointment because they desired to see a local African American selected to fill the position, the fact that Wood was not a Baltimorean made him an attractive candidate to the Superintendent and members of the school board who desired to appoint someone from outside the city whom they felt would be "untrammelled by local prejudices," likely believing that a non-Baltimorean would be easier to control.

Upon arriving in Baltimore and assuming his new post, Wood immediately went to work expanding the administration of the city's black schools. Following the Strayer Survey in 1922, one African American woman, Edith Cooper, had been appointed as an assistant supervisor in charge of black elementary schools, but Wood realized that more assistant supervisors were needed to create a more effective administration. Initially, he divided the city's African American schools into three groups and designated an assistant supervisor for each group. A year into Wood's tenure, at the beginning of the 1926-1927

⁷⁹ The school board's initial selection for the Supervisor of Colored Schools was Charles Reynolds, Ph.D., principal of the Booker T. Washington Junior and Senior High School in Norfolk, Virginia. Reynolds was appointed in March 1925 at a salary of \$3,500 a year; however, in May, Reynolds informed school officials that he had decided not to assume the new position. See "Board Appoints New Supervisor of Public Schools," *Afro-American*, March 28, 1925; "New Supervisor Refuses Post In Baltimore," *Afro-American*, May 9, 1925.

For the appointment of Francis Wood, see "School Board Elects Supervisor of Public Schools," *Afro-American*, July 18, 1925; "New Supervisor Welcomed to City By School Board," *Afro-American*, September 5, 1925; Francis M. Wood, "Opportunity for Service in Our Public Schools," *Baltimore Bulletin of Education* 4:2 (November 1925): 38.

school year, he appointed four assistant supervisors of elementary grades, two for the primary grades and two for the intermediate grades, who were responsible for overseeing classroom instruction in their respective group. By the end of the decade, the administration of the city's African American schools had more than doubled with four primary grade assistant supervisors, four intermediate grade assistant supervisors, four junior high assistant supervisors, one assistant in research, three assistant supervisors of health education, one assistant supervisor of art, and one assistant supervisor of music.⁸⁰

In addition to reorganizing and expanding the administration of Baltimore's African American schools, Wood expanded the training opportunities available to the city's African American teachers, addressing a recommendation made in the Strayer Report for the city's entire teaching force.⁸¹ Prior to Wood's tenure, African American teachers, much like other teachers in the city of Baltimore, had few opportunities for teacher development and training. Beginning with the 1925–1926 school year, African American teachers were offered summer school classes at Morgan College in addition to demonstration lessons during the course of the school year. By the second year of this training program, an impressive 75 percent of black elementary school teachers took advantage of the after-school demonstration classes. Simultaneously, partially due to his hard work, Francis Wood was promoted to the position of Director of Colored Schools, a position one rank above his previous position as a supervisor. In subsequent years under

⁸⁰ "One Man Cannot Supervise Schools," *Afro-American*, October 17, 1925; Johnson, 37, 41; "Asst. Supervisors Named for Schools," *Afro-American*, April 10, 1926; *Ninety-Eighth Annual Report of the Board of School Commissioners to the Mayor and City Council for the Scholastic Year Ending August 31, 1927 and the Fiscal Year Ending December 31, 1927* (Baltimore, MD: no publisher indicated, 1928), 66; *One Hundred and First Annual Report of the Board of School Commissioners to the Mayor and City Council for the Scholastic Year Ending August 31, 1930 and the Fiscal Year Ending December 31, 1930* (Baltimore, MD: No publisher indicated, 1931), 174–175.

⁸¹ Strayer, *Report of the Survey*, v. 2, v – vii.

Director Wood's leadership, teacher training was further expanded to include lectures from noted educators, group and grade level meetings, and courses that trained teachers in a newly instituted testing program for city students.⁸²

Though the hiring of an African American to oversee the administration of the city's black schools and the expansion of training opportunities for black teachers were important recommendations made in the Strayer Report that were realized, the mass of African Americans were concerned with the recommendations made in the survey's first volume regarding school buildings. Through the 1920s, a variety of African American leaders and organizations worked to improve the physical infrastructure of Baltimore's black school system through the addition of both older and new school buildings with the Federation of Parent-Teacher Clubs often at the forefront of this movement. The earliest school building addition for African Americans during this decade was School Number 112, a new elementary school on Laurens and Calhoun streets in Northwest Baltimore whose construction predated formation of the Federation as well as the completion of the Strayer Report. City officials entered into a contract for construction of School Number 112 in 1920, which was completed and occupied during the 1920-1921 school year.⁸³ A second addition for African American schools, which also predated the formation of the

⁸² Johnson, 41 – 42; *Ninety Seventh Annual Report of the Board of School Commissioners of Baltimore City to the Mayor and City Council for the Scholastic Year Ending August 31, 1926 and the Fiscal Year Ending December 31, 1926* (Baltimore, MD: No publisher indicated, 1927), 45–47; *Ninety Eighth Annual Report of the Board of School Commissioners*, 66–67; *One Hundred and First Annual Report of the Board of School Commissioners*, 174. On promotion of Wood, see “Director Wood,” *Afro-American*, July 2, 1927; “Francis M. Wood Made Sch. Director,” *Afro-American*, July 2, 1927. At this time, there were Supervisors of Home Economics, Home Gardening, School Buildings, Drawing, Music, and Industrial Education. There were Directors of Physical Education and Americanization.

⁸³ *Ninety-First Annual Report of the Board of School Commissioners*, 7; *Ninety-Second Annual Report of the Board of School Commissioners*, 6; “Public Shower Baths Open at School 112,” *Afro-American*, March 10, 1922.

Federation and the completion of the Strayer Survey was an African American parental school for the city's black truant population. Funds for the parental school were appropriated by the city's Board of Estimates at the beginning of 1921, representing the realization of a struggle waged by African Americans for over a decade. By the end of the 1921 – 1922 school year, two portable buildings had been erected for use as a parental school on the grounds of the Maryland Home for Friendless Colored Children just outside the city limits in Catonsville.⁸⁴

The addition of these two school buildings for African Americans were an important advancement for Baltimore's black community, particularly considering the few additions made during the course of the 1910s. However, these additions, particularly the construction of School Number 112 on Laurens and Calhoun streets, did little to solve the problems plaguing African American schools as overcrowding and half-time classes persisted. Within roughly a year of opening School Number 112, school officials had to erect four portable buildings at the school to accommodate the surplus of students and the school had eight half-time classes. But the overcrowding in other black schools proved to be just as bad if not worse for two other black schools also had eight half-time classes and two schools, School Number 101 and Number 104, had double that amount. In the fall of 1923, an estimated one-third of African American children in Baltimore were forced to attend school on a half-time basis due to overcrowding.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ "\$10,000 Lays Idle," *Afro-American*, March 4, 1921; "Parental School To Be Establish," *Afro-American*, July 22, 1921; "New Contract for Parental School," *Afro-American*, October 13, 1922; *Ninety-Third Annual Report of the Board of School Commissioners*, 197.

⁸⁵ *Ninety-Fourth Annual Report of the Board of School Commissioners of Baltimore City to the Mayor and City Council for the Scholastic Year Ending August 31, 1923* (Baltimore, MD: No publisher indicated, 1924), 6 – 7; "Thousands Get Only Half-Time Education," *Afro-American*, September 14, 1923; "Half-Time Classes Create School Problem," *Afro-American*, September 28, 1923; "Thousands of City's

Overcrowding as well as the deplorable conditions in African American schools were detailed extensively in the Strayer Report and these conditions continued in the years immediately following the report's publication.⁸⁶ However, the Strayer Report provided a critical blueprint for addressing these issues. Using the report as a guide to improve Baltimore's schools in a "scientific manner" in the words of School Board president Isaac Field, the Board developed a plan for new school construction. Shortly following the survey, the Board, in consultation with Dr. George Strayer, developed the "first ten school buildings project," which designated the first ten new schools to be built in Baltimore to satisfy the most urgent needs as stipulated by the Strayer Report. The plan relied upon a recently appropriated six million dollars for the school system. Among the first ten building projects were two new school buildings for African American students, a new building for the Colored High School and a new black elementary school in Northwest Baltimore.⁸⁷

Plans for the construction of a new high school for black Baltimoreans met a demand of the city's black community that extended back to the beginning years of the previous decade. In 1912, Harry S. Cummings, the city's first black councilman, introduced a bill to appropriate \$400,000 for the construction of a new high school

School Kiddies Able to Get Only Half-Time Education," *Afro-American*, October 5, 1923; "Supt. Henry West Admits School Overcrowding," *Afro-American*, October 12, 1923 (2,356 whites in half-time classes compared to 4,588 blacks); "Kindergarten Held in Basement," *Afro-American*, November 30, 1923; "Board Sleeps on School Problem," *Afro-American*, February 15, 1924.

⁸⁶ "School Toilets Are Held Unsanitary," *Afro-American*, March 7, 1924; "Four Hi Teachers Made Regular," *Afro-American*, March 14, 1924; "Silence Painful in Board Meeting," *Afro-American*, April 25, 1925.

⁸⁷ *Ninety-Second Annual Report of the Board of School Commissioners*, 4, 6; *Ninety-Third Annual Report of the Board of School Commissioners*, 183; *Ninety-Fifth Annual Report of the Board of School Commissioners of Baltimore City to the Mayor and City Council for the Scholastic Year Ending August 31, 1924 and the Fiscal Year Ending December 31, 1924* (Baltimore, MD: No publisher indicated, 1925), 40.

building to accommodate a growing student body and replace the existing twenty-year old building. In the short period from 1908 to 1913, the student population grew by 30 percent and continued to grow in subsequent years.⁸⁸ This bill received the support of a number of leaders within the African American community, including future Federation president Laura Wheatley, who investigated the overcrowding, poor equipment, and lack of special rooms in the Colored High School in order to report these conditions before the Board of Estimates, urging them to seek funds for a new high school.⁸⁹ One of the largest organizations involved in the fight to have a new high school constructed was the Alumni Association of the Colored High School, which proposed a number of solutions from constructing a completely new building to relocating the Colored High School's student body to the building which housed the all white and all girls Western High School.⁹⁰

In 1921, following the Strayer Survey, the city finally moved forward with demands to build a new African American high school by securing property formerly occupied by the white Maryland Industrial Training School for Girls in Northwest Baltimore for the price of \$100,000 in order to construct a new combined high school and junior high school for black Baltimoreans.⁹¹ But even beyond this point, members of the Alumni Association maintained pressure on city officials, requesting certain equipment

⁸⁸ "Wants \$400,000 For High School," *Afro American*, February 3, 1912; "New Building for High School Badly Needed," *Afro American*, July 4, 1914; Insert more enrollment/attendance information from Douglass High School.

⁸⁹ "School Board Urges New School Building," *Afro-American*, November 16, 1912.

⁹⁰ Untitled Advertisement, *Afro-American*, January 30, 1915; "New High School Urged," *Afro-American*, February 27, 1915; "Would Turn Over Western High School," *Afro-American*, June 28, 1918; "Action of the Alumni Association of the Colored High School," *Afro-American*, July 5, 1918; "School Board Asked for New High School," *Afro-American*, April 22, 1921.

⁹¹ *Ninety-Second Annual Report of the Board of School Commissioners*, 6; "Site for High School Bought," *Afro-American*, December 9, 1921.

be installed in the new school and charting the building's progress, ensuring that the new school reached completion in spite of numerous delays.⁹² After over two years of construction and almost four years after purchase of the site, the Frederick Douglass Senior-Junior High School opened for classes on September 8, 1925 on the corner of Carey and Baker streets. The modern building boasted thirty two classrooms, a library, two gyms, three study halls, and a variety of other special rooms to accommodate eighty-seven teachers and 2,400 students. The site also served as the home of a new vocational school for African American boys. It was the realization of a long held educational goal for African Americans in Baltimore that was spurred to fruition by the Strayer Report.⁹³

With the opening of the Frederick Douglass Senior-Junior High School in the fall of 1925, only one school building for African Americans on the School Board's first ten buildings plan remained uncompleted. This last item on the list, popularly referred to as "Project Ten," called for the construction of a new elementary school building for

⁹² Members of the Alumni Association made an unsuccessful request for a pipe organ and a swimming pool be included in the new high school building. See "Preliminary Plans for High School Discusst," *Afro-American*, February 24, 1922; "Pool and Organ Not in High School Plans," *Afro-American*, March 17, 1922. A number of problems delayed the construction and opening of the new high school, including razing a building on the site, which they previously thought could be salvaged, a malfunctioning heating system, and a delay in approving equipment for the building. See "Strayer Survey Errs by 7 Years," *Afro-American*, February 16, 1923; "Douglass High School Delay Scored at Board Meet," *Afro-American*, April 11, 1925; "Equipment for Hi School Approved," *Afro-American*, June 27, 1925.

⁹³ "New Million Dollar High School Accepted by School Board," *Afro-American*, December 20, 1924; Cover Page, *Baltimore Bulletin of Education* 4:1 (September/October 1925); "2000 Witness Dedication of Douglass High," *Afro-American*, December 12, 1925; "Douglass High School Dedicated," *Baltimore Bulletin of Education* 4:4 (January 1926): 82

The vocational school for African American boys, which was another recommendation of the Strayer Report, opened prior to the high school in the spring of 1925 in a building adjoining the building. A vocational school for African American girls also opened on the site in the 1926-1927 school year. The schools offered black boys and girls an opportunity to pursue a two-year course in a variety of trades, including dressmaking, tailoring, electric shoe repairing, carpentry, cabinet making, and auto mechanics. The school was open to students who were at least 14 years of age and had completed the sixth grade. See Joseph C. Briscoe, "The Colored Vocational School," *Baltimore Bulletin of Education* 6:1 (September/October 1927): 17 – 18; Joseph C. Briscoe, "Trade Education for Colored Boys and Girls," *Baltimore Bulletin of Education* 7:3 (December 1928).

African Americans in Northwest Baltimore. Of the eight schools for white children on this initial building program, five were completed by the first half of 1924 and the remaining three schools were in various states of construction. Additionally, city officials had begun a second building program of sixteen schools, all for white Baltimoreans, of which one was completed and four were in the process of construction. Yet, Project Ten had not even been started, drawing the ire of many within the African American community.⁹⁴

By 1924, delegations from the Federation of Parent-Teacher Clubs, led by Laura Wheatley, became a regular presence at school board meetings in order to voice African American concerns, and especially to lobby for the construction of Project Ten. Coming before the school board in early 1924, Wheatley and Federation members advocated for a new elementary school building for African American children in Northwest Baltimore, emphasizing that three years had passed since the completion of the Strayer Survey and there still had been no movement to bring this particular project to fruition. In pushing for the completion of this project, the Federation counted upon and received the support of the Public School Association, a white organization in the city that had pushed for a survey of the city's public schools and cooperated in the completion of the Strayer survey. Its leader, Marie Bauernschmidt, pledged her support for Project Ten and vowed that the Association would not cease action until this project was completed.⁹⁵

⁹⁴ *Ninety-Fifth Annual Report of the Board of School Commissioners of Baltimore City to the Mayor and City Council for the Scholastic Year Ending August 31, 1924 and the Fiscal Year Ending December 31, 1924* (Baltimore, MD: No publisher indicated, 1925), 40–41.

⁹⁵ Sherry H. Olson, *Baltimore: The Building of an American City* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 306; Robert J. Brugger, *Maryland, A Middle Temperament: 1634 – 1980* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 510; *School and Society* 13 (January 1921), 468. The Public School Association, a relatively young organization in the city, had been established less than five years earlier in 1920 by a group of white citizens concerned with education reform led by Walter

Despite the agitation of the Federation and the support of the Public School Association, in the spring of 1924, the School Board announced that it had abandoned plans for Project Ten after cycling through various reasons for delaying the project from the inability to find suitable land to promising to turn over the Western High School building, an all-white girls school on McCulloh and Lafayette streets in Northwest Baltimore, for use as an African American elementary school.⁹⁶ In the face of this pronouncement, the Federation did not abandon its fight to have this new school constructed and sent another delegation to appeal to Mayor Howard Jackson. The mayor reaffirmed his support of all the recommendations set forth by the Strayer Survey and promised to push for the completion of the new school. The Federation followed their appeal to mayor with another petition to the school board.⁹⁷ Under leadership of the Federation, numerous African American organizations mobilized to have Project Ten resurrected including the NAACP, the Defense League and the Women's Cooperative Civic League. Adopting resolutions, circulating petitions, and staging mass meetings, these organizations worked to try to force the School Board to rescind its decision. At a mass meeting held at School Number 112 in Northwest Baltimore on Calhoun and

Hollander, a local businessman who advocated progressive education. Marie Bauernschmidt, who was involved in a number of civic movements in Baltimore, particularly those focused on children and mothers of the working class, agreed to serve as the organization's first Executive Secretary. Bauernschmidt's husband, William, was the son of a wealthy Baltimore brewer, and she was able to rely upon the resources accrued due to her husband's wealth in addition to her own organizational experience and skills, to support her educational activism as she appealed for educational reforms before the School Board, City Council, and Mayor. Winifred G. Helmes, ed. *Notable Maryland Women* (Cambridge, MD: Tidewater Publishers, 1977), 24–30.

⁹⁶ "Delegation Meets School Board," *Afro-American*, February 22, 1924; "Mass Meetings Are Planned," *Afro-American*, March 28, 1924.

⁹⁷ "Parent-Teachers At City Hall," *Afro-American*, March 7, 1924; "Lack of School Room Cited," *Afro-American*, March 21, 1924; "Mass Meetings Are Planned," *Afro-American*, March 28, 1924.

Laurens streets in March 1924 under the auspices of the Federation, representatives of these various organizations gathered to adopt resolutions to be sent to the mayor, school board, and the Public Improvement Commission emphasizing the need for a new black elementary school. And once again, Marie Bauernschmidt of the Public School Association vowed her organization's support of this initiative.⁹⁸

By the end of 1924, largely through the efforts of the Federation in cooperation with the Public School Association, the School Board had reversed its decision to abandon Project Ten and secured land on Preston Street in the midst of the area known as the "Lung Block" in Northwest Baltimore as part of a plan to help clean up the neighborhood. The city committed a half million dollars for the construction of the new school.⁹⁹ The following year, the cornerstone for School Number 122 was finally laid, accompanied by a ceremony where both Laura Wheatley and Marie Bauernschmidt gave remarks, representing the importance of their respective organizations in working to achieve this accomplishment.¹⁰⁰ Within another year, construction of the new school was complete and in June 1927 over 600 African American children marched from School Number 103A and Number 103B on Druid Hill Avenue to their new large and well-equipped building on Preston Street between Druid Hill and Pennsylvania Avenues, named the Samuel Coleridge Taylor School. The first floor of the building included both a wood and sheet metal working department and on the second floor, there were sewing

⁹⁸ "School Board Abandons No. 10 Project," *Afro-American*, March 28, 1924.

⁹⁹ *Ninety-Sixth Annual Report of the Board of School Commissioners of Baltimore City to the Mayor and City Council For the Scholastic Year Ending August 31, 1925 and Fiscal Year Ending December 31, 1925* (Baltimore, MD: Board of Public School Commissioners, 1926), 9; "New School in the Heart of the Lung Block," *Afro-American*, January 31, 1925.

¹⁰⁰ "Cornerstone Laid for New School," *Afro-American*, June 26, 1926.

and cooking departments, which boasted a model apartment furnished with a living room, bedroom, bathroom, and kitchenette. The school also housed a model kindergarten with playroom equipment and a bath department, which was open to the general public, revealing how this new school not only provided services for African American children, but their families as well. The entire building held seventeen classrooms and space for school doctors and nurses.¹⁰¹

The completion of Project Ten with the opening of the Samuel Coleridge Taylor School proved to be a monumental victory on the part of the Federation of Parent-Teacher Clubs, but it only represented a portion of the work of this organization in helping to improve conditions for African American schoolchildren in Baltimore. Federation meetings were an opportunity for individual Parent-Teacher clubs to report the “deplorable conditions” that existed in various African American schools, which included the presence of polluted drinking water or the complete absence of it, inadequate fire protection, and unsanitary toilets. With the assistance of the executive council of the Federation, Parent-Teacher organizations in individual schools worked to alleviate these conditions through bringing them to the attention of the school board. These petitions for improvements were complemented by the Federation’s battle to increase available

¹⁰¹ “Asks Supervisor To Sit Tight on School Problems,” *Afro-American*, March 12, 1927; “S. Coleridge Taylor School Turned Over,” *Afro-American*, February 12, 1927; “New School Jewel in Bad Setting,” *Afro-American*, June 18, 1927.

funding for repairs in African American schools.¹⁰² The Federation also battled for more African American doctors to be employed in African American schools.¹⁰³

To provide more schools for the city's black children beyond the construction of new schools, the Federation monitored the attendance of various white schools, regularly petitioning the school board to turn over white schools to black students when white enrollment decreased mirroring the changing demographics in the school's neighborhood. By the end of the 1920s, ten white elementary schools had been turned over to the African American community.¹⁰⁴ Through these efforts, the number of black children attending school in makeshift classrooms decreased by over 65 percent and the number of black schoolchildren attending school on a half-time basis was almost eliminated, decreasing by over 75 percent over the course of ten years.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² "Federation Meeting," *Afro-American*, December 7, 1923; "West Baltimore Asks Junior Hi," *Afro-American*, June 19, 1926; "Federation Fights Cut in School Repairs," *Afro-American*, November 6, 1926; "Federation Asks Segregated School Loan," *Afro-American*, January 15, 1927.

¹⁰³ "Federation Asks More Race Doctors," *Afro-American*, January 7, 1928.

¹⁰⁴ The schools turned over were Number 8 on Caroline and Lombard Sts., Number 11 on Gilmor and Mosher Sts., Number 12 on Barre and Warner Sts., Number 16 on Harford Rd. and Ashland Avenue, Number 21 on Pennsylvania Avenue and Robert St., Number 26 on Orleans and Bond Sts., Number 29 on Sharpe and West Sts., Number 31 on Schroeder and Pierce Sts., Number 39 on Carrollton and Riggs Avenues, and Number 80 on Federal and Eden Sts. The Federation of Parent-Teacher Clubs was directly involved in at least three of these schools being turned over: Number 12, Number 21, and Number 39. Number 39 located on Carrollton and Riggs Avenue had previously served as an African American school and was the first school in Baltimore to have an entire black faculty. See "Riggs Avenue School To Be Turned Over," *Afro-American*, October 26, 1923; "New School is Turned Over," *Afro-American*, November 9, 1923; "Our Public Schools," *Afro-American*, December 14, 1923; "Our Public Schools," *Afro-American*, December 21, 1923; "Delegation Meets School Board," *Afro-American*, February 22, 1924; "City Schools Open With 2500 in 60 Part Time Classes," *Afro-American*, September 12, 1924; "Contracts Just Let for High Equipment," *Afro-American*, February 21, 1925; "School 101 to Be a Junior High," *Afro-American*, March 14, 1925; "Silence Painful in Board Meeting," *Afro-American*, April 25, 1925; "School Building Change Here Marks Housing Expansion," *Afro-American*, March 20, 1926; "Two New Elementary Schools Turned Over," *Afro-American*, May 15, 1926; *Directory of the Public Schools of Baltimore, 1929 – 1930* (Baltimore, MD: No publisher indicated, 1929), 58.

