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THE STRUGGLE FOR COMMUNITY AND EQUALITY: AFRICAN AMERICANS IN BATON ROUGE, 1915-1955

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THE STRUGGLE FOR COMMUNITY AND EQUALITY:
AFRICAN AMERICANS IN BATON ROUGE, 1915 - 1955

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IINTRODUCTION

During the first half of this century a "twoness" existed, one white world, one black world (Cooper:556), which belied the notion of any real "Solid South". These two worlds were divided by a dominant white race, determined to remain in control at any cost, and a subordinate black race, lacking the means, self-confidence, of unity to oppose its enforced subservience. The Jim Crow system cemented both de jure and de facto segregation and ensured the second class status of African Americans (Ibid:545).

The South succumbed to extreme racism primarily because of the relaxation of restraint from the United States Supreme Court and a change of heart among Northern supporters. In a series of cases from 1873 to 1898 the Supreme Court essentially handed over jurisdiction over race policy to the individual states, in an effort to reconcile the state and federal courts (Woodward:71). Meanwhile, Northern Republicans attempted their own reconciliation with the South, as they led the country into "Imperialistic pursuits" in the Pacific and Caribbean. Some eight million "colored" people came under American governance, and in taking up "the white man's burden", the nation adopted much of the South's position on race relations (Ibid:72). In January 1899, the Boston Evening Transcript conceded that the southern race policy was "now the policy of the Administration of the very party which carried the country into civil war to free the slave". On May 10th, 1900, the New York Times wrote that "Northern men no longer denounce the

suppression of the Negro vote as it used to be denounced in the days of Reconstruction. The necessity of it under the supreme law of self preservation is candidly recognized" (Ibid:73). Racist doctrines were accepted throughout the nation, and white supremacists of the South were quick to recognize this.

Louisiana hastened to devise its own policy of race. In 1898, the "Grandfather clause" of the Louisiana Constitution, designed to "eliminate from the electorate the mass of corrupt and illiterate voters who have degraded our politics", ensured the virtually complete disenfranchisement of Louisiana's black population (Kunkel:17). Its repeal in the Supreme Court decision of Guinn v. United States, in 1915, did little to improve the political empowerment of blacks, who by that time were firmly entrenched in a system relegated them to the margins of society for the next fifty years.

With their enforced resignation to a white dominated society, African Americans in Baton Rouge, as elsewhere throughout the American South at the beginning of this century, found themselves once more in the position of having to accommodate themselves to a system of gross injustice, in order to co-exist in relative peace. Forced to build their own society, within an alien one, the black community pursued a strategy of self-help and community development. This was to be the fundamental building block of black progress in Baton Rouge from 1915 to 1955, the chronological focus of this paper.

African Americans within the city did not accept this fate without protest, however. They resisted silently, through "flight" to northern and western cities and, more particularly, through determined

legal efforts, or loudly through boycotts and sit-ins. This behavior was typical of a pattern that reflected the actions of the entire black population of the South during this period. In this respect the lives of Baton Rouge's African Americans in many ways mirrored those in other southern cities.

During the month of April, in 1915, Booker T. Washington, America's foremost black spokesman and educator embarked upon an educational tour of the parishes of Louisiana. He was invited to the state not only by leaders of the black community, but also by the Governor of Louisiana and the mayors of several cities. Throughout his tour, huge crowds of both black and white Louisianians traveled from all over the state to hear him talk. For most of the white men and women who attended, it was the first time in their lives that they had ever listened to a black orator. Washington found these mixed audiences orderly, friendly, and prosperous. He was convinced that there was indeed progress within the black community and felt sure that a sympathetic bond between the two races was more common than "the spirit of modern violence or racial antagonism" (Harlan:322).

As he traveled Louisiana, Washington observed the conditions of the black community, and over four days he spoke to over fifty thousand people about the promotion of black progress and of black and white co-operation. Meetings were held in New Orleans, St Bernard Parish, New Iberia, Crowley, Lake Charles, Lafayette, Alexandria, Gibsland, Shreveport, and Mansfield (Ibid:323). On April 15th, he arrived in Baton Rouge, where Dr. Joseph S. Clark, president of Southern University, one

of a handful of leaders in the black community who had helped lay the groundwork for Washington's visit, arranged for him to speak to the students and faculty on the campus (Vincent.1:123). That morning he ate breakfast cooked by the Domestic Science students, toured the university inspecting every department, and congratulated Clark for his momentous efforts in creating such a well organized and run establishment: "It is wonderful how Professor Clark and his assistants have accomplished so much in such a short time" (Vincent.2:191). His address to the students was typical of the speeches given throughout the tour, urging his black audiences to lead lives of "constructive usefulness", combining their academic and practical education to "help put the community on its feet" (Vincent.1:125). He told them not to be ashamed of work, instead, with the aid of education and practical skills, recommended that each student be of service to somebody (Harlan:327).

The Baton Rouge State Times reported that later in the morning, at the organization of local black civic leader and businessman Beverly V. Baranco, Washington spoke to a mixed audience of over 5,000, in front of the State Capital building in downtown Baton Rouge. Mayor Grouchy welcomed the President of Tuskegee and maintained: "Nowhere else in Louisiana are the negroes more respected than in Baton Rouge. Here they are law abiding and honorable. Religious and civic institutions take a deep interest in their welfare and a civic league for negroes has been organized" (Ibid:323). Washington rose to the occasion by congratulating both the blacks and whites of Baton Rouge in their efforts towards helping the progress of the black community. He especially praised the state for putting its stamp of approval on Southern University in giving

it financial support, adding that "more and more white people of the South are beginning to see the wisdom of educating the negro industrially" (Ibid.2:197).

The speech to the people of Baton Rouge concluded Washington's Louisiana tour. It was an enormous success. For Horace G. White Sr., who had heard him speak on the university campus, the visit "was the most memorable event of his entire career at Southern University" (Ibid:198). To white political leaders who appreciated his accommodationist tone, Washington represented a shining example of black leadership for the administrators of Southern and its students (Ibid:198). The state superintendent of education, T. H. Harris, agreed that "Dr. Washington is not only a very able man but he has, in my judgement, the right view point on the subject of negro education" (Ibid:192).

It was indeed a memorable visit from this articulate and well educated black leader; for both the black and white community his well received speeches were an undeniable novelty. Washington's words of self-help and community development seemed something tangible for blacks to aspire to, and for whites, his message of appeasement was irresistible and enormously appreciated. They interpreted his words to mean that blacks assented to segregation and disenfranchisement. After all, had he not promised the audience at the Atlanta Exposition, in 1895, that with white support blacks would be "the most patient faithful law-abiding and unresentful people that the world has ever seen" (Newby.2:357). Whites not only took the black leader at his word, but believed that he spoke for all blacks, that they were satisfied in their low station, and "content to be hewers of wood and drawers of

water" (Williamson:461).

Despite the euphoric feeling shared by many that change was at hand, however, the optimism of Washington's rhetoric and the self-congratulatory tone of Mayor Grouchy's welcome contrasted starkly with the realities of opportunity for blacks at that time. Although the "Tuskegee Wizard's" advice for self-help was eagerly followed, it would be many decades before any genuine improvement in sympathetic relations between black and white occurred. Far from being carried on the backs of whites for nearly fifty years, as Washington declared in one of his Louisiana addresses, the white man had been gradually pulling the rug out from under the feet of the black man, denying him his Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendment rights, making him a second class citizen, and pushing him beyond the bounds of society. It was the black man who was "beginning to get tired", not the white man (Harlan:326). He was tired of his peripheral existence in society, and of having to accommodate to the enforced system of Jim Crow. Instead of merely resigning himself to a life of inequality and segregation, black Baton Rougeians built up their community and went on to successfully challenge the system.

The purpose of this paper is to describe that challenge: to present a study of how the black community lived in Baton Rouge from a time when individuals had no rights, little educational opportunity and few prospects for jobs, to the time when they had achieved a phenomenal amount -- the equalization of teacher's salaries, the desegregation of public transport, the registration of many to vote, and later the desegregation of lunch counters, the promotion to jobs previously held only by whites, and the right to peaceably demonstrate in public places

-- through their own determined efforts. It was a long hard struggle and done independently of the white community, without the aid of the state or federal governments.

The achievements are many, yet they go largely unrecorded. I have therefore had to rely substantially on the oral data of a handful of persons who settled in Baton Rouge, and whose lifetimes span these years: Dr.G.L.Netterville (b.1906), Business Manager of Southern University, 1938-1968 (later President 1968-74), the first black Chairman of the Bi-racial Committee - present at Booker T. Washington's downtown speech, (although too young to recall his words); Dr.J.K.Haynes (b.1907), President of the Louisiana Education Association (LEA), 1942-1955; Acie Belton (b.1912), first President of Focus, Vice President of the United Defense League; Willis Reed (b.1914): Director of the Baptist Training Union, and newspaper publisher; James Stampley (b.1935), moved to Baton Rouge in 1949, a truck driver for Standard Oil in the 1950s; Olga Haywood (b.1953), student at Southern Lab School in the early 1960s, and a Harvard graduate.

I start this paper in 1915, since that is the year that Washington came to Baton Rouge to speak and give encouragement to its black community. Its relevance to the paper is such that he had a great influence on those who came to listen to his words of self-help and community development, in particular Dr. Joseph S. Clark who applied Washington's message to his own work and helped develop the state's first black university, from a small vocational college into a large, reputable academic one, which was consequently to have enormous repercussions throughout the community. I conclude the paper in 1955,

not only because it is a tidy half decade later, but also because that is the year in which the federal government concluded its series of Civil Rights Acts with the Voting Act, and schools in Baton Rouge were officially desegregated. African Americans in Baton Rouge, as elsewhere throughout the South, could at last let the law take its course in their struggle for equality.

