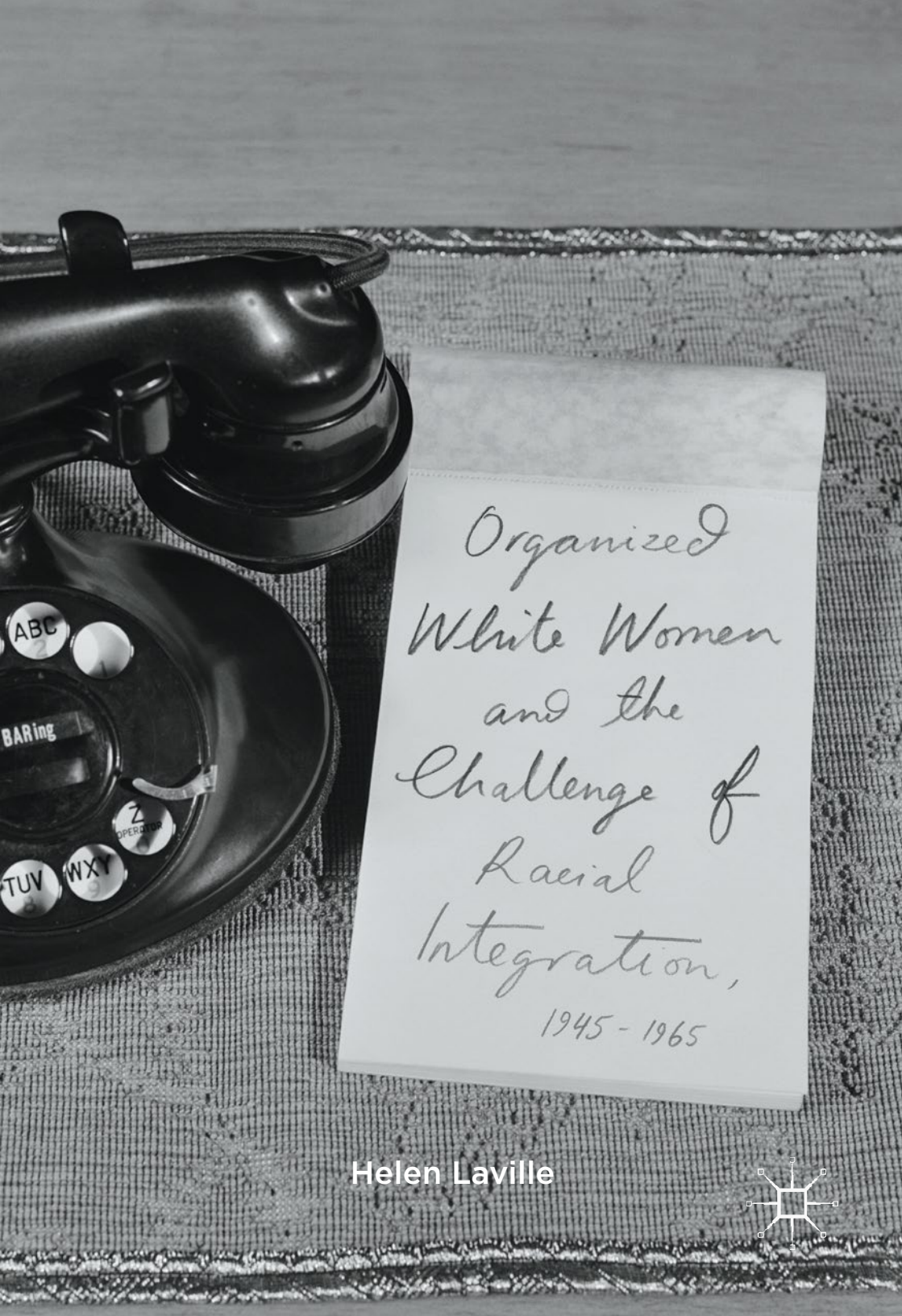

Helen Laville

Organized White Women and the Challenge of Racial Integration, 1945-1965

Helen Laville

Organized White Women and the Challenge of Racial Integration, 1945-1965

palgrave
macmillan

Helen Laville
Manchester Metropolitan University
Manchester, UK

ISBN 978-3-319-49693-1 ISBN 978-3-319-49694-8 (eBook)
DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-49694-8

Library of Congress Control Number: 2017932446

Cover illustration: ClassicStock / Alamy Stock Photo

Printed on acid-free paper

This Palgrave Macmillan imprint is published by Springer Nature
The registered company is Springer International Publishing AG
The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

To Dirk

Acknowledgements

Searching for inspiration for writing the acknowledgments for this book drove me to re-read the acknowledgments of my first book, a section so good that many close friends and family (and possibly fellow historians) concluded I had peaked too soon, and there was little point reading anything further. For any author, looking back on previous acknowledgements, especially when the gap between books has been lengthier than one would have liked or indeed, promised, is somewhat sobering. The personal lives of scholars find space in acknowledgements, and comparing the tributes in one book to the tributes in a later one reflects the passage of time. Ryan and Lauryn, small distracting children in my first book, are grown-ups, exploring universities of their own, and able to help with the odd bit of editing. They are still distracting, but they have got a lot better at making mummy a nice gin and tonic when the stress of writing gets just too much. I now have a lot more nephews and nieces, a new husband, and some new colleagues and friends. Some absences here make me pause, particularly the absence of my Dad, who is no longer here to read the gratitude I express again for the support, love and good humour of my parents. Constants include my lovely siblings, Steven, Jim, David and Jenny, their equally lovely partners, Lucy, Sam, Penny and Pete, and my aunt Janet. My still best friend Maria Balshaw and her children Jake and Lily, who moved cities to escape me, only to find me following ten years later, have been a constant source of support and fun. We still know how to live.

The Archives and Special Collections at Auburn University wins top praise in these acknowledgements, not only for the unexpected excellence

of its collection of papers from Alabama women's associations, diligently amassed by their formidable former Dean of Women Katherine Cooper Cater, but also for the friendliness and hospitality of their greeting, and their help and interest in my project. I thank Michael Rich and his congregation at St Andrew's Church for their marvellous hospitality during my research trip to Birmingham, Alabama. I am particularly grateful for the help of the dedicated librarians at the following libraries: Mary McLeod Bethune House, Washington, DC; Sophia Smith Library, Smith College, Massachusetts; Robert Woodruff Library, Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia; Birmingham Public Library, Birmingham, Alabama; Georgia State Archives Morrow, Georgia; John Fitzgerald Kennedy Library, Boston, Massachusetts; Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe College, Boston, Massachusetts; National Archives, Washington, DC; Library of Congress, Washington, DC; University of Missouri Archives, Kansas City, Missouri and the William Pullen Library, Atlanta, Georgia. Previous versions of some of the material in this monograph have appeared in a *Women's History Review* article titled, "'If the Time is not Ripe, Then it is Your Job to Ripen the Time!' The Transformation of the YWCA in the USA from Segregated Association to Interracial Organization, 1930–1965," (*Women's History Review*, 15:3, 2006, www.tandfonline.com), and in a *Journal of American Studies* article titled, "'Women of Conscience' or 'Women of Conviction'? The National Women's Committee on Civil Rights" (*Journal of American Studies* 43:2, 2009), and that work is reprinted here with permission.

I would like to thank my friends and colleagues especially, but in no particular order, Danielle Fuller, Fiona Gilyead, Matthew Hilton, Corey Ross, Deborah Longworth, Danielle Fuller, Jeannette Littlemore, Michael Whitby, Tom Lockwood, James Walters, Hugh Adlington, Valerie Rumbold, Susan Hunston, Nick Merriman, Graeme Murdock, Solange Mouthaan Aengus Ward, Andrew Johnstone, George Lewis, Laura Belmonte and Sharon Montieth. My thanks are also due to Scott and Lesley Lucas, who share the logistical stress and the joy of parenting. My final thanks are due to Daniel Moore, who has read drafts of this book in various forms far too many times, and has only complained a little bit.