¹⁰⁵ *One Hundred and First Annual Report of the Board of School Commissioners*, 160.

The Federation was also active in the campaign to have the all-white Western High School for girls located in Northwest Baltimore on Lafayette and McCulloh streets converted into a junior high school for African American students. By the fall of 1927, the city had agreed to allocate funds to remodel the building for use by African Americans and the following spring, the old Western High School was occupied as the new home of the Booker T. Washington Junior High, the Fannie J. Coppin Normal School, and the offices of Francis M. Wood, Director of Colored Schools. The opening of this school marked an important step in expanding junior high school education into the African American community for it had not existed at the time of the Strayer Survey. Sixteen junior high schools were established across the city of Baltimore during the decade of which four were schools for black students.¹⁰⁶

By the end of the 1920s, the state of education in Baltimore had greatly improved for all the city's schoolchildren. Dr. George Strayer, whose extensive survey of the school system had served as an important catalyst for change, praised the Baltimore school system, noting numerous advancements:

The schools of Baltimore have improved greatly during the past ten years. Better buildings and equipment have been provided; courses of study and curricula have been revised; teachers have shown a high professional spirit in their classrooms; and the administration and supervision of the schools have been greatly improved.

And for each of these areas of improvement, African Americans could proudly boast that black schoolchildren benefitted from these changes. Strayer's Survey had served as a

¹⁰⁶ "City May Get Second Million Dollar School," *Afro-American*, July 9, 1927; "Western High School Ready By January 1," *Afro-American*, September 24, 1927; "Western High School to Become Junior Hi and Normal School," *Afro-American*, October 1, 1927; "Western Hi Repairs from School Loan," *Afro-American*, April 28, 1928; "Board Names New School Booker T.," *Afro-American*, October 13, 1928; *Ninety-Ninth Annual Report of the Board of School Commissioners of Baltimore City to the Mayor and City Council For the Scholastic Year Ending August 31, 1928 and the Fiscal Year Ending December 31, 1928* (Baltimore, MD: No publisher indicated, 1929), 20, 59; *One Hundredth Annual Report of the Board of School Commissioners*, 104; Weglein, "The Baltimore Junior High Schools," *Baltimore Bulletin of Education* 7:6 (March 1929): 123–124.

critical roadmap for city officials as they addressed the wide range of problems that plagued the Baltimore public school system. For the city's black population, however, the

Table 3.4 African American Schools in Baltimore, 1930

School Number and/or Name	Street Location	Year Main Building Erected
Coppin Normal School (No. 401)	McCulloh St. and Lafayette Avenue	No date given
Frederick Douglass SR/JR High (No. 450)	Calhoun & Baker Sts. And Annex A on Pennsylvania Ave and Dolphin St.	1925?
School No. 100- Joseph Harrison Lockerman School	Mount & Saratoga Streets	1896
School No. 101- Dunbar Jr. High School	Jefferson and Caroline Sts.	1916
School No. 102	Jefferson and Bond Sts.	1884/1890
School No. 103- Henry Highland Garnet School	Division St. near Lanvale St.	1877
School No. 104- Robert Brown Elliott School	Carey and School Sts.	1897
School No. 105	East St. near Lexington (Rogers Ave near Lexington)	No date given
School No. 106- Jr. High School	Hill St. near Sharp	1893
School No. 110- Phyllis Wheatley School	Waesche St. near Fremont Avenue	1877
School No. 111	Carrollton and Riggs Aves	1889?
School No. 112	Laurens & Calhoun Sts.	1921?

School No. 113- Benjamin Banneker School	Federal and Carter Streets	No date given
School No. 113A (Formerly 115)	Merryman's Lane near York Road	1889
School No. 114	Caroline St. near Lombard	No date given
School No. 114A (Formerly 108)	Caroline St. near Bank	1867
School No. 117	Barre and Warner Sts.	No date given
School No. 118	Argyle Ave near Lanvale St	No date given
School No. 119	Gilmor and Mosher Sts.	No date given
School No. 120	Pennsylvania Ave and Robert St.	No date given
School No. 121	Sharp St. near West	No date given
School No. 122- Samuel Taylor Coleridge School	Preston St. between Druid Hill and Pennsylvania Aves.	1927
School No. 124 (Formerly 101A)	Orleans St. near Bond	No date given
School No. 125	Pennsylvania Ave and Dolphin St	1893
School No. 126 (Formerly 106A)	Sharp St. near Montgomery	No date given
School No. 127 (Formerly 103A)	Biddle St. near Pennsylvania Ave.	1870
School No. 128	Schroeder and Pierce Sts	No date given
School No. 129	Harford and Ashland Ave.	No date given
School No. 130- Booker T. Washington Jr. High School	McCulloh St. and Lafayette Avenue	No date given
School No. 154- Fairfield School	7th St. btw 2nd & 3rd Aves.	No date given
School No. 155- Lauraville School	Arlington and Adams Ave, Govans	No date given
School No. 156-	Center St. between	No date given

Morrell Park School	Morgan and Warner (Mt. Winans)	
School No. 158- Roland Park School	Falls Road near Cold Spring Lane	No date given
Colored Parental School (No. 175)	Ellicott City, MD	No date given
No. 452- Colored Vocational School (For Boys)	Carey St. near Cumberland	No date given
No. 453- Colored Vocational School (For Girls)	Calhoun and Gold Sts.	1905

Source: *Directory of Public Schools*

Strayer's Survey and its recommendations were only the first step in ameliorating conditions for black schoolchildren. Under the leadership of the Federation of Parent-Teacher Clubs and Francis M. Wood, the Director of Colored Schools, African Americans in Baltimore waged a battle with roots in previous decades to ensure that white officials in the city addressed the needs of their community. Strayer's survey served as an important guide and often as confirmation of changes that members of the African American community had been requesting for over a decade. However, though the survey offered important confirmation, it still required black activism to ensure that its recommendations came to fruition. It was only through constant agitation that black

Baltimoreans were able to realize significant improvements during the course of the 1920s as well as pave the way for further advancements in the following decade.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁷ At the end of the 1920s, school officials had developed another program of construction for the following decade that would continue to meet the demands of the African American community. This building program was comprised of fourteen projects of which five were projects designated for African American students. It included additions to School Number 113 in East Baltimore and School Number 122 in Northwest Baltimore, a new elementary school in Northwest Baltimore, and a new junior high school in East Baltimore, which would open in 1932 as the Dunbar Junior High School and pave the way for the Dunbar Senior High School, the city's second black high school, which awarded its first diploma in 1940. It also included plans for the conversion of the old Western High School into a junior high school, which had been completed prior to the end of the decade. See *One Hundred and First Annual Report of the Board of School Commissioners*, 86 – 87; Elzee C. Gladden and Jessie B. Gladden, "The Dunbar Chronicle: A Case Study," *The Journal of Negro Education* 57:3 (Summer 1988), 372–373.

Chapter Four

“Common Interest in the Welfare of the City”: African American Women’s Social Welfare Activism and Interracial Cooperation

By the 1930s, the annual Flower Mart sponsored by the Women’s Cooperative Civic League (WCCL) was a long-standing and well-known tradition in the Baltimore African American community, one that would continue well into the remainder of the twentieth century. Held initially in 1914 on the front lawn of the Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Northwest Baltimore, this annual fundraising event for the WCCL quickly grew in scope and significance, with proceeds quadrupling over the course of its first decade.¹ Walking through the mart, visitors encountered lavishly decorated booths and tents with a variety of items for sale, including flowers, men’s and women’s clothing, books, and an assortment of food and drink. Over the years, the Flower Mart also featured a variety of forms of entertainment such as glee club musical performances, doll carriage parades, pony rides, readings from a fortune-teller, and various types of demonstrations staged by city schoolchildren.² For Baltimore’s black middle-class, particularly its women, the event was a highly anticipated social affair where one could “mingle with the throng, to hear their gay chatter, to note the forecast in

¹ The Flower Mart was a fundraiser for the Women’s Cooperative Civic League and patterned after the annual Flower Mart sponsored by the Women’s Civic League. It was held regularly from 1914 through the 1960s in a number of locations in Northwest Baltimore: Perkins Square, Lafayette Square, Druid Hill Park. By the 1970s, there was only one Flower Mart held in Baltimore under the auspices of both the Women’s Cooperative Civic League and the Women’s Civic League. “An Interesting Out-Door Event,” *Afro-American*, May 16, 1914; “Report of Flower Mart,” *Afro-American*, June 26, 1915; “Women’s Civic League Makes Mart Report,” *Afro-American*, August 8, 1925; “100 Years Later, Flowermart Still Blooming,” *Baltimore Sun*, May 5, 2011.

² “Women’s Cooperative Civic League Flower Mart,” *The Town: A Civic Journal* 2: 25 – 26 (May 20 – 27, 1916): 2; “Flower Mart Is Social Event of Next Week,” *Afro-American*, May 21, 1927; “Annual Flower Mart Proves Usual Success Here Friday,” *Afro-American*, June 15, 1929; “17th Annual Flower Mart Excels All Other Celebrations,” *Afro-American*, May 24, 1930.

summer styles as indicated in their exquisite raiment.” Described in the Baltimore *Afro-American* newspaper as “feminine,” “dainty,” “refined,” and “societish,” the annual Flower Mart became an established gathering where the elite of black Baltimore socialized and displayed their status in the community. And as articulated by Augusta T. Chissell, one of the founders of the WCCL and a chairman of the Flower Mart, the event held even greater significance for middle-class black women as “an expression of [their] cultural development.”³

Although the Flower Mart and similar cultural activities of the WCCL figure more prominently in popular accounts of the organization, these events often obscure a fuller history of the organization and reflect the often-ignored activism of African American women to which others have called attention.⁴ On the surface, the importance of the Flower Mart is its role as a long-standing social affair for Baltimore’s black middle class, but the event’s significance extended beyond its social role to its importance in generating funds for the operation of the WCCL and enabling the organization to institute and continue a much broader civic program aimed at improving the social welfare of the city’s African American community which was a part of, and not separate from, the struggle for civil rights. Established in 1913 under the leadership of Sarah Collins Fernandis, an African American social worker with an established record in improving the social welfare of African American communities in various locales for over a decade, the WCCL brought together middle-class African American women from across

³ “Nancy to Naila,” *Afro-American*, June 4, 1927; “Glorify Women At Flower Mart, Men Out of Place,” *Afro-American*, June 2, 1928; “The Afro Appreciates the Commendation of This Worthy Organization Which it is Always Ready to Serve,” *Afro-American*, June 28, 1930.

⁴ Cynthia Neverdon-Morton, *Afro-American Women of the South and the Advancement of the Race, 1895–1925* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1989).

Baltimore. Through the WCCL, these women were able to address the social welfare of the black community by attacking the range of ills plaguing black families in the urban environment, particularly problems related to the neighborhood and home.⁵

The “race women” of the WCCL, many with their own personal histories of activism in the African American community, assembled together under the umbrella of this organization to serve as “spokesmen” for the black community and “intervene with the City Hall,” to ensure that the municipal government provided social and municipal services to the African American community, equal to those services provided to the white community, thereby emphasizing that these services should be accorded to all citizens of the city regardless of race.⁶ In fighting for improved social and municipal services, these women were also asserting these issues were a central part of the struggle for civil rights similar to the women of the Women’s Convention of the National Baptist Convention discussed in the work of Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham whose 1913 manifesto “What We Want and What We Must Have” listed improved sanitation and properly paved streets alongside more traditional civil rights concerns such as voting

⁵ In using the term “social welfare,” I am using the definition used by scholars Iris Carlton-LaNey and Sandra Carlton Alexander in their work on African American women in the field of social welfare at the turn of the twentieth century. Carlton-LaNey and Alexander’s work begins by giving the narrow and broad definitions of social welfare. The narrow definition includes “public or voluntary nonprofit functions of society that are aimed at alleviating distress and poverty.” The broader definition includes “a national system of programs, benefits, and services designed to assist people in meeting those social, economic, educational, and health needs that are essential to maintain a functioning society.” Carlton-LaNey and Alexander argue that “race women” of the early twentieth century defined social welfare in a manner that combined elements of both of these definitions in their work to protect women, children, and the elderly; battle issues related to the home and neighborhood; and address educational needs within the black community. This definition aptly describes the philosophy and actions of the African American women engaged in social welfare activism through the WCCL. See Iris Carlton-LaNey and Sandra Carlton Alexander, “Early African American Social Welfare Pioneer Women: Working to Empower the Race and the Community,” *Journal of Ethnic & Cultural Diversity in Social Work* 10:2 (2001), 68–69.

⁶ *History of Women’s Civic League of Baltimore, 1911 – 1936* (Baltimore: Lord Baltimore Press, 1937), 69.

rights, equal accommodations in public transportation, and an end to lynching.⁷ Additionally, the program of the WCCL not only consisted of pressuring the city government, but it also consisted of a program of education for the African American community, emphasizing the importance of self-help to these African American leaders. These actions reflected the politics of respectability often found among the middle-class, a strategy that emphasized the importance of teaching and ensuring “respectable” behavior for the mass of African Americans, which included cleanliness and orderliness, in order to garner esteem and the extension of rights from white America.⁸

The founding of the WCCL is also significant in that it represented an important advancement in interracial cooperation in the struggle for civil rights in Baltimore, revealing how the women of the city were in the vanguard of this movement. Prior to 1913, white and black Baltimoreans had very limited cooperation in programs or movements related to the struggle for civil rights. The most extensive cooperation to date occurred with the work of the Colored Law and Order League during the first decade of the twentieth century. A group of leading African American men established the Law and Order League in the wake of the Atlanta race riot of 1906 and in completing its work, relied upon the assistance of a small committee of influential whites in Baltimore headed by Johns Hopkins University president Daniel Coit Gilman in order to pressure the city government to address vice and crime in African American neighborhoods. However,

⁷ Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880–1920* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 221–222.

⁸ In addition to cleanliness and orderliness, the politics of respectability also emphasized such values as temperance, chastity, industriousness, refined manners, and thrift. For more on the politics of respectability see Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent*, 14–15; Victoria W. Wolcott, *Remaking Respectability: African American Women in Interwar Detroit* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 4–6.

this short-lived and limited movement did not result in the institutionalization of interracial cooperation within the African American community.⁹ However, the founding of the WCCL represented the institutionalization of interracial cooperation among Baltimore's white and black women for the WCCL was organized as a response to a call from leaders of the all-white Women's Civic League. The Civic League, a product of the Progressive Movement, was established in 1911 as a means for these women to organize around issues concerning the neighborhood and home environments, especially the improvement and expansion of municipal services. Within two years, the WCCL was created as an auxiliary organization to the all-white female organization, thereby providing African American women with the institutional and organizational framework to ensure that the work of the Civic League also extended to the African American community. Essential to completing this goal was the cooperation of white women within the Civic League who often served as mediators to those in power within the city government for the black women of the WCCL and by extension, the entire African American community.¹⁰ By cooperating with the women of the Civic League as they

⁹ For more information on the founding and work of the Colored Law and Order League, see "Licenses Revoked in Baltimore," *The Survey* 20, 243; "Cooperation in Baltimore," *Southern Workman* 44: 5, (May 1915), 261 – 262; James H.N. Waring, *Work of the Colored Law and Order League* (Baltimore, Md., Cheyney, PA: Committee of Twelve for the Advancement of the Interests of the Negro Race, 1908).

¹⁰ My discussion of interracial cooperation and mediation draws upon the work of Sarah Judson on African American women in Atlanta during the opening decades of the twentieth century. Her work examines how the black women of the Neighborhood Union engaged in public health work and how this work intersected with the work of white women in the Atlanta Anti-Tuberculosis Association. In her analysis, Judson differentiates between interracial cooperation and mediation, arguing that the former occurs when two groups "create a synergy so that specific goals of each group are relatively satisfied," while the latter is a "strategy for working with an established power structure, with the agency coming from the side of the group with less power." In her work, Judson solely focuses on African American women as mediators for the entire black community; however, my work places more emphasis on the mediation of white women of the Women's Civic League who served as a bridge between African American women of the WCCL and the city government. In focusing on this type of mediation, I am emphasizing its importance as a strategy for the African American women of the WCCL who realized this type of mediation was important to the success of their program. Additionally, in contrast to the argument advanced by Judson, I

gained increasing influencing in the opening decades of the twentieth century, African American women of the WCCL proved to be savvy navigators of the racial landscape who realized that their direct appeals to those in power would be strengthened by the cooperation of white women and that the successful completion of their goals may also require allowing these white women to serve as spokesmen at City Hall on behalf of the African American community. And though gender solidarity was surely not the guiding force behind this interracial cooperation, it still allowed for women of both races to satisfy their goals regarding social welfare for all Baltimoreans and creating a cleaner and healthier city.¹¹

The all-white Women's Civic League was born out of a meeting of six members of Baltimore's elite class in January 1911 at the grand Mount Vernon home of Elizabeth Platt Jencks and her husband Francis M. Jencks, an esteemed capitalist and president of the Safe Deposit Company of New York. Those assembled desired to establish a civic organization of white women across the city to address a host of issues plaguing the environment of the city and infringing upon the ability of Baltimoreans to live in clean and peaceful neighborhoods including unpaved or poorly paved streets, lack of adequate

see this mediation as part of what can be called interracial cooperation and not something separate from it. In analyzing the work and especially the written reports of the work of the Women's Civic League and the WCCL, cooperation, both interracial and cooperation with the city government, was an essential component of their work and aptly describes how they viewed their work. See Sarah Judson, "Civil Rights and Civic Health: African American Women's Public Health Work in Early Twentieth-Century Atlanta," *NWSA Journal* 11:3 (Autumn 1999), 93–111.

¹¹ As noted by historian Glenda Gilmore in her study of North Carolina, gender solidarity was not a driving force for interracial contact and cooperation among black and white women at the turn of the twentieth century. For white women, the rationale behind this contact was often varying and "confusing," however, for African American women, it is clear that they viewed this cooperation as essential to accomplishing their goals because white women often controlled or wielded considerable influence in the social welfare arena, power that increased in the opening decades of the twentieth century. See Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow: Women and the Politics of White Supremacy in North Carolina, 1896–1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996).

sanitation facilities, open streets and alleys filled with sewage, unscreened stables that were breeding places for flies and mosquitos carrying disease, and smoke infestation from the city's homes and large factories.¹² These issues had been exacerbated by the increasing immigration and migration over the past few decades as the population of the city had grown from a quarter to a half million people from 1870 to 1900. This explosion in growth along with the increasing industrialization of the city, placed a strain on public services and the urban environment, and working-class and poor Baltimoreans were the most affected by these developments.¹³ As subsequently set forth in the Women's Civic League's certificate of incorporation, the aim of the organization was:

[t]o suggest, obtain, improve and promote desirable and proper living conditions in the City of Baltimore and its suburbs, or elsewhere in the State of Maryland, in respect to hygienic and sanitary matters, cleanliness, recreation, ornamentation, cultivation, the abatement of nuisance of every kind, and generally with respect to any and every subject whatsoever which may in any way affect the safety, health or welfare of the people.

By addressing these issues, the Civic League filled a void not addressed extensively by any other organization in the city at the time and by focusing on problems related to the home and neighborhood environment, their program supported existing notions prevailing in society concerning the role of women in creating and maintaining a suitable

¹² *History of Women's Civic League of Baltimore*, 1–9. A few secondary sources incorrectly state that the initial meeting of the organization consisted of six women. In fact, there were four women in attendance and two men, husbands of women who were also present. In addition to Elizabeth Platt Jencks and her husband Francis, those present at the initial meeting of the Women's Civic League were Mrs. Elise Winchester Dana Frick (Mrs. James Swan Frick), Mary Frick Garrett Jacobs and her second husband Henry Barton Jacobs, and Miss Miriam Brandt.

¹³ James B. Crooks, *Politics and Progress: The Rise of Urban Progressivism in Baltimore, 1895 to 1911* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1968), 155–158; Garrett Power, "Deconstructing the Slums of Baltimore" reprinted from *From Mobtown to Charm City: New Perspectives on Baltimore's Past*, ed. Jessica I. Elfenbein et al. (Baltimore: Maryland Historical Society, 2002).

home. Thus the work of the Civic League enforced a gendered activism that derived its power from its focus on issues already deemed to fall within the purview of women.¹⁴

Within a few months of the initial meeting of the Women's Civic League, the organization held its first public meeting at McCoy Hall on the campus of Johns Hopkins University in April 1911. The Civic League selected its first officers and executive committee with Mrs. Henry Barton Jacobs, one of the group's founders, serving as the League's first president. The city was divided into four main sections with one individual in charge of the work for each section. Committees on smoke abatement, home gardens, milk, education, and refuse disposal were established to coordinate programs and activities within the main areas of concern for the Civic League. Fifty incorporators formed the organization's first Board of Directors and an advisory council of fifty-five men was also established to support their work. By the end of the year, membership of the Women's Civic League had grown to 365 women and by the following spring, its membership had almost doubled to 656 white women across the city of Baltimore.¹⁵

During its first two years of existence, as the membership of the Civic League expanded, the new organization made a number of important strides in addressing

¹⁴ *History of Women's Civic League*, 1–9. The women of the Women's Civic League were part of a Progressive reform movement initiated in Baltimore in the 1890s. A number of organizations were established by upper class white women to address a range of social wrongs in the city brought about by population growth and industrialization. And a number of the women involved in these earlier organizations would become part of the Women's Civic League. See Crooks, *Politics and Progress*, 157–194.

¹⁵ *History of Women's Civic League*, 9–12; "Five Years' Work of the Women's Civic League," *The Town: A Civic Journal* 1:17 (March 18, 1916): 1.