II

ACCOMMODATION TO WHITE DOMINATION

LEGAL PROCEDURES

During the 1890s the long process to disenfranchise and segregate blacks in Louisiana, as elsewhere throughout the South, accelerated. In July 1890 Louisiana's General Assembly passed an ordinance requiring "that all railway companies carrying passengers in their coaches in this State, shall provide equal but separate accommodations for the white and colored races" (Kunkel:16). The Legislature further strengthened the law in 1894, when it necessitated segregation in the state's railroad depot waiting-rooms.

Soon demands for a new constitution to require separate education and disenfranchisement of blacks grew more fervent. And after the Plessy v. Fergusson decision of 1896 established the legal precedent to allow Southern states to secure their own segregation measures, Governor Foster gave in to the pressure. On February 8th, 1898, the Louisiana Constitutional Convention met in New Orleans to draft a new constitution that would have a far reaching effect on the state's black population (Ibid:17). In response to the demands for disenfranchisement, the Convention devised the "grandfather clause" which read: "No male person who was on January 1st, 1867, or at any date prior thereto, entitled to vote under the Constitution or Statutes of any States of the United States wherein he then resided, and no son of grandson of any such person not less than twenty-one years.....shall be denied the right to register and vote in this state by reason of his failure to posses the

educational and property qualifications prescribed by this constitution" (Ibid:18). This clause made it possible for all those whites excluded from the franchise because of the education and property restrictions contained in the new constitution to obtain the ballot, while successfully excluding African Americans from such protection. Since most were not even citizens, let alone able to vote, prior to 1867, African Americans in Baton Rouge found they had to overcome the other tough restrictions before being able to register.

The 1898 Louisiana Convention then turned its attention to the matter of segregated education. In doing so it determined that "There shall be free public schools for the white and colored races, established by the General Assembly, throughout the State....", thus sanctioning the principle of "separate but equal" in public school education in Louisiana (Kunkel:18). Southern University, at that time in Orleans, was designated to be the state university of higher education for black Louisianians.

Over the next few years additional means were adopted by the Louisiana legislature to disqualify African Americans from registering to vote such as literacy tests, property requirements, and a poll tax, which required a fee of one dollar to be paid by every applicant. The desired effect was achieved; the black vote in Louisiana fell from 130,334 in 1896, to 1,342 in 1904 (Woodward:85). In 1906 the white primary was embraced, prohibiting anyone from voting "at any primary election or other political assembly held for the purpose of nominating any candidate....unless he is at the time a registered voter....." (Kunkel:20). This succeeded in removing any remaining potential voters

who met franchise demands.

The lowly status of the State's black populace was reaffirmed in the Constitution of 1913 by the acceptance of a 1912 statute which necessitated the updating of registration lists under the "grandfather clause". Other provisions of the 1898 Convention, concerning Louisiana's African Americans were left intact (Kunkel:19). Two years later, in 1915, the United States Supreme Court invalidated the "grandfather clause" in Guinn v. United States. As a result the Louisiana legislature reacted to the Court's decision by devising other means to prevent African Americans from voting, and in 1921 the tenth Louisiana Constitutional Convention, held in Baton Rouge, adopted the "understanding clause" to accomplish this purpose. The clause required potential registrants to read and interpret any clause of both the Louisiana and the United States Constitutions (Ibid:20). This further codified black disenfranchisement so that by 1924 there remained only 955 black voters in the entire state of Louisiana ((Dugas:70).

Thus, by the first decades of the twentieth century black citizens of Baton Rouge were completely disenfranchised, and, consequently politically impotent. In addition, they were legally separated from white citizens in public transport, education, neighborhoods, saloons and even mental institutions (Reed:383). Although African Americans were still citizens, these segregation laws effectively divided them once more from the mainstream of society, to remain that way until the dramatic change of heart in the 1950s and 1960s.

EXTRA-LEGAL PROCEDURES

White citizens used legal measures and extra-legal procedures to ensure white domination, there were also extra-legal procedures and to intimidate blacks into subordination. These extra-legal included lynchings and other forms of white-on-black violence. Lynching was a powerful weapon used by the South to put a halt to black economic and social progress and prevent them from rising out of their place (Zangrando:12).

The desire to maintain white control resulted in almost two hundred lynchings in Louisiana during the last decade of the nineteenth century (Arno:68-71). With the new century the number of incidents was on the decline, but with the social upheaval caused by the wartime influx into cities, racial tensions flared, and the trend in lynchings reversed. From 1915 to 1919 the number of lynchings in the South rose from sixty-seven to eighty-three (Cooper:601). In Louisiana alone, from February 1918 to August 1919, there were six incidents of lynchings across the state (Austin:125). During the summer of 1919, race riots erupted over the South, as whites felt increasingly threatened by returning black servicemen who had "gotten bad notions" from their military experience at home and in Europe (Cooper:601). The brutality of what the secretary of the NAACP, James Weldon Johnson called the "red summer" however, seemed to by-pass Baton Rouge; indeed, it was quite free from any frenzied mob that took the rest of the South by storm and tended to avoid too much controversial "law enforcement". In fact, from 1915 to 1946, when Louisiana had no lynching laws, a total of forty-five recorded lynchings took place throughout the state, while in Baton

Rouge, there were only two incidents reported during this period (Austin:7; Arno:73). One occurred in Port Allen, in 1921, when George Werner, accused of murder, was mobbed in jail, dragged off and hanged in Plaquemine; the other happened in 1933, in the city itself, when Robert Richardson was killed in his home by a mob of twenty-five men, including the Deputy Sheriff, for annoying a white woman (Ibid:126;128). Clearly this low rate of lynchings was because the system of "twoness" worked well in Baton Rouge: the blacks remained in their community, rarely bothering the whites, and vice-versa. Lynchings in Louisiana took place mostly in the rural and poor protestant north, where black and white scraped a living on tenant farms, and whites had little confidence in the available system of law enforcement (Ibid:114).

The lack of lynchings, however, did not mean that racial intimidation in Baton Rouge did not occur. Racially motivated incidents erupted frequently as a reminder to blacks to stay in their place. One frightening reminder of just how vulnerable African Americans were took place in the late 1930s. Willis Reed recalled that Bruce Jones, a man of no-fixed-abode was wrongly accused of murdering Baton Rouge's Chief Detective and executed. Reed claimed that family of the Chief Detective knew who his murderer was, but refused to admit it for fear of creating a scandal. Jones was "used as a scapegoat for a white crime; he was in the wrong place at the wrong time", and was the wrong color (Interview with Reed:Nov'94).

During World War Two, the racial friction that had afflicted the nation during the First World War re-surfaced: black soldiers found that even the uniforms of the United States forces did not shield them from

overt hostilities. In 1943 white city police arrested a group of young black soldiers after they had caused trouble in a disreputable part of Baton Rouge. Their black commanding officers were also arrested when they tried to gain custody of the young privates. When the news reached camp, other soldiers tried to leave in order to help but were detained. Wild rumors abounded, one that these men tried to take a jeep and two machine guns in order to rescue their comrades, another alleged they made off with six jeeps and twelve machine guns. Nothing, however, is reported of such a dramatic outcome (Race Relations Review:16). Across the state relationships between white and black soldiers became so tense that riots often broke out. At Camp Claibourne in north Louisiana, in 1944, a riot started when black privates broke in to the ammunition store room and began "shootin' things up" (Ibid:66). In addition to the aggravating treatment by white commanding officers, these black soldiers from the camp had been shot at and beaten by local white police and civilians. In the fray, one white officer and one black officer were killed. Willis Reed, who was stationed at Camp Claibourne at that time, claimed that the entire regiment, himself included, was sent to the front line in France as punishment (Ibid:66; Interview with Reed:Nov'94). Riots also erupted in Alexandria and New Orleans after white military police mistreated black soldiers. Both soldiers and bystanders were hurt, and property damaged (Sanson:514).

Extra-legal measures to curtail the freedom of the black community continued after the war, especially on Louisiana's roads beyond the relatively safe confines of Baton Rouge. Johnnie Jones the army's first black warrant officer and later a local civil rights lawyer, said he

was stopped in his car just outside Baton Rouge, en route to New Orleans in 1946. The police officer did not issue a ticket, instead he beat him to the ground and kicked him in the head before Jones could even utter a word to him. Eventually the police officer said: "I'm going to let you go.....but nigger, I don't want you to be driving over the speed limit no more" (Jones:tape 459 side A). In the early 1950s, a white service station attendant beat Dr. J. K. Haynes over the head when he stopped one night for refreshment at a gas station. He staggered to a nearby policeman for help, who merely said: "boy you didn't have any better sense than that?" (Interview with Haynes:March'95).

The Klu Klux Klan also made itself apparent in Louisiana by intimidating black citizens. According to Dr. Haynes there were more KKK in Bossier parish than citizens willing to obey the law. Haynes went on to add that one day in the 1940s, while his field secretary for the LEA, John S.Jones, petitioned for support for the building of a Rosenwald school in northern Louisiana, Jones was shot at by the Klan. Fortunately they succeeded only in hitting his umbrella (Ibid) Haynes himself was threatened with death by the Klan, in the 1950's, for his work with school desegregation cases.

The Baton Rouge Klan was the third to be chartered in the state, and the city itself was not without incident: Dr. G. L. Netterville had crosses burnt on his lawn, in Southern Heights, during the 1953 bus boycott in Baton Rouge, and had threatening phone calls at his home for weeks; Johnnie Jones had his life threatened by the Klan for his participation in the 1961 Supreme Court State v. Garner case. There were also bomb threats by the klan at Southern Lab School, for the University

student's participation in the 1960's demonstrations (Interview with Haywood:March'95). By the mid-sixties however, while national focus was on the South, the violence declined. Netterville recalled the time he was in need of a lift across town, and given one from a white man; the driver stopped outside the KKK hall in Baton Rouge and went inside leaving Netterville sitting alone. He was terrified; he was, after all, in the process of helping desegregate the work place in governmental institutions with the Bi-Racial Committee. The moment passed without incident though, and the driver returned and continued with the lift. Netterville had no idea why the man gave him a lift, or why he stopped at the Klan hall, he was too afraid to ask. He was nevertheless, heartened that what once was a potentially explosive situation no longer held any danger for him.