Abbreviations

AAUW	American Association of University Women
AFSC	American Friends Service Committee
ALP	American Labor Party
ASWPL	Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching
CAW	Congress of American Women
CIC	Commission on Interracial Cooperation
COFO	Council of Federated Organizations
CORE	Congress of Racial Equality
CRC	Civil Rights Congress
CWC	Colored Women's Committee, Young Women's Christian Association
DAR	Daughters of the American Revolution
FOC	Fellowship of the Concerned
GFBPWC	General Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs
GFWC	General Federation of Women's Clubs
HOPE	Help Our Public Education
HUAC	House Committee on Un-American Activities
IFUW	International Federation of University Women
LWS	League of Women Shoppers
LWV	League of Women Voters
MPE	Mississippians for Public Education
NAACP	National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
NACWC	National Association of Colored Women's Clubs

NAWSA	National American Woman Suffrage Association
NCCW	National Council of Church Women
NCJW	National Council of Jewish Women
NCNW	National Council of Negro Women
NCW	National Council of Women
NOW	National Organization of Women
NLC	Negro Leadership Conference (Young Women's Christian Association)
NSC	National Student Council (Young Women's Christian Association)
NWCCR	National Women's Committee on Civil Rights
PAC	Public Affairs Committee (PAC)
SCLC	Southern Christian Leadership Conference
SDS	Students for Democratic Society
SNCC	Student Non-violent Co-ordinating Committee
SRC	Southern Regional Council
STJ	Sojourners for Truth and Justice
TWIC	Tallahassee Women's Intergroup Committee
UCW	United Church Women
USIA	United States Information Agency
WCTU	Women's Christian Temperance Union
WEAL	Women's Equality Action League
WILPF	Women's International League for Peace and Freedom
WIMS	Wednesdays in Mississippi
WSP	Women Strike for Peace
YMCA	Young Men's Christian Association
YWCA	Young Women's Christian Association

Contents

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

On 9 July 1963, a group of 300 women gathered at the White House in Washington DC at the invitation of President Kennedy. All leaders of women's organizations, they represented some fifty million American women members of associations as diverse as the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), the National Association of Negro Business and Professional Women's Clubs, the National Council of Women, B'nai B'rith, the National Council of Jewish Women, the National Council of American Baptist Women, the National Council of Catholic Women, the American Nurses Associations, the National Council of Negro Women, the American Association of University Women (AAUW), the League of Women Voters (LWV), United Church Women, the Women's Missionary Society, the National Association of Women Deans and Counsellors, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, the General Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs and Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority. Nationally these associations constituted a powerful coalition, whom the government hoped they could persuade to lend their logistical resources and moral authority to the cause of racial justice at the legislative level. Even more importantly, the White House conference hoped to inspire branches of women's associations across the country, particularly in trouble spots where racial tensions were running high, to take an active role in improving race relations in their local communities. The members of the associations represented at the White House conference were amongst the most affluent, well-educated and socially

H. Laville, *Organized White Women and the Challenge of Racial Integration, 1945-1965*, DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-49694-8_1

and politically influential women in their communities. If Kennedy could persuade these women to speak out in the interests of improved race relations, the President's advisors reasoned, their communities would listen. President Kennedy, alongside Vice-President Lyndon Johnson, welcomed the women to the White House, telling them they represented "a tremendous potential for developing understanding and influencing public opinion."[1] Seemingly inspired, the leaders of these influential women's associations assured the President that the fifty million women members of their groups were willing and able to direct their effort towards racial justice. Their members, they asserted, were "joined together with a common purpose… with the singular goal of completing our nation's biggest unfinished job."[2]

Kennedy's efforts to involve women's associations in his campaign to secure civil rights legislation was part of a political tradition in post-war America of collaboration and co-operation between the federal government and the leaders of a coalition of American women's associations. In the post-war period, women's associations had carved out a particular place for themselves in American political life, presenting themselves as quasi-governmental institutions, that is to say groups that sat apart from the formal institutions of government claiming all the responsibilities and rights of non-governmental status but which nonetheless purported to offer women a form of legitimate access to national political life outside of direct electoral politics. Sex-segregated associations had floundered somewhat in the period following the extension of suffrage in 1920, as they struggled to define their place in a world where formal barriers to women's participation in mainstream politics no longer existed, and where the notion of an exclusively female political party or a woman's lobby within American politics was greeted with suspicion, hostility or derision. In the period after 1945, however, American women's associations were able to engineer a renaissance in their authority and influence. Post-war American women's associations were able to justify and increase women's civic engagement at the local level in the face of a prevailing domestic ideology that suggested the limitation of women's interest to the domestic sphere. Two decades before Betty Friedan diagnosed the domestic alienation and depression of the homemaker as "the problem which had no name," leaders of American women's associations had not only recognized the disease but offered membership in their own public-minded associations as the cure. Local resurgence in membership was matched with increasing levels of national activism and influence, as

American women's associations claimed the participation of their leaders in national affairs mitigated the low levels of women in electoral politics. Sex-segregated women's associations offered a form of public activism for women that drew legitimacy not from mainstream public electoral politics, but from the democratic processes and structures of private associational membership.

The resurgence of American women's associations in the post-war period owed much to the context of red-baiting and anti-communist paranoia, which made more explicitly progressive positions and organizations a radical and dangerous proposition for potential members. Recent scholarship has uncovered the extent to which women's progressive and left-wing political activism and associations continued throughout the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s, despite both anti-communist pressures and the much-documented pull of domesticity. Nonetheless, it would be fair to say that direct and ideological engagement was more a marginal than a mainstream activity because of those constraints. Because of the political, social and cultural costs associated with left-wing politics in the post-war and Cold War years, American women's associations strove to avoid any position that might be considered radical. Their members were those women who sought a meaningful role outside the home, but who lacked the ideological fervour, political commitment, and disregard for social and economic consequences that membership in an explicitly left-wing group would have demanded.

While mainstream women's associations survived their lean years in the 1930s by forming alliances and working alongside more openly left-wing associations, contributing to the formation of a Popular Front, they quickly shed these ideological affiliations in the post-war period.[3] Rather than embracing a progressive position, with all the ideological baggage such a term contained, the mainstream women's associations studied in this book successfully stressed their non-partisanship, their lack of ideological motivation and their benign advocacy of a non-political women's position, predicated on good citizenship, liberal internationalism and protection of the vulnerable. While their instance on a lack of a political position was sometimes met with skepticism, indignant challenges and accusations of bias, overall the mainstream women's associations studied in this monograph were remarkably adept at avoiding controversy. While quietly opposing the excesses of anti-communism at home, they frequently collaborated with their government in an anti-communist position on foreign policy, vigilantly policing any international efforts to enlist

American women in campaigns for peace that might lend succour to the Soviet Union.[4] The efforts by mainstream women's associations to distance themselves from pacifist groups and causes was part of a broader spilt between the liberal and progressive position in the post-war period. As Jacqueline Castledine has observed, fears about national security and Cold War demands proved a significant dividing line between progressive and liberal women's groups, with progressive women putting the fight for peace at the heart of their work.[5] Other women's associations quickly distanced themselves from the controversial issue of pacifism and announced their wholehearted allegiance to the Cold War fight. The haste with which women's associations abandoned former pacifist positions and allies was, in large part, a result of the appropriation of the cause of peace by the Soviet Union, such that American groups espousing the same cause were subject to accusations of being communist sympathizers or fellow travellers.[6] The impact of "red-tagging" on the cause of peace was such that mainstream American women's associations generally avoided an identification with pacifism and withdrew from international networks and efforts aligned to that cause.