The League initially only had three committees: refuse disposal, smoke abatement, and home garden. The Milk Committee was organized in the summer of 1911 and in 1922, the title of this committee was changed to Public Health and Sanitation. The Education Committee was organized in 1912. During World War I, a Home Economics Committee was established and an American Citizenship Committee was established after the war. An Art Committee was established in 1921. *History of the Women's Civic League*, 27.

problems plaguing the city through educating citizens and through working with the city government to improve sanitation problems and services, particularly through the Refuse Disposal Committee. In the summer of 1911, the committee launched a campaign to lessen the number of flies in the city, using the press to urge citizens to cover their garbage and food supplies, and distributing traps to be used to catch flies throughout the city. The committee also succeeded in getting the city to place 100 additional waste paper trashcans throughout the city in residential sections. Finally, in cooperation with the mayor and the Street Cleaning Department, the committee launched its first Clean City Crusade in the winter of 1911 – 1912, which motivated citizens to abide by existing sanitation laws in their disposal of garbage and enlisted the city in hauling away nearly 20,000 cartloads of garbage.¹⁶ However, leaders of the Civic League realized that the organization’s continued success depended upon further cooperation with the African American community as living conditions and sanitation problems were “uniformly worse” in the city’s black neighborhoods. To meet this goal, a committee consisting of both white and black women was organized in 1912, headquartered in the day nursery for African Americans in Northwest Baltimore. The following year, the committee was further expanded and the WCCL, a separate all black auxiliary organization to the all-white Women’s Civic League, was established with “arrangements made for regular contact and close cooperation.”¹⁷

The establishment of the WCCL in 1913 was made possible by the leadership and guidance of black social worker Sarah Collins Fernandis, the “moving spirit” of the new

¹⁶ *History of Women’s Civic League*, 27 – 29; “7,500,000 Flies Destroyed,” *Baltimore Sun*, August 5, 1911; “Ten Months’ Work,” *Civic Courier* 1:1 (February 1912): 3–4.

¹⁷ *History of Women’s Civic League*, 69.

organization, whose background and expertise in social work laid important groundwork for the new organization. Fernandis was born into a free black family in 1863 in Port DePosit, Maryland, a town along the Susquehanna River in Cecil County, the northern part of the state. Her parents, Caleb and Mary Collins, moved their family forty miles south to the city of Baltimore sometime during the mid-1860s following their daughter's birth. During the early 1870s, the Collins family moved yet again to rural Virginia, where Sarah Collins Fernandis subsequently attended Hampton Institute, graduating in 1882. Following graduation, Fernandis began a career in teaching that spanned nineteen years in a number of states, including Pennsylvania, Virginia, Tennessee, Georgia, and Florida, where she taught in a school organized by the Woman's Home Missionary Society of Boston. After her stint in teaching in Florida, she returned to Baltimore, teaching in its public schools until her marriage to John Fernandis, a local barber, in 1902.¹⁸

As married women were not allowed to teach in the public schools of Baltimore, Sarah Collins Fernandis resigned from teaching following her marriage and began a full-time career in the field of social work.¹⁹ Like other African American women of her generation involved in this field, Fernandis was motivated by what historian Stephanie Shaw terms an "ethic of social responsibility" to her race, which mostly likely had been

¹⁸ Jessie Carney Smith, ed. *Notable Black American Women v. 2* (Detroit, MI: Gale Research, 1992), 221; *Southern Workman* (1904): 412.

Caleb and Mary Collins were listed in the 1860 census as free African Americans residing in Cecil County, Maryland with their children Martha and Thomas. By 1870, the Collins family had relocated to Baltimore, Maryland, and were listed in the 1870 census as residing in the city's Ninth Ward in South Baltimore. See U.S. Census of 1860, NARA microfilm publication M635, roll 472, Cecil, Maryland, Enumeration District 7, Sheet 627, accessed online at Ancestry.com, 15 June 2014; U.S. Census of 1870, NARA microfilm publication M593, roll 575, Baltimore, Maryland, 9th Ward, Sheet 373B, accessed online at Ancestry.com, 15 June 2014.

¹⁹ Miriam Decosta-Willis, *Notable Black Memphians* (Amherst, NY: Cambria Press, 2008), 7. Married women were not allowed to teach in the public schools of Baltimore until the ban was lifted in the 1940s during World War II.

inculcated by her parents and undoubtedly by her educational training at Hampton Institute.²⁰ As a young woman, Fernandis vowed “to keep [her] heart in sympathy with my fellow-creatures and alive to its duties to them; and to make my life a contradiction to the idea that a Negro is low and groveling in sentiment and purpose. I mean to look up and lift up.” Social work allowed Sarah Collins Fernandis to follow this personal calling for racial uplift and serve as an example within the African American community. And embarking on this career path without formal training in social work reflected the emphasis on social conscience over social science for this generation of African American female social work professionals, as well as the fluid occupational lines and broad-based education which allowed Fernandis to easily transition from a career in education to one in social work.²¹ Eventually, Fernandis would supplement her real life experiences in the field with educational training by completing a one-year course at the New York School of Philanthropy in 1906.²²

Prior to her marriage, Fernandis had engaged in volunteer social work in Baltimore under the auspices of the Charitable Organization Society, becoming one of the organization’s first two African American “friendly visitors,” which involved traveling to working-class households in the black community and counseling them on household economics and domestic hygiene, and assisting them in finding sources of

²⁰ Stephanie J. Shaw, *What A Woman Ought To Be and To Do: Black Professional Women Workers During the Jim Crow Era* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 68–69, 141.

²¹ Shaw, *What a Woman Ought*, 139–140; Rosa Hunter Moore, “A Pioneer Settlement Worker,” *Southern Workman* 52 (July 1923): 320–324.

²² Smith, *Notable Black American Women*, 221. No formal educational program for social work existed until the Charity Organization Societies of New York established the New York School of Philanthropy in 1898, the precursor to the Columbia University School of Social Work. Initially a six-week summer course, the program in social work was extended to a one-year course in 1903 and eventually a two-year course in 1910. See Shaw, *What a Woman Ought*, 142.

economic relief.²³ In 1902, she and her husband relocated to Washington, D.C. where she had accepted a position from the Associated Charities at the M Street Social Settlement for African Americans in the infamous Bloodfield neighborhood. Located in the southwestern quadrant of the city, this black neighborhood was plagued by vice and poor living conditions, which included dilapidated housing, contamination from the nearby open sewage in the James Creek Canal, and a disproportionate number of saloons. Over the course of the following five years, Fernandis, with the assistance of members of the community and volunteer assistance from students at the city's Armstrong Training School and the Colored Normal School, a division of Howard University, was able to transform the neighborhood with a number of improvements such as establishing a day nursery for working mothers, opening a public kindergarten and a playground for children, providing carpentry and sewing classes, and opening a savings bank within the settlement. Under Fernandis' leadership, a Neighborhood Improvement Association was also established within the settlement, which participated in a number of local movements, including agitation for child labor laws and compulsory education laws, and pressuring city officials to establish playgrounds for African American children across the city.²⁴ In 1908, Sarah Collins Fernandis relocated to East Greenwich, Rhode Island to

²³ The Charitable Organization Society was established in 1881 under the leadership of the first Johns Hopkins University president, Daniel Coit Gilman. "Social Worker Writes Poems as Her Particular Hobby," *Afro American*, August 9, 1930; Samuel Kelton Roberts, Jr., *Infectious Fear: Politics, Disease, and the Health Effects of Segregation* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 95, 162–163.

²⁴ Some sources cite Fernandis' settlement in Washington, D.C. as the first African American settlement established in the nation; however that distinction goes to the Locust Street Social Settlement established in Hampton, VA in 1890 by Janie Porter Barrett, also a graduate of Hampton Institute. Shaw, *What a Woman Ought*, 68–69; 140.

establish another social settlement for African Americans in the beleaguered black Scallop Town neighborhood. Using the experiences and skills she developed in Washington, D.C, Fernandis built a settlement that addressed both the educational and labor needs of the black population.²⁵ By 1912, Fernandis had returned to Baltimore where she served as a caseworker for the Baltimore Federated Charities and head of a day nursery for working-class African American families in Northwest Baltimore.²⁶

The year following Fernandis' return to Baltimore, the leaders of the all-white Women's Civic League called upon the seasoned social worker to take the lead in establishing an all-black auxiliary to their organization. Fernandis eagerly accepted this call for interracial cooperation and under her leadership, thirty-five middle-class African American women came together to form the Women's Cooperative Civic League in October 1913, establishing the new organization's headquarters in the day nursery on Druid Hill Avenue. Within weeks, the women of the WCCL had elected officers, adopted governing rules, and established standing committees. The leadership of the WCCL and its committees was composed of prominent clubwomen in Baltimore's African American

For the M Street Settlement, see Smith, *Notable Black American Women*, 222; Sarah Collins Fernandis, "Neighborhood Interpretations of a Social Settlement," *Southern Workman* 35:1 (January 1906): 46-49; *Southern Workman* (1904): 412; *Southern Workman* 39 (1910): 77; Roberts, *Infectious Fear*, 281.

²⁵ Roberts, *Infectious Fear*, 281; *Southern Workman* 48:2 (February 1919): 96; *The Survey* 29, 99; *Southern Workman* (1908): 322.

²⁶ Sources provide conflicting and unclear information on the exact time and reason for Fernandis' return to Baltimore. A number of sources cite 1913 as the date when she returned to Baltimore and that she returned solely at the invitation of the Women's Civic League to organize an auxiliary organization. However, records of the Baltimore Federated Charities of 1912 show Fernandis working as a social worker. Additionally, a number of sources highlight the role of Elisabeth Gilman in securing Fernandis' return to Baltimore to engage in social work. Gilman was not involved with the Women's Civic League, however Fernandis undoubtedly had developed a relationship with Gilman during her previous time in Baltimore for Gilman was heavily involved in social welfare work in Baltimore and her father, Daniel Coit Gilman, had been instrumental in establishing the Charitable Organization Society which had hired Fernandis in 1900. "Social Worker Writes Poems As Her Particular Hobby," *Afro-American*, August 9, 1930; *The Survey* 29, 99; Roberts, *Infectious Fear*, 281.

community with extensive civic and social connections who each had their own personal history of agitating for change for the African American community of Baltimore. In addition to Fernandis, who served in the role of Executive Secretary, other leaders included Margaret Hawkins and Minnie Gaines, both members of the executive committee of the newly established Baltimore branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People; educational activist Laura D. Wheatley; Dr. Melissa Thompson, resident physician at the city's black Provident Hospital; and Hannah Smith, who had recently relocated to Baltimore from Boston to serve as the secretary of the Colored Young Women's Christian Association.²⁷

Through the WCCL, African American women now had the opportunity to further develop the necessary institutional and organizational framework needed to ensure that the city government addressed issues relating to the social welfare of the African American community. Following the organizational plan of the Civic League, the WCCL immediately set up analogous committees on refuse disposal, milk, smoke abatement, home gardens, and education in order to address the same range of issues as the Civic League, but with a focus on the African American community. With the

²⁷ The following were the initial officers of the Women's Cooperative Civic League: Sarah Collins Fernandis, Executive Secretary; Margaret Gregory Hawkins (Mrs. Mason Hawkins), Chairman; Mary Brooks (Mrs. Daniel Brooks), Secretary; Mrs. Hannah Smith, Treasurer; Minnie Gaines (Mrs. Abraham L. Gaines), Education Committee Chairman; Fannie Cardoza (Mrs. Frank Cardoza), Home Gardens Committee Chairman; Dr. Melissa E. Thompson, Milk Committee Chairman; Augusta T. Chissell (Mrs. Robert Garland Chissell), Smoke Abatement Committee Chairman; Laura Wheatley (Mrs. Edward J. Wheatley), Refuse Disposal Committee Chairman; Minnie Christian Harvey (Mrs. John B. Harvey), Membership Committee Chairman. The leadership structure of the organization was reorganized in 1915 with the addition of the position of President. "Many Celebrities Have Spoken at Civic League," *Afro-American*, February 8, 1930; "Women's Cooperative Civic League," *Civic Courier* 1:5-6 (October 1913-January 1914): 3, 9; "Cooperation in Baltimore," *Southern Workman* 44: 5 (May 1915): 262; "Prominent Caterer Buried," *Afro-American*, September 12, 1914; *Afro-American*, October 18, 1913; "Prominent Couple Reported Engaged," *Afro-American*, August 1, 1914; "Bishop Coppin's Widow Dies," *Afro-American*, October 5, 1940; "N.A.A.C.P. Holds Annual Meeting," *Afro-American*, February 1, 1913; "Dr. Mason Hawkins Dies; Was Professor At Morgan," *Afro-American*, February 8, 1947; "Colored Young Women's Christian Association," *Afro-American*, March 8, 1913.

assistance of the women of the Civic League who provided lecture materials, the women of the WCCL organized an initial series of monthly meetings covering each of these issues in order to educate the membership on the existing problems and needs in Baltimore as well as the efforts to address these same issues in other cities across the nation. Within a year, the WCCL had successfully cooperated in Civic League campaigns, nearly tripled its membership to 100 members, instituted original programs not covered by the Civic League such as a baby contest and an annual luncheon, and initiated plans for a general meeting featuring a speech from Leila Amos Pendleton, a noted race woman and founder of the Washington, D.C. based Social Purity League. Within two years, the WCCL had become such a strong organization that the Civic League entrusted all civic work for the city's Seventeenth Ward, a section of the city with a majority African American population, to the women of the WCCL who were praised for their "earnestness of purpose" and the "intelligent methods which they employ[ed] in all their work."²⁸

One of the most important areas in which the women of the WCCL concentrated their energies from their inception was the work of the Refuse Disposal Committee, which focused on working with the city government to gain improved sanitation services in residential areas, public markets, and stores selling perishable food. For black Baltimoreans, this work was particularly important as their neighborhoods were those most often plagued by unsanitary conditions. And whereas middle and upper class white women were often spatially separated from these conditions in their home environments,

²⁸ "Report of the Civic League," *Civic Courier* 2:1 (April 1914): 8; "Report of the Women's Cooperative Civic League," *Civic Courier* 2:1 (April 1914): 16; "Report of the Women's Cooperative Civic League," *Civic Courier* 2:2 (November 1914): 10; "Women's Cooperative Civic League," *Civic Courier* 3:1 (April 1915): 10.

the residential separation of African Americans of varying classes was limited, thus unsanitary conditions often effected the entire community, including the middle-class women of the WCCL. And it is likely that some of these women had been reared in, or at least in close proximity, to working-class families in Baltimore. In a report to the Civic League, Sarah Collins Fernandis shared her own experience as a child growing up in the city's Ninth Ward in a neighborhood bordering the open sewer of the Jones' Falls, a soap factory, and a section of the city characterized as one of "undisturbed moral abandonment." Fernandis' experiences and environment were undoubtedly shared by other women of the WCCL, revealing how unsanitary conditions affected African Americans of all classes.²⁹

By 1916, the WCCL's Refuse Disposal committee was recognized as an active force in the African American community manifested by alerts made to the organization on unsanitary conditions at white-owned grocery stores serving black customers. These alerts prompted WCCL leaders to make Civic League officials aware of these conditions which in turn led to the arrest of some of these white business owners.³⁰ However, the most significant campaign in which the women of the WCCL were involved through the Refuse Disposal committee was the Clean City Crusade, which the Civic League had inaugurated in February 1912 on the anniversary of the Great Baltimore Fire of 1904 with the cooperation of Baltimore's mayor and the city's Street Cleaning Department under the leadership of William Larkin. This crusade extended the previous cooperation of the Civic League with the Street Cleaning Department, which had resulted in the purchase of

²⁹ "Annual Report of the Women's Cooperative Civic League," *The Town* 1:19 (April 8, 1916): 5.

³⁰ "Annual Report of the Women's Cooperative Civic League," *The Town: A Civic Journal* 1:19 (April 1, 1916): 6; "Report of Women's Civic League," *Afro-American*, November 4, 1916.

additional waste paper cans and their placement on street corners throughout the city in both residential and commercial sections. For the first few years after its inauguration, the Clean City crusade resulted in thousands of cartloads of trash being removed from city neighborhoods each year. In addition to securing additional resources and services from the government, the Crusade was also a “community housekeeping” and involved a program of education to ensure that city residents were aware of existing sanitation laws and abided by them. This focus on education also resulted in the establishment of Clean City Clubs in city schools to develop and instill in young children those values conducive to maintaining clean homes and neighborhoods.³¹

Within two years of its founding, the WCCL had become extensively involved in the Clean City Crusade and by 1916, the organization helped to organize a mass rally held at Bethel A.M.E. Church, bringing together a number of black leaders and organizations to support the campaign. Speaking before those assembled, Sarah Collins Fernandis urged the city’s African American community to pledge “definite activity in this great municipal campaign for a cleaner and more healthful Baltimore” by disposing of waste and garbage properly in order to avoid attracting flies and rodents and thereby exhibit a “hygienic standard that will fit in with the highest ideals of our city.”³² Through the distribution of literature on proper sanitation and other outreach activities of the WCCL, interest and participation in the Clean City Crusade within the African American

³¹ *Civic Courier* 1:1 (February 1912): 2; “Ten Months’ Work,” *Civic Courier* 1:1 (February 1912): 3–4; “Clean City Crusade,” *Civic Courier* 1:3 (November 1912): 6; “Waste Paper and Street Litter,” *The Municipal Journal* 1:1 (January 17, 1913): 2; “Clean City Crusade,” *The Municipal Journal* 1:1 (January 17, 1913): 6; “Placing Refuse Cans,” *The Municipal Journal* 1:7 (April 11, 1913): 1; “Clean City Clubs,” *Civic Courier* 1:5 – 6 (October 1913–January 1914): 9.

³² “Movement for a Cleaner City,” *Afro-American*, June 17, 1916.

community was increased as shown by the great number of white flags bearing the crusade name prominently displayed in black neighborhoods with each passing year. Additionally, Clean City Clubs were established in four African American schools, three located in Northwest Baltimore and one located in East Baltimore. In educating African Americans, both young and old, and awakening an interest in the campaign in the broader black community, the WCCL relied upon a strategy of self-help in order to urge African Americans to take an active part in improving their surroundings. Simultaneously, this strategy allowed black men, women, and children to prove themselves responsible citizens who were willing and able to assist in the transformation of the city and thus deserved access to the same sanitation services provided to white Baltimoreans. Therefore, the WCCL's work proved vital in helping to extend the benefits of the Clean City Crusade not just to the white community, but to the black community as well.³³

Closely related to the work of the Refuse Disposal Committee was that of the Home Gardens Committee whose goals included encouraging and assisting African Americans in converting "unsightly" backyards into flower gardens and creating vegetable gardens in vacant lots in black neighborhoods. Following the plan of the Home Gardens Committee of the Women's Civic League, the WCCL encouraged black Baltimoreans to cultivate backyard gardens and window boxes by selling discounted flower seeds and annually awarding prizes to the best gardens; worked with the women of the Civic League to establish the first citywide garden in an African American neighborhood in Northwest Baltimore; and worked to ensure that the city Forestry

³³ "Cooperation in Baltimore," *Southern Workman* 44:5 (May 1915), 261-262; Sarah Collins Fernandis, "Social Service Work in Baltimore," *Southern Workman* 46:10 (October 1917), 538-540.

Department's tree planting program extended to black communities.³⁴ Through the work of this committee along with their efforts the realm of refuse disposal, the women of the WCCL were participants in the local arm of the "City Beautiful" Movement, a national city planning movement with origins in the last decade of the nineteenth century. Part of Progressive Era reform, this movement focused on improving the physical appearance of the nation's urban areas through park systems and civic centers. In completing this goal, urban reformers in this movement stressed that their actions served the "public good" and represented a new ethic of citizenship. And in creating a "City Beautiful," these reformers reached out to a variety of individuals and groups in their community, bridging racial and socioeconomic divisions. For African American social welfare reformers like the women of the WCCL, the "City Beautiful" Movement offered them the opportunity to embrace and exhibit their commitment to a new citizenship ethic, highlighting that the rights of citizens should be extended to them as well.³⁵

A third committee of the WCCL, the Milk Committee, worked along with the Civic League to protect the city's milk supply by raising standards for both producers and shops selling milk and by educating consumers on the proper handling of milk, keeping in line with the focus of the two organizations on improving sanitation and alleviating problems that plagued the home environment. During the late nineteenth century, very limited regulations, which set minimum standards and forbade the sale of adulterated

³⁴ *History of Women's Civic League*, 36–37, 40–41; "The Home Garden Committee," *The Town: A Civic Journal* 1:19 (April 1, 1916): 4; "To Make Backyards Beautiful," *Afro-American*, April 25, 1914; "Civic League Gives Garden Prizes," *Afro-American*, September 8, 1928; Sarah Collins Fernandis, "Social Service Work in Baltimore," *Southern Workman* 46:10 (October 1917): 537–538.

³⁵ Jon A. Peterson, *The Birth of City Planning in the United States, 1840 – 1917* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 100; Priscilla A. Dowden-White, *Groping Toward Democracy: African American Social Welfare Reform in St. Louis, 1910 – 1949* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2011), 58–61.

milk, were passed; however, these regulations were poorly enforced as no inspection system was put in place. Milk procured from cows within the city limits came from stables located near privies and exhibiting a variety of other insanitary conditions. While milk from rural farms was also in a poor state as it often came from cows fed distillery slops and arrived in the city containing a range of contaminants from blood to dead mice to decomposing food. In the first decade of the twentieth century, the campaign for pure milk increased nationwide, including the campaign in Baltimore, and the movement gained even more momentum in the city in 1907 following outbreaks of infant cholera and typhoid fever which were attributed to the city's contaminated milk supply.³⁶ A coalition of civic groups, health officials, and milk dealers responded to this crisis by drafting and successfully pressuring the city government to pass a tougher ordinance which raised content standards, prohibited distillery slops from being fed to cows in city stables, and increased inspection. But the work of this coalition continued into the second decade of the twentieth century as inspections lagged and unsanitary operations continued.³⁷

Following its founding in 1911, the white women of the Civic League also became involved in this fight for pure milk and almost immediately went to work using scientific studies they had commissioned on local milk to pressure the Health Department

³⁶ For further discussion of the fight for pure milk during the Progressive Era, see Daniel Block, "Purity, Economy, and Social Welfare in the Progressive Era Pure Milk Movement," *Journal for the Study of Food and Society* 3:1 (1999); Daniel Block, "Saving Milk Through Masculinity: Public Health Officers and Pure Milk, 1880–1930," *Food and Foodways* 13:1-2; Alan Czaplicki, "Pure Milk is Better Than Purified Milk: Pasteurization and Milk Purity in Chicago, 1908–1916," *Social Science History* 31:3; E. Melanie DuPuis, *Nature's Perfect Food: How Milk Became America's Drink* (New York: New York University Press, 2002).