The violence perpetrated by whites on blacks was an excessively difficult problem to overcome, and not one that could be achieved by the black community alone. It had to wait until the federal government intervened to abolish the basic system of racial order with the Civil Rights Acts of 1964 and 1965. By 1965 white society no longer bothered itself with overt physical harassment of the black community, and police brutality was left for the demonstrators.

III

SELF-HELP AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Having been successfully isolated by white society, African Americans in Baton Rouge had resolved themselves, by 1915, to an existence within their own community, and over the years they constructed and maintained this world apart from whites, both individually and collectively. As southern historian, Terrill maintains, the black world became institutionalized: in Baton Rouge they established black churches, insurance companies, schools, universities, stores, clubs, fraternities, and movie theaters. Ministers, businessmen, teachers, merchants, and eventually lawyers, and doctors emerged as leaders (Cooper:624). They not only learned to survive outside the mainstream of white society, but with determination and strong leadership, blacks in Baton Rouge created their own viable society and led productive lives.

OCCUPATIONS

It was, of course, necessary to find employment in order to improve their standards of living, however, right up until the 1950s, the majority of the work available for African Americans in Baton Rouge tended to be low paid, menial jobs. In 1950, out of 6,766 black females gainfully employed, 3,403 worked in private households as cleaners, cooks, maids and nannies; a further 1,575 worked in service jobs outside of private households. Of 10,735 employed males, 3,665 worked as laborers; 2,003 were employed in the non-manufacturing industries such

as construction and railroad services; 1,675 were service workers -- janitors and porters; and a further 1,373 were craftsmen, such as carpenters, painters and plasterers (1950 US Housing Census:204-5). This had been the typical trend in African American employment since 1915. Netterville recalls that there were many black artisans working in plastering and carpentry along Government Street in the early twenties; there were also a number of small black owned construction firms that built houses for the black community (Interview with Netterville: March '95). Standard Oil Company in north Baton Rouge, employed a large number of these craftsmen to work at the refinery, and paid them decent wages; in 1927, bricklayers were paid an hourly wage of \$1.25, the same as the rate paid to white workers, for doing the same work (Neyland:42).

Despite the limited job opportunities, many African Americans nonetheless, were able to rise above the racial barriers and establish themselves in licensed professional and business occupations. By 1940, in Louisiana, 5,669 African Americans were employed in education, 1,828 in the medical and health services, 1,523 in the insurance industry, and over 21,000 working in the wholesale and retail trade (1940 Louisiana Census:235, 262, 271). This progress of African Americans from predominantly laboring jobs into white collar work had taken place in Baton Rouge too. In 1942, there were some twenty-eight black owned businesses: among these there were three pharmacists, four physicians, a dental practice, two funeral homes, a tailoring service, three gas stations, two barbers, a grocery store, and a private transport service with a fleet of five buses. Most of them depended on black customers or clients. Some, however, like Thomas H. Delpit's Chicken Shack, and

Bernard's famous Chicken Loaf House which, by 1940, had "served every Governor since 1915", had both white and black customers (Sepia Socialite:20). By 1950, there were eleven pharmacists, ten physicians and surgeons, five dentists, and over five hundred employed in the field of education (1950 Louisiana Census:204-205).

Among these doctors, dentists and entrepreneurs were men who contributed a large part of their time and much effort towards ameliorating the conditions of black lives in the city, through affiliations with organizations like the National Association of the Advancement of Colored People, the Louisiana Education Association, and other local associations. These men include: Dr.George Butler, pharmacist and owner of the Ideal Drug Store on East Boulevard; Dr.H.Horne Huggins, "one of Louisiana's most respected physicians", had a surgery on Government Street; Joseph Henderson entrepreneur and owner of Everready Hotel and Cafe, Everready Taxi Line, and Everready Photo Studio; Dr. B.V.Baranco Jr., Southern Graduate and dentist with a practice on South 13th Street, and his brother Dr.Raymond Baranco Sr., Southern University's physician from when it first opened in Scotlandville; Horatio Thompson, Southern Graduate, and owner of two Esso gas stations -- one on South Boulevard, the other in Scotlandville -- employing twenty young men (Ibid:17-27).

Women did not just sit back and let the men do all the work, they too played a part in the city's professions. In addition to the women who devotedly helped in their husbands' businesses, there were those who had their own: Miss M.C.Meadors, bursar at Southern University for over fifteen years, founded the Scott's Bluff Morticians and Burial

Association in 1933 at Scotlandville; Bessie Brown established the Bessie Brown Beauty Salon, in 1940, on North Street (Ibid:25-8). And by 1950, there were also over four hundred teachers, almost three hundred managerial and clerical workers, and over one hundred nurses and midwives (1950 US Housing Census:206).

There were, however, many African Americans who had to endure the lack of job opportunities and work in whatever was available. Willis Reed recalls that during his younger working life, he could only find menial jobs, in Baton Rouge, to support himself and, later, his wife and family. This, though, was due largely to his nominal education. At the age of eight Reed started selling newspapers from a handcart along North Boulevard, for twenty-five cents for five hours work every Sunday morning. When he left school at age twelve, he found work as an errand boy for a white-owned wholesale and retail poultry and egg dealer on St.Charles Street, where he delivered chicken and took orders from various establishments, including LSU, and private households. For this he made \$3 for a six day week. At sixteen years he was hired to chauffeur the retailers wife to Clinton, Louisiana, and back, but he was never allowed to drive the car by himself. It was highly likely that he could be forced into an accident by whites who did not like to see African Americans driving cars, and, as Reed said, black drivers were always in the wrong!

His jobs did improve over the years; in 1930 he started evening classes at the Commercial School where he learned to type, which benefitted him immensely. After numerous other jobs including road construction on Convention Street, and cleaning at Kean's Laundry for

twenty-five cents a day, Reed started typing for the Baton Rouge Post, a black owned newspaper. He and a friend, John Davis, then ventured into the publishing industry and printed their own newspaper, The Capital City Gazette. Unfortunately it folded two months later because of the high operating costs.

Reed's work in Baton Rouge was interrupted by the Second World War, when he was drafted overseas. At the war's conclusion, Reed returned home from Okinawa, and found work at the black owned Keystone Life Insurance Company. In this job he went on to become the district manager. However, he was fired in 1953 for his high profile involvement in the Baton Rouge bus boycott. Reed reasoned that it was because other more conservative African Americans within the company feared repercussions from the white community, if they appeared to be deeply involved (Interview with Reed:Aug'94)

With a bachelor's degree from Southern University, Netterville got a much better start in life than Reed. After college he went straight into the National Benefit Life Insurance Company as an assistant manager, in 1928, for eighty dollars a month. In 1932 he established his own Meat Company. Netterville's company distributed meat supplied by the white owned Pelican Provisions Company to twenty-five black businesses throughout the city. It was a very successful company until whites put it out of business by intimidating him, at the height of the depression, and then took over his customers. In the late thirties he worked briefly for the Civilian Conservation Corps, teaching reading and writing to illiterate veterans and children at a camp in rural Louisiana. In 1938, Dr. Felton G. Clark appointed him business manager of Southern

University. Dr.Netterville worked in this capacity until 1968, when he took over the Presidency from Dr.Clark (Interview with Netterville: Nov'94; Vincent.1:210)

HOUSING

By 1915, all racial zoning laws had been ruled unconstitutional by the United States Supreme Court because they obstructed "the rights of owners to dispose of their property to whom ever they liked" (Kennedy:73). This did not stop the Louisiana Legislature from passing Act 118, in 1924, which prohibited whites from setting up residence in a black community (Neyland:157). This and other confining regulations functioned in urban areas, but they were rarely enforced, and segregated housing came about less because of legal reasons than economic ones (Ibid:158). But though segregated districts existed in Baton Rouge, they were never as clearly defined as in other Southern cities, until the 1950s, when whites fled the downtown area for the more expansive suburbs. From 1915 to 1955, residing predominantly in an area extending from South to North Boulevard and scattered in areas from the river to the Garden District, African Americans lived largely in sub-standard housing with meager sanitation, on streets that were poorly paved (Watson:48). In the late 1920s, Willis Reed moved with his mother and sister to downtown Baton Rouge from Perkins Road, to a rented house on South Boulevard. It was a neighborhood of mixed incomes; some of the larger houses were rented by those who worked at Standard Oil and could afford to pay for homes with a living room and a dining room. Reed and his family though, could only afford a small two room house. He shared

the back room with his sister, where they bathed, ate and slept, while his mother, who was ill for a number of years, had the tiny front room to herself (Interview with Reed:Nov'94).

Scotlandville had been a black neighborhood since Southern University opened its doors in 1914, and it expanded as the school expanded, but it essentially remained a rural environment. After the Second World War, however, one the first middle-class subdivision for African Americans was built there. Olga Haywood, whose parents first moved to the area in the mid 1950s, affirmed that Southern Heights attracted the wealthy professionals as it offered large comfortable housing and a good way of life, with nearby amenities, such as tennis courts and a swimming pool, at Southern University. Southern Heights was developed at a distance from the white community, which Haywood added, was a bonus, since its residents did not have to deal with whites on a daily basis (Interview with Haywood:March'95). Scotlandville grew into such a large residential area that, by the late fifties, an attempt was made to have the area created into its own separate township.