In an era when campaigns for racial justice were similarly vulnerable to accusations of being sponsored, infiltrated or hijacked by communism, anxiety about redbaiting might seem a plausible reason for American women's associations to avoid the issue of race. There may be an element of truth to this, but it is at best but one element of the complicated story of American women's associations' engagement and non-engagement with the issue of racial integration. There is certainly no evidence that fear of redbaiting was a conscious theme for the actions of the women in this book, and I have found no efforts on their part to explain or justify their avoidance of the issue of racial justice on this basis. Moreover, when they felt sufficiently strongly about an issue, American women's associations did act in defiance of seemingly implacable Cold War mores. Eschewing identification with the Left, mainstream women's associations nonetheless did speak out against the excesses of anti-communism, as explored in Chap. 2 of this book. The reluctance of American women's associations to involve themselves in campaigns for racial justice was not the result of their fears over redbaiting. Rather, it was the result of their own long history of racial segregation and their reluctance to upset the private social relationships on which their branches depended.

A memo drafted for President Kennedy in advance of the White House meeting confidently asserted, "There is a long precedent … for Negro

and white women to sit down together to talk to one another about their mutual problems. More than a hundred years ago the women's suffrage movement learned of the innate kinship of suffering by sharing in their meetings the experience of Negro Women. This has continued in the many national women's organizations in which today race has no negative implications for membership or full participation."[7] In fact, the "long precedent" of relationships between African-American and white women reveals not a history of sitting down together in a recognition of mutual problems but rather a tradition of segregation, formal and informal patters of racial exclusion, and a widespread refusal on the part of white women to acknowledge shared identity and purpose with African-American women. Despite the declaration of the women at the White House conference that they were willing to join the President in completing the "unfinished job" of racial justice, American women's associations had already proved themselves largely incapable of adapting to racial integration in the postwar period. While other political, social and economic issues had caused dissention and disagreement within women's associations, none had challenged their authority and legitimacy in the way the issue of racial integration threatened to do. Challenges to racial segregation might expose the impossible tension on which national American women's organizations based their authority—the public legitimacy derived from private associations.

The efforts of American women's associations to claim a national public role was complicated by the very values they sought to celebrate. While frequently taking pride in the sense of national significance, authority and influence that the leaders of women's associations were enthusiastic in promoting, members often saw their branches as private groups, reflecting social and frequently emotional networks and ties. Members of national women's associations joined and were loyal to local community branches rather than their national associations. While a few rose through the ranks to take on state level, and sometimes national positions, the vast majority contented themselves with local involvement. Local conditions and community activism was frequently far more important to the members of women's associations than national identity and policy. As a result, the authority of national leadership over their branches was fragile at best. While the leaders of women's associations gathered at the White House declared themselves "joined together with a common purpose" it was in fact the case that issue of racial integration, both within women's associations and in American life more generally, had been a bone of contention

between branch membership and national leadership for decades. Any efforts of national leadership to hold their associations to a common position had long been on a collision course with the determination of branch membership to maintain their autonomy. While national leadership understood that an explicit public position on racial integration was vital to maintaining their status as legitimate national institutions, branch membership was frequently determined to defend segregation within their groups as a matter of private association, and within their local communities as an issue of local choice.

The civil rights revolution of the mid-twentieth century had a profound and hitherto underexplored impact on the history of women's associations in the United States. The role of the Civil Rights Movement in creating the new institutional forms of women's political activism that emerged in the mid-1960s has been well documented, most notably by Sara Evans.[8] The impact of the civil rights revolution on the existing forms of women's political activism has been less discussed. In the period before 1945, women's associations had frequently celebrated the positive benefits that accrued from the gender exclusivity of their organizations, while leaving the class and racial exclusivity of their membership unspoken. The shift in racial mores after the Second World War and the move towards a confrontation with the persistence of racial segregation in American life inexorably pushed women's associations to take a position on segregation both within their own associations and as a feature of American life. This process revealed the significant dependency of women's associations on both the homogeneity of their membership and the frequently unexamined privileges associated with their class, race and gender position.

The impact of the civil rights revolution on all voluntary membership associations in the United States is a contentious one. The work of Robert Putman and Theda Skocpol has established the declining membership of associational membership amongst Americans after 1970, yet the reasons behind this decline remain the subject of debate.[9] In particular, the relationship between declining membership in voluntary associations and the changes wrought by the Civil Rights Movement is complex and hotly debated. Putman, for example, acknowledged that "it seems intuitively plausible that race might have somehow played a role in the erosion of social capital over the last generation." That a significant decline in membership in civic associations followed in the aftermath of civil rights legislation suggests, Putman admits, a possible connection between the "legal desegregation of civic life" and "a kind of white flight" from

associational membership.[10] However, since civic disengagement in this period was as significant amongst African-Americans as it was amongst white Americans, Putnam asserts that the decline in membership in civic associations required a more complex explanation than a simple cause and effect relationship between the decline of associational membership and the Civil Rights Movement.

It is certainly true that many factors, including increasing demands on the leisure time of Americans and declining trust in the public sphere, contributed to the decline of membership in voluntary associations. More specifically, a number of factors played a part in the declining membership of women's voluntary associations in the period after 1965. Women's increased participation in the workplace made the pseudo-careers and leadership positions they had previously pursued in voluntary sex-segregated association less attractive. Frances Pauley, an influential member of the Georgia League of Women Voters in the 1950s and 1960s, acknowledged in late 1990s that "the League now doesn't do anywhere near as much as we did. They can't now because much of the leadership works. The women who were the League leaders in my day would now have a good job for pay. I am sure I would have had a career."[11] Second-wave feminism, which encouraged and facilitated women's direct participation in the public sphere and mainstream political activism, also made a significant contribution to the decline of women's voluntary associations. As the hyper-domestic "feminine mystique" ideology which had kept post-war American women in their homes wilted, the role of women's voluntary associations in offering an alternative political structure for women's activism which drew on domestic authority and created a public space outside mainstream politics seemed increasingly redundant.

If the rise of second-wave feminism undermined the function of traditional sex-segregated associations, so too did they challenge their ideology and collective identity. While traditional sex-segregated associations celebrated a distinctively feminine culture and authority, they generally rejected (sometimes forcefully) an explicit identification with feminism and a women's rights agenda. The gradual emergence of the second-wave feminist movement in the early 1960s represented a resurgent interest in women's rights and a willingness amongst women to identify themselves as feminists. Public concern over the relationship between women and domesticity contributed to an increasing willingness amongst American women to challenge the social and cultural expectations that excluded them from the public sphere. This shift in public mood coincided with

the emergence of activism from within the US government that brought about a renewed focus on examining the way in which legal measures could secure women's equality.[12] The subsequent revival in self-identified feminist activism in the mid-1960s created a wave of new groups such as the National Organization of Women (NOW), formed in 1966, and the Women's Equality Action League (WEAL), formed in 1968. New groups of women also emerged from apprenticeships in interracial civil rights activist organizations such as the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) or New Left groups such as Students for a Democratic Society (SDS).[13] These groups, who embraced an explicitly feminist outlook agenda quickly seized the political agenda leaving traditional sex-segregated associations such as the LWV, trailing in their wake, struggling to maintain both membership and political authority.[14]

Acknowledging that the Civil Rights movement was not the only factor responsible for the decline in traditional women's voluntary associations, however, does not mean that it did not play a significant role. Demands for racial integration undoubtedly rendered forms of public engagement that were mediated through formal racially segregated membership associations unacceptable. Equally, the informal, seemingly benign, practices of class and racial exclusion that underpinned the efficacy and authority of many sex-segregated associations were exposed because of the Civil Rights Movement. White women's associations were forced into a confrontation with both the issue of racial injustice in the United States and the issue of racial and social exclusivity within their own associations. This confrontation revealed the limited nature of the political authority that women exercised both nationally and locally through the membership in the quasi-governmental sex-segregated associations. Promoted and lauded as a method of facilitating women's political engagement in a period where female participation in mainstream politics was limited and difficult, women's associations seemed to offer a legitimate and accessible political identity for American women. The challenge of racial justice, however, made painfully obvious the conditional and fragile nature of women's associations as a form of organizing American women's political expression. Tensions between national and branch membership over racial justice revealed the inability of national leadership to speak for, much less to utilize their membership on, this issue of national and international significance. Rather than risk the identity and cohesion of their associations, national leadership had frequently chosen instead to ignore the exclusionary terms on which they operated.