³⁷ *History of Women's Civic League*, page 48 – 49; Joyce E. Wessel, "Baltimore's Dairy Industry and the Fight for Pure Milk, 1900–1920," *Business and Economic History* 13 (1984): 151–153.

to abolish the sale of “loose” milk, milk which consumers poured into open containers they brought into local stores from dirty cans that were usually not kept at the proper cold temperature; publish milk scores based on a system established by the federal government which rated milk based on the conditions under which it was produced; and establish higher bacteriological standards for raw and pasteurized milk.³⁸ The work of the WCCL in this arena largely focused on a campaign of education within the black community as evidenced by their annual conference in 1915, which focused on the fight for pure milk featuring motion pictures and literature on the subject produced by the Civic League.³⁹ Lacking the same direct access to resources as the Civic League, the women of the WCCL relied upon the scientific investigations and other reform efforts of the Civic League to lead to tougher legislation and enforcement that would help all Baltimoreans, including African Americans. The movement for tougher legislation intensified in 1916 following a typhoid scare attributed to unsanitary milk which once again galvanized forces to fight for a tougher milk ordinance, with the women of the Civic League at the forefront with the support of their African American counterparts in the WCCL. The Civic League used its influence to arrange conferences on the legislation before the mayor, city solicitor, and the city council, where Civic League spokesmen explicitly stated that they represented the interests of a range of organizations including the WCCL in their efforts to push through legislation on milk that would better the

³⁸ Ibid.; “Work of the Milk Committee,” *Civic Courier*, Volume 1:3 (November 1912): 4; “Milk Bureau,” *The Town: A Civic Journal* 1:10 (January 22, 1916): 1; “Disadvantages of Corner Grocery Shops as Milk Selling Stations,” *The Town: A Civic Journal* 1:15 (March 4, 1916): 3 – 4; “A Summary of a Survey of the Milk Situation in Locust Point and Fells Point,” *The Town: A Civic Journal* 2:24 (March 24, 1917): 6.

³⁹ “The Annual Milk Meeting of the Women’s Cooperative Civic League,” *The Town: A Civic Journal* 1:6 (December 11, 1915): 8.

lives of all “women, children, and babies of Baltimore.” Thus, in supporting the educational efforts of the Civic League, the WCCL exhibited their commitment to the movement for pure milk and achieved recognition for their role as the women of the Civic League acted as mediators to those in power in the local government. The movement met with success when the new ordinance was officially introduced to the city council in January 1917 and subsequently passed four months later. It required that all milk be pasteurized, instituted a strict inspection process, raised bacteria standards for milk, barred cows from within the city limits and prohibited dealers from selling milk from cows fed distillery slops, and required all milk to be bottled and capped in plants located within the city. This legislation did not result in the end of the city’s problems with its milk supply, but it represented a crucial turning point from which the women of the WCCL and the African American community at large benefited.⁴⁰

In the movement for pure milk, the women of the WCCL were not only addressing sanitation issues, but also issues relating to the welfare of African American children, particularly since the movement often relied upon rhetoric that emphasized the negative impact of impure milk on the city’s children. But the majority of the WCCL’s efforts for improving the lives of black children in Baltimore concentrated on improving the city’s educational system. Through its Education Committee, women of the WCCL developed plans for a number of changes in the educational offerings made available to black schoolchildren, most notably establishing a music school and increasing vocational

⁴⁰ “The Milk Conference in Mayor Preston’s Reception Room,” *The Town: A Civic Journal* 2:4 (November 4, 1916): 4–5; “Save Babies, He Urges,” *Baltimore Sun*, March 13, 1917; Wessel, “Baltimore’s Dairy Industry,” 153–155.

training, particularly for African American girls.⁴¹ One of the earliest educational campaigns initiated by the women of the WCCL was that for a parental school to accommodate delinquent and truant African American children. The WCCL brought together experts on this subject to discuss the topic and plans for the realization of a parental school and in the process, brought together a number of African American organizations to work in the campaign including the Teacher's Association, the Schoolmaster's Club, the DuBois Circle, the Empty Stocking Club, the Y.M.C.A. and Y.W.C.A., and a number of the city's black churches. But this campaign met with limited success and a parental school would not be established for black Baltimoreans until 1921, largely due to the recommendations made for improvements to the entire city school system by educational expert George Drayton Strayer in his commissioned survey.⁴² However, the WCCL did achieve success in its efforts to provide inexpensive lunches to African American schoolchildren through the "penny lunch" program. The Civic League established its first penny lunch in 1914 in a white elementary school located in East Baltimore to address the limited and often unhealthy meal options for the children of the city's poor and working classes in that area who often arrived at school having received little or no food at home. Three years later, working in cooperation with the school board

⁴¹ "Women's Cooperative Civic League," *The Town: A Civic Journal* 2:25 (March 31, 1917): 2; "The Women's Cooperative Civic League," *The Town: A Civic Journal* 2:26 (April 7, 1917): 2.

⁴² "Cooperative Civic League to Meet," *Afro-American*, April 25, 1914; "Need of Care for Delinquent," *Afro-American*, May 2, 1914; "The Women's Cooperative Civic League," *The Town: A Civic Journal* 3:1 (April 1915): 30; "Speaks for Negro Teachers," *Baltimore Sun*, November 19, 1920; Sarah C. Fernandis, "Interracial Activities of Baltimore Women," *Southern Workman* 51:10 (October 1922): 484. For an extended discussion of the Strayer Report, see Chapter 3.

and following the model of the Civic League, the women of the WCCL had successfully established a similar lunch program at a school in Northwest Baltimore.⁴³

By 1917, the WCCL had made considerable leeway in addressing a range of issues related to the social welfare of Baltimore's black community. However, with the advent of World War I, the work of the women of the WCCL shifted from its regular program to focus on contributing to the war effort. Under the leadership of WCCL member K. Bertha Hurst, black women in the organization assisted the Baltimore chapter of the American Red Cross in assembling garments to be shipped overseas at the outbreak of the war in 1914. Following the entrance of the United States into the war, the WCCL expanded its work with the Red Cross by serving as the nucleus of an African American branch of the organization with Fernandis serving as its director assisted by Frances Murphy and Mamie Thomas. Within a few months, the chapter had established ten auxiliaries to assist in the war effort.⁴⁴ In addition to work with the Red Cross, the women of WCCL also contributed to the work of the War Food Bureau, an organization established by the women of the Women's Civic League to provide instruction on food preparation in order to support food conservation and ensuring the provision of food supplies to American troops abroad. Through this Bureau, free lectures and demonstrations were given on the canning, preserving, and drying of fruits and

⁴³ "Penny Lunch," *The Town: A Civic Journal* 1:13 (February 12, 1916), 4-5; "Penny Lunch at School Number 107," *The Town: A Civic Journal* 2:22 (March 10, 1917): 2. At the time the WCCL established the penny lunch at School Number 107, there were two similar lunches in existence at white elementary schools.

⁴⁴ Though Fernandis served as the branch's director and the women of the WCCL formed the nucleus of the new organization, the executive committee of the African American branch of the American Red Cross consisted solely of African American men. "Dr. W.T. Carr Heads Red Cross Chapter," *Afro-American*, November 24, 1917; "Women's Cooperative Civic League," *The Town: A Civic Journal* 3:6 (November 24, 1917): 2; "Report of the Women's Cooperative Civic League," *The Town: A Civic Journal* 3:23 (March 23, 1918): 6.

vegetables in the public schools of the city, the Woman's Club of Roland Park, and the headquarters for the WCCL in Northwest Baltimore. Sarah Collins Fernandis ensured that these lectures and demonstrations in food conservation were extended to African American women so that these methods could be used both in their homes and on their jobs as the majority of African American women in Baltimore were employed in domestic service.⁴⁵

The shift in focus of the activities of the WCCL during the World War I era resulted in a decrease in the advancements the organization made in the realm of social welfare likely connected to the organization's decrease in membership.⁴⁶ But the WCCL's regular program was dealt its most serious blow as a result of the loss of the leadership of Sarah Collins Fernandis who became engaged in various efforts outside Baltimore aimed at increasing interracial cooperation that grew out of wartime activities. The League of Women Workers called Fernandis to New York City to travel through New England and the Middle Atlantic states giving lectures to working-class women on the necessity of interracial cooperation. In early 1919, Fernandis relocated to Chester, Pennsylvania, an industrial center outside of Philadelphia, at the request of Charles F. Weller whom had previously recruited her to work in Washington, D.C. In Chester, Fernandis served as the director of Colored Organization Work for the city's War Workers Community Service Committee, an entity established by the Commission on

⁴⁵ Following the end of the war, the work of the War Food Bureau continued under the name of the Home Economics Bureau. "Canning at Day Nursery," *Afro-American*, July 7, 1917; "Demonstrations for Colored People," *The Town: A Civic Journal* 3:17 (February 9, 1918): 2; "Report of the Women's Cooperative Civic League," *The Town: A Civic Journal* 3:23 (March 23, 1918); "Women's League Conducts a Home Economics Bureau," *Afro-American*, January 31, 1919.

⁴⁶ *History of Women's Civic League*, 11 – 13. As the WCCL became the basis of the African American branch of the Red Cross, the white Women's Civic League became the basis of the Women's Section of the Maryland Council for Defense.

Living Conditions of War Workers, which was appointed by the United States Department of Labor. Here, as she had done elsewhere, Fernandis used her expertise to help white and black residents develop “a better understanding of their mutual value” and use this interracial cooperation as the foundation for improvements in African American life in the realms of housing, recreation, and health services.⁴⁷

With the return of Sarah Collins Fernandis to Baltimore in 1920 to resume her position as the head of the WCCL, the organization came back to life and shifted its focus back to its pre-war program of improving the social welfare of the city’s African American community, presenting a series of educational programs and holding monthly meetings in various locations throughout the city.⁴⁸ A significant feature of the WCCL’s post-war program was an increase in cooperation and alliances with organizations within the African American community. From its beginning, the WCCL had not only worked closely with the white members of the Women’s Civic League, but also a myriad of organizations within the African American community. In March 1915, less than two years after its founding, the WCCL cooperated with a wide range of black social, civic, and fraternal organizations to stage the city’s first Public Health Conference for the African American community as part of National Negro Health Week, an initiative launched by race leader Booker T. Washington that same year. Through this program, African American communities across the South utilized a variety of strategies such as clean up campaigns and providing health education in order to address and improve the

⁴⁷ “Social Worker Writes Poems As Her Particular Hobby,” *Afro-American*, August 9, 1930; *Southern Workman*, Volume 48:2 (February 1919): 96; “Chester’s New Era Week,” *Southern Workman* 48:8 (August 1919): 379 – 381.

⁴⁸ “Graduates and Ex-Students,” *Southern Workman* (1920): 482; Sarah Collins Fernandis, “Interracial Activities of Baltimore Women,” *Southern Workman* 51:10 (October 1922): 482–483.

public health of the black community. Washington understood that the economic success of the African American community was inextricably linked to health concerns and that these concerns needed to be addressed in order to enable blacks to gain better housing, employment, and education. Speaking before the over 6,000 people gathered for the opening session of the Public Health Conference, the esteemed race leader called upon blacks and whites to cooperate in this health movement:

As I have stated, white people and black people throughout this state can cooperate in encouraging the Negro wherever he lives to have a clean, sanitary, healthy community. I do not believe that this can be brought about by any laws that are meant to segregate the Negro in any certain part of any community or city. Wherever the Negro is segregated, in most cases it means that he will have poor streets, poor lighting, poor sidewalks, poor sewerage, poor sanitary conditions generally, and this reflects itself in many ways in the life of the race to its disadvantage and to the disadvantage of the white race.

Washington's call for interracial cooperation resonated with the already existing philosophy and activities of the women of the WCCL and its educational campaigns, which emphasized self-help within the black community. However, as also revealed in Washington's words, this movement, and the work of the WCCL in this and other arenas, was also concerned with pressuring the white power structure to provide the same municipal and social services to blacks that were afforded whites in order to improve their living conditions.⁴⁹ Over the next two years, the WCCL increased its visibility within the Public Health Conference, particularly in connection with its fight for pure milk, and by 1917, the WCCL had established its own "Community Health" Conference which brought together both white and black medical experts to explore ways to reduce

⁴⁹ "Thousands Attend First Public Health Conference," *Afro-American*, March 27, 1915; "Cooperation in Baltimore," *Southern Workman*, Volume 44:5 (May 1915), 262; Judson, 102; Susan Smith, *Sick and Tired of Being Sick and Tired: Black Women's Health Activism in America, 1890 - 1950* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995).

the rate of tuberculosis among the African American community, as well as pressure the state government to establish a much needed sanitarium for African American tuberculosis patients.⁵⁰

Following its reconstitution after World War I, the WCCL continued its earlier alliances with organizations in the African American community and expanded upon this form of inter-organizational cooperation. By 1924, the women of the WCCL had organized their largest community conference to date in which a wide range of black leaders, including physicians and educators, were able to discuss potential solutions to a number of issues plaguing the black community, including poor housing, the high rate of death and disease, and the lack of vocational education programs. This conference brought together not only African American leaders, but also important and influential leaders in the white community, notably Marie Baurenschmidt, head of the Public School Improvement Association, and C. Hampson Jones, the city's Health Commissioner. Engaging these leaders in their dialogue on increasing vocational education, hiring more African Americans to staff the Henryton Tuberculosis Sanitarium, and lowering the death rates of black Baltimoreans as a result of disease, was a critical step in making white officials aware of the poor living and educational conditions of African Americans, as well as pressuring these specific individuals to serve as mediators to the city power structure in addressing these concerns. The following year, the WCCL was able to expand the participation of influential white leaders and organizations in its conference

⁵⁰ "Conference of Public Health Association," *Afro-American*, March 11, 1916; "Large Crowds Attend Health Conference," *Afro-American*, March 18, 1916; "Community Health Meeting," *The Town: A Civic Journal* 2:22 (March 10, 1917): 2; "Report of the Women's Cooperative Civic League," *The Town: A Civic Journal* 2:25 (March 31, 1917): 6; "Civic League Urges Support of U.S. In War," *Afro-American*, February 22, 1918.

with representatives from the city's Bureau of Child Welfare, the Maryland Tuberculosis Association, and the American Federation of Labor.⁵¹ The WCCL's other most important forum for continuing cooperation within the African American community in the 1920s was its continued participation in Health Week activities. Working in conjunction with local organizations such as the Sharp Street Community House and the Federation of Parent-Teachers Clubs as well as local branches of national organizations such as the NAACP, National Urban League, and the Federation of Colored Women's Clubs, the WCCL and its partner organizations secured second prize for the city of Baltimore in the national Health Week competition in 1924. In subsequent years, additional organizations, including local secondary and college student organizations, helped to expand the Health Week efforts in order to improve the city's black death rate, most notably cooperating with the city Health Department and Street Cleaning Department to initiate a survey of alleys and side streets in African American neighborhoods.⁵²

The 1920s also brought a critical change for the WCCL's organizational structure. Following a survey of the city in 1920, the white women of the Civic League initiated plans to establish branches of the organization within each ward in the city in order to extend the work of the organization and improve its overall strength. The women of the WCCL followed suit, establishing their first branch in East Baltimore's Sixth Ward in 1921. By the end of the decade, branches of the WCCL had been established in seven of

⁵¹ "Civic League Plans Session," *Afro-American*, February 15, 1924; "Muzzle Suggested To Keep Quiet City's Colored Press," *Afro-American*, February 22, 1924; "Civic League Plans Program," *Afro-American*, February 7, 1925; "Civic League To Convene Saturday," *Afro-American*, February 14, 1925.

⁵² "City Health Week Plans Complete," *Afro-American*, February 7, 1925; "Health Week Plans Are Now Complete," *Afro-American*, March 14, 1925; "57 Features and Lectures on Health Week Program," *Afro-American*, April 4, 1925; "To Observe Health Week April 21-27," *Afro-American*, April 7, 1928.

the city's wards.⁵³ With the establishment of branches throughout the city, African American women of the WCCL were able to extend the work of the organization across the city, engaging more black women in a variety of programs that supported the WCCL's mission, including fundraising events, supporting patients at Henryton, and aiding disabled children.⁵⁴ This reorganization also enabled African American women to address needs particular to certain sections of the city that may otherwise have not been addressed by the main organization as revealed in the work of the WCCL's branch located in the Twenty-Second Ward in South Baltimore under the leadership of Jennie Mills, a woman with extensive social and fraternal connections and experienced in campaigns for civic betterment, notably the fight against black disfranchisement. Beginning in the spring of 1925, the branch started a movement to establish a clinic to cater to the health needs of children in South Baltimore. Though it took five years, the movement achieved success with the opening of a clinic in School Number 106 with an appropriation from the Health Department, which provided for a physician, nurse, and the necessary equipment to provide health services for black children in this section of the city.⁵⁵

⁵³ The Women's Civic League had completed its reorganization by 1925 with a branch in each of the city's wards. By 1930, branches of the WCCL were located in the Sixth, Twelfth, Fourteenth, Sixteenth, Nineteenth, Twenty-Second, and Twenty-Seventh Wards. No branch existed in the Seventeenth Ward at this time likely because the WCCL's headquarters was located in this ward, the ward with the city's largest African American population. *History of Women's Civic League*, 13 – 14; "Entertain Elks," *Afro-American*, March 4, 1921; "6th Ward League Elects," *Afro-American*, May 4, 1929; "Civic League Notes," *Afro-American*, November 2, 1929; "Congressman's Wife is Civic League Speaker," *Afro-American*, February 22, 1930.

⁵⁴ "Civic League Meets," *Afro-American*, November 22, 1924; "14th Ward League Helps Cripple Kids," *Afro-American*, November 22, 1924; "14th Ward Club," *Afro-American*, March 21, 1925; "Civic League Notes," *Afro-American*, March 29, 1930.

⁵⁵ "Miss Jennie Mills: The Logical Candidate," *Afro-American*, January 29, 1916; "Civic League Notes," *Afro-American*, December 7, 1929; "So. Baltimore Gets New Baby Clinic," *Afro-American*, May 3, 1930.

At the close of the decade, the WCCL remained at the forefront of the struggle to improve the social welfare of the city's African American community. Working alongside the Civic League, the women of the WCCL played a pivotal role in the organization and completion of the city's largest Clean City Crusade to date in 1929. Similar to the crusades of the early 1910s, this campaign's success relied upon a program of education within the black community, which led to the purchase of "modern" garbage cans for many black households; as well as the cooperation of the Street Cleaning Department in hauling away trash in a number of blighted black neighborhoods, particularly in Northwest Baltimore, and installing large trash cans in many black neighborhoods.⁵⁶ Beyond continuing its longstanding activities in the realm of sanitation, the women charted an ambitious program for the following year to pressure the city government to provide a public bath for African Americans in East Baltimore; improve street lighting in Lafayette Square, which was located in the midst of a black neighborhood; and raise wages and ameliorate working conditions at the city incinerator which employed a number of African American men.⁵⁷ This agenda reflected the WCCL's continued commitment to "constructive cooperation" with the women of the Civic League, leaders and organizations in the African American community, and leaders within the city government. As articulated by Sarah Collins Fernandis, the work of the WCCL was critical to securing a "fuller, freer democracy" for the city's black community

⁵⁶ "Slogan Contest To Feature Clean-Up," *Afro-American*, June 22, 1929; "Women Start City House Cleaning," *Afro-American*, June 29, 1929; "League's Clean-Up Drive Shows Visible Results Here," *Afro-American*, July 13, 1929; "Every Day, My Yard I Clean," *Afro-American*, July 13, 1929; "Civic League Wants Cleaner Streets and Alleys," *Afro-American*, June 15, 1929; "Women's Civic League Aiding City in Clean Up Campaign," *Baltimore Municipal Journal* 17:27 (July 26, 1929): 7.

⁵⁷ "Congressman's Wife is Civic League Speaker," *Afro-American*, February 22, 1930.

and developing “a consciousness of mutual civic and social responsibility and of municipal interdependence.”⁵⁸ Developing and maintaining this consciousness was a critical component of the WCCL’s program, enabling the women to ensure that municipal and social services enjoyed by white Baltimoreans were also available to black Baltimoreans, as both were citizens of the city with a common interest in its welfare who equally deserved the rights of citizenship.

⁵⁸ Sarah Collins Fernandis, “Social Service Work in Baltimore,” *Southern Workman* 46:10 (October 1917): 540–543.

Chapter Five

“Common Citizens of the Common City”: Interracial Cooperation and Scientific Social Work in the Baltimore Urban League

Shortly before the Christmas holiday in 1929, a crowd of over 100 guests gathered at Frederick Douglass Senior-Junior High School in Northwest Baltimore for a testimonial in honor of R. Maurice Moss, Executive Secretary of the Baltimore Urban League (BUL). Moss was preparing to leave the city at the end of the month in order to become Executive Secretary of the Pittsburgh Urban League, where it was hoped he would achieve success similar to that achieved in Baltimore over the past five years. Those who assembled in the school’s library and cafeteria to laud Moss for his diligent work on behalf of the African American community in Baltimore included some of the leading citizens of both the black and white races in the city: John O. Spencer, the white president of Baltimore’s all black Morgan College, who served as master of ceremonies for the evening; Dr. Broadus Mitchell, a white Johns Hopkins University professor and former president of the BUL; Lillian Lottier, the black secretary of the BUL and a former president of the Baltimore branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP); former Baltimore City councilman, William L. Fitzgerald, one of three African Americans to serve on this legislative body during the 1920s; and numerous others.¹

R. Maurice Moss had arrived in Baltimore in 1924 to assume leadership of the city’s newly established branch of the National Urban League. Over a decade earlier, the

¹ “Large Share of Credit for Urban League’s Success Due to Men and Women Who Have Helped Make it a Community Organization,” *Afro-American*, December 7, 1929, 6; “R. Maurice Moss Given Watch at Testimonial,” *Afro-American*, December 21, 1929, 9.

National Urban League was founded in New York City in 1911 by an interracial group of racial reformers and Progressives in order to address the needs of African Americans in the urban environment as their numbers swelled with increasing migration to large cities in the early twentieth century. The organization's general mandate was "to promote, encourage, assist and engage in any and all kinds of work for improving the industrial, economic, social and spiritual conditions among Negroes." With this broad mandate, the National Urban League generally focused on securing employment and social services for African Americans.² By the end of its first decade, the National Urban League had expanded to nineteen other cities and over the course of the 1920s, seventeen new branches were established, including the BUL.³

Under Moss's leadership during the 1920s, the BUL became recognized as one of the city's foremost civic organizations at the forefront of efforts to improve the lives of African Americans in Baltimore. The organization fought to secure for black Baltimoreans rights comparable to those enjoyed by white citizens of the city in the realms of labor, health, housing, and recreation.⁴ In focusing on the BUL, this chapter

² The National Urban League was originally named the National League on Urban Conditions Among Negroes and it was formed as the result of the merger of three organizations: National League for the Protection of Colored Women (1905), Committee for the Improvement of Industrial Conditions Among Negroes in New York (1906), and the Committee on Urban Conditions Among Negroes (1910). The name was shortened to the National Urban League in 1920. For more information on the organization's founding, see Nancy J. Weiss, *The National Urban League, 1910 – 1940* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974); Jesse Thomas Moore, Jr., *A Search for Equality: The National Urban League, 1910 – 1961* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1981).

³ Thirteen new branches of the National Urban League were established between 1916 and 1919, mostly in major industrial centers such as Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit, Milwaukee, Newark, and Pittsburgh. In 1918, there were a total of 27 branches, but this number had decreased to 20 by 1920. Over the course of the 1920s, 17 branches were established which included those founded in Atlanta, Los Angeles, Louisville, and Tampa. By 1930, there were 34 branches of the National Urban League. Weiss, *The National Urban League*, 112, 163–164, 174.