RELIGIOUS AND SECULAR ORGANIZATIONS

The church has always played a prominent role in the lives of African Americans in Baton Rouge, not only as a place of spiritual guidance and Christian education, but as a vital social meeting ground where African Americans from all economic backgrounds have met and become a functioning part of the community. Its importance is indicated by the number of African who attended: in 1936, when the black population of the city was a little over thirteen thousand, 10,632 were

members of the black Baptist Churches (Watson:284).

Black churches in Baton Rouge also shaped and nurtured young people; it provided Sunday schools for religious instruction and training programs, such as the Baptist Training Union directed by Willis Reed. Reed later recalled that in the 1950s, he helped youths to read and write (Interview with Reed:Nov'94). In addition to their more formal programs, black churches tried to provide an informal social outlet for youngsters, by organizing excursions such as boat trips and picnics and recreational sports. One example was the softball team organized by Reverend T. J. Jemison, the pastor of the Mount Zion Baptist Church on East Boulevard, which won the 1952 intra-city championship. The competition was part of an attempt by the various black churches to help lessen the increasing rate of juvenile delinquency in the city, and was typical of a variety of social functions which they undertook to try and improve the lives of members of the community (Neyland:142). The Reverend Jemison went on to demonstrate his leadership abilities with the role he played in conducting a boycott of the city's buses just a year later.

Like the church, clubs and fraternal organizations were significant social outlets and a strong force for uniting many African americans in Baton Rouge. The Prince Hall Masons, under the grand mastership of John G. Lewis in the 1940s and 1950s, promoted the Bayou Boys State, an annual conference for young black men to train in citizenship and learn governmental affairs (Ibid:167). Lewis and the Prince Hall Masons also worked closely with Dr J. K. Haynes and the Louisiana Education Association, to organize a leadership conference at

Southern University in the 1950's. The idea was to bring together over a hundred "grass roots" leaders from all over Louisiana to instruct them in civic leadership and give advice on registration, voting, and ways to deal with the numerous social economic and political problems that continually beset the black citizen. Thurgood Marshall, the Chief Counsel of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and James M. Narbrit Jr., Secretary of Howard University, participated by giving speeches and advice to the young leaders (Ibid:168). The Masons were therefore highly influential in initiating change in Baton Rouge's black community.

CULTURAL AND RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Not surprisingly, there was nothing in the way of public entertainment facilities open to African Americans in the early part of this century. That did not stop them from creating their own amusement. When Dr. Netterville was a teenager, he and his friends had a gang; in order to keep them out of trouble in the long summers, their mothers came to the rescue: one prepared big pots of red beans and rice, another lent an old record player, another provided refreshment, and they would all go to different houses - entire families in tow - for an evenings entertainment, during which they might play ball, or sing and dance.

By the late 1920s there were two movie theaters for blacks in south Baton Rouge, and clubs and bars were to be found in the mid city area (Dr. G. L. Netterville). By the forties, the Apex Cocktail on the corner of Louisa and Braddock streets was known as the "swankiest nite club in Colored America", and only the "sophisticated" and "properly

attired" could enter (Sepia Socialite:25).

In the early fifties, a few public parks, playgrounds, and golf courses had opened, but they operated on segregated basis. No swimming pool had been provided by the city for the children, so the black community raised money from collections at church functions and built their own (Jones:tape 481;side A). This was an enormous help to tax payers because in the mid 1950's the city embarked upon a costly development program to build separate but equal recreational facilities for the black population, in an attempt to avoid having to comply with desegregation orders from the federal court. This segregation of public parks, playgrounds and other such facilities, however, was finally brought to an end with the Civil Rights Act in 1964 (Dugas:296)

Another medium for entertainment was music, and although always in the shadow of the New Orleans music scene, Baton Rouge built a blues tradition of its own. Unlike the country blues of the twenties and thirties, the urban blues of the forties and fifties needed large bands to be heard above the noise of the crowds who came to hear them play. As a result, Baton Rouge spawned a number of popular bluesmen, who went on to national prominence (Beyer:3). One local bluesman, "Slim Harpo", who was born in 1924, grew up in the Lobdell community of Baton Rouge. His was a rags to riches story, from playing harmonica to support the family when his parents died, to performing at clubs, beer joints, picnics and parties in Baton Rouge and all over south Louisiana in the 1950's, he went on to record with international stars such as the Rolling Stones and George Thorogood in the 1960's. Although Slim was appreciated nationally he, like many other local bluesmen always returned to play in

Baton Rouge (Ibid:14).

EDUCATION

Prior to 1896, schools had been integrated, however, after the Plessy decision, of that year, separate black schools became a reality, but they were in no way equal. Before 1915 there were no publicly supported secondary school in Louisiana and little was spent on elementary education (Vincent.1:112). State funding went almost entirely into raising the level of education for whites, as a result black education was substandard in every aspect (Neyland:119). Black children were usually taught in one room schools, which were more often black churches used as schools, and church pews the only equipment. One teacher instructed all classes and all ages, and were on the whole uneducated and ill-equipped to teach; school boards were indifferent to the standards of teaching and the facilities. The school term lasted anything from two to four months and was not mandatory (Middleton:26). As far as more advanced education was concerned it was virtually non existent, in 1916 there was only one public high school in the entire state of Louisiana (McCullen:11). Small wonder that the illiteracy rate among blacks by 1920 was as high as 38.5%, improving to 23.3% by 1930 (Sullivan:51). Louisiana's black children continued to be largely unprovided for. In the 1940-41 school year the state had accredited only forty-five public and ten private high schools, and merely "approved" an additional twenty-three public and one private high school throughout the state. In some parishes only elementary schools were provided because the State Department felt, according to a 1941 Report, "the

number of Negro educables in several of these parishes does not justify a high school" (Sanson:373). Of this same period the median number of school years completed was 3.9 years and 5.2 years in urban districts, compared to the number of years whites completed: 8.2 and 9.1 years (Sullivan:52). There was also as big a disparity in financing; in 1942 the state spent \$66 on each white child per year, but as little as \$15.50 on each black child (Sanson:375). The total value of black school property in East Baton Rouge Parish, in 1924, equaled \$204,733, whereas white school property in the area was valued at \$1,323,539, and African Americans made up over thirty percent of the population (Vincent.1:111). The Louisiana Educational Survey Commission recognized, that same year, that the state had done virtually nothing to improve public education for black children (Sanson:374).

Schools in Baton Rouge were typical of the state. Willis Reed, who grew up in Baton Rouge, first lived along Perkins Road, eight miles from the downtown area, reported that he walked five miles to school each day in the early 1920s. The school he attended, just outside the city center, consisted of one room with a big belly heater by which the students dried themselves on wet days - they hung up their shoes and socks to dry for the long walk home. The length of the school year was above average, lasting six months, weather permitting, and was regulated by the teacher's whim -- if she had personal matters to deal with the teacher would tell the children not to come in the next day. All classes were taught by one teacher, from first through sixth grade. The children did chores before classes: they cut the grass, collected wood for the heater in winter, and since there was no running water, pulled it from

the well. The school also had no electricity or sanitation, and the bathroom was outside with a sack to cover the entrance.

Since schooling was not mandatory for black children in Baton Rouge, Reed left school after the fifth grade, in order to work and earn money to support his sick mother; consequently he finished his schooling with a fairly rudimentary education, which was not at all unusual (Interview with Reed:Nov'94).

In other instances the black community worked together to provide more education for their children; for example, Dr.Netterville, who spent his early years in Sorrento and Donaldsonville, remembered a similar lax system of education to that of Reed's, but parents in the black community there arranged for the children to study an extra three months each year, and taught the children themselves. For his elementary education, Netterville was sent to Baton Rouge to attend public school. He spent five weeks at Bludlon Elementary, and then Hickory Street Elementary, on North Boulevard, to which he walked or rode a horse for about a mile from the home where he lived with his Godmother, on Rail Avenue. From the 1920s through 1940s, there were only three high schools for blacks in Baton Rouge: a private baptist college, Southern Lab, which was also private, and McKinley, the only public school. Mckinley eventually gained an excellent academic reputation under principal Dr. J. M. Frazier. In the early days, though, most black parents with sufficient income and interest chose to send their children to the well-equipped private schools rather than send them to the non-partitioned, un-painted, makeshift building that housed Mckinley (Sepia Socialite: 22). Netterville's grandfather sent him to Southern Lab, in 1920, where

Netterville learned English literature, history, latin and trigonometry. He also had to do daily chores to instill personal discipline, and like all the new "upper-class" boys, wore shorts and was called a "stinker". In 1924 Netterville went on to Southern University to take his Bachelor's degree graduating in 1928 (Interview with Netterville: Nov'94).

Johnnie Jones also went to Southern Lab. He attended in the late 1930s, when it was known as Demonstration High. In his class there were twenty-two students, with mixed educational backgrounds. The students studied math, science, history, and civics. According to Jones, he felt somewhat disadvantaged because he came from a poor, uneducated, farming family and had to work throughout high school to pay the \$17.50 tuition each semester. Jones at times felt quite awkward when he returned to visit his parents at their farm in rural Scotlandville, being the only one of his home community who was educated, but he learned to adapt to the rather uncomfortable situation. After his discharge from the army in 1946, he returned to Southern to complete his interrupted undergraduate studies and eventually earned a law degree in 1953 (Jones:tape 451;side A).

The provisions for elementary and high school education for African Americans in Baton Rouge had improved by 1949, when James Stampley moved to Baton Rouge from rural Mississippi at the age of fourteen. At that time a new elementary school had just been built in south Scotlandville, but he attended the old one in north Scotlandville since it was a closer walk from his home. In 1950, when he started the eighth grade the school board built a junior high school for the black

school children of Scotlandville, on Ellen Grove; while Stampley was there another grade was added each year, until it became a full high school. Capital High was built in 1951, making it the fourth black high school in Baton Rouge. In Istrouma just slightly north of the city, the black community built their own high school since there was none provided by the Board in that area (Interview with Stampley:Dec'94). Standing directly across from Standard oil, the Gilbert Wright school was financed by the community itself, through fund raising events and donations. The building itself was constructed by local black construction companies, including masons, cementers, carpenters, painters, and anyone else who could offer a skill. Unfortunately, when it was completed, Jones alleged that the black community was forced to hand Gilbert Wright over to the School Board, who proceeded to take advantage of it. After a few years they turned it into a white high school because it was a better facility than the one the white children were using (Jones:tape 481;side A).