Historians have begun to explore the way in which exclusively or predominately white membership associations were forced to confront their racial practices in the period between 1945 and 1965. The YWCA, in particular, has been the focus of attention for historians such as Kate Dossett, Nancy Marie Robertson, Abigail Lewis, Nina Mjagkij and myself.[15] The two women's associations which are the focus on this monograph—the AAUW and the LWV—lacked both the institutional structure and the strong sense of Christian identity which enabled the YWCA to address the issue of racial segregation. Both associations, while lacking any explicit rules on racial segregation within their national laws, were overwhelming, indeed almost exclusively white. The struggle for the integration of these groups has received less attention from historians than that of the YWCA. Susan Levine's study of the AAUW and Louise Young's study of the LWV, as well as article-length studies such as Janice Leone's work on the integration of the AAUW, have explored the way in which the AAUW and the League confronted the issue of segregation within their associations.[16] Cherisse Jones Branch's study of women's interracial organizing in South Carolina has examined efforts by women in that state to work together during and after the Second World War, examining the ways in which different women's groups approached the issue of segregation.[17] Other local case studies of branch integration such as Shannon Frystak's study of the LWV in New Orleans have explored the relationships between branch membership, national leadership and local politics.[18] In addition to this scholarship, a number of women who were active in women's associations either have been the subjects of biographies or have published their own autobiographies. Biographies of women such as Dorothy Height, Sara Mitchell Parsons and Frances Pauley offer individual recollections into the way in which American women's associations grappled with the issue of integration.[19]

It is the contention of this book that bringing together different accounts of the engagement of organized American women with race relations, together with significant new research into the way in which these associations, and collaborations between these associations, struggled with the issue of racial integration, allows us to reach broader conclusions about the impact of racial integration on traditional women's associations as a political form than are possible in individual case studies. It is certainly the case that women's associations at the time understood themselves as a collective force, as well as individual associations. Their frequent collaborations

and patterns of multiple membership reflect the extent to which they saw themselves as part of something bigger than themselves. This collaboration included consultation over the best way to approach the challenge of integrating their memberships, and acting together on national and community level programmes to address integration.

The second chapter of this book offers a historical overview of American women's associations and their role in American political life. Both before and after the extension of suffrage to American women, sex-segregated women's associations served to celebrate and legitimize the place of feminine values in public life, offering alternative forms of political activism to women who felt themselves to be excluded from mainstream male-dominated political life. These groups facilitated meaningful cooperation between American women and the federal government, and encouraged significant local activism at state and civic levels. Alongside these political functions, however, American women's organizations also considered themselves social in nature, with their local branches and membership groups reflecting friendship networks and homosocial practices. National American women's associations can thus best be understood as hybrid forms, bridging the divide between the social and the political worlds. This hybridity, while it contributed much to the continued vibrancy and authority of these groups, also meant that exclusionary social practices and, in particular racial segregation, lay at the heart of women's voluntary associations. This chapter explores the way in which American women's associations created a meaningful space for women's public activism in the period between the extension of suffrage and the emergence of second-wave feminism in the mid-1960s. It argues that American women's associations created a form of quasi-governmental activism for American women that allowed them to avoid a direct confrontation with social, cultural and political gender roles. While acknowledging the success of American women's associations in creating this role, this chapter also explores the racial segregation that was at the heart of the structures and, frequently, the unspoken ideology of these associations. Some notable exceptions to racially segregated women's associations did exist. Women's pacifist groups and those associated with left-wing politics frequently organized interracially and explicitly defined an end to racial injustice as one of their goals. Notwithstanding these notable exceptions, however, the vast majority of American women who were

members of sex-segregated women's associations in the period before the Second World War, were part of racially segregated groups, where informal barriers to racial mixing were often as rigid and unyielding as formal barriers.

The following two chapters focus on important case studies within this broad picture: the AAUW and the LWV. These chapters critically assess the way in which these individual organizations contributed to the renaissance of women's associations in post-war America, examining the way in which they articulated a broad range of responsibilities for their members and their associations. Both of these associations struggled to negotiate the internal tensions within their organizations between the semi-private nature of branch membership and the quasi-governmental role claimed by national leadership. The challenges of racial integration, both as an internal membership issue and as an increasingly significant issue in American life, threatened the balance of compromise between local branches' autonomy and the national consensus on which the authority of the association rested. While acknowledging the differences between these groups in terms of their membership and purpose, comparison between these organizations is nonetheless instructive, revealing significant commonalities. The long history of segregation between white and African-American women meant that many individual white women simply failed to understand racial segregation as a problem they shared with African-American women, and were therefore slow to take collective action against segregation.

On a structural level, study of the League and the AAUW also reveals the inherent weaknesses in the way in which women's associations sought to build national authority and influence from a series of local and state level groups. The delicate relationship between the homogeneity and autonomy of local branches and the policy-making authority of national leadership became strained as difference in approaches to the imperative of integration became apparent. While toleration for segregation in the southern states was widely unchallenged in the period before the Second World War, by 1945, it became increasingly difficult for groups that drew status and authority from their position as "national" associations to ignore segregation within their own branches. National leadership acknowledged the need to integrate their associations, and hoped, with some justification, that integration in northern branches would be a relatively smooth process. However, they were not unsympathetic to the position of branches in the South, where patterns of racial segregation were

far more rigid. In the southern states, integration of branch membership would have to overcome a more hostile community context, significant legal barriers to interracial association and the more ingrained racial habits of members.

The fifth chapter of this book focuses on the history of the National Women's Committee on Civil Rights (NWCCR), the coalition organization which emerged as a result of the July 1963 White House conference. It argues that the failure of the NWCCR to direct the authority of national women's associations towards improved race relations reflected the failure of many of these groups to effectively address the issue of race relations within their own associations in the period before 1963. It quickly became clear that the long-standing system of collaboration between the US government and leading women's associations could not be easily adapted to promote racial integration in a context when many members of the coalition were themselves struggling with the challenges posed by integration. The experience of the NWCCR painfully exposed the impossible tensions between the claims of women's associations to function as national groups, empowered to lobby the federal government on issues of interest to their organization and their country, and the need of these groups to, at the same time, maintain consensus and branch harmony throughout their associations. While other issues such as support for the United Nations had also exposed this tension, it was the highly fraught issue of race relations that brought the national-local relationship to breaking point. While the national leadership of women's associations were eager to associate themselves with the White House Conference, and were happy to issue general statements in favour of racial justice, they were reluctant to demand activism on the part of their membership.