⁴ "John R. Carey Heads Urban League in 1927," *Afro-American*, February 5, 1927, 5.

rescues the organization's early years and activities from obscurity and restores them to their rightful place in the story of the struggle for civil rights in Baltimore. The work of Bruce Thompson, which focuses on the NAACP in the 1930s and early 1940s, provides an example of how the work of the BUL has been obscured and minimized. Thompson claims that with the weakening of the Baltimore NAACP in the 1920s, no other organization assumed leadership of the struggle for civil rights. Thompson dismisses the BUL, noting that its focus was "conducting research and negotiating goodwill with potential employers." He thus fails to address the complete program of the BUL in the 1920s and also fails to realize how the aforementioned tactics and agenda were part of the struggle for civil rights and not separate from it.⁵

The BUL represented a step forward in interracial activism in the struggle for civil rights in Baltimore. Prior to the emergence of the BUL and its precursor, the Interracial Conference, the most extensive and continued interracial activism in Baltimore occurred among white and black women. In 1913, the Women's Cooperative Civic League (WCCL), an organization of middle-class black women, was established as an auxiliary to the Women's Civic League, an all-white organization founded 1911. Though they were members of a separate organization, the women of the WCCL cooperated extensively with the campaigns of the Women's Civic League, relying upon their resources and influence to work to improve the social welfare of the African American community.⁶ Involving much smaller numbers than those involved in the WCCL and the Women's Civic League, the BUL also relied upon interracial cooperation.

⁵ Bruce Thompson, "The Civil Rights Vanguard: The NAACP and the Black Community in Baltimore, 1931 – 1942 (Ph.D. diss., University of Maryland, 1996), 38.

⁶ For a discussion of the founding and work of the WCCL, see Chapter 4.

And unlike the interracial alliances formed among women in Baltimore, the BUL brought together leading black and white citizens of both genders under the umbrella of one organization who viewed themselves as “common citizens of the common city” who were all invested in improving the lives of black Baltimoreans. In the BUL, these leaders drew upon their expertise in civil rights organizing and their access to resources in order to advance an agenda that addressed both the economic and social conditions of African Americans in the city.⁷

Central to the work of the BUL during the 1920s was “scientific social work,” which employed the tools of investigation in order to study urban conditions. With advancements in the field of sociology and the training of social workers at the beginning of the twentieth century, scientific social work had emerged as an important tool upon which the National Urban League relied from its beginnings in 1911. Through collecting information, making observations, and analyzing conditions, the National Urban League was able to produce surveys of various urban conditions affecting African Americans. In turn, it was hoped that these surveys would serve as the foundation for reform. Thus, the BUL followed this same strategy during the course of the 1920s, completing and using thorough sociological and scientific investigations of various facets of African American life in order to enable stronger appeals to employers, city officials, and other whites in positions of power in an attempt to secure improvements in a range of areas including jobs, housing, sanitation, and recreation.⁸

⁷ “Annual Report of the Executive Secretary, Baltimore Urban League, January 1929,” in Public Relations Department, Historical Information, Baltimore, Maryland Urban League, Series 5, Box I:E8, Records of the National Urban League, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. (hereafter cited as the NUL Records).

⁸ Moore, *A Search for Equality*, xii–xiii, 39, 55; Weiss, *The National Urban League*, 216–219.

The beginnings of the BUL can be traced to the formation an organization known as the Interracial Conference after World War I by a group of Baltimore’s leading white and black citizens. The stated aim of this new organization was “the fostering of a more friendly spirit between the races, and the attacking of the serious problems in a spirit of co-operation.”⁹ The Interracial Conference was started under the leadership of the Rev. Peter Ainslie who served as the organization’s chairman. Motivated by a desire to improve the health and welfare of Baltimore’s African American community, Ainslie set about establishing this organization upon returning from the 1919 Hague Conference on World Friendship. The Rev. Ainslie was a prominent church leader in Baltimore who had arrived in the city in 1891 to assume the pastorate of the Calhoun Christian Church, later renamed Christian Temple, a congregation of the Disciples of Christ denomination. He was a leading figure in the Christian unity movement on both the national and international stage, serving as the first president of the Council on Christian Unity, which was established in 1910.¹⁰ In addition to Ainslie, other white leaders who played pivotal roles in founding the Interracial Conference were John R. Carey, founder and chairman of the Board of Directors of Provident Savings Bank; and Dr. Broadus Mitchell, a professor in economics at Johns Hopkins University.¹¹

Like the white racial reformers who founded the National Urban League, the white founders of the Interracial Conference were members of the “urban occupational

⁹ “Interracial Conference Meets Today,” *Afro-American*, March 11, 1921.

¹⁰ Ralph L. Pearson, “The National Urban League Comes to Baltimore” *Maryland Historical Magazine* 72 (1977), 523; Craig M. Watts, “Peter Ainslie, Church Unity and the Repudiation of War,” *Encounter* 68.3 (2007), 1–2.

¹¹ Pearson, “Urban League Comes to Baltimore,” 523–524.

elite.” Historian Jesse Thomas Moore, Jr., argues that these reformers generally did not believe in full social equality and their motives were not altogether “altruistic.” Believing that social environment and not race determined attitudes and behavior, these reformers mainly sought to improve the social welfare of African Americans in order alleviate class and racial conflict.¹² The Rev. Peter Ainslie, who had done little if any work to assist in improving the lives of black Baltimoreans prior to establishing the Interracial Conference, fits this mold. Though Ainslie admitted to having a “friendly feeling for the negro” in his autobiographical book *Working With God*, which was published in 1917, the autobiography also revealed that the pastor had done little to improve conditions for African Americans and that this “friendly feeling” was largely informed by a problematic and romanticized view of his Southern upbringing and of the slaveholding history of his ancestors. Ainslie clearly did not believe in full social equality for African Americans as evidenced by his support of the failed Strauss Amendment to the Maryland state constitution in 1909, which would have deprived African Americans across the state of the right to vote. He did not favor universal suffrage, citing it as an “evil” and supported the amendment movement as a means to eliminate the “illiterate negro vote.”¹³

Unlike Ainslie, other white founders of the Interracial Conference like John Cary and Broadus Mitchell do not fit comfortably within this mold of the white urban occupational elites who established the National Urban League. John Cary, a Quaker, was born in Southern Maryland and upon moving to Baltimore in his youth in 1879, he

¹² Moore, *A Search for Equality*, 37–38.

¹³ Peter Ainslie, *Working With God or The Story of a Twenty-Five Year Pastorate in Baltimore* (St. Louis Mo: Christian Board of Publication, 1917), 279–296; “Pastor Supports It,” *Baltimore Sun*, October 24, 1909.

became immensely interested in the problems affecting the working-class and African Americans. In 1888, he helped to establish the Provident Savings Bank, an institution that catered to the needs of the working class. Following the end of his banking career, Cary founded the Homemakers' Building and Loan Association in the 1910s to increase home ownership among Baltimore's African American population as well as work to provide them with rental housing at fair market rates. Though it is not clear whether or not Cary promoted full social equality for African Americans, his work to improve housing opportunities for African Americans seems to indicate motives beyond a mere desire to limit racial and class conflict.¹⁴

Though it is not completely clear whether or not Cary supported social equality for African Americans, the life and career of Dr. Broadus Mitchell supports that he did believe in extending equal rights to black Baltimoreans. Mitchell was born in 1892 in Georgetown, Kentucky into a family of southern progressives who advocated racial progress, specifically in education and eliminating segregation. Mitchell obtained his undergraduate degree from the University of South Carolina in 1913 and thereafter matriculated to Johns Hopkins University to pursue his doctorate. As a graduate student, Mitchell became interested in social work and fraternized with the school's radical element, thereby developing a stronger interest in socialism, progressivism, and workers' rights. He received his Ph.D. in 1918, and after serving briefly in World War I, Dr. Mitchell returned to Baltimore to assume a position as a Professor of Economics at Johns Hopkins University. And through his work with the school and the larger Baltimore

¹⁴ "To Lower Rents," *Afro-American*, February 4, 1921; "John R. Cary, Civic Leader, Dies Suddenly," *Afro-American*, August 9, 1928; "John R. Cary is Victim of Heart Attack," *Afro-American*, August 16, 1928.

community, Mitchell worked extensively to extend the rights afforded to African Americans, even working to have an African American student admitted to his school's graduate program in the 1930s.¹⁵

In addition to these white founders of the Interracial Conference, the new organization also included a number of members of the black middle-class among its founders and early members. These African Americans in the Interracial Conference were established leaders in the community and often brought to the organization extensive histories in agitating for African American rights. The Rev. Ernest S. Williams, secretary of the Interracial Conference, was a graduate of Morgan College and Gammon Theological Seminary in Atlanta, Georgia. Williams had pastored a number of churches in the Methodist Episcopal denomination and served as superintendent of the Baltimore district of the Washington Conference of the denomination.¹⁶ Dr. B.M. (Barnett Milton) Rhett served as vice-chairman of the Conference's Industrial Committee. A graduate of Hampton Institute and the Howard University School of Medicine, Rhett began practicing in Baltimore in 1908 following a year's internship at Freedmen's Hospital in Washington, D.C. In the 1910s, Dr. Rhett campaigned to have the city hire African American doctors and nurses.¹⁷ Among the other members of the Interracial Conference not serving on its executive board were Sarah Collins Fernandis, a social worker and

¹⁵ "Broadus Mitchell, 95, Professor, Historian and Hamilton Authority," *New York Times*, April 30, 1988; Danton Rodriguez, "All Quiet on the Southern Front: The Bravery of Edward S. Lewis- A Look at the Policies and Politics Regarding Admission of African Americans to Johns Hopkins in the 1930s," (Unpublished paper, May 2003).

¹⁶ "To Discuss Race Problems," *Afro-American*, February 13, 1920; "Metropolitan Pastor Dies Suddenly Here," *Afro-American*, March 23, 1929.

¹⁷ Pearson, 524; "Funeral Services for Dr. Rhett," *Afro-American*, October 13, 1956.

president of the Women's Cooperative Civic League; W. Ashbie Hawkins, an esteemed race lawyer who had fought municipal residential segregation as counsel for the NAACP and would become the first African American to run for the United States Senate in Maryland; Mason Hawkins, principal of the city's Colored High School; Hugh Burkett, a pioneer in the real estate field for African Americans and an educational activist; J. Howard Payne, a young lawyer; the Rev. George F. Bragg, pastor of St. James Protestant Episcopal Church, former newspaper editor, and veteran of the local civil rights movement; and Dr. William Pickens, the first African American appointed to serve as dean at Morgan College.¹⁸

During its first few years of existence, the work and activities of the Interracial Conference were limited. In both 1920 and 1921, the organization held conferences which brought together black and white leaders to discuss problems affecting African Americans in a variety of areas, including employment, education, health, housing, and recreation. But in holding these conferences, the Conference failed to draw large crowds of either racial group.¹⁹ Under the leadership of John Cary, the organization also sought to organize a stock company to sell and rent homes to African Americans, but this project never materialized as an initiative of the Interracial Conference.²⁰ Thus, in an effort to strengthen and extend its work, the Rev. Peter Ainslie and John Cary contacted the

¹⁸ "To Lower Rents," *Afro-American*, February 4, 1921; "Interracial Conference Meets Today," *Afro-American*, March 11, 1921; "Hugh Burkett," *Afro-American*, September 1, 1922, 3; "Requiem Mass for J. Howard Payne," *Afro-American*, November 5, 1960, 18; "Rev. Geo Bragg Dies," *Afro-American*, March 16, 1940, 1; "Dean Pickens to Be Installed on Thursday," *Afro-American*, November 27, 1915, 1.

¹⁹ "To Discuss Race Problems," *Afro-American*, February 13, 1920; "Conference Plans Interracial Meeting Will Be Held at Friends Church," *Afro-American*, December 10, 1920; "Interracial Conference Meets Today," *Afro-American*, March 11, 1921; "Interracial Conference," *Afro-American*, March 18, 1921.

²⁰ "To Lower Rents," *Afro-American*, February 4, 1921.

offices of the National Urban League in New York in order to have its staff undertake an in-depth sociological study of employment and economic conditions for African Americans in Baltimore. Through this study, it was hoped to learn more about the economic challenges of the African American community and that the study would serve as an important foundation for ameliorating these conditions.²¹

The ensuing survey of industrial conditions in Baltimore among African Americans was conducted under the auspices of the Department of Research and Investigations of the National Urban League. This department was established in 1921 with a five and a half years grant from the Carnegie Foundation. The Department of Research and Investigations conducted a number of community surveys in various cities that detailed the social and economic conditions of the African American population. These surveys were often conducted at the request of social agencies located within that particular city and they were often the first step in establishing a local branch of the National Urban League. Charles S. Johnson, an African American sociologist, headed this department and served as the lead for these community surveys through most of the 1920s. Prior to assuming this position with the National Urban League in 1921, Johnson had organized a research department for the Chicago Urban League in 1917 while pursuing a degree in sociology in the University of Chicago. During his time in Chicago, Johnson had investigated conditions among African Americans following the infamous 1919 race riot. The resulting report of which Johnson was the principal author was

²¹ “To Make Industrial Survey of Baltimore,” *Afro-American*, February 24, 1922; Pearson, “Urban League Comes to Baltimore,” 523–524.

published in 1922: *The Negro in Chicago: A Study of Race and A Race Riot*. Thus Johnson's experience and expertise more than qualified him to lead this division.²²

Charles S. Johnson arrived in Baltimore in March 1922 to initiate the survey which fell under his supervision with the assistance of the Interracial Conference's Industrial Committee led by Dr. Broadus Mitchell, the committee's chairman, and Dr. B.M. Rhetta, the committee's vice-chairman. To complete the survey, the Conference enlisted the cooperation of the city's Board of Trade and the Merchant's and Manufacturers' Association in order to determine which industries employed African Americans and to be able to interview employers and employees. The *Afro-American* was also an important resource for advertising Johnson's visit to the city in order to urge African Americans engaged in industrial work to provide information for the survey, particularly workers engaged in skilled occupations. Also cooperating in the completion of the survey were African American teachers and those engaged in work with Colored YMCA and Colored YWCA who were responsible for interviewing African American workers to obtain information on wages. Following three months of investigation, the industrial survey was completed and a summary of the resulting report was published in the pages of *Opportunity*.²³

²² In his role with the National Urban League, Johnson studied African American communities in Hartford, New London, and Waterbury, CT; Morristown, Planfield, and Trenton, NJ; Akron, OH; and Westchester County, NY. In addition to his role as head of the Department of Research, Johnson also served as editor of *Opportunity*, the National Urban League's official publication. He resigned from his positions with the League in 1928 in order to chair the Department of Social Science at Fisk University in Nashville, TN. Pearson, 524; Weiss, 216 – 217; Felix Armfield, *Eugene Kinckle Jones: The National Urban League and Black Social Work, 1910 – 1940* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2011), 38.

²³ There is no clear indication when the Interracial Conference received Johnson's final report but generally, it would take five to six weeks for results of surveys to be tabulated. "To Make Industrial Survey of Baltimore," *Afro-American*, February 24, 1922; "Problems of Negroes to Come Up in Survey," *Afro-American*, March 20, 1922; "Johnson Here for Industrial Survey," *Afro-American*, March 24, 1922;

Following the completion of the industrial survey, further steps towards establishing an official branch of the National Urban League in Baltimore lagged until the end of 1923. In December of that year, J.R. Lee, the Extension Secretary for the national office, visited a number of African American churches in the city to discuss the League and its work in improving economic and social conditions for other urban black communities. Lee continued his visits through January 1924, speaking before additional African American churches as well as gatherings of black fraternal organizations. Through his talks, Lee increased support for the League and collected financial contributions for the national office, as well as educated black Baltimoreans on the work of the League in hopes of increasing support for establishing a local branch.²⁴ Definite steps towards establishing the BUL were taken in May 1924 with a meeting of interested white and black Baltimoreans, which was presided over by John R. Cary of the Interracial Conference and featured Eugene Kinckle Jones, the League's Executive Secretary, as its main speaker. As a result of this meeting, an official organizing committee was formed, but delays continued until the fall of 1924 when Jones again returned to Baltimore. In late November 1924, the BUL was finally established with Dr. Broadus Mitchell of the Interracial Conference as its president; Lillian Lottier, a black educator and NAACP office, as the organization's secretary; and an interracial executive committee and advisory board of twenty individuals. Within two months, the BUL had officially merged with the Interracial Conference, its precursor organization, and Dr. B.M. Rhetta and John

"Skilled Workers Urged to Register," *Afro-American*, April 21, 1922, 6; Pearson, 524; Weiss, 218; "The Baltimore Industrial Survey," *Afro-American*, July 13, 1923.

²⁴ "Urban League is at Work Here," *Afro-American*, December 21, 1923; "Many Contribute to Urban League," *Afro-American*, January 25, 1924.

R. Cary, both members of the Interracial Conference, were elected as the BUL's vice president and treasurer, respectively.²⁵

Immediately following the organization of the BUL, select members of the executive committee assumed the task of appointing an Executive Secretary, one of the final steps required for affiliation with the national organization. Executive Secretaries were responsible for running local branches. They set the agenda for Board meetings, made policy recommendations, provided the Board with information regarding League work, and carried out policy directives adopted by the Board.²⁶ Relying upon a recommendation from the national office, the BUL selected R. Maurice Moss as its new Executive Secretary. In selecting Moss, the BUL secured the services of an indefatigable leader with impressive experience in the fields of social work and investigative research. Born in Danville, Virginia, Moss obtained his early education in the public schools of Norfolk, Virginia and Brooklyn, New York. He matriculated to Columbia University, graduating in 1919 and then proceeded to the New York School of Social Work for a year of study made possible through a fellowship awarded by the National Urban League. As a fellow of the League, Moss worked for the YMCA in Long Island, New York as its Secretary of Colored Work. He also worked in the athletic department of the Brooklyn

²⁵ The Executive Committee of the BUL was an interracial body: Broadus Mitchell, C. Baker, Howard Hill, John R. Carey, Robert L. Carey, Miss Dorothy Khan, Dr. Mollie Carroll, Miss Dorothy Pope, Beale Elliott, Dr. B.M. Rhett, Lewis Flagg, William N. Jones, Miss Anita Williams, Lillian Lottier, and Elsie M. Mountain. Advisory Board of the BUL consisted of the following prominent white Baltimoreans: The Rev. Peter Ainslie, the Rev. Hugh Birkhead, Archbishop Curley, Phillips Lee Goldsborough, Judge James P. Gorter, General Lawrason Riggs, Dr. Bernard C. Steiner, and Daniel Willard. "Group to Advance Negroes' Welfare," *Baltimore Sun*, May 8, 1924; "Urban League is Planned Here," *Afro-American*, May 9, 1924; "Urban League Ready to Open," *Afro-American*, October 31, 1924; "R.M. Moss Picked to Head Local Urban League," *Afro-American*, November 8, 1924; "Dr. Mitchell Heads City Urban League," *Baltimore Sun*, November 23, 1924; "Inter-racial Body and League Merge," *Afro-American*, January 31, 1925; *Opportunity: A Journal of Negro Life* (February 1925), 62.

²⁶ Moore, *A Search for Equality*, 56–58.

branch of the YMCA. During his fellowship tenure, Moss conducted two investigate studies of African American communities: one on Westchester County, New York and a second that covered twenty different black communities on Long Island, New York.²⁷

At the time Moss accepted the position of Executive Secretary of the BUL, he was serving as the director of the Frederick Douglass Community Center in Toledo, Ohio, the precursor to that city's branch of the National Urban League. Established in February 1920, the Center's initial mission was to "establish a recreation center for colored boys and young men, and to provide a place for the moral, mental, and physical development of colored youth." Through the National Urban League, Moss was secured to head the Frederick Douglass Community Center in November 1920. Under his leadership, the Center's staff was expanded; an organized program of classes, teams, and tournaments was created; and the Center's work was expanded to include African American girls and women. Moss also expanded the work of the Center beyond recreational activities, which included holding a "Negro Business Exposition" and operating an information bureau and employment agency for the city's black community. The Center was ultimately credited with creating a "community consciousness among

²⁷ "R.M. Moss Picked to Head Local Urban League," *Afro-American*, November 8, 1924; "Urban League Secretary Here to Begin Work," *Afro-American*, December 20, 1924; "Pittsburgh Gets Urban League Head," *Afro-American*, November 9, 1929; " 'No Alms, But Opportunity': The Seventeenth Annual Report of the National Urban League," *Opportunity* (March 1928): 86; R. Maurice Moss, "The Frederick Douglass Community Center," *Southern Workman* 52:5 (May 1923): 222; *Opportunity* (February 1925), 62; *Opportunity* (March 1928), 86; *Afro-American*, November 9, 1929.

An emphasis on training African American social workers was brought to the National Urban League through George Haynes, its first Executive Secretary, who also organized a department of social science to train African American social workers in 1910 at Fisk University. Under the leadership of Executive Secretary Eugene Kinckle Jones, the National Urban League began a program offering two annual fellowships at the New York School of Social Work to further this goal. R. Maurice Moss was one of the early recipients of this fellowship. At the conclusion of the fellowship, fellows were expected to devote at least a year to social work. Historian Nancy Weiss maintains that this program to train African American social workers was the NUL's "most innovative effort" during its earliest years of existence. See Weiss, *The National Urban League*, 74, 77–80; Armfield, *Eugene Kinckle Jones*, 31–32.

men and women of color” in Toledo. Moss brought this extensive experience and social work training to Baltimore to help transform the newly formed BUL into a viable organization aimed at improving the welfare of black Baltimoreans.²⁸

Corresponding to the goals of the Interracial Conference and the National Urban League, the goal of the newly established BUL was to foster greater interracial understanding and take steps towards improving the economic and social conditions of Baltimore’s African American population. Foremost on the BUL’s initial agenda was improving economic conditions for black Baltimoreans. A 1928 advertisement for the BUL succinctly stated the organization’s mission and emphasized its focus on economic conditions: “The Urban League is especially active in seeking to improve the economic status of the Negro and to aid an increasing number of them to find their way to better paid jobs. This is done in the belief that better pay leads to better housing, better training, better recreation, better health- to better citizenship.”²⁹ In this statement, the BUL articulated a core belief that improving African Americans’ economic status provided a crucial foundation for improving other areas of their lives realizing that financial resources were needed to improve social conditions and material circumstances. It also linked economic and social conditions to the concept of citizenship, stressing that improvements in these areas were the rights of citizens. Additionally, in emphasizing “better citizenship,” this statement also connects to ideas of middle-class respectability and racial politics of the early twentieth century. For the middle-class leaders of the BUL,

²⁸ R. Maurice Moss, “The Frederick Douglass Community Center,” *Southern Workman* 52:5 (May 1923): 222–227.

²⁹ Robert W. Coleman, *The First Colored Professional, Clerical and Business Directory of Baltimore City* (Baltimore: Published by author, 1928), 44.

improving the economic status of the mass of African Americans would enable them to live a lifestyle that reflected positively upon the entire black community.