From 1915 to 1955 black education and facilities had made great headway, this was due primarily to a concerted effort by certain members of the black community who desired to better schooling and ultimately better lives for its children. More particularly, black education in Baton Rouge was improved by the endeavors of Southern University, which raised the standards of teacher training and consequently sent out better educated teachers to the community, and through the achievements of the Louisiana Education Association, which fought hard to equalize teachers salaries and to desegregate graduate and professional schools in the city and the entire state.

In 1914, Southern University, Louisiana's first black public university, moved from its original location in New Orleans to just north of Baton Rouge at Scotlandville. On March 9th, the Baton Rouge State Times reported: "Between sixty and seventy back students enrolled.....ten plows were running in the field, while the black-smith and wood-working shops started working" (9 March:1). The next day the same newspaper mentioned that the female students would learn practical instruction in sewing, sanitation and home economics from the domestic science department (10 March:1). What started as a vocational school of sixty or so students and a handful of teachers, very much in the style of Booker T. Washington's own school in Tuskegee, grew to a school with an enrollment of a thousand students with seventy-eight teaching staff in twenty-four years. This development occurred under the guidance of the university's president, Dr. Joseph S. Clark, who pushed for expansion and excellence of the student body and the school's faculty, and created a first rate, broad ranging curriculum (Vincent.1:xiii). True to Washington's ideals, Clark was determined to send his students out to help improve the community, and to live constructive lives.

In 1916, President Clark announced that Southern would serve the black community by holding short agricultural courses for local farmers every year. He said "Southern University's mission is to help the negro farmer and negro teacher in the full preparation of their life's work to do whatever their hearts, heads and hands may be trained to do" (Ibid:94). These agricultural courses as well as the University had enormous influence in the local Scotlandville community. When the school opened here were three houses and fifteen inhabitants in the community.

By 1919 there were three hundred houses and a population of over fifteen hundred (Ibid:95).

With a curriculum extended to incorporate machine work of all kinds, in 1924 the New Orleans Times Picayune noted that Southern University ranked sixth among the black agricultural and mechanical colleges in the country; the students were making excellent records, and were "all succeeding" (18 May:8). Teacher training also improved during this period. In 1920 the Rosenwald Summer Normals, offering courses to qualify teachers for their first grade certificate for their first grade certificate, were held at Southern (McCullen:13). Despite the huge achievements of the university and the public recognition of them, Southern was still grossly under-funded compared to the white Louisiana State University. Louisiana spent less on black education than any other state in the country, but spent more on white education than most other states (Vincent.1:111) .

Dr.Felton G.Clark, took over as president of Southern when his father retired in 1938, and remained in that position until 1968. He undertook to extend the school's academic curriculum and ten years later he added five new academic departments: art, biology, psychology, social science, and sociology.(Ibid:153). Still the school struggled to get sufficient funding from the state. A 1949 report found that although one in every three citizens in Louisiana were black, less than 0.5% was spent on black higher education; further, more was spent on each Angola prisoner per year, than cost to educate a Southern student (Ibid:160). However, even without proper financing and state support, the school continued to improve and expand. In 1948, with the help of

the Louisiana Education Association, a law school was added, and a graduate school opened in 1958 (Ibid:165). By 1952, a survey of 306 graduates from various years indicated that 73% had gone into the field of education, including teaching, principal and supervisory roles (Ibid:245). Clearly Southern University worked hard to become a great asset not only to Baton Rouge's black community but to the city as a whole.

Starting in Alexandria in 1901 the Louisiana Colored Teachers Association set out "to advance the ideals and standards of the teaching profession, to promote the general interest of the public, private and parochial schools of Louisiana, to provide for the economic welfare of teachers and pupils and generally enable, aid and assist the cause of education throughout the State of Louisiana." In 1948, the members of the Louisiana Colored Teachers Association voted to change the name to the Louisiana Education Association (LEA) and move its headquarters to Baton Rouge (Middleton.2:2). In the early years the organization followed the lead of Booker T. Washington and advocated vocational education and because of the sensitive racial climate, it made little attempt to change the policies of black education. However, a 1936 survey revealed that 70,000 black children of Louisiana were not enrolled in any school due to problems of over burdened teaching loads, availability and accessibility problems. From this, the LEA determined that without the rudiments of education, black children would "suffer in degree and intensity far beyond the ravages of their grandparents. Without the proper tools for good citizenship these children would be a burden on the future state" (Ibid:37). As a result they resolved to

change the system.

The LEA's most momentous achievements took place in the 1940s and 1950s. In November 1942 Dr.J.K.Haynes, principle of Lincoln Parish Training School (later Lincoln Parish High), was invited by black educators to become the new President of the LEA. Many black leaders wanted a dynamic leader with new ideas to lead the association in a new direction. Immediately Haynes called an executive Committee together at Dillard University in New Orleans and asked NAACP lawyer Thurgood Marshall along to help organize LEA's legal program; Marshall recommended that the LEA use A.P.Tureaud, a lawyer for the New Orleans NAACP, for its legal cases. Tureaud and Daniel E.Bird, State President of the NAACP, worked extremely hard for the LEA. Indeed, without their efforts, the association "couldn't have succeeded" (Interview with Haynes:March'95).

In early 1943, Haynes appointed Rev. Gardner C.Taylor, Pastor of Mount Zion First Baptist Church, chairman of the Citizens Education Committee. A meeting was held at his church in Baton Rouge to discuss raising more capital in order to finance a suit for the equalization of teachers's pay. Notable members of the Baton Rouge community attended the meeting: Dr. George Butler, Joseph Henderson, Dr.Huggins, Drs. B. V and Raymond Baranco, W. W. Stuart and others. The next day they started to canvas teachers for ten dollars each to support the case (Ibid). In May they petitioned the School Board to adjust the teachers salaries "so that white and black teachers with equal qualifications and equal experience would receive equal salaries" (Sanson:377). Dr.Haynes and Daniel E.Byrd both went to Governor Jones personally to ask him to

persuade the State Board of Education to equalize teachers salaries. Instead Governor Jones tried to make it more difficult for black teachers to receive equal pay by instituting new qualifications for salary raises: in addition to education and experience, merit and responsibility were included as a standard on which to base payment. Governor Jones' intended to save white teachers from black intrusion on their salaries, and was quoted as saying "Twenty-two years ago the 1921 Louisiana Constitutional Convention had enacted legislation that would forever keep the negroes in their place" (Dr.J.K.Haynes). The LEA decided to push for legal action.

Malcom McGuard stood as plaintiff for East Baton Rouge parish in one of eight cases initiated by the LEA to bring about equal wages throughout Louisiana. Already A.P.Tureaud had won a case on behalf of the LEA for the equalization of teachers wages in Ruston, in February 1948, and as a result of this new effort later on in the year, school boards in other parishes decided to increase the wages of black teachers voluntarily (Interview with Haynes:March'95). That same year the new Governor, Earl K.Long passed through legislation providing equal salaries for Louisiana's teachers.

With that task done Haynes then turned his attention to the desegregation of higher education, now possible with the Supreme Court's 1950 ruling in Sweatt v.Painter, which challenged the doctrine of separate but equal in graduate education. On July 5th, 1950, Haynes reported that he brought two of his former students from Lincoln Parish High, Roy and Henry Allen Wilson, to Baton Rouge to seek admission to the LSU Law School, along with seven other young African American men;

they were turned down. Tureaud took the case to court, in October 1950, using Roy Wilson as the plaintiff (Ibid). Except that he was black, the court found that Wilson was qualified to enter LSU Law School, and therefore granted him the right to admission on the grounds that he had been denied his Fourteenth Amendment rights (Dugas:140). Haynes escorted Wilson to LSU to begin his first day at the Law School; his brother and the seven other young men also enrolled. LSU's graduate school was desegregated, but it would be a long struggle before its undergraduate school was fully integrated. Numerous suits to desegregate were brought against the school, including Tureaud's son A.P.Tureaud Jr., in 1953. In fact more suits were filed against LSU than any college in Louisiana, the last of which was the Smith Case in 1956, against the General College. In the meantime, ruling for Tureaud's case in 1955, the district court of Louisiana ordered the desegregation of undergraduate colleges in light of the Brown decision. In 1956 the desegregation order was upheld by the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals. Consequently, by the middle of that year, the whole of LSU was finally desegregated (Interview with Haynes:March'95; Dugas:141-2). Throughout the 1950s the LEA also fought for equal facilities and opportunities in every area of education, to eliminate all short term schools, and to provide bus transportation for all school children throughout Louisiana (Middleton.2:57).

The association also branched out in other directions in order to benefit the community: it pursued voter registration so that more individuals might become involved more actively with the political dynamics of the community, and organized a Black Credit Union for the

entire state - the first was opened at Southern University and a second in New Orleans. Haynes also had an idea for a workshop, he felt nothing was being done for grass roots leaders. With the help of Dr. G. L. Netterville, John G. Lewis of the Prince Hall Masons, and Dr. Felton G. Clarke he brought together 150 "bottom-shelf politicians" to Southern University to learn about community leadership and political action at annual workshops throughout the fifties. Haynes remembered one young leader, Henry McFaraden, who attended the workshops and was inspired to change the racial order in his home in Concordia Parish, in north Louisiana. Haynes believed that over the years McFaraden helped to transform his home town from a Klu Klux Klan infested place to a more equal society which was to eventually have a black mayor and other black leaders. Other young leaders included Acie Belton, Raymond Scott and Johnnie Jones, who were to become enormously influential in the development of the black community in Baton Rouge (Interview with Haynes).