The sixth chapter of this book examines the history of Wednesdays in Mississippi (WIMS), an ad hoc group which emerged largely from the embers of the shortcomings of the NWCCR. The leadership of WIMS, while they had been frustrated by the institutional sensitivities and sluggishness which had stymied the efforts of the NWCCR, were nonetheless convinced that the authority and energy of organized white women had an important role to play in ensuring the peaceful implementation of civil rights in the southern states. WIMS was a more radical effort to direct the activism of organized white women on behalf of racial justice. However, the strategies of WIMS were still predicated on the highly radicalized and gendered conceptions of authority and status which had dominated the ideological assumptions and strategy of the NWCCR. Moreover, the

decision to comply with the racial codes of Mississippi, while made for strategic rather than ideological reasons, nonetheless made inevitable a limited and limiting challenge to the racial status quo in Mississippi. Significantly, however, the leadership of WIMS promoted a self-reflective approach to their work and in the years following the Mississippi Freedom Summer they developed a more in-depth and radical approach to activism and race relations.

It is not the argument of this book that the challenge of racial integration was a phenomenon which was unique to American women's associations, or that their response to that challenge was any more admirable or worthy of condemnation than any other American group or institution. American women's associations were not alone in being forced into an engagement with the issue of integration and racial justice in the mid-1940s. Segregation had invaded every aspect of political, social, cultural and economic life in the United States, and institutional inertia or conservatism was not exclusive to women's associations. Histories of male-segregated and mixed associations reveal a similar story of racial exclusion and segregation. The American Bar Association, for example, excluded African-American lawyers before the early 1950s.[20] Fraternal societies usually followed racially segregated lines, some more explicitly than others, with the Modern Woodmen of America insisting in its membership rules that applicants had to be at least seven-eighths white blood with no "strain" of Negro blood.[21] African-Americans had long been excluded from Rotary Clubs, their inclusion being seen as a threat to the bonds of camaraderie that were the principal attraction of the club for white professional men.[22] The Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) had explicitly excluded African-Americans from membership in white associations since 1852, and did not dissolve their coloured work department and urge local branches to desegregate until 1946.[23]

One could make a strong argument that racial integration was a more difficult prospect for women's associations than for some other institutions. While action on behalf of racial integration was significantly less dangerous for white Americans than it was for African-American activists, it did nonetheless carry a risk. Despite the chivalrous rhetoric of the South, women found their gender did not protect them from the ire of those who were determined to keep the solid south solid in opposition to racial integration. White women who expressed support even for the most moderate and limited concessions to racial integration faced reprisals, ranging from loss of social status and relationships, economic pressure

on family members, to physical threats and violence. White women such as Juliette Hampton Morgan and Claudia Sanders faced economic and physical reprisals for daring to speak out against massive resistance.[24] The need to protect the purity of southern women had long served as a legitimization of white supremacy. As a result, "a white woman's critique," argued historian Timothy Tyson, "represented a unique threat to Jim Crow."[25] Efforts on the part of white women to involve themselves in racial work were seized upon by white segregationists, determined to tag any effort by white women to dismantle racial segregation as an expression of their approval of sexual relationships between white women and black men. The murder of Viola Liuzzo, killed by the KKK while driving an African-American man home after participating in the Selma march in 1965, powerfully reflected these connections between sex, race and gender. Danielle McGuire has documented the number of reactions to Liuzzo's murder that asserted that a white woman who was riding in a car with a black man was almost certainly involved in a sexual relationship with him.[26]

It is the contention of this monograph that the response of women's organizations to racial integration was more important than other groups, not because they responded to the challenge any more or less successfully than other American institutions, but because it revealed the particular dependence of these associations and the form of political authority which they exercised on frequently unspoken practices of racial exclusion. The legitimacy of American women's associations as a quasi-governmental form depended on their ability to translate private, predominately social networks into public authority, and to subsume regional and local difference within nationally cohesive structures. The demands of racial integration threatened this legitimacy. Some associations, notably the YWCA, engaged with the issue of integration, recognizing their commonality with African-American women, and the need to develop programs and policies to make their commitment to racial integration a living practice. Other women's associations, the focus of the case studies of this book, were painfully aware that the issue of racial integration threatened their organizational unity and national authority, and chose to ignore the issue, both within their own membership and in their communities. Many—indeed most—of the women in the associations included in this monograph did not fight for racial integration. Nor did they consider themselves part of the fight against it. Rather they sought to ignore it and to define it as outside their interest and concern. Their ability to do so for at least a decade after the ground-breaking *Brown* vs *Board of*

Education decision was testament to the often silent yet inexorable grasp of racial segregation over women's associations in the years before 1945. This monograph argues that the invidious influence of racial segregation on the history of women's associations hindered their ability to adjust as racial patterns of segregation were challenged in the post-war period. This failure reveals the limitations of sex-segregated women's voluntary associations as a method of shaping women's public activism.

Despite the insistence of American women's associations that they were non-partisan, and that their activism reflected their gendered, rather than their political interests, many commentators and historians have identified their position as being broadly progressive. Susan Lynn's 1992 study of the associational activities of middle-class American women in the period 1945–1960s, *Progressive Women in Conservative Times*, has explored how associations such as the YWCA, the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), the National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW) and others created a multitude of opportunities for their members to pursue social goals such as racial integration, peace and labor reform. Lynn argues that this position amounted to a "post-war progressive coalition" of voluntary associations. This coalition, she argues, served as a bridge between pre-war women activism and the "Civil Rights, anti-war, and feminist movements of the 1960s."[27] The existence of a bridge between these two periods of activism is unarguable, as is the contention that women's associations played an important role in sustaining activism during a challenging period. Lynn's work, as well as this monograph, demonstrates that women's associations frequently facilitated and supported individuals who undertook what was broadly understood at the time as "progressive" activism on race relations. Women's associations undoubtedly played an important role in nurturing the talents and activism of some exceptional women who became passionate and sincere campaigners for racial justice. Moreover, it is certainly the case that the post-war period was not devoid of women's interracial organizing and coalition building. Lynn has revealed in the groups she studied since meaningful efforts at working across racial divides. More radical groups made more strenuous efforts to work interracially; the Emma Lazarus Federation of Jewish Women's Clubs, for example, worked in close alliance with the African-American Group Sojourners for Truth and Justice, meeting with them regularly and making a financial constitution to their work.[28]

It is not the claim of this book that there was no interracial organizing between American women in the period before 1965, or that individual

examples of members of mainstream women's associations or particular branches working for a racial justice and integration cannot be found. Rather, it argues that as national institutions, mainstream American women's associations sought to avoid taking a position or any action on the issue of racial justice. Bringing together accounts of the ways in which women's associations dealt with the issue of racial integration exposes the way in which their authority rested on white privilege and racial exclusion. Existing historiography on the relationship between organized white women and race relations has generally focused on the activism of white women who embraced the goals of racial justice and became involved in interracial associations established specifically to work for the promotion of integration and an end to racial discrimination. It is the argument of this book that it is important that we study the impact of racial integration on American politics and society within a broader framework than just this focus on its advocates and activists. The post-war retreat from a progressive position has been explained by many historians of the period as a consequence of the growing power of anti-communism and its tactic of "red-baiting." Pro-labor, pro-pacifist and pro-civil rights positions that may have flourished in 1930s America, struggled to find space on a post-war political stage that saw such causes as indicative of a less-than-robust position on communism. This argument clearly has some weight; historians of pacifist, labor and civil rights organizations in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s can attest to the extent to which anti-communist zeal forced these groups into defensive and compromised positions. This explanation, however, does not completely explain the reluctance of mainstream American women's groups to engage with the issue of racial integration, as it became an increasingly pressing issue throughout the 1950s and 1960s. This book argues that the potential of white women's associations to serve as agents of improved race relations was hindered by their failure to address their own dependence on both the racially homogenous social and personal networks that underpinned their associations, and the racial and gendered nature of their own privileged positions of authority within their communities. The determination of white women's associations to avoid the issue of racial segregation in order to protect the harmony, influence and effectiveness of their organizations frequently served as a tacit endorsement of the racial status quo. Only in those instances where women made a deliberate effort to reflect on the structures, ideologies and patterns of exclusion and privileges that were fundamental to their groups was evolution possible.