By the time the BUL was established, the economic condition of the mass of African Americans in Baltimore was in a dismal state and declining. At the end of the nineteenth century, African Americans in Baltimore held a variety of skilled and unskilled positions. Skilled occupations included barbers, seamstresses, cooks, bricklayers, and shoemakers. Unskilled occupations included hackmen, laundresses, porters, stevedores, and common laborers. There were also a considerable number of African Americans in the business and professional class, including teachers, doctors, ministers, tailors, and lawyers. In 1890, black Baltimoreans were employed in thirty-three unskilled occupations, twenty skilled occupations, and thirty business and professional occupations. But over the course of the next two decades, the variety of African American positions declined, most drastically in the realm of skilled labor. In 1910, black Baltimoreans were only employed in nineteen unskilled occupations, six skilled occupations, and nineteen business and professional occupations.³⁰

The African American community of Baltimore experienced significant advances in employment in the late 1910s as a result of World War I and the increased demand for industrial labor. Conditions in Baltimore mirrored those on the national level where approximately 255,000 blacks found industrial employment, fueling the migration north.³¹ Exact figures for Baltimore are not available but the city's steel industry provides

³⁰ James R. Coates, "Recreation and Sport in the African-American Community of Baltimore, 1890 – 1920" (Ph.D. diss., University of Maryland, 1991), 54–56.

³¹ Weiss, *The National Urban League*, 178; Roderick N. Ryon, "Baltimore Workers and Industrial Decision Making, 1890–1917," *Journal of Southern History* 51:4 (November 1985): 565–566.

a relevant example of the employment opportunities that opened for African Americans. By the summer of 1917, the *Afro-American* was reporting that thousands of African Americans were employed at the city's Bethlehem Steel Company located at Sparrow's Point. The wartime emergency also opened up employment opportunities to African Americans in the city's copper industry. However, with the end of the war, much of the ground gained by African Americans was quickly lost.³²

In order to develop an informed approach to remedying economic conditions for African Americans in Baltimore in the 1920s, the BUL relied upon the industrial survey of the city completed in 1922 under the leadership of Charles Johnson of the national office of the National Urban League. The survey was the most extensive sociological investigation of economic conditions for African Americans in Baltimore. By focusing on industrial employment, the survey provided much needed information on an area of which little information was known and an area that would benefit extensively from interracial cooperation.³³ Two years before the survey, the 1920 census reported a population of 108,390 African Americans residing in Baltimore, comprising 14.8 percent of the city's total population and making Baltimore the city with the fifth largest black population in the nation. Of the city's black population, 66,763 were employed, representing 61 percent of the black population and revealing the need for African American families to have as many members employed as possible. Johnson's survey in

³² "Wages Drove Men North," *Afro-American*, July 21, 1917; "Copper Works Employs 600," *Afro-American*, June 11, 1920; Moore, 59–63.

³³ Pearson, "Urban League Comes to Baltimore," 529; Charles S. Johnson, "Negroes at Work in Baltimore, Md.," *Opportunity: A Journal of Negro Life* 1 (June 1923): 15.

1922 focused on 175 industrial plants in the city and the 6,525 African Americans employed in roughly two-thirds of these plants.³⁴

According to the industrial survey, African Americans only dominated two fields of work in Baltimore. First, African Americans comprised roughly 65 percent of the 50,446 Baltimoreans engaged in domestic and personal service occupations. Roughly two-thirds of the 33,436 African Americans in these occupations were women. This field included janitors, chauffeurs, servants, and laundresses. The occupations with the highest percentages of African Americans employed in this field included waiters (78 percent), porters in stores (71.8 percent), and porters employed outside of stores (92.5 percent). Second, African Americans dominated unskilled laborer occupations, amounting to 47 percent of the workforce in this occupation with a total of 21,934. In this field, the occupations with the highest percentages of African Americans employed were building and repair laborers (70 percent), laborers in blast furnaces and steel rolling mills (64 percent), and stevedores (73 percent). Other unskilled laborer occupations with high numbers of African Americans included ship and boat builders, laborers in fertilizer factories, teamsters and draymen, and deliverymen.³⁵

The most in-depth portion of the survey evaluated the conditions that determined the African American presence in Baltimore industries. Johnson's investigation revealed that African Americans predominated in the following industries and occupations: laborers in Baltimore's fertilizing industry, the largest in the country; longshoremen on the city's docks, an occupation that African Americans dominated prior to the Civil War;

³⁴ Johnson, "Negroes at Work," 13, 15; *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., 1923), 368.

³⁵ Johnson, "Negroes at Work," 14 – 15.

Table 5.1 Occupations of African Americans in Baltimore, 1922

Occupational Category	Number of African American Males Engaged in Occupation	Number of African American Females Engaged in Occupation	Total
Professional Service	660	543	1,203
Entrepreneurs	750	177	927
Managers and Foremen	162	14	176
Clerical Workers	538	249	787
Skilled Workers	2,260	674	2,944
Apprentices	23	0	23
Extraction of Minerals	97	0	97
Semi-Skilled Workers (Manufacturing Industries)	1,833	1,940	3,773
Domestic and Personal Service	10,796	22,640	33,436
Unskilled Workers	12,094	328	12,422
Unskilled Laborers-Transportation	9,512	0	9,512
Public Service	605	0	605
TOTAL	39,330	26,565	65,895

Source: Charles S. Johnson, "Negroes at Work in Baltimore, Md.," *Opportunity: A Journal of Negro Life* 1 (June 1923): 15

brick-yard laborers; construction laborers who engaged in a variety of tasks including street paving, excavation, and general building contract work; and laborers in the tanning industry of which there was only one plant in the city. The survey found that within these industries, African Americans were able to gain a foothold due to the industries' need for

a fluid labor supply and their reliance on unskilled labor, which generally paid 25 cents per hour. In these industries, employers were able to hire African Americans for this type of labor more cheaply than white laborers. Additionally, the nature of the work in these factories often proved “disagreeable” to white workers such as the strong and offensive odors in the fertilizer industry. Thus, greater possibilities for employment were opened to African Americans. In addition to these industries in which African American labor predominated, the survey also revealed the variety of reasons used by employers in industries that often excluded them. Of the 175 plants examined for the survey, sixty-two or roughly one-third, did not employ African Americans. Reasons for this exclusion included tradition; the fear of racial conflict; unwillingness of employers to place black men and white women in close proximity; belief that African Americans lacked the mental ability to learn certain skills needed for the job; allegations that African American workers used in the past had performed poorly; inability to cover the expense required to create segregated working environments; and the objection of labor unions.³⁶

African American membership in Baltimore labor unions was also a topic covered in detail in the 1922 industrial survey. Though Baltimore unions possessed a multitude of weaknesses, over seventy had formed by the beginning of the twentieth century and many were large enough to be effective.³⁷ However, African Americans were largely excluded from union membership. For the few lines of work permitting African Americans to organize and affiliate with the American Federation of Labor, they were only permitted to become members in separate locals. Of the 114 locals affiliated with the American Federation of Labor, only six of these organizations were African American, which

³⁶ Johnson, “Negroes at Work,” 15–16, 18–19.

³⁷ Ryon, “Baltimore Workers,” 568.

included separate unions for longshoremen and freight handlers. Together, these six unions amounted to a membership of just under 2,000. In addition to these unions, African Americans had also established four independent unions, which collectively amounted to an estimated membership of 1,900. Thus, across the city, African American laborers were generally excluded from labor unions. More often, they were used by employers as strikebreakers in opposition to union demands, fueling a contentious relationship between the black community and organized labor. Johnson concluded that situation had “little light” and African American exclusion from organized labor would be extremely difficult to change.³⁸

With a better understanding of the industrial situation for African Americans in Baltimore as a result of Johnson’s survey, the BUL worked continuously throughout the remainder of the decade to improve it. Realizing the monumental difficulties in making inroads for African Americans in organized labor, the BUL instead focused on working with individual employers to secure greater employment opportunities.³⁹ This strategy

³⁸ Johnson, “Negroes at Work,” 19. During the course of the 1920s, there were only a few instances in which African Americans worked with white unions in strikes in order to secure better working conditions, including a 1922 strike at the B&O Railroad Riverside shop, a 1923 strike of common laborers engaged in municipal projects, and a 1924 strike in the city’s garment industry. For the 1922 B&O Railroad strike, see “150 On Strike,” *Afro-American*, September 8, 1922; “B. and O. Peace Pact Signed with Men,” *Baltimore Sun*, September 16, 1922; “Strikers Will Man Rail Shops At Once,” *Baltimore Sun*, September 17, 1922. For the 1923 strike see “Negro Labor Stands Pat in Wage Strike,” *Afro-American*, April 20, 1923; “The Local Strike,” *Baltimore Sun*, April 4, 1923; “Mayor’s Order Raises Payroll by Thousands,” *Baltimore Sun*, April 7, 1923; “The Municipal Wage Increase,” *Baltimore Sun*, April 8, 1923; “Sewer Laborers’ Strike Spreads,” *Baltimore Sun*, April 4, 1923; “Sewer Strike Gets Labor Indorsement,” *Baltimore Sun*, April 5, 1923. For the 1924 garment industry strike see “Women Garment Workers Plan Union Drive,” *Afro-American*, July 18, 1924; “1,500 Garment Workers Will Strike Today,” *Baltimore Sun*, July 23, 1924; “Anticipates Strike Settlement Soon,” *Baltimore Sun*, August 6, 1924; “Effort to Be Made to Conclude Strike,” *Baltimore Sun*, July 26, 1924; “Garment Workers Go Out on Strike,” *Baltimore Sun*, August 1, 1924; “Women Garment Workers Plan Union Drive,” *Baltimore Sun*, July 18, 1924.

³⁹ Within a few months of the completion of Johnson’s survey for the National Urban League and prior to publication of the final report and formation of the BUL, some efforts were made on behalf of the American Federation of Labor (AFL) to organize African American workers under the leadership of W. W.

was also most likely informed by the changing industrial landscape of Baltimore during the 1920s as more opportunities were created and the industrial base became even more diversified. Over 100 new plants were established in the city; Bethlehem Steel expanded its plant in Sparrows Point; and the volume of foreign trade increased greatly as Baltimore went from seventh to third in the nation's ranking of most active ports between 1920 and 1926.⁴⁰ One of the new plants established in Baltimore in the mid-1920s was the mail order business Montgomery Ward and Company, which opened a two million dollar plant in Carroll Park in Southwest Baltimore. Initiating and maintaining contact with the personnel manager of the company, the BUL sought to convince the company to employ African American women in clerical positions, believing that opening this door to African American women would open up similar positions in other Baltimore industries. Responding to arguments that it "would not work" for black women and white women to work together, the BUL offered proof of multiple instances where interracial work forces were successful. Additionally, the BUL made appeals to the company's national office to develop a national policy that mandated that African Americans be employed in more than just positions as common laborers. However, when it opened its

Cordell, an organizer with the AFL. Over the course of two months, Cordell held two months to stimulate African American membership in the AFL; however, this movement did not seem particularly fruitful in the long term and likely influenced the strategy of the BUL. See "Race Carpenters Urged to Organize," *Afro-American*, July 7, 1922; "Colored Men Hold Jobs in Labor Unions," *Afro-American*, November 17, 1922, 14; "Labor Federation in Membership Drive," *Afro-American*, July 21, 1922; "Pastors Act to Organize Unions," *Afro-American*, September 29, 1922.

⁴⁰ Jo Ann E. Argersinger, *Toward a New Deal in Baltimore: People and Government in the Great Depression* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 2.

doors in August 1925, African American women were not among the clerical force and African American men were only employed as common laborers.⁴¹

Appeals to individual employers were supplemented by a variety of other strategies. Members of the BUL's Committee on Industrial Relations held separate meetings with the heads of the city's leading employment agencies and the Association of Commerce, a federation of city businessmen, in order to discuss ways to expand the industrial opportunities available to black men and women.⁴² In the summer and fall of 1925, at the suggestion of T. Arnold Hill, director of the National Urban League's Department of Industrial Relations, the BUL began exploring the idea of holding an Industrial Campaign, an event designed to increase the number of African Americans in "profitable lines of employment."⁴³ In order to achieve greater employment opportunities, members of the BUL outlined three goals for this event:

(1) to get jobs for men and women in occupations and business houses that do not offer them employment or which afford them little chance for advancement; (2) to impress upon workers the necessity for industrial improvement, training, and

⁴¹ "Montgomery Ward to Employ Stenogs," *Afro-American*, April 4, 1925; "Montgomery-Ward Bars Colored Girls," *Afro-American*, July 4, 1925; *Opportunity: A Journal of Negro Life* (September 1925), 284.

⁴² "Employment Agents Endorse Committee," *Afro-American*, July 23, 1927; "Progress: The Eighteenth Annual Report of the Activities of the National Urban League," *Opportunity: A Journal of Negro Life* (April 1929): 114.

⁴³ "Industrial Program for an Urban League Branch" in Industrial Relations Department, Affiliates File, Baltimore, Md., 1925 – 39, Series 4, I:D, Box 28, NUL Records; R. Maurice Moss to T. Arnold Hill, August 5, 1925, in Industrial Relations Department, Affiliates File, Baltimore, Md., 1925 – 39, Series 4, I:D, Box 28, NUL Records; R. Maurice Moss to T. Arnold Hill, October 2, 1925, in Industrial Relations Department, Affiliates File, Baltimore, Md., 1925 – 39, Series 4, I:D, Box 28, NUL Records; R. Maurice Moss to T. Arnold Hill, October 6, 1925, in Industrial Relations Department, Affiliates File, Baltimore, Md., 1925 – 39, Series 4, I:D, Box 28, NUL Records.

Industrial Campaigns and "Negro in Industry Weeks" were held by a number of BUL branches and met the goals set forth by the National Urban League and its Department of Industrial Relations, established in 1925. T. Arnold Hill was the Department's first director. See Moore, *A Search for Equality*, 66; Weiss, *The National Urban League*, 188.

thorough application to the jobs now open to increase employment opportunities for the race; and (3) to arouse public thinking on the low economic status of our workers forced upon them by lack of occupational opportunity.

To meet these goals, the BUL planned to include charts documenting advancements made by African Americans in industrial occupations; live exhibits with companies that employed African Americans showing their workers engaged in making products; photographs and other pertinent information on African American owned businesses; and public meetings with speeches from employers and organized labor leaders.⁴⁴ Plans for the Industrial Campaign dragged over the course of two years and by 1927, the BUL had decided to cancel plans for the event due to the withdrawal of support from the Association of Commerce, a lack of funds to execute the event, and the fact that Baltimore was enduring its worst economic slump in five years.⁴⁵ Plans for an Industrial Campaign resurfaced in 1929; however the focus of this event was African American businesses, providing black business owners with lectures from experts in the field and advertising these businesses to the community. But this event never materialized as well, probably due to many of the same reasons that prevented the earlier campaign.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Hill to Moss, October 14, 1925, in Industrial Relations Department, Affiliates File, Baltimore, Md., 1925 – 39, Series 4, I:D, Box 28, NUL Records; “Negro Business and Educational Show,” in Industrial Relations Department, Affiliates File, Baltimore, Md., 1925 – 39, Series 4, I:D, Box 28, NUL Records; “Urban League Plans Industry Campaign,” *Afro-American*, October 30, 1926.

⁴⁵ “Urban League Plans Industry Week,” *Afro-American*, January 29, 1927; “The Executive Board, Summary of the Quarterly Meeting, January 27, 1927,” in Industrial Relations Department, Affiliates File, Baltimore, Md., 1925 – 39, Series 4, I:D, Box 28, NUL Records; Moss to Hill, February 3, 1927, in Industrial Relations Department, Affiliates File, Baltimore, Md., 1925 – 39, Series 4, I:D, Box 28, NUL Records; Moss to Hill, February 24, 1927, in Industrial Relations Department, Affiliates File, Baltimore, Md., 1925 – 39, Series 4, I:D, Box 28, NUL Records.

⁴⁶ According to Weiss, the National Urban League “ignored black capitalism as a route to racial progress.” Instead the crux of the League’s efforts was carving out a space for African Americans in the industrial system of white America. However, this program of the BUL shows an instance in which a local branch attempted to focus on African American business as a route to improved economic conditions. Weiss, *The National Urban League*, 179–180; “Perfect Plans for Business Exhibit,” *Afro-American*, January 19, 1929.

The work of the BUL in securing better employment opportunities for African Americans proved to be most successful in the realm of social work. From its beginnings, the National Urban League was concerned with training African American social workers in order to increase their numbers in the field. By the 1920s, the field of social work was undergoing a professional transformation and Eugene Kinckle Jones, the National Urban League's Executive Secretary, worked to ensure that black social workers were also recognized as professionals. Jones also worked to ensure that white social workers worked in conjunction with black social workers to tackle race issues.⁴⁷ This focus on social work was evident in the work of the BUL. During the late 1920s, the BUL established an annual social work conference in conjunction with the Family Welfare Association to discuss African American cases; held a joint meeting of African American social workers in Baltimore and Washington, D.C.; started a course in social work at the Sharp Street Community House; made steps towards creating an organization that brought together the over thirty African American social workers in the city; and called together a special conference bringing together an interracial audience representing eighteen different social agencies to discuss problems affecting African American mothers and their children.⁴⁸ In 1929, due to BUL efforts, two African American social workers were hired by the Family Welfare Association, Baltimore's main social welfare organization. One of the new social workers was Elizabeth McCard, a native Baltimorean who obtained her undergraduate degree from Smith College in 1928. Following her

⁴⁷ Armfield, *Eugene Kinckle Jones*, 23, 28–31.

⁴⁸ "Annual Report of the Executive Secretary, Baltimore Urban League, January 1929," in Public Relations Department, Historical Information, Baltimore, Maryland, Series 5, Box I:E8, NUL Records.

graduation, McCard returned to Baltimore and worked as a substitute teacher at Douglass High School, her alma mater. The second social worker was Sadye George, a 1917 graduate of Wilberforce University and a 1919 graduate of the Bishop Tuttle Social Service School. Prior to her appointment in Baltimore, George served as the associate head resident of the Phyllis Wheatley Settlement House in Minneapolis. The BUL assisted the Family Welfare Association in canvassing and selecting candidates for these positions, undoubtedly due in large part to Dorothy Pope, assistant secretary of the organization and a member of the BUL's executive board. The appointment of these two women marked the first time African American social workers had been employed by the Family Welfare Association since 1921. This feat proved particularly important for African Americans made up 30 percent of the Family Welfare Association's constituents in the years leading up to the Great Depression.⁴⁹

Despite the BUL's advancements in the realm of social work employment that directly benefitted members of the middle-class, its efforts to secure greater employment opportunities for the mass of working-class African Americans were largely unsuccessful. A complete and detailed annual account of African American job placements secured through the BUL is extant; however, existing records that discuss job placements reveal that the BUL's results in this area were minimal. For example, in 1926, the BUL was only able to find employment for forty-four blacks, the majority of whom were men.⁵⁰ The inability of the BUL to improve economic conditions for large numbers

⁴⁹ "Family Welfare to Add Two Workers," *Afro-American*, June 22, 1929.

⁵⁰ Records of annual job placements were not preserved by the National Urban League and there are only partial records available from League branches. The BUL's records only give numbers for one year. See Weiss, *The National Urban League*, 192; "Summary of Fall Meeting of the Executive Board of the Urban League," October 20, 1926, in Industrial Relations Department, Affiliates File, Baltimore, Md.,

of black Baltimoreans was undoubtedly due in part to the economic recessions that hit the city and affected African Americans disproportionately. In 1927, the national economy was hit by a brief recession and its effects were felt in Baltimore. The dire state of the economy and its effect on African Americans was a driving force behind the BUL's decision to cancel plans to hold an Industrial Campaign that year. Writing to T. Arnold Hill in the national office of the National Urban League, R. Maurice Moss explained that "[i]t is an art to get a man a job now... it would be an impossibility almost to get him a better one." Nationwide, recovery began in early 1928, but in Baltimore, the recession continued throughout the year. Unemployment reached an unprecedented high of 10 percent and the tremendous increase in families seeking support forced the Family Welfare Association to close its doors to new clients, the first time such action had been taken in the organization's history. For African Americans in Baltimore and elsewhere across the country, the economic depression that would not hit white Americans until the end of the decade, had already affected them by the mid-1920s.⁵¹

Though the BUL was able to effect little change to employment conditions for African Americans in Baltimore through the use of scientific social work, the organization still relied upon this strategy to address other problems plaguing the black community. In early 1925, the BUL launched an investigation of living conditions in Biddle Alley, a black neighborhood in Northwest Baltimore known as the "Lung Block," a name shared by neighborhoods in a number of large cities due to their high rates of

1925 – 39, Series 4, I:D, Box 28, NUL Records; John R. Cary Heads Urban League in 1927, *Afro-American*, February 5, 1927.

⁵¹ Argersinger, *Toward a New Deal*, 1–3, 22; Pearson, "Urban League Comes to Baltimore," 532; R. Maurice Moss to T. Arnold Hill, February 24, 1927, NUL Records.

tuberculosis and death.⁵² Through a survey of the Lung Block, the BUL hoped to be able to strengthen its appeals for better housing and greater access to municipal services for African Americans in this particular neighborhood and citywide. Situated at the southern border of the hub of black Baltimore in the northwestern section of the city, Biddle Alley was bounded by Druid Hill Avenue, Biddle Street, Pennsylvania Avenue, and Preston Street. It encompassed a network of small streets and lanes, which were often badly paved and dotted with unsanitary sheds and small houses. Though the area was only one fifteen thousandths of a square mile, it was home to close to 1,500 African Americans by 1920 which included over 400 families crowded into 200 houses, many of which had been either constructed in the late eighteenth century or built on lots that were once backyards or part of larger properties.⁵³ For most of the period extending from the late nineteenth century into the early twentieth century, Baltimore was the nation's largest unsewered city and even after 1915, with the integration of the city's assortment of privately constructed sewerage systems into a single network, numerous African American neighborhoods, including Biddle Alley, remained unconnected to the system. Well into the 1920s, a number of homes in Biddle Alley were forced to share one hydrant for access to water and one privy, and both often overflowed into the alleys and even into the basements where families lived.⁵⁴

The area's reputation as the city's "Lung Block" was cemented with the 1907 publication of a study of housing conditions in Baltimore funded by several private

⁵² Roberts, *Infectious Fear*, 126-127.

⁵³ Some estimates place the African American population of Biddle Alley closer to 4,000. *Afro-American*, January 31, 1925; *Afro-American*, March 7, 1925; Roberts, *Infectious Fear*, 126 – 127.