Throughout the years that he worked with the LEA, Haynes did not believe that black education could work in a vacuum, therefore he tried to involve all the black community leaders to help in every activity; for example, the Drs. J. S. and F. G. Clark were both appointed to head the LEA Committee of Graduate Work; also Haynes was active in the Masonic Lodge, John G. Lewis, the President of the Masonic Lodge worked with the LEA, and both were closely involved with the NAACP -- everything Haynes did with the LEA he had the backing and support of the Masons the NAACP and the black church. In this way a more closely knit community evolved, which is the result Haynes had worked and hoped

for (Ibid). Haynes was, in effect, recognized at the national level for his efforts in changing the system of black education in Louisiana. On July 30th, 1964, he was invited to the White House by President Johnson, as a representative of the LEA, to be part of the Conference of Educators, collected together to discuss the importance of education in shaping the future of America (Middleton.2:72).

IV

PROTEST

The black citizens of Baton Rouge did not simply resign themselves to the indignities of segregation and intimidation by white supremacists, for many years they had been protesting silently, and had done so with their feet. From 1910, the percentage population of African Americans in Baton Rouge steadily declined from 53% of the population to only 28% by 1950 (United States Census of Population: 1910-1950). This marked decrease was partially ascribed to the lower life expectancy and higher mortality to that of whites, but was also attributable to the out flow of African Americans to other parts of the country, in search of a better life (Perkins:20). They were fed up with low wages, poor housing, and the unfair treatment by whites; migration was a show of dissatisfaction. The decline in the black population relative to whites in Baton Rouge reflects the population trends in urban areas throughout the South as numerous African Americans left their homes and migrated to the north or to the west of the country. As Dr. Netterville pointed out, while most headed to the big industrial cities of the North, many in Baton Rouge headed West to California. If one person left for better job prospects and treatment, friends and family would soon follow (Interview with Netterville:Nov'94).

Those who stayed behind, however, did not stay silent for long; they began to protest against the system of de jure and de facto segregation which hindered their lives and impeded their progress. Protest in Baton Rouge began initially with a boycott of the city buses

because of the continual harassment and discriminatory treatment of black passengers by the white bus drivers. The protest went on to include a boycott of a store in Scotlandville and a march on an Istrouma high school. There was also a concerted effort within the community to register black voters, throughout the 1940s and 1950s.

VOTER REGISTRATION

Although the United States Supreme Court invalidated the "grandfather clause" as a breach of the Fifteenth Amendment in the 1915 decision of Guinn v. United States, it did not impede the states from adding alternate effective clauses to prevent African Americans from registering to vote. In the same year the Louisiana Constitutional Convention included three new provisions to the Constitution: the understanding clause, the poll tax, and the primary election provision. These were remarkably efficacious at achieving their desired effect, and a year later, in 1916, only 1,979 blacks registered to vote in Louisiana -- 1.1% of the registered voting population. This figure had declined to only 735 by 1918, a mere 0.3% of the state's registered voters. When the number of registered black voters had increased to 3,533 by 1920, delegates at the 1921 Louisiana Constitutional Convention incorporated further means to disenfranchise blacks (Baker:338). The devices used were carefully designed so that whites might easily avoid the pitfalls of voting regulations; however few blacks could satisfy such electoral qualifications as the white primary or the poll tax, as well as other local election gimmicks and registration requirements such as the necessity to read and write

English, or to possess a "good character and reputation" (Dugas:73). This last stipulation could remove persons in common law marriages and those with illegitimate children, or whomever local parishes considered to be "undesirable" (Ibid:74). Even highly regarded professionals like Drs. Haynes and Netterville found they could not vote, despite their position in society, for the white primary precluded any qualified blacks from the franchise. As a result the number of black voters plummeted to 598 in 1924, and remained under one percent for another twenty years (Baker:339).

The Supreme Court stepped in to halt the domination of the polls by white supremacists in the South by finding the white primary unconstitutional, in the 1944 Smith v. Alwright case. After almost half a century of being disfranchised, black Louisianians could at last legitimately return to cast their ballot and re-enter into southern politics. Four years later, the number of blacks registered to vote leaped to 28,177 from 1,672, and by 1956 that number had skyrocketed to 152,073 (Ibid). But there were still difficulties to be encountered when registering to vote and in surmounting them registrants required help.

Although the abolition of the white primary paved the way for African Americans to return to the polls, many still needed help in overcoming registration difficulties. In Baton Rouge a voter registration drive got under way: on December 30th, 1946 Dr. Haynes called a meeting to deal with the matter. Haynes himself had only been able to register earlier in the year and in so doing became aware of the many problems involved -- not just with the various tests imposed

by the white registrars, but with actually getting prospective voters to the place of registration, which was usually miles away from the place of residence. The idea of the meeting was to provide leadership that would help get people to vote (Interview with Haynes). Acie Belton had just been demobilized from the United States army and registered to vote. He knew conditions had to change for blacks in the community, and realized they could only start to change with the power of the vote. He proved to be just the man for that much needed leadership, embarked upon a voter registration drive among the black community of Baton Rouge and created the Voters League. Belton also started Voter Education classes to teach blacks how to register: many who could not read or write had to be told how and where to write their names on the registration form; others were taught how to calculate and answer various questions such as the exact day and time of birth, as well as quizzes on the American or Louisiana Constitutions. Often blacks were too frightened to vote, but the knowledge acquired at these classes gave them enough confidence to overcome the often intimidating white registrars. Belton made sure registrants would sign up as Democrats and not Republicans, since all governing officials were Democrats (Interview with Belton:Aug'94). Dr.Netterville lent the Voters League his service by chauffeuring new voters to classes and to register (Interview with Netterville:March'95).

In addition to the Voters League, Acie Belton tried to incorporate the predominantly black Scotlandville into its own township, with its own governorship, so that it might be a powerful voting block. Unfortunately the District Attorney was against it, therefore Belton

did not succeed in creating a majority black township, despite the fact that Scotlandville had the right requirements (Interview with Belton). Jones reported that later in the 1950s, an organization called Focus was set up with the idea of bringing the community closer. Belton was offered the presidency. Through Focus, Belton was able to raise national funds for the Voters League, which he thought was of prime importance. He was eventually able to have access to \$250,000 to aid the voter school and help pay for transporting registrants to and from the Court House (Jones:tape 606;side A).

The black vote of Louisiana was greatly enhanced by the careful nurturing of Governor Earl K.Long who recognized their potential as a powerful voting block. Therefore, when he became governor in 1948, he let it be known to parish registrars that they should sign up black voters. During his first administration, from 1948 to 1952, as well as actively promoting the right of blacks to vote, Long embarked on a program of heavy state spending for health, education, and welfare, which mostly benefitted blacks who were at the bottom of the economic ladder. He had long desired to help the poverty stricken; he sincerely believed that "a poor man is a poor man.....it makes no difference what color he is" (Kurtz:197). What did make a difference though was the support blacks gave him on election day, when they turned out in their thousands to vote for him. Long's plan to win votes for himself paid off, and he was elected governor again in 1956.

This courting of the black vote in Louisiana did not last long however, as segregationist politicians attempted to get rid of their franchise by purging the voter registration rolls in an effort to

defeat Governor Long (Ibid:206). Once again the number of black voters in the state shrank -- by 1958 that number had dropped to 129,506 -- but it was not through lack of effort on the part of the black community in Baton Rouge, rather it was the success of conniving racist registrars and the growing reactionary movement of groups such as the Citizens Council of Louisiana (Baker:339).

THE BATON ROUGE BUS BOYCOTT

Public transport had been segregated in Louisiana since 1890, when legislation was passed requiring segregated railroad transportation for black and white passengers. The only stipulation was that the accommodation provided for black passengers must be equal to that of whites. Black leaders unsuccessfully challenged the law in the Plessy v. Fergusson case of 1896, after which the doctrine of "separate but equal" became firmly established throughout the South. Two years later the state legislature mandated separate railroad waiting rooms for the races, and in 1902 the policy of segregation extended to streetcars. By 1928 buses had also been segregated - black passengers had to load the bus from the rear to front - they remained that way until black citizens themselves did something about this undignified discrimination (Dugas:312).

The separation of the races on buses in Baton Rouge by no means always went smoothly, incidents often arose when blacks reacted to their hostile treatment by white drivers and passengers. Dr. Netterville's alleged that in 1932, his six year old son was thrown off a bus and threatened with arrest for mistakenly sitting just in front

of the partition, in the white area. From that day on he and his son never travelled by bus again, he preferred instead to walk (Interview with Netterville:Nov'94). Another incident occurred in 1943: a black cripple was about to board a bus on North Boulevard when a white passenger barred his way. After murmuring an objection, the white youth struck the cripple in the mouth and knocked him to the ground. No arrest was made (Race Relations Review:6). Later that year a white Baton Rouge bus driver was released on nominal bail for chasing Mabel Smith, a black woman, for over a block and beating her on the head leaving lacerations. The driver charged that Miss Smith had cursed him; in court she claimed that she merely said "I missed my bus, ain't it a shame" (Ibid). There was another law suit involving the Baton Rouge Bus Company in 1947. Three Southern University teachers filed a suit in the district court asking damages of \$12,000 against the bus company. They had as usual sat on the bus from the rear to the front, when the bus driver demanded that they vacate their seats for white passengers who boarded later. They refused. Their attorneys, A.P.Tureaud, Louis Berry and Archibald T.Lecesne, attested that as a result the teachers were subject to false arrest and other indignities (Ibid:202). The Reverend T.J.Jemison, a black minister in Baton Rouge recollects: "The Negro passenger had been molested and insulted and intimidated and all Negroes at that time were tired of segregation and mistreatment and injustice" (Morris:17). On top of this harassment, blacks were expected to pay exactly the same fare, of fifteen cents, as the whites to whom they had to give up their seats. What was more, the majority who rode the buses were black, since they could not afford cars; in effect it

was the black population who overwhelmingly financed the bus company (Acie Belton).