Notes

1. Report on White House Conference on Civil Rights with Women's Organizations, 9 July 1963, Records of the Women's Bureau, Department of Labor, National Archives, Maryland (hereafter WB papers), box 19.
2. Directors of the National Women's Committee for Civil Rights to President Kennedy, October 1963, WB papers, box 19.
3. For an insightful analysis of the history of the relationship between liberalism and the left in the United States see Doug Rossinow, *Visions of Progress. The Left-Liberal tradition in America* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008). For an excellent example of both the networks of Popular Front Feminism and the way in which these networks were decimated in the 1950s see Landon R.Y. Storrs, "Red Scare Politics and the Suppression of Popular Front Feminism: The Loyalty Investigation of Mary Dublin Keyserling" *The Journal of American History* 90:2 (2003): 491–524.
4. See Helen Laville, *Cold War Women: The International Activities of American Women's Organizations* (Manchester and New York, Manchester University Press, 2002).
5. Jacqueline Castledine, *Cold War Progressives: Women's Interracial Organizing for Peace and Freedom* (Urbana, Chicago and Springfield, University of Illinois Press, 2012)8.
6. See R. Lieberman, "'Does that make peace a bad word?' American responses to the Communist Peace offensive 1949–50," *Peace and Change* 17:2 (April 1992) 198–228.
7. Memo to President – Subject Notes for meeting with women 9 July 1963. Papers of John F. Kennedy. Presidential Papers. White House Staff Files of Lee C. White. Civil Rights File, 1961–1963. Women's meeting with the President, 9 July 1963.
8. Sara Evans, *Personal Politics: The Roots of Women's Liberation in the Civil Rights Movement and the New Left* (New York, Random House, 1979).
9. See, for example, Theda Skocpol, *Diminished Democracy. From membership to management in American Civic Life,* (Norman, University of Oklahoma Press 2004), Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone. The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York, Simon & Schuster Ltd., 1999).

10. Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, 279.
11. Quoted in Kathryn Nasstrom, *Everybody's Grandmother and Nobody's Fool. Frances Freeborn Pauley and the Struggle for Social Justice.* (Ithica and London, Cornell University Press, 2000), 37.
12. One manifestation of a greater government role in legitimizing feminism and women's rights was itself an unintended consequence of the 1964 Civil Rights Act – the addition of "sex" to Title VII, prohibiting discrimination in employment on the basis of race and sex. See Carl M. Brauer, "Women Activists, Southern Conservatives and the Prohibition of Sex Discrimination in Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act", *Journal of Southern History* 49:1 (February 1983): 37–56. See also Cynthia Harrison, "A 'New Frontier' for women: The Public Policy of the Kennedy Administration," *The Journal of American History* 67:3 (December 1980): 630–646.
13. Evans, *Personal Politics.* Winifred Breines, *The Trouble Between us. An Uneasy History of White and Black Women in the Feminist Movement* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2006).
14. Historian Cynthia Harrison alleged that Equal Employment Commissioner Richard Graham urged both the AAUW and the League of Women Voters to respond to the example of Civil Rights associations and establish a comparable organization devoted to securing women's rights. After they refused, he encouraged Betty Friedan to establish what became NOW. Cynthia Harrison, *On Account of Sex: The Politics of Women's Issues 1945–1968* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1988), 193.
15. See Kate Dossett, *Bridging Race Divides: Black Nationalism, Feminism and Integration on the United States 1896–1935* (Gainesville, University Press of Florida, 2008), Helen Laville, "If the Time is not right, then it is your job to Ripen the time!" The Transformation of the YWCA in the USA from Segregated Association to Integrated Organization 1930–1965, *Women's History Review,* 15:3, (2006) 359–383, Nina Mjagkij and Margaret Spratt, (New York, New York University Press, 1997), Nancy Marie Robertson, *Christian Sisterhood, Race relations and the YWCA 1906–46* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2007).
16. Janice Leone, "Integrating the American Association of University Women 1946–1949," *The Historian* 51:3, (1989): 423–445,

Susan Levine, *Degrees of Equality. The American Association of University Women and the Challenge of Twentieth-Century Feminism* (Philadelphia, Temple University Press, 1995), Abigail Sara Lewis, *"The Barriers Breaking Love of God": the Multiracial Activism of the Young Women's Christian Association, 1940s to 1970s* (PhD Dissertation, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, 2008.) and "The Young Women's Christian Association's Multiracial Activism in the immediate Post-war Era," in *Freedom Rights: New Perspectives in the Civil Right Movement*, ed Danielle L. McGuire and John Dittmer (Lexington, University of Kentucky Press, 2012): 71–110, Nancy Marie Robertson, *Christian Sisterhood, Race Relations and the YWCA 1909–1946* (Urbana and Chicago, University of Illinois Press, 2007), Louise Young, *In the Public Interest: The League of Women Voters 1920–1970* (Connecticut, Greenwood Press, 1989).

17. Cherisse Jones Branch, *Crossing the Line: Women's Interracial Activism in South Carolina during and after World War II* (Gainsville, University Press of Florida, 2014).
18. Shannon L. Frystak, "'With all deliberate Speed': The Integration of the League of Women Voters of New Orleans, 1953–-1963," in *Searching for their places: Women in the South Across Four Centuries,* ed Thomas Appleton (Columbia, University of Missouri Press, 2003): 261–283.
19. Vivion Lenon Brewer, *The Embattled Ladies of Little Rock 1958–1963. The Struggle to Save Public Education at Central High,* (Fort Bragg California, Lost Coast Press, 1999), Dorothy Height, *Open Wide the Freedom Gates* (New York, Public Affairs, 2003), Sara Mitchell Parsons, *From Southern Wrongs to Civil Rights: The Memoir of a White Civil Rights Activist*, (Tuscaloosa, Alabama, University of Alabama Press, 2000), Kathryn L Nasstrom, *Everybody's Grandmother and Nobody's Fool: Frances Freeborn Pauley and the Struggle for Social Justice*. (Ithica and London, Cornell University Press, 2000).
20. See J. Clay Smith Jr., "The Black Bar Association and Civil Rights," *Creighton Law Review*, 15 (1982): 651–679.
21. See David T. Beito, *From Mutual Aid to the Welfare State. Fraternal Societies and Social Services 1890–1967.* (Chapel Hill and London, The University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 45.

22. Jeffrey A. Charles, *Service Clubs in American Society: Rotary, Kiwanis and Lions* (Urbana and Chicago, University of Illinois Press, 1993), 155.
23. Nina Mjagkij, *Light in the Darkness: African-Americans and the YMCA 1852–1946* (Lexington, University Press of Kentucky, 1994).
24. Timothy B. Tyson, "Dynamite and 'The Silent South': A Story from the Second Reconstruction in South Carolina, in *Jumpin" Jim Crow. Southern Politics from Civil War to Civil Rights*, eds Jane Dailey and Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore, (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2000): 275–297, and Mary Stanton, *Journey towards Justice. Juliette Hampton Morgan and the Montgomery Bus Boycott* (Athens and London, University of Georgia Press, 2006).
25. Timothy B. Tyson, "Dynamite and 'The Silent South,'" 285.
26. Danielle L. McGuire, *At the Dark End of the Street. Black Women, Rape and Resistance. A New History of the Civil Rights Movement from Rosa Parks to the Rise of Black Power.* (New York, Alfred A Knopf, 2010), 183.
27. Susan Lynn, *Progressive Women in Conservative Times: Radical Justice, Peace and Feminism 1945 to the 1960s* (New Brunswick, Rutgers University Press, 1992), 3.
28. See Joyce Anther, "Between Culture and Politics. The Emma Lazarus Federation of Jewish Women's Clubs and the Promulgation of Women's History 1944–1989," in *U.S. History as Women's History: New Feminist Essays.*, eds Linda K Kerber, Alice Kessler-Harris and Kathryn Kish Sklar (Chapel Hill, The University of North Carolina Press, 1995) and Erik McDuffie, *Sojourning for Freedom: Black Women, American Communism and the Making of Black Left Feminism* (Durham, Duke University Press, 2011).