⁵⁴ Roberts, *Infectious Fear*, 81-82.

charitable organizations and conducted by private investigator Janet Kemp who was trained in social survey work. The survey, entitled *Housing Conditions in Baltimore*, was nearly 100 pages in length and included tables, maps, and photographs. Kemp's work focused on four neighborhoods in Baltimore: the Albemarle Street district, the Thames Street district, the Hughes Street District, and the Biddle Alley district. The Albemarle and Thames Street districts were tenement neighborhoods occupied mostly by European immigrants and their families, while the Hughes Street and Biddle Alley districts were alley neighborhoods occupied by African Americans. In her discussion of Biddle Alley, Kemp detailed the overcrowding and insanitary living conditions in the neighborhood that led to the high rates of tuberculosis and death. She noted that Biddle Alley's residents were "compelled to breathe air foul with the excretions of each other's lungs, where privacy is unknown, where there is no repose in sickness, and where even the children of the family must, perforce, be sometimes rudely familiarized with the mysteries of birth and death." However, these seemingly sympathetic words were belied by a number of Kemp's conclusions, which ignored social and economic factors and instead relied on stereotypical views of African Americans. In examining African American neighborhoods, the survey failed to use methodological rigor equal to that used in examining white neighborhoods. More often, Kemp attributed problems plaguing black neighborhoods to racial differences, emphasizing stereotypical views of African Americans as immoral and degenerate.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Baltimore Association for the Improvement of the Condition of the Poor, *Housing Conditions in Baltimore: Report of a Special Committee Submitting the Results of an Investigation made by Janet E. Kemp* (Baltimore: Federated Charities, 1907; reprint ed., New York: Arno Press, 1974); Roberts, *Infectious Fear*, 126–130.

African American efforts to address the horrible living conditions that existed in Biddle Alley through the use of a survey began in 1908, following closely on the heels of the completion of Kemp's survey. This survey was completed by the Colored Law and Order League, an organization comprised of some of the city's leading African American men. The organization's leader, Dr. James Waring, was principal of the Colored High School and had practiced medicine for twenty-seven years in both Baltimore and Washington, D.C. The Colored Law and Order League's survey focused on the Lower Druid Hill Avenue district in Northwest Baltimore, a neighborhood which included Biddle Alley. The report explored the school, moral, and sanitary conditions of this neighborhood. But due to the fact that it was produced by men not trained in social investigation, the survey lacked the complete data found in Kemp's work. However, whereas Kemp used African American stereotypes to explain conditions found in the neighborhood, the work of the Colored Law and Order League attributed poor living conditions in the neighborhood to police corruption and white influence. The survey resulted in the formation of a brief interracial coalition to battle police corruption and to attempt to close white-owned saloons in the neighborhood; but the coalition was short-lived and only achieved minimal results.⁵⁶

By the 1920s, the deplorable conditions in Biddle Alley still existed and the BUL initiated its own plans to make a study of the "Lung Block." Plans to complete the survey were underway by the spring of 1925 with cooperation from a number of institutions and government entities including the Health Department, Morgan College, the Sharp Street

⁵⁶ James H.N. Waring, *Work of the Colored Law and Order League, Baltimore, MD* (Cheyney, PA: Committee of Twelve for the Advancement of Interests of the Negro Race, 1908); Roberts, *Infectious Fear*, 130–135.

Community House and the Maryland Tuberculosis Association, reflecting the interracial nature and intentions of the BUL. Students in the sociology classes of Dr. Thomas I. Brown at Morgan College conducted a house-to-house canvas in Biddle Alley with a printed questionnaire to gain more in-depth information on living conditions in the “Lung Block.” These findings were supplemented by another 900 questionnaires answered by school children in the area’s two schools. Dr. Ellicott of the Health Department provided the League with pertinent health data and the Family Welfare Association, a white organization for which BUL president Broadus Mitchell volunteered, provided figures on charitable aid given to African Americans. The collection of this data was supervised by Moss with the assistance of Elsie Mountain of the Sharp Street Community House, a civic organization connected to the historic black Sharp Street Methodist Episcopal Church.⁵⁷ The published report resulting from the investigation exposed the unsanitary and cramped living conditions endured by African Americans in Biddle Alley and emphasized the link between these conditions and the prevalence of tuberculosis in the “Lung Block,” noting that over half of its homes had been ravaged by the disease known as “the white plague” within a little over a decade.⁵⁸

With the release of the BUL’s report, government officials slowly moved to address housing and sanitation issues in this black neighborhood. After reading the “Lung Block” survey, the city’s Commissioner of Street Cleaning, three members of the Police Department, an inspector with the Health Department, and the foreman of street cleaning

⁵⁷ *Afro-American*, March 7, 1925; *Afro-American*, March 28, 1925; Jacqueline Hall, “Broadus Mitchell (1892 – 1988),” *Radical History Review* 45 (1989), 32–33.

⁵⁸ No known existing copy of the survey and the information on its content is known from articles, photos and charts from the survey reprinted in the *Afro-American*.

and garbage collection in Biddle Alley traveled to the neighborhood with Moss to survey conditions in person. Twelve two-ton trucks were loaded with garbage and debris to be hauled away from the block; standing water was collected for chemical analysis; and one shack was ordered torn down. Following this visit, Highways Department officials promised to pave all streets and alleys in the neighborhood, while the Public Improvement Commission promised to purchase the land situated around School Number 122, a new African American school scheduled for construction in the Lung Block. However, despite these promises, city officials stalled in fulfilling them.⁵⁹

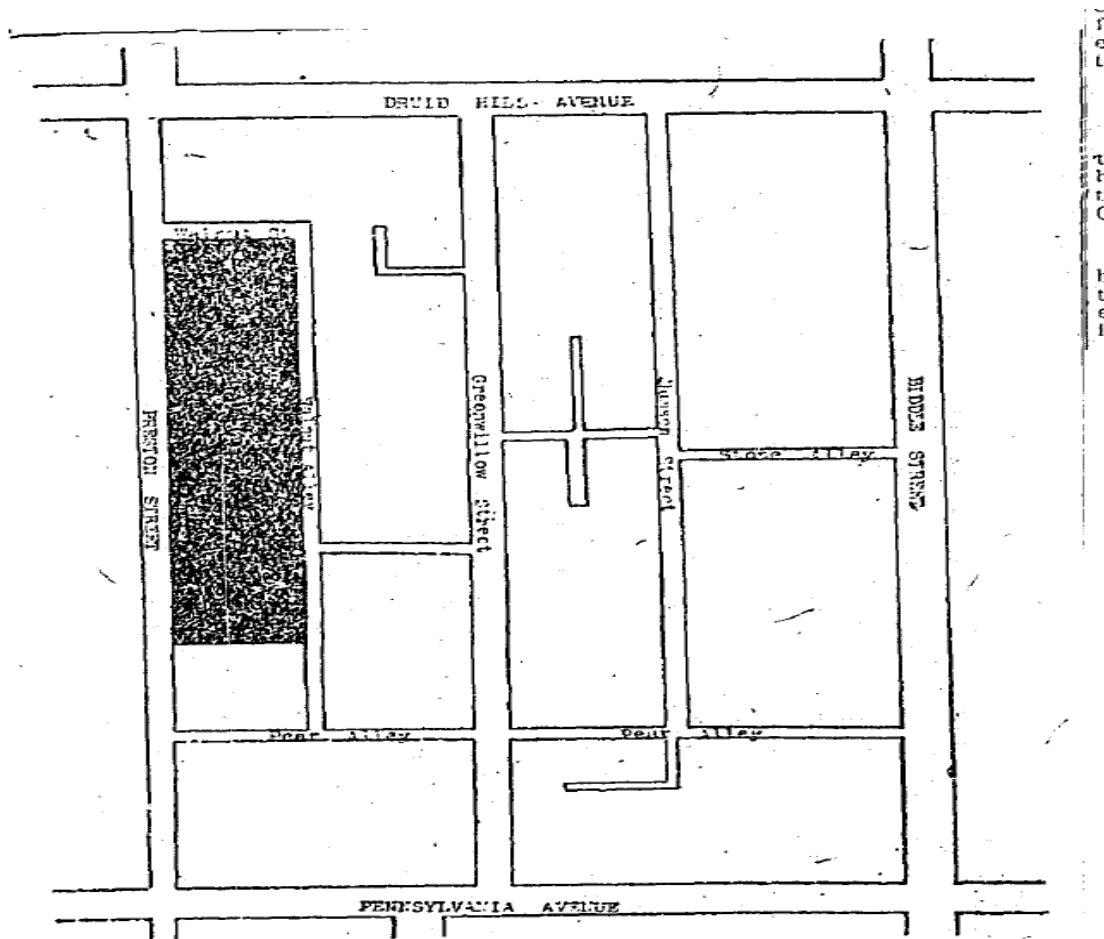
Over the course of the next few years, the BUL, relying upon the validation offered in its survey, continued to press for city action in the Lung Block. Their efforts intersected with those of the Federation of Parent Teacher Clubs, an organization whose goal was to improve the state of African American education. Following the construction of the School Number 122, named the Samuel Taylor Coleridge School, the Federation turned its attention to securing a playground for the school children in Biddle Alley adjacent to the school. In order to meet this objective as well as other educational goals, the Federation campaigned for one-third of the recently secured \$10 million school loan in Baltimore to be designated for use for African American schoolchildren. Speaking before the School Board, Marie Bauernschmidt of the white Public School Association urged that part of the school loan go towards African American schools, noting the patience of the African American community in dealing with the board's lack of speed in moving to action in the past.⁶⁰ To further its cause of securing a playground, the

⁵⁹ *Opportunity: A Journal of Negro Life* (December 1925): 386.

⁶⁰ *Afro-American*, January 15, 1927.

Federation borrowed from BUL tactics and conducted a survey that revealed two deaths and six serious accidents in Baltimore over the course of a week due to dangerous heavy traffic and children compelled to play in the streets due to lack of a playground or other recreational space. Federation president Laura Wheatley, who was also a member of the BUL Advisory Board, presented these findings to the School Board, pressing for further action in the “Lung Block.”⁶¹

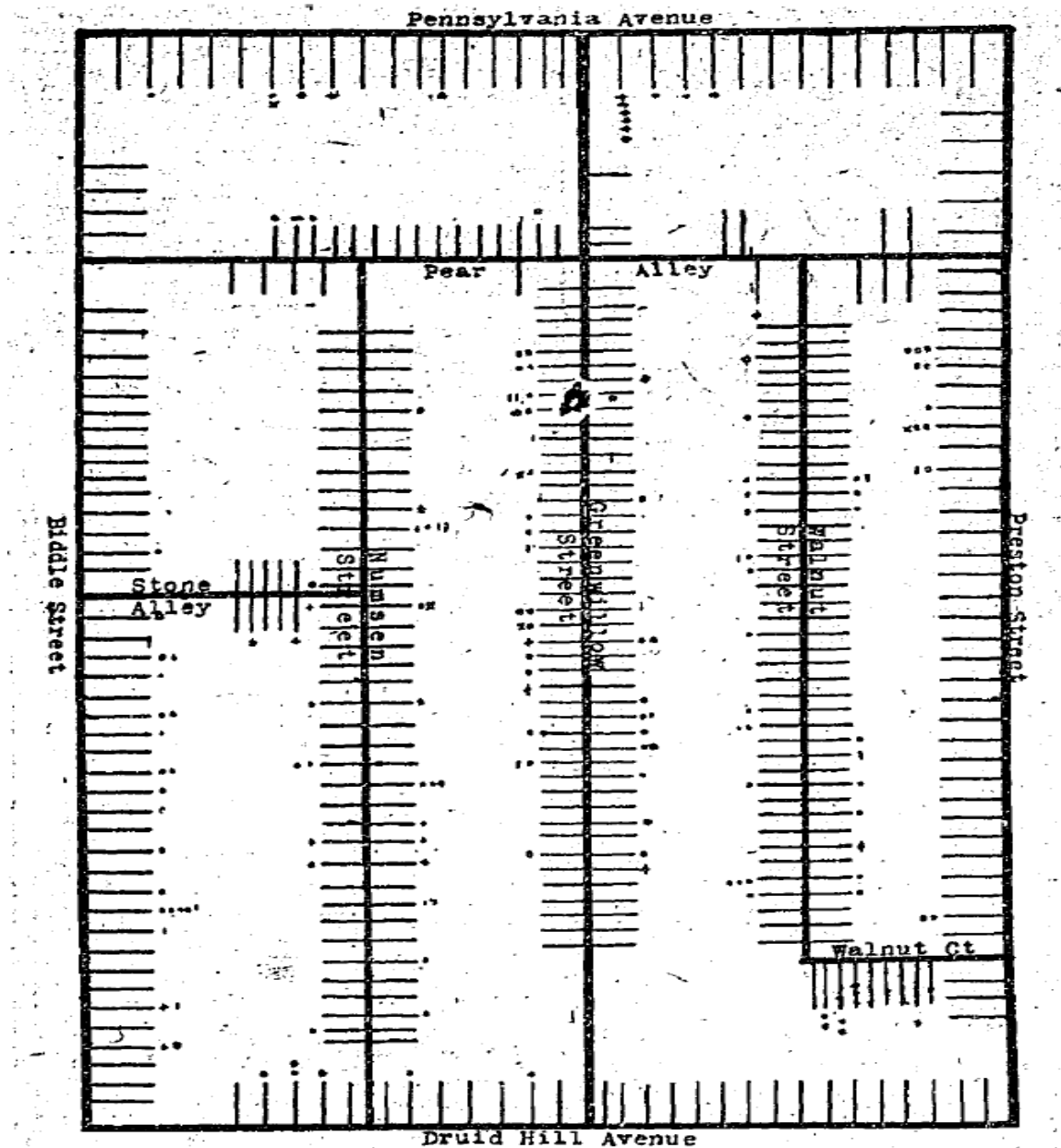
Figure 5.1 Map of Lung Block



Map of the Lung Block from BUL Survey reprinted in *Afro-American*, October 3, 1925

⁶¹ *Afro-American*, May 15, 1926; *Afro-American*, May 11, 1929.

Figure 5.2 Map of Lung Block Showing Tuberculosis Cases



Map from BUL Survey reprinted in *Afro- American* showing Tuberculosis Cases in this neighborhood reported to Health Dept from 1913 – 1924, October 17, 1925

As a result of the agitation of the BUL, a number of municipal entities were eventually compelled to act and address African American concerns related to the “Lung Block.” By the spring of 1929, the Park Board, Public Improvement Commission, Health

Department, and the Commissioner for Opening Streets had all announced their support for establishing a playground in the “Lung Block,” marking the first time municipal entities had voiced their cooperation in this effort. Within a matter of months, the Public Improvement Commission had taken further action and approved the Biddle Alley district for demolition. In November 1929, work crews arrived and initiated demolition, eventually razing over 100 buildings. This feat, on one level, represented success on the part of the BUL as it demonstrated that government authorities had been swayed by their campaigning in the “Lung Block” and had finally invested money in making improvements. However, though property in Biddle Alley was purchased by the city and buildings were razed; these organizations were not successful in having their complete agenda realized. City officials never developed a systematic plan for tenant relocation as demolitions continued through the next decade and plans for a playground and an extension for School Number 122 never materialized.⁶²

Though not as celebrated as other areas of work of the BUL, particularly the Lung Block campaign, the organization’s work in the realm of recreation proved particularly impressive and yielded tangible and relatively immediate results. During the first three decades of the twentieth century, organized recreational activities and spaces for black Baltimoreans were severely limited. Middle-class African Americans were able to enjoy a small number of excursions and commercial ventures in addition to church-sponsored events, such as outings at Druid Hill Park, plays, bazaars and fairs, and choral festivals. However, for the mass of African Americans in Baltimore who were members of the

⁶² *Baltimore Sun*, December 18, 1929. *Baltimore Post*, November 6, 1929; *Baltimore Sun*, January 5, 1930; Scrapbooks, Records of the American Lung Association (Maryland Chapter), Series I, Special Collections, Langsdale Library, University of Baltimore.

working class and possessed little or no disposable income, the range of recreational activities were even more limited. Additionally, the types of working-class recreational and leisure activities, which included gambling, drinking in saloons, and attending dance halls and sporting events, were often criticized by members of the middle class.

Baltimore's black elite, worked to limit and ban these types of activities, believing they reflected poor morality and perpetuated negative images that damaged the white race's view of the entire African American community.⁶³ Thus, for the middle-class leaders of the BUL, a program focused on recreation not only served as a means of extending the rights afforded to white citizens to African Americans, but it also afforded them the opportunity to police working-class behaviors that were deemed reprehensible and advance a program of "acceptable" recreation.

By the early 1920s when the BUL was established, two important advancements had been made in recreational activities available to black Baltimoreans. First, the Colored Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) opened a new building in 1919 with funds raised from both the black and white communities in addition to a \$25,000 donation from the Julius Rosenwald Fund. The all-white YMCA was first established in Baltimore in 1852 but it would be another forty years before an African American branch of the institution was established.⁶⁴ During its first few decades of existence, the Colored YMCA was plagued by chronic underfunding, lack of a permanent location, and inadequate equipment. Additionally, membership lists suggest that the institution had a

⁶³ Coates, "Recreation and Sport," 59, 62, 80–86.

⁶⁴ Though the Colored YMCA was not established until 1892, its precursor was established in 1885 at the Old Union Baptist Church located at Guilford Avenue near Lexington Street. Jessica I. Elfenbein, *The Making of a Modern City: Philanthropy, Civic Culture, and the Baltimore YMCA* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001), 55–59, 67–71.

minimal enrollment and did not attract large numbers of African Americans, partly due to its reputation as an “elitist” organization. Following World War I and the construction of its new building, the YMCA expanded its recreational program to include swimming, boxing, dances, and basketball, many of which had been previously frowned upon by middle-class African Americans. These changes resulted in a limited expansion of the Colored YMCA’s clientele.⁶⁵

A second advancement of the early 1920s, which had a much greater effect on the African American community, was the opening of a black swimming pool in Druid Hill Park in 1921. Following the drowning of a young African American boy named George Tucks at a quarry hole near the Pimlico neighborhood in West Baltimore, a number of African American leaders, including John H. Murphy of the *Afro-American*, mobilized to secure a municipal swimming pool for African Americans. This campaign enlisted the support of the mayor, Park Board, and Public Bath Commission, and following two years of agitation, resulted in the opening of a \$100,000 pool, the first and only municipal swimming pool for African Americans.⁶⁶ Over the course of the first seven years after the pool was opened, an estimated 210,000 African American adults and children utilized the pool, amounting to an average of 2,000 per week during the open season. However, the use of the swimming pool among African Americans remained limited because blacks were only provided with part-time instruction. African American attendance was also

⁶⁵ Coates, “Recreation and Sport,” 90–100; Elfenbein, *The Making of a Modern City*, 63, 67–71.

⁶⁶ “Swimming Tragedy Near Pimlico,” *Afro-American*, August 22, 1919; “Swimming Pool Ready July 1st,” *Afro-American*, April 23, 1920; “Cheerful Guards Rescue Fat Man,” *Afro-American*, June 17, 1921.

limited due to the fact that there was only one municipal pool for blacks in the city and it was located a quarter mile from the closest black neighborhood.⁶⁷

The BUL's work in the realm of recreation in the late 1920s focused on expanding the amount of park space and the number of playgrounds available to the African American community. The beginning of Baltimore's public park system can be traced to the period before the Civil War and in 1860, the city's newly formed Board of Park Commissioners established Druid Hill Park, the city's first public park. Additional parks and squares were added over the next few decades; however, it was not until the 1890s that Baltimore engaged in extensive expansion of its public park system, fueled by Progressive era politics. In a little over a decade, the city acquired land for over 100 additional parks and squares.⁶⁸ But the city's African American population did not reap huge benefits from this expansion. Through the beginning decades of the twentieth century, African Americans had access to only a few sitting parks in black neighborhoods and to only two of the city's larger parks: Druid Hill Park in Northwest Baltimore and Carroll Park in Southeast Baltimore. Additionally, black use of these spaces was often restricted and segregated. For example, at Druid Hill Park, the park located closest to the

⁶⁷ "Swimming Pool Open at Druid Hill Park," *Afro-American*, June 16, 1922; "210,000 Dip In Druid Hill Pool In Seven Years," *Afro-American*, July 9, 1927; Ira De Augustine Reid, *The Negro Community of Baltimore: A Summary Report of a Social Study Conducted for the Baltimore Urban League Through the Department of Research, National Urban League* (Baltimore, MD: Publisher not identified, 1935), 150.

⁶⁸ Prior to the 1890s, Baltimore possessed only 26 parks and squares. Beginning in the 1890s through 1904, the city acquired 111 additional parcels of land for parks and squares and the city possessed 7 parks with land exceeding 100 acres. Christopher G. Boone et al., "Parks and People: An Environmental Justice Inquiry in Baltimore, Maryland," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 99:4, 777 – 778; Coates, "Recreation and Sport," 154–159.

mass of black Baltimoreans, athletic fields and tennis courts were available for African American use but segregated.⁶⁹

Like park space, playgrounds for African American children in Baltimore were also scarce. Nationally, the movement to establish formal children's playgrounds emerged in large eastern urban areas like New York and Boston in the 1880s. For Progressive reformers at the head of this movement, playgrounds were critical recreational spaces needed to "rescue" children of the working class from a range of social and economic ills that plagued the urban environment and to limit juvenile delinquency.⁷⁰ This movement had spread to Baltimore by 1897 when the Children's Playground Association was formed "for the purpose of directing the play of children and the encouragement of the development of the play facilities of Baltimore." The Association immediately went to work to provide organized recreation for the city's youth at schools, parks, and in city streets. But the Association's efforts among the African American community were severely limited. Their efforts were also characterized by segregation as shown in its policies at Druid Hill Park where African American children only had access to afternoon programs, whereas the city's white children were provided with organized programs during the course of the entire day.⁷¹

In focusing on parks and playgrounds, the recreation efforts of the BUL built upon a campaign initiated by the *Afro-American*. As early as 1920, there appeared an editorial in the newspaper urging city officials to transform a vacant lot in Northwest

⁶⁹ Coates, "Recreation and Sport," 153–154, 164, 168, 171.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 183.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 183–185; William Burdick, ed., *Official Handbook of the Playground Athletic League, 1923–1924* (New York: American Sports Publishing Company, 1924), 5.

Baltimore into a much-needed playground for African American children with slides, tennis courts, swings, and a baseball field.⁷² By the mid-1920s, the newspaper, along with the support of the BUL, waged an unsuccessful battle to convince the city's Park Board to establish a playground in Perkins Square, also located in Northwest Baltimore.⁷³ The pages of the *Afro American* also featured articles and images, which exposed the city's underfunding of recreational activities for African Americans and the "woeful state" of existing playgrounds including safety hazards and inadequate equipment. The newspaper exposed that in one playground in South Baltimore, the sand used by brick masons for mixing mortar, was the same sand used for the African American children's play space. Furthermore, articles revealed that Baltimore's playgrounds and the overall state of the city's recreational program lagged far behind similar-sized and smaller cities such as Cincinnati, Detroit, and York, PA.⁷⁴

By the late 1920s, the BUL had assumed the lead in working to improve playgrounds and the overall recreational offerings available to black Baltimoreans. In the fall of 1928, the BUL collaborated with the Playground Athletic League, an organization formed in 1922 to provide organized sports for Baltimore youth, to improve recreational opportunities for African Americans.⁷⁵ The two groups invited Ernest Atwell, Field

⁷² "Why Not a Playground?," *Afro-American*, April 23, 1920.