Fed up with this dehumanizing treatment, black leaders petitioned the city council to modify the seating arrangements. In March of 1953, the council passed Ordinance 22, which although it maintained segregation, allowed for seating on a first-come-first-serve basis with no seats reserved for white passengers. Infuriated, the white bus drivers went on strike in protest of Ordinance 22. They agreed to halt their strike after four days, only when the Attorney General Fred J. Le Blanc, declared that the new city law conflicted with Louisiana's segregation laws. Black leaders responded by calling for a mass boycott, demanding that the ordinance be upheld and that blacks be hired as bus drivers (Meier:365).

On June 19th, 1953, the black community in Baton Rouge began the bus boycott which lasted the whole week. The previous evening, Willis Reed, who worked part-time for WLCS radio, got permission for his cousin and president of the newly formed United Defense League (UDL) to make an announcement over the air, calling for all blacks to refuse to ride the buses (Interview with Reed:Aug'94). Under the leadership of the Reverend T.J. Jemison, of the Mount Zion Baptist Church, and the UDL boycott organizers created a "free lift" service of private cars. As Vice President of the UDL, which was established to direct the boycott, Acie Belton lent his car, along with Dr. Netterville, to collect passengers from Scotlandville and transport them to work in downtown Baton Rouge (Interview with Belton:Aug'94).

Except for a handful of people who did not hear Scott's radio

announcement and took the bus the first morning, the Reverend Jemison and Acie Belton recounted that nobody rode the buses the entire strike (Ibid; Morris:18). The black community was spurred into action and thousands gathered at nightly meetings organized by Jemison and the UDL in various places around the city, such as Jemisons church on East Boulevard, or the auditorium of a local black high school. At the meetings funds were raised to maintain the twenty-four hour free taxi service (Ibid). By the end of the second day the UDL had collected over \$1,500, and Jemison declared "We're going to drive cars until the council satisfies us" and added "This is the onward march of people who desire to be totally free.....we will not retreat one inch" (Morning Advocate;21 June:1).

By the fifth day the parish attorney, R. G. Kean Jr., disclosed that a new city ordinance had been prepared but he refused to give any details. That same day the bus company informed the newspaper that it was losing about \$1,600 a day (Ibid). Jemison announced that the boycott would continue but warned the community not to do anything antagonistic; he particularly asked that blacks close their saloon bars for its duration (Jones:tape 510;side A). Both Belton and Reed confirmed there was little overt hostility from the white community, although some voiced their opposition outside the Capital Building while a meeting between city council members and UDL leaders took place, and crosses were burned on Nettervilles lawn. James Stampley said his parents were reluctant to join the meetings and visibly support the strike for fear of losing their jobs as many did, including Willis Reed who was fired from his job at the Keystone Life Insurance

Company. The police kept a low profile; the Mayor, who was on reasonable terms with Reed, and at Reed's request asked the Chief of Police to keep his men in check; consequently there was not any police brutality towards the black community during the boycott (Interview with Reed:Aug'94). However, Jones claimed Jemison was afraid that his life might be in jeopardy and consequently hired bodyguards to protect him, and a black patrol was started up for the duration of the boycott (Jones:tape 510;side A).

Eventually the city council devised a compromise: passengers could fill seats on a first-come-first-serve basis, on the condition that the front two seats be reserved for whites. UDL leaders met with the city council to negotiate. The Reverend Jemison urged that the compromise be accepted temporarily and that it be left to the courts to decide if bus segregation was legal. After much heated debate the compromise was accepted by a vote of five to three (Morris:24). At a mass meeting at Memorial Stadium, Jemison told an audience of 8,000 of the compromise, who voted by acclamation in favor of the group decision (Ibid). On June 25th the boycott officially ended. Some of the movement's leaders were disappointed with the compromise as they felt that the strength of the movement could have brought about complete desegregation on the buses (Ibid). Willis Reed was disappointed with the compromise and could offer no explanation as to why Jemison accepted it so readily. He thought it could have been sustained for much longer and felt the community was ready for it (Interview with Reed:Aug'94). Acie Belton was also disillusioned; he felt that the new ordinance was not sufficient. He also believed that if the boycott had continued a little

longer, then what happened in Alabama later would have happened in Baton Rouge. He had little patience with Jemison's statement: "A good leader knows when to start, but he also knows when to stop". Belton thought he chose the wrong moment to stop, and the week's momentous efforts therefore seemed to him an enormous anti-climax (Interview with Belton:Aug'95). Netterville, who was quite close to Jemison at the time and attended all the nightly meetings, believed that Jemison was not interested in continuing the boycott for any longer because the community had achieved the aims which they had set out for (Interview with Netterville:Nov'94).

At that final meeting at Memorial Stadium, Jemison said to the audience "You cannot change traditions overnight, it takes patience, prayer and downright rock bottom common sense". He concluded, "Justice is on our side, and brother it's on its way" (Morning Advocate;26 June:6). Justice was indeed on its way, but it would take a lot more direct action on the part of the black community -- in the form of protest demonstrations and sit-ins -- and a hard concerted struggle before racial justice would genuinely come to Baton Rouge. It was not until 1961 that the Justice Department ensured that the Greyhound and Continental bus company waiting rooms and facilities were desegregated in Baton Rouge, and by March of the following year so too were all transit facilities (Dugas:325).

GILBERT WRIGHT HIGH SCHOOL

Shortly after the conclusion of the bus boycott, in September 1953, almost the entire black community of Istrouma, in north Baton

Rouge, gathered for a meeting to discuss the future of the Gilbert Wright High School which had recently been taken from them by the parish school board and turned into a white school. They decided that they would lead a march on the school; Alec Pitcher, a graduate from Southern Law School, was chosen as the spokesman and lawyer on behalf of the community, and Johnnie Jones, a fellow graduate, accompanied him (Jones: tape 481;side A). When the large crowd reached Gilbert Wright the principal came out to ask them what they were doing there; Pitcher informed him that they intended to get the school back and he meant to take the issue to court as a test case. Pitcher and Jones were arrested and charged with "creating strife, drumming up business, and forming a litigation" (Ibid:side B). No criminal charges actually went forward, but members of the Bar Association, who were also members of the Southern Gentlemen, a similar organization to the notorious Citizen's Council, tried to disbar Pitcher and Jones. Before they were tried, they were given the opportunity to recant and apologize in order to have the charges dismissed; because Jones refused he was called "an arrogant nigger" and scheduled for a hearing. After a somewhat difficult trial Jones was eventually exonerated; Pitcher who had agreed to the Bar Association's terms was reprimanded but not tried. In 1956 both men filed a segregation suit against the Baton Rouge School Board on behalf of the community who had helped build Gilbert Wright and who wished their own children could utilize it; however, the suit dragged on until the school was eventually desegregated under federal law, in the mid 1960s (Ibid).

FOOD TOWN STORE BOYCOTT

In 1954, the local supermarket in Scotlandville, the Food Town Store, hired no black clerks, assistants or cashiers - the only blacks employed were made to sweep the floor - yet 98% of its business was from the local black community. Acie Belton approached the store manager to ask about the hiring of black cashiers; the manager refused. As a result, Belton galvanized the community to boycott the Food Town Store, and they set up picket lines outside the shop for eight days. The manager acquiesced and two cashiers, one stock clerk and a shop assistant were hired (Acie Belton).

Belton's successful leadership was noted by Baton Rouge's mayor, Jack Christian, who asked him to work with the Bi-Racial Committee, which was organized in 1958. The committee of five white men and five black men, including Dr.G.L.Netterville, John G.Lewis and Horatio Thompson was set up as an advisory delegation to the mayor, to deal with employment matters and segregation problems in the municipal government. Under the committee's guidance, the mayor employed the first black director of personnel, ensured the hiring of blacks in Baton Rouge hospitals, and later revised some rules of segregation such as public water fountains and eating houses (Ibid).

VEPILOGUE

In reaction to the Supreme Court's decisions in Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, of 1954 and 1955, which called for the desegregation of schools, and to the escalating protest movements, similar to those of Baton Rouge, taking place throughout the South, massive white resistance spread rapidly and challenged the move towards integration. In Louisiana, race once more became a powerful political force; Governor Earl K. Long could no longer remain silent on the race issue as his political opponents forced it into the open to do battle with him. The Supreme Court ruling shattered what little racial compromise existed in Louisiana politics, fanatic white supremacists loomed omnipotent to preserve the status quo, and moderate politicians kept a low profile (Dugas:79).

State Senator Willie Rainach, head of the Louisiana Association of Citizens' Councils, the leading white supremacist group in Louisiana, alleged in 1956 that the state had illegally registered thousands of black voters in violation of the literacy clause in the Louisiana Constitution. Rainach decided to reverse the trend towards increased black voting by challenging the legality of their registration (Ibid:80). Between 1956 and 1959, with the help of sympathetic registrars, Rainach removed the names of 15,326 black voters from registers in parishes across the state (Kurtz:207). The Citizens Council was so successful in its purge of voting rolls that it attracted the attention of the Justice Department, which began an

immediate investigation. They discovered from their secret minutes that the Louisiana White Citizens Council had plans to prevent every African American from voting in the state. A loop hole in Louisiana law meant that voters who had made the most minor spelling errors on their applications could be stricken from the rolls. Although Long tried to halt the purges with a number of bills that protected the voter from being persecuted in this trivial way, they were overwhelmingly defeated in the legislature. One Long supporter explained his lack of loyalty: "We just couldn't be seen as soft on the nigger question" (Ibid). And even though other Longites did not support the racial policies of Rainach and his cronies, they were badly embarrassed by their leader's obscene public tirades against Rainach in front of a legislative committee, for which he was rushed off to a mental asylum (Ibid:208). With Long out of the way the segregationists encountered no more opposition, and continued to hold sway in Louisiana's political arena until action by the federal government in 1964 finally put a stop to their discriminatory antics with the Civil Rights Act. By the end of the year the number of black voters had risen to 164,717, a little over the 1956 level, of 152,073 black voters, before the purges began. With the Voting Rights Act of 1965 there were at last federally employed poll watchers to oversee elections; literacy tests became illegal and the way was paved for a massive return to the polls by African Americans (Baker:339).