CHAPTER 2

Women's Associations in the United States

The extent to which American women in the period before the extension of suffrage constructed a "separate sphere," which both justified the involvement of American women in public life and celebrated the positive values of sisterly bonds, has been well established. Women's membership in a plethora of voluntary associations including church groups, charitable associations and missions, educational improvement campaigns, prayer groups, book clubs, suffrage and temperance campaigns, abolitionist societies, settlement houses and social welfare organisations all facilitated significant activism within their local communities. When local branches combined to form national associations that in turn promoted and facilitated the establishment of further branches, the political, cultural and social capital of local women's sex-segregated groups expanded onto a national stage. Before the extension of suffrage, women's associations ameliorated the impact of women's formal exclusion from mainstream electoral activism, justifying and facilitating their forays into forms of publicly engaged "social housekeeping" through involvement in local and national campaigns on a wide range of issues. American women's associations successfully bridged the ideological and geographical spaces between women's domestic place and the public sphere, creating a nationally significant quasi-governmental force—one that operated outside mainstream electoral processes, but mimicked its forms and acquired space and legitimacy in public life. This dynamic sphere of women's activism had a significant impact on American politics, civic life, and social and cultural progress.[1]

H. Laville, *Organized White Women and the Challenge of Racial Integration, 1945-1965*, DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-49694-8_2

In the period immediately following the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920, it seemed to many observers that national American women's associations faced an inevitable decline. Ironically, the very act of having won the prize for which many of them had fought, and indeed, for which some of them had been specifically established, seemed likely to put them out of business. What after all was the purpose of a suffrage association for women, after women gained the vote? The National Women's Party (NWP), formed in 1916 as the militant wing of the Suffrage movement, answered this question by arguing that women's suffrage was but the first step on the journey towards full sexual equality, and threw their energies into campaigning for a further constitutional amendment to secure the full equality of American women.[2] The National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA), while disagreeing with the NWP that further legislation was necessary, or indeed would be advantageous for women, nonetheless saw the merits of continued associational activism. Between 1920 and 1921, the NAWSA transformed itself into the League of Women Voters (LWV), determined to educate newly enfranchised American women into the responsibilities and mechanics of voting. The LWV joined women's associations such as the American Association of University Women (AAUW), the National Consumers League, the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) and the Women's Trade Union to form the Women's Joint Congressional Committee (WJCC). The WJCC, while setting themselves firmly against the NWP's goal of constitutionally assured equality, nonetheless recognized the need for continuing women's sex-segregated organizing. While avoiding the suggestion that women needed to form themselves into their own political party along the lines of the NWP, sex-segregated women's associations nevertheless argued that they had a continuing role to play in the post-suffrage world, organizing and leveraging American women's votes in support of issues that promoted both the self-interest and altruistic concerns of their members. On behalf of their twelve million members, the WJCC lobbied the government to extend protections to women and children in the form of labor and health insurance laws.

The passage of the Sheppard-Towner Act in 1921, with its provision of funding for maternal and infant health, was widely heralded as evidence of the potential power and authority of women's associations acting in this way.[3] The success of the WJCC was, however, remarkably short-lived, with the Sheppard-Towner Act being repealed in June 1929. The failure to prevent its repeal was a significant setback for women's associations' claim

for legitimacy as a political force. Suspicious of the progressive aims of the WJCC, a coalition of conservative groups and politicians attacked the collective influence of women's associations as potentially subversive and left-leaning. A petition from a right-wing group, pointedly calling themselves "Women Patriots," was read into the US Congressional Record. The petition accused the associations of the WJCC of being at the heart of a network of subversion, determined on the sovietisation of American life.[4] Further anxiety over the influence of women's associations in American life came with the publication of the so-called spider-web chart, widely circulated in the American press. The chart, produced by an employee of the War Department in response to efforts of women's associations to reduce military spending, purported to show the complex connections between fifteen American women's organizations, and international pacifist and socialist groups.[5] The accusations in the spider-web chart reflected an anxiety, not only over the partisan politics of women's associations, but also over their undue influence over (by implication) credulous, overly sentimental women.

The repeal of the Sheppard-Towner Act and these accusations of undue influence and partisan subversion marked a significant setback for American women's associations as a political form. The claims of American women's associations to represent women's voice and activism in the public area in a way that spoke to gender identity and interest, rather than partisan politics, had met a skeptical, sometimes hostile audience. After a first flush of enthusiasm, membership of the LWV declined from 100,000 members in 1924 to 44,000 in 1934, as hopes that post-suffrage women's associations could play a significant role in national politics seemed to fade. While membership numbers and the national lobbying effectiveness of these groups may have stalled however, local and state-level activism continued, albeit in a geographically patchy form across the United States. This continued activism ensured that there was sufficient critical mass to slowly rebuild a national presence. Coalition with left-wing and communist groups, more publicly acceptable in the 1930s than it had been in the 1920s, allowed American women's groups to collaborate on projects working towards women's rights, labor rights, social and sometimes racial justice. Organizations such as the National Consumers League, founded and led by women, used female consumer lobbying and boycotts to pursue both the protection of the consumer from unsafe products and the promotion of minimum wages and better working conditions for workers.[6] Nascent national activism on the part of women's associations was supported by

the National Women's Bureau (WB) in the Department of Labor, who encouraged a relationship between organized American women and the federal government. This relationship grew substantially because of both New Deal programmes and then the mobilisation of the work force during the Second World War, as the government sought allies amongst the ranks of non-governmental actors to work in alliance with them on a range of social and economic programs. This relationship enabled American women's associations to claim a quasi-governmental legitimacy for their activism. Embracing a particularly American reverence for voluntary associations as a vital adjunct to electoral politics, women's associations demonstrated a willingness to work in collaboration with their government. In the period between 1929 and 1945, American women's associations established a framework for women's activism and a relationship with their government that left them poised to take advantage of the resurgence in membership that occurred after the Second World War

The post-war revival in membership in American women's associations was testament to their success in articulating a justification for women's activism in sex-segregated associations that roused a generation of women to the responsibilities of public activism, while avoiding a challenge to the dominant domestic ideology that asserted a woman's primary responsibility lay in the home. Offering themselves as an acceptable face of feminine public activism, whilst eschewing identification with either feminism or partisan politics, women's associations offered an escape from the "problem that has no name" even before Freidan's dark exposition of depression and purposelessness (*The Feminine Mystique*) had popularized the notion of domestic frustration in 1963. The potential negative impact of lives constrained within the home was one that American women's magazines had warned of years before Freidan's expose.[7] Membership in a local branch of a woman's association, however, offered an escape from this domestic drudgery, a chance to meet like-minded women and to exercise intellectual capacity. Rose Sparling, who joined the Montgomery LWV explained, "I was a housewife and I really needed that outside stimulus that I knew the League would offer."[8] A 1945 AAUW pamphlet explained that their study groups "grew out of a keenly felt need and antedated by many years the present enthusiasm for adult education. The early members of the Association were women of more-than-average intellectual vigour, as their hard-won diplomas attested, and they found little in the life of their communities to satisfy their hunger for learning or their sense of obligation to return to the community something of what they had learned in college…

[today] these study groups offer a means of bridging the gap between the intellectual pursuits of college life and the more humdrum duties which are apt to fall to their lot after college."[9]

Purely local women's groups who had no affiliation to national associations shared many of the "escape from the kitchen" benefits of local branches of national associations. A large number of American women's groups did not go much beyond a regulated expression of group friendship networks. The public library in Birmingham, Alabama, for example, holds the records of a plethora of literary, study and gardening groups available to Birmingham women. These groups included Amaranth club, Argus club, Aramatine club, Belvedere study club, Bud'n' bloom club, Cadmean Circle, Cleopatra club, Clinonian club, Cosmos club, Crepe Myrtle club, Glen Iris club, Highland book club, Home Arts club, Kenilworth club, Letitia club, Mathean club, Mother's club, Peter Pan club, Progressive study club and the West End Study club. These clubs largely focused on self-improvement, local civic improvement and social bonding. The Amaranth Club, founded in 1897, for example, described its purpose as being "to encourage intellectual development and to strengthen individual effort by organization." Essentially a social association, the rules specified the strict arrangements which would govern their meetings; "each member shall entertain Club during each series… refreshments are limited to one course, no wines to be served in any form."[10] Seeking group support for their intellectual development, study topics for the group in 1949–1950 included, "How America looks from Europe," "US policy towards Germany," "Communism in our Midst" and "Can science save the world?"[11] Interspersed between these topics were more light-hearted events; a January 1951 meeting, for example, looked at "The story of Fans through the Years."[12]

While American women could and did gain the positive benefits of sex-segregated association through their engagement with these kinds of purely local groups, the success of post-war national women's associations lay in their ability to create a connection between members of their branches in local communities and national politics. An AAUW 1948 pamphlet explained, "Through the American Association of University Women, college and university alumnae in a thousand communities are working together in a program that challenges their intelligence and makes use of their training – widening their own horizons, helping to build better communities, taking action on vital national and international programmes."[13] National women's associations promoted activism in women's groups not

just as a form of social interaction and intellectual development, but also as a way of exercising a grave responsibility. Anna Lord Strauss, President of the LWV between 1944 and 1950, while acknowledging that women "should not neglect the home" insisted that they had a responsibility to involve themselves in public affairs. Strauss went so far as to castigate full-time housewives who "flock to day time movies, play bridge all afternoon and listen to 'soap-operas' all day," as "shirkers." "If all citizens are on the job doing their duty," Strauss asserted, "we can avoid another war."[14] Mabel Newcomer, a stalwart of the AAUW similarly sought to downplay any tensions between women's private and public responsibilities, acknowledging in the Associations' *Journal,* "Many women feel that any participation in community affairs means corresponding neglect of their families. They make a virtue of their indifference and they fail to see that family and community welfare are as closely interwoven as the well-being of the community and the world."[15] In offering a space in which American women could escape the domestic drudgery, women's associations were careful to articulate this activity as a responsibility as much as a pleasure. Journals and speeches justified women's public participation and efforts to keep abreast of vital issues as a necessary obligation in a functioning democracy, and as the only way to avoid the calamities of another war, or the dire consequences of the atomic age.[16] One member of the AAUW in Parkville Missouri warned grimly, "We have a big job ahead of us. Briefly it is this – to keep ourselves informed on events that are of tremendous importance to our nation and our world, and then to use the knowledge thus gained in positive constructive action for the building of a world in which we may live in peace and security."[17]

As much recent scholarship has pointed out, the dearth of women's political activism in the 1940s and the 1950s because of the drive for domesticity has been somewhat overstated. The prevalence of the domestic ideal and the challenges facing women in direct participation in public life did not result in a mass retreat to the home and to the safe and benign form of socially legitimate activism promised by mainstream women's associations. Betty Friedan herself, as historian Daniel Horowitz has demonstrated, did not abandon her political life, retreating to the home until suddenly struck by the limitations of a domestic role in 1963.[18] Horowitz's work, as well as that of Jacqueline Castledine and Kate Weigand have disputed notions of the 1940s and the 1950s as a period devoid of female political activity. Their work has challenged the idea that all American women withdrew to suburban retreats and restricted

themselves to gentle forms of political activism, such as mainstream voluntary associations, that were careful not to challenge gender roles. Such a narrative, they argue, overlooks the strong tradition of labor and left-wing activism that connects the "Old Left" to the "New." Betty Friedan's own credentials as a stay-at-home housewife were shaky at best. Despite her own failure to acknowledge the extent to which her work as a labor activist and journalist influenced *The Feminine Mystique*, Daniel Horowitz has argued powerfully that Friedan's articulation of feminism owed at least as much to her early exposure to radical left-wing politics as it did to her experience in coffee mornings and car pool huddles.

Castledine similarly encourages historians to look beyond what she calls the three tropes which underpin the power of the narrative of women's containment in the post-war period: that this was an empty period in the history of women's activism, that the strength of anti-communism crushed any form of left-wing activism and that women's interracial organizing had little, if any success. Beyond these assumptions, Castledine demonstrates, lies a wealth of evidence of women's activism. Weigand's research has explored the activities of American women in the Communist party, demonstrating the vibrancy of this activism, notwithstanding the difficult context of Cold War anti-communism.[19] Erik McDuffie has explored the determination of African-American women to promulgate their own brand of left-wing activism, tracing a continuum of activism from the 1920s to the 1970s.[20] The continued work of women such as Eslanda Goode Robeson, Anne Braden, Kathryn Clarenbach, Shirley Graham Du Bois and Susan B. Anthony II was predicated on the interconnected nature of social justice, racial justice and pacifism. Working through organizations such as the Sojourners for Truth and Justice (STJ), the American Labor Party (ALP), the Civil Rights Congress (CRC), the Congress of American Women (CAW) and groups within the Progressive Party, the work of these women belies conventional wisdom on the activities of women in the post-war period. While acknowledging the impact of McCarthyism and anti-communism on left-wing, pacifist and interracial organizing, the work of these historians demonstrates significant continuities and the survival of these forms of engagement even thorough the worse periods of the red scare. Their history challenges narratives that present a second wave feminism and the New Left suddenly emerging in the 1960s into an America long bereft of any form of left-wing or radical activism.

For more mainstream, less politically identified women's associations, however, identification with what might be thought of as strongly

progressive causes was generally avoided. There was some crossover; Lena Madesin Phillips, founder and long-serving President of the General Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs (GFBPWC) ran as the Progressive Party candidate for Lieutenant Governor of Connecticut in 1948. It is notable, however, that she had to step down from her position with the GFBPWC to run for office, since her organization, like the LWV, insisted on a policy of non-partisanship from its leaders. For the majority of American women, radical or progressive activism of this nature was either ideologically unappealing or culturally and socially unthinkable. For most American women, the resurgence of mainstream, explicitly non-partisan, non-ideological associations offered an important pathway to public action which circumvented the dangerous and controversial political climate of the Cold War, offering a form of public engagement that seemed benign. While avoiding an overt identification with causes that might be labelled progressive or radical, the ideological position of the majority of American women's associations could nonetheless broadly be described as "liberal." As more right-wing critics would later complain, despite their much-vaunted non-partisan position, women's associations seemed to generally lean towards policies that promoted liberal internationalism abroad and strong governmental intervention in social and economic matters at home. More progressive positions were to be avoided, as women's associations sought, above all, to avoid controversy or positions which might be seen as political, rather than arising naturally from the gendered concerns of women for good governance, citizenship and protection of the vulnerable.

By the 1950s, significant numbers of women's clubs, even many of those who had once tended towards social functions and self-improvement, had morphed into significant semi-public institutions, capable of translating a loose concept of women's special interests and outlook onto a national stage. Historian Kathleen Laughlin has noted that by the 1950s, women's clubs could best be understood as bureaucratic institutions, noting that by 1945 the GFBPWC, the AAUW and the National Council of Jewish Women had all appointed