⁷³ "Playgrounds and Parks," *Afro-American*, August 8, 1924; "City to Provide a Playground in Perkins Square," *Afro-American*, May 9, 1925; "Let's Have the Playground," *Afro-American*, June 6, 1925; "Do We Need Playgrounds?," *Afro-American*, July 4, 1925.

⁷⁴ "City Lags in Recreation for Our Group," *Afro-American*, July 28, 1928; "Another Alleged Baltimore Playground," *Afro-American*, August 11, 1928; "Balto. Behind York, PA. with Playgrounds," *Afro-American*, August 11, 1928.

⁷⁵ Coates, "Recreation and Sport," 186; Burdick, *Handbook of Playground Athletic League*, 5.

Director of the Bureau of Colored Work for the National Recreation Association, to Baltimore to undertake a study of the African American recreational situation. Earlier that same year, Atwell had spoken at the BUL's annual meeting and urged its members to place improving recreation as a top priority on its agenda.⁷⁶ Atwell had served on the faculty of Tuskegee Institute for eighteen years and had served as a football coach in the early years of the development of the school's athletic program. During World War I, he joined the staff of the U.S. Food Administration at the request of President Herbert Hoover.⁷⁷ Following the war, Ernest Atwell began his career with the National Recreation Association in 1919, overseeing the development of recreational programs for African Americans in various locales across the country. Between 1919 and 1923, Atwell helped to develop black recreational programs in forty-seven cities and over the course of his thirty-year career, he helped to create recreation programs and community centers in more than 200 African American communities.⁷⁸ In advocating for expanded recreational opportunities for African Americans, Atwell argued that recreational activities brought "people together in happy wholesome relationships, develop[ed] the social instinct, promote[d] goodwill, and create[d] a higher type of citizenship." This argument echoed Progressive era principles and the argument made by leaders of the BUL in their efforts

⁷⁶ "Annual Report of the Executive Secretary, Baltimore Urban League, January 1929," in Series 5, Box I:E8, NUL Records; "Recreation to Be Stressed by Urban League," *Afro-American*, February 11, 1928.

⁷⁷ Ernest T. Atwell, "Community Recreation School," *Southern Workman* (June 1924): 249 – 251.

⁷⁸ Among the forty-seven cities in which Atwell established recreational programs during the period immediately following WWI were Dayton, Ohio; Augusta, GA; Fort Wayne, IN; and Norfolk, VA. See Ernest T. Atwell, "The Recreation Movement and Colored Americans," *Southern Workman* 52:2 (February 1923): 79 – 84; Cheryl Sadowski, "Culture, Community and Opportunity: Striking a Chord With Minorities," *Parks and Recreation* 41:2 (February 2006): 48.

to expand recreational activities for black Baltimoreans, particularly the relationship between recreation and citizenship.⁷⁹

The final report resulting from Atwell's survey of African American recreation in Baltimore was completed and given to local officials in February 1929; however, the survey's results were not made public for another five months. The survey evaluated the playground and recreational programs located at Druid Hill Park, the Sharp Street Community House, and those located at African American elementary schools. It revealed that the city primarily employed only part-time play leaders at African American playgrounds and there was only one full-time employee in African American recreation in the city. Additionally, the survey highlighted a number of other pitfalls, including inadequate equipment, no recreational program for adults, the absence of recreational activities catering exclusively to young girls, and the lack of centrally located play centers to accommodate African Americans residing in all sections of the city. At the root of these problems lay a lack of adequate funding. The city government drastically underfunded African American recreation as the annual appropriation was significantly lower than the amount needed to at least meet the black population's proportion in Baltimore. In his final report, Atwell argued that black population's needs were greater than those of white citizens and therefore warranted an appropriation that exceeded their proportion of the city population:

The needs of the colored group go far beyond any proportionate population aspect. Their economic status and the very limited facilities in their homes and meeting places available to them for general recreational programs, is always far below and more limited than for white groups. The Negro is unfortunately exposed to a greater extent to less uplifting activities. This very unfortunate

⁷⁹ Atwell, "Recreation Movement and Colored Americans," 89.

condition reflects itself on health, delinquency, crime and general moral tone among the masses of this group.

Once again, Atwell's words reflected Progressive principles, the relationship between economic status and recreation, and middle-class notions of appropriate forms of recreation, all ideas reflected in the program and activities of the BUL.⁸⁰

The first recommendation of the recreational survey to be realized was the creation of an interracial committee in the fall of 1929 to work in conjunction with the Playground Athletic League. The committee's main goal was formulating a plan of development and improvement for municipally funded African American recreation. The committee was composed of a number of black and white civic and educational leaders, including a number of members of the BUL. The committee's president was Sidney Hollander, a white BUL advisory board member, and the committee's secretary was R. Maurice Moss, Executive Secretary of the BUL. The interracial body immediately went to work to increase the city's appropriation for African American recreation, another recommendation of Atwell's survey. By the end of the year, the committee was successful in getting the Board of Estimates to pass a supplemental budget of \$10,200 for African American recreational programs, adding to the \$8,000 already appropriated for this purpose. This supplemental appropriation more than doubled the available funds for municipal recreational programs for the black community, but it still fell far below the minimum amount suggested by Atwell. The total appropriation reflected only 10 percent of the Playground Athletic League's budget and comprised nearly \$10,000 less than one-

⁸⁰ "Baltimore Lags in Playground Work For Race," *Afro-American*, July 20, 1929.

sixth of its budget, which would have been in proportion to the African American population of the city.⁸¹

The year following the creation of this interracial advisory committee, the Division of Recreation for Colored People was established as part of the Playground Athletic League to oversee further progress for the African American community. This division was separated into three departments to coordinate programming for both athletic and non-athletic events: Dramatic, Music, and Social-Civic. The interracial committee oversaw the work of this Division, which, by the mid-1930s, included eight playgrounds and two playfields, distributed across the city in South, East, and Northwest Baltimore, providing greater access to recreational facilities. Additionally, the Division was also staffed by an expanded force of African American play leaders. But in spite of these improvements, African American recreational programs still paled in comparison to the white community. Ignoring the recommendation of Atwell's survey, all but one of the city's African American play leaders worked on a part-time basis, mirroring conditions prior to 1930. Also, city expenditures for this Division remained restricted, particularly once the Division was transferred from the authority of the Playground Athletic League to the Board of Estimates in 1932, an action which further restricted sources of funding.⁸²

Overall, an examination of the work of the BUL during the 1920s reveals a multi-pronged approach relying upon scientific social work and interracial cooperation in order to address a range of economic and social conditions plaguing the African American

⁸¹ "Bulletin No. 2, September 1929," in Public Relations Department, Historical Information, Baltimore, Maryland U.L., Series 5, Box I:E, NUL Records; "Baltimore Lags in Playground Work for Race," *Afro-American*, July 20, 1929; "Plan City-wide Recreation Program," *Afro-American*, October 5, 1929; "Will Halt P.A.L. Budget Until Group Reports," *Afro-American*, October 26, 1929; "City Grants \$10,200 for P.A.L. Recreation Work," *Afro-American*, November 16, 1929.

⁸² Reid, *Negro Community of Baltimore*, 148–152.

community. As R. Maurice Moss prepared to leave the city in 1929 and assume his new position in Pittsburgh, the BUL proudly pointed to BUL achievements over the previous five years including the Lung Block survey and its recent recreational survey which resulted in the expansion of African Americans employed with the Playground Athletic League. But ultimately, these achievements were not permanent solutions as African Americans continued to struggle with issues of employment, housing, sanitation, health, and recreation in the ensuing decades. But the work of the BUL in these areas does reveal an important chapter in the struggle for civil rights and an organizing tradition that would continue into the 1930s as African American civil rights leaders built upon previous success and explored new strategies and techniques to advance a civil rights agenda.

Epilogue

In March 1934, black sociologist Ira De A. Reid, director of the Department of Research of the National Urban League, arrived in Baltimore. At the request of the Baltimore Urban League (BUL) and with the funding of white millionaire A. E. O. Munsell, Reid was visiting the city to undertake a survey of the city's African American community.¹ It had been more than ten years since the national office had conducted a survey of black Baltimoreans under the leadership of another black sociologist and Reid's predecessor, Charles S. Johnson.² The first survey, which had investigated economic conditions for African Americans in the city, laid the foundation for establishing the BUL. In subsequent years, the BUL relied heavily upon this form of research and investigation in order to gather information on different aspects of black life which would serve as the basis for reform. Reid's survey, *The Negro Community of Baltimore*, continued in the tradition of using scientific social work to advance a civil rights agenda and was the most extensive study of conditions for African Americans in the city to date.

Published in 1935, *The Negro Community of Baltimore* painted a grim picture of 1930s black Baltimore. By the 1930s, over half of the state's population resided in the city, as well as more than half of the state's African American population. Baltimore was the eighth largest city in the nation, with the fourth largest African American population and the largest percentage of African Americans among the ten largest cities in the

¹ "They Are Making a Survey of Life in Baltimore," *Afro-American*, March 17, 1935, p. 15; James Bock, "A Picture of Black Baltimore," *Baltimore Sun*, August 6, 1995.

² Reid assumed Johnson's duties as Director of Research and editor of Opportunity in 1928 after Johnson resigned to head the Department of Social Sciences at Fisk University. Reid, who was a former fellow of the National Urban League, joined the staff of the New York office in 1924, serving as the Industrial Secretary. Nancy J. Weiss, *The National Urban League, 1910 – 1940* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), 217.

United States.³ Many African Americans migrated to the city in search of better economic opportunities; however, in the midst of the Great Depression, black Baltimoreans suffered disproportionately, representing just over 20 percent of the city's workforce yet making up almost 50 percent of those unemployed.⁴ Reid's survey revealed that the economic status of African Americans in Baltimore in the mid-1930s had not improved since the previous decade. With no substantial changes since 1923 and the National Urban League's initial survey of the city, those blacks employed in Baltimore's industries were still mostly common laborers. The mass of African Americans were excluded from industrial employment, and were concentrated in domestic and personal service occupations. The absence of change in economic conditions for African Americans in Baltimore reflected the minimal civil rights activism in this realm during the previous two decades, as well as the conditions of the Great Depression endured by African Americans in communities across the nation.⁵

Whereas relatively little civil rights activism had centered on increased economic opportunities for African Americans, battles against discrimination in the realm of housing had taken center stage during the 1910s and propelled the growth of the local chapter of the NAACP. With the Supreme Court's ruling in *Buchanan v. Warley* in 1917, municipal residential segregation, which had originated in Baltimore seven years earlier, was declared unconstitutional. White segregationists remained undaunted however, and

³ Jo Ann E. Argersinger, *Toward a New Deal in Baltimore: People and Government in the Great Depression* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 15.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁵ Ira De Augustine Reid, *The Negro Community of Baltimore: A Summary Report of a Social Study Conducted for the Baltimore Urban League Through the Department of Research, National Urban League* (Baltimore, MD: Publisher not identified, 1935), 23, 38 – 43.

quickly went to work formulating other ways to promote and enforce residential segregation. Borrowing from a plan developed in Chicago, city officials prompted health department officials and city building inspectors to charge landlords with costly housing code violations if they rented or sold homes located in white neighborhoods to African Americans. White neighborhood associations also continued residential segregation through the use of restrictive covenants.⁶ Reid's survey showed that these efforts at segregation, coupled with the inability of the mass of African Americans to secure financing to buy their own homes, further restricted housing opportunities. No more than 17 percent of black Baltimoreans were homeowners. The majority of blacks were renters and resided in "blighted" areas with dwellings in poor physical condition beyond rehabilitation and situated in neighborhoods with second-rate health and sanitary conditions.⁷ By the 1930s, African Americans were confined to roughly 2 percent of the city's residential area, with nearly half of the city's black population residing in four city wards with population densities ranging from 50,000 to 100,000 per square mile in one of these wards. At the end of the decade, Baltimore was home to the third-worst supply of housing in the nation, with African Americans bearing the brunt of the city's poor housing conditions.⁸

Though not covered in Reid's survey, African Americans also suffered in the realms of education and politics, two areas in which African Americans had continuously

⁶ Garrett Power, "Meade v. Dennistone: the NAACP's Test Case to 'Sue Jim Crow Out of Maryland' with the Fourteenth Amendment," *Maryland Law Review* 63 (2004), 791; C. Fraser Smith, *Here Lies Jim Crow: Civil Rights in Maryland* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), 69.

⁷ Reid, *Negro Community of Baltimore*, 27–32.

⁸ Argersinger, *Toward a New Deal*, 5–6; Samuel Kelton Roberts, *Infectious Fear: Politics, Disease, and the Health Effects of Segregation* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 209–211. Before 1940, less than 150 new houses were built for black occupancy. The first low-rent housing development for African Americans, the Edgar Allen Poe Homes, opened in October 1940.

battled for improvements for the past twenty years. Under the leadership of a variety of individuals and organizations during the 1910s and 1920s, including the Colored Citizens' Equitable Improvement Association, the Federation of Parent-Teacher Clubs, and the Director of Colored Schools, important advancements had been made in black education, including the construction of new schools, the expansion of grade offerings for black students, and increased training opportunities for black schoolteachers. However, as the city's educational system remained segregated, it was inherently unequal. In the decades following the 1920s, funding for African American schools continued to lag behind that provided for white schools, amounting to nearly 40 percent more per pupil in white schools by the mid-1930s. Additionally, salaries for black city schoolteachers remained substandard and despite state law, black teachers in elementary schools received half the pay provided to white teachers.⁹ Political conditions and activity in Baltimore for African Americans during the 1930s also suffered, contrasting sharply with the previous two decades where African Americans had been successful in defeating disfranchisement, placing black men on the city council, and mounting an independent political movement. By the 1930s, according to historian Hayward Farrar, black Baltimoreans were "impotent" in local electoral politics. Gerrymandering prevented African Americans from securing seats on the city council, and voter apathy resulted in low turnouts, drastically weakening the political power of African Americans and their ability to wield influence in local politics.¹⁰

⁹ Argersinger, *Toward a New Deal*, 3–4.

¹⁰ Hayward Farrar, *The Baltimore Afro-American, 1892 – 1950* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1998), 64. In a plan pushed by Democrats that went into effect in 1923, the city was divided into 6 districts with 3 individuals from each district voted to serve on the now one branch city council. For reorganization, see "10,000 Colored Voters in New 4th Councilmanic District," *Afro-American*, January 12, 1923.

Ultimately, the state of black Baltimore during the 1930s emphasized that the civil rights battles of the previous two decades were not finished and the need for new leadership in the struggle for civil rights. The year 1931 marked a critical turning point in this struggle with the establishment of the City-Wide Young People's Forum in October of that year. This new civil rights organization was established under the leadership of sisters Juanita and Virginia Jackson and brought together recent high school and college graduates to address issues of importance to the younger generation of black Baltimoreans that they felt were not being addressed. Other young leaders of the Forum included Clarence Mitchell, Jr., a reporter for the *Afro-American*; and W.A.C. Hughes, Jr. and Thurgood Marshall, both rising young lawyers who were mentored by Warner T. McGuinn, a former city councilman who had been active in the courtroom battles against residential segregation in the 1910s.¹¹ Also playing a pivotal role in the Forum was *Afro-American* editor, Carl Murphy. Since the 1910s, Murphy had been active in the local struggle for civil rights in a variety of ways from serving on the executive committees of the Independent Republican League and the BUL to using his newspaper to mobilize the black community and push for the extension of a wide range of rights to African Americans in Baltimore. Thus, Murphy served as a critical bridge between the older and younger generation of civil rights activists in the city as well as tangible and direct evidence of an organizing tradition in the local struggle for civil rights.¹²

¹¹ Prudence Denise Cumberbatch, "Working for the Race: The Transformation of the Civil Rights Struggle in Baltimore, 1929 – 1945" (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 2001), 153 – 154; Andor Skotnes, " 'Buy Where You Can Work': Boycotting for Jobs in African-American Baltimore, 1933 – 1934," *Journal of Social History* 27 (Summer 1994), 748.

¹² Cumberbatch, "Working for the Race," 158–159.

From its incipiency, education and interracial cooperation were central components of the program of the Forum, hearkening to activities of organizations over the past two decades, notably the Women's Cooperative Civic League (WCCL) and the BUL. Through its Friday night mass meetings, the Forum brought together a multi-generational crowd of up to two thousand individuals to hear speeches from both locally and nationally known speakers addressing issues of importance to the black community.¹³ And to further interracial cooperation, Forum leaders engaged in "good will tours," meeting primarily with white religious leaders and taking white citizens on visits to black churches and businesses.¹⁴ But the program of the new organization quickly expanded to include social activism as revealed in its campaigns to increase the number of African Americans employed by the city's public library and within the Family Welfare Association; to raise money for the defense of Euel Lee, an African American on the Eastern Shore accused of killing a white farmer and his family; and to protest the 1933 lynching of George Armwood for an alleged assault on a white woman on the Eastern Shore. And through these campaigns, the Forum regularly allied itself with older individuals and organizations engaged in the struggle for civil rights, including Sarah Collins Fernandis of the WCCL; and William Jones, Lillian Lottier, and Edward Lewis of the BUL.¹⁵

¹³ Reid, *Negro Community of Baltimore*, 191–194; Skotnes, " 'Buy Where You Can Work,'" 742.

¹⁴ Cumberbatch, "Working for the Race," 156–157; Reid, *Negro Community of Baltimore*, 191–194.

¹⁵ Cumberbatch, "Working for the Race," 156–157; Reid, *Negro Community of Baltimore*, 191–194.

The most significant work of the Forum was its involvement in the Buy Where You Can Work campaign, a mass direct action movement that mobilized both middle-class and working-class African Americans to force white retail establishments to hire black employees and end discrimination against black consumers. This economic campaign was part of a national movement that included protests in over thirty-five cities across the country, including Chicago, New York, and Washington, DC.¹⁶ In Baltimore, the campaign began under the leadership of Prophet Kiowa Costonie, a charismatic religious leader who arrived in the city in the spring of 1933. By the fall of the same year, Costonie had organized a small committee to investigate the employment policies of white owned business on Pennsylvania Avenue, the commercial center of Baltimore's black community in Northwest Baltimore. Discovering that African Americans were mostly excluded from employment in these businesses, Costonie initiated the local Buy Where You Can Work movement. The Forum became a part of the movement shortly after its beginning, participating in its direct action tactics which included boycotting and picketing, and playing a central role in the movement's success.¹⁷ Also playing a pivotal role was the Housewives' League, an organization established in 1931 with eighteen branches throughout the city and a membership of two thousand by the mid-1930s. Together, the Forum and the Housewives' League proved to be the most important organizations in the boycott movement, revealing the continued importance of African

¹⁶ Cumberbatch, "Working for the Race," 166. For a discussion of the Buy Where You Can Work movement in other locales, see Beth Tompkins Bates, "A New Crowd Challenges the Agenda of the Old Guard in the NAACP, 1933 – 1941" *American Historical Review* 102:2 (April 1997); Cheryl Lynn Greenberg, "*Or Does It Explode?*": *Black Harlem in the Great Depression* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); August Meier and Elliott Rudwick, "The Origins of Nonviolent Direct Action in Afro-American Protest: A Note on Historical Discontinuities," ed., Meier and Rudwick, *Along the Color Line: Explorations in the Black Experience* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1976).

¹⁷ Skotnes, "Buy Where You Can Work," 736–747.

American women in civil rights organizing, similar to their activism during the previous two decades.¹⁸

Ultimately, the founding of the Forum marked the beginning of a new era in the local struggle for civil rights. Described as the “most aggressive social organization” in Baltimore by Reid’s survey on behalf of the National Urban League, this organization gave a voice to the younger generation of black Baltimoreans and filled a void in the local civil rights movement.¹⁹ By the early 1930s, a number of organizations that had been at the forefront of civil rights activism in the 1920s were in a state of decline. With the resignation of their leaders, the Federation of Parent-Teacher Clubs and the BUL struggled to maintain their previous level of activism, and by the mid-1930s, the Federation seems to have no longer been in existence. Though the WCCL maintained its leadership in the form of Sarah Collins Fernandis, the organization seems to have shifted its focus away from its previous focus on social welfare activism that had dominated its work during the 1910s and 1920s. Thus, the Forum emerged at a critical moment to assume the mantle of leadership in the struggle for civil rights.²⁰

The most important legacy of the Forum is its role in breathing new life into the civil rights movement in Baltimore, particularly the local chapter of the NAACP, which had been inactive since the early 1920s. The activism of these younger activists,

¹⁸ Ibid., 751; “The Baltimore Negro: Social, Cultural and Fraternal Organizations,” in Research Department, Early Surveys, Community Surveys, Baltimore, Md., Business (Miscellaneous), Series 6, Box I:F84, NUL Records.

¹⁹ Reid, *Negro Community of Baltimore*, 191–194.

²⁰ “Mrs. Fernandis, 88, Social Worker, Dies,” *Afro-American*, July 21, 1951, 14; “Mrs. Wheatley’s Resignation is Bombshell,” *Afro-American*, April 16, 1932, 5; “Mrs. Lottier New Federation Head,” *Afro-American*, June 18, 1932; Skotnes, “‘Buy Where You Can Work,’” 740–741; Editorial, *Afro-American*, October 10, 1931.

particularly through the Buy Where You Can Work campaign, created the energy needed to resuscitate the Baltimore NAACP. Following the boycott's end, the local NAACP returned to the courts to remedy local grievances, much as it had done during the 1910s. The branch became involved in two major legal battles regarding education to force the Baltimore County school system and the University of Maryland Law School to admit African American students. In the ensuing years, the Baltimore NAACP experienced exponential growth, becoming one of the largest branches in the nation with 17,600 members by 1946.²¹ Thus, the Forum, though defunct by the late 1930s, played a pivotal role in Baltimore's struggle for civil rights in laying the foundation for future activism, while serving as a bridge between activism of the 1910s and 1920s and the activism of the 1930s and beyond. The organization ushered in a new generation of civil rights activists, but it remained rooted in an organizing tradition that expanded back to 1910 and even further, as African Americans in Baltimore, through a myriad of tactics and organizations, fought to protect, preserve, and extend the rights of citizenship for themselves and future generations.

²¹ Lee Sartain, *Borders of Equality: The NAACP and the Baltimore Civil Rights Struggle, 1914 – 1970* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2013), 8; Cumberbatch, "Working for the Race," 167, 194, 259–260; Skotnes, " 'Buy Where You Can Work,'" 752.

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