Supremacists also endeavored to maintain segregation in education, after Brown v. Board of Education. Three days after the Supreme Courts pronouncement in May 1954, the Louisiana legislature created a joint

legislative committee on segregation, headed by Senator Rainach, to discover ways by which the state could thwart the process of desegregation. The policy proposed was one of delay, evasion and defiance, and three laws were enacted to strengthen segregation. Act 752 called on the state's police power to maintain the operation of separate schools for black and white children; Act 555 prohibited the State Board of Education from approving any public school which violated Act 752; Act 556 gave local school boards the power to obstruct the progress of desegregation of their schools (Dugas:187). When the Supreme Court assigned the responsibility of desegregating schools to the individual states a year after the 1954 Brown decision, it essentially gave carte blanche to Rainach and the Louisiana legislature to put off desegregation indefinitely. Even Earl K. Long, during his Governorship from 1956 to 1960, ignored the integration issue despite his efforts to ensure that blacks could vote; it was easier for him to steer a neutral course. As a result the de jure system of segregation in public schools remained in tact in Baton Rouge until 1963 when the School Board finally adopted a federal court plan, which allowed black twelfth grade students to commence transference to white schools (Baton Rouge State Times; Aug 7:1).

The Baton Rouge NAACP, along with other local state branches, was also targeted by the Louisiana legislature because of its active involvement in the fight for black equality and legal rights. In 1956 the organization was required to file a list of all its members; as a result these NAACP members were fired from jobs and leaders were intimidated by law enforcement officers and white supremacist groups.

The fear of reprisals, especially of losing work, made many African Americans in Baton Rouge reluctant to be seen as supporting or participating in the sit-ins, protests, and demonstrations of the early 1960s (Interview with Stampley:Dec'94). White resistance did not, however, deter black leaders and students in a determined effort to bring about an end to segregation and inequality.

As news of the Greensboro student's attempts to desegregate lunch counters with sit-ins reached Baton Rouge, many Southern University students were ready to express their discontentment with Louisiana's racial practices. On March 28th, 1960 about sixteen students disregarded the warnings of expulsion from President Clark and staged quiet and orderly sit-ins at lunch counters in the Greyhound Bus Terminal, Simmons drug store, and Kress department store, where they were arrested for breaching the peace (Vincent.1:192). The state district court informed the students that their presence alone at the lunch counters disturbed the peace and consequently found them guilty. The judge sentenced each of them to ninety days in jail if they could not afford the fine of \$100. When Southern University officials subsequently expelled them from school, 1,500 other students boycotted class and marched to the State Capital building for an orderly demonstration. Disregarding warnings by the school authorities, students stayed out of class for a week (Vincent.1:193). Meanwhile, the student's attorney, Johnnie Jones, worked to get their bail reduced (Jones:tape 511;side A). When the state supreme court denied the students appeals, they took their case to the federal courts. In the 1961 State v. Garner case, the Supreme Court reversed the lower court's

ruling on the grounds that there was not enough evidence to support the allegation of disturbing the peace, and found that the law on which the convictions rest upon was "overbroad" in its language (Race Relations Reporter:988).

Another Supreme Court case arose out of student directed action against segregated lunch counters in Baton Rouge. On the morning of December 14th, 1961, Southern University students along with local field representatives for the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), picketed certain stores and called for a boycott of them over the Christmas period. Police officers arrested twenty-three protesters for violating a 1960 state law forbidding obstruction of a public thoroughfare, and held them on bail of \$1,500. A CORE field representative, David Dennis, told newsmen as he was leaving for jail "We were not doing anything to agitate. We are just doing all we think is possible to eradicate the problem of segregation". That night some five hundred Southern University Students attended a rally on the campus to protest the arrest of the pickets (Morning Advocate;Dec 15:1).

The next day approximately 1,500 Southern University students, under the leadership of CORE field secretary, Reverend B.Elton Cox, marched to the old State Capital building in protest of the previous days arrests. From there the crowd marched to the courthouse which housed the jail where the students arrested the previous day were being held. Although they had received permission to demonstrate, the chief of police warned the protestors that they must remain on the opposite side of the road from the courthouse, where they filled the sidewalk

around the whole block, obstructing entrances to shops on that side. The crowd sang songs and clapped and cheered when they heard singing from the students in jail; after that Reverend Cox urged the students to go downtown and stage sit-ins at the twelve stores which refused to desegregate: "It is lunch time, and we are hungry", he told them, "go to the lunch counters and tell them we are hungry" (Ibid:10). At this point, when the students cheered in response, Sheriff Bryan Clemmons ordered them to disperse for fear that the demonstration would violate the peace. When they did not move immediately, the police started hurling tear gas into the crowd, which turned and fled (Ibid). The police then arrested and jailed Reverend Cox, along with fifty students, and charged him with conspiracy to commit criminal mischief, obstruction of justice obstruction of public passageways and disturbing the peace, and held on bond charges of \$2,000. Meanwhile in court that day the judge signed two court orders prohibiting members of CORE and others from unlawful picketing and demonstrations (Ibid:1).

After Cox's trials in state district court and the state supreme court city officials dropped all the charges by 1963, except the obstruction of public passageways and breach of the peace allegations, for which he was found guilty (Dugas:19). Cox then proceeded to file two separate appeals with the United States Supreme Court: one involved his two convictions by the state supreme court; the other involved the validity of the Louisiana law which prohibited picketing near a courthouse (Ibid:20). The court made its rulings in January 1965. In the first case of Cox v.State of Louisiana, the Supreme Court held that advocating sit-ins was constitutionally protected under the rights of

freedom of speech and assembly, and that singing, clapping and cheering in protest of segregation, discrimination and harassment was not a breach of the peace. The Court also recognized that although a state or municipality had a right to regulate the use of city streets to assure public safety and convenience through law, it was unconstitutional if that law was so "vague and indefinite" that it permitted the arrest of persons for peaceably assembling and demonstrating (Ibid:21).

In the second case of Cox v. State of Louisiana the Court upheld the right of a state to pass legislation protecting "its judicial system from pressures which picketing near a courthouse may create", but declared that Cox could not be convicted on charges regarding this law, since he had gained permission from the correct authorities to demonstrate opposite the courthouse. The Supreme Court further added, that legislation moderating freedom of speech and assembly should not be so broad that they suppress protected freedoms (Ibid:23).

The two Supreme Court cases were not only a success for Reverend Cox, particularly as a CORE field secretary, but also a step forward for the black community in Baton Rouge, who now had the right to demonstrate and protest against the various forms of segregation, discrimination and exclusion. Meanwhile, the Bi-Racial Committee had met with merchants of twelve major downtown stores after more lunch counter sit-ins had taken place in each during the spring of 1963; an agreement was eventually reached to quietly desegregate the lunch counters in August 1963 (Baton Rouge State Times;Aug 7:1).

In this study of the progress of African Americans in Louisiana and, more specifically, African Americans in Baton Rouge between the years of 1915 and 1955, I have attempted to describe how they survived the humiliation of segregation, how they demonstrated their opposition to it, and how they finally broke down its barriers and achieved equality within the greater society. These were long years of struggle born with fortitude by a black population who, by mainly quiet but dogged perseverance, eventually accomplished their goal.

In 1915, African Americans in Baton Rouge were completely disenfranchised, politically impotent, and isolated from the rest of society. There was little chance for a good education: schools were overcrowded -- if there were any at all -- and teachers grossly underpaid; the only chance for higher education was at a fledgling university. Job opportunities fared no better, the only work available was low paid and menial. Living conditions were poor because incomes were poor, and streetcars, later buses were segregated.

Fifty years on, in 1965, voter registration had increased by the thousands and African Americans were a political force to be reckoned with. Education had improved tremendously as more schools had opened to facilitate the community's children; black teacher's wages were on a par with those of white teachers; Southern had blossomed from a rustic vocational school into a recognized academic university; and as an alternative, LSU had opened up its graduate and undergraduate schools. The black population could be found in all occupations -- from selling fried chicken to the state's Governors, to suing the state for discriminatory practices. A large middle class subdivision -- among

the first of its kind in the nation -- housed many wealthy black professionals in large residences. All public transport was desegregated, and everyone could enjoy a meal at any downtown lunch counter.

In short the lives of black Louisianians in Baton Rouge had progressed prodigiously: although their percentage population decreased over this period, the strength of their presence had increased. This improvement had not happened simply through federal action alone, but through the concerted protestations, and persistent litigations of an industrious and developing black community.

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ORAL DATA

(Interviewed by Miranda Kombert 1994-95)

MR.ACIE BELTON : Vice Preident UDL, 1953; August, 1994

DR. J.K.HAYNES : Head of LEA, 1947-1950's; March, 1995

DR. L. NETTERVILLE : President Southern University 1967-1974; November
1994, March 1995

WILLIS REED : Director, Baptist Training Union, 1950's; August 1994,
November 1994

MR.JAMES STAMPLEY : Moved to Baton Rouge in 1949 at age 10 years;
December 1994

OLGA HAYWOOD: Student at Southern High in early 1960's; March, 1995

(Interviewed by Mary Herbert, 1993-94)

JOHNNIE JONES: Baton Rouge Civil Rights Lawyer, 1950's-1960's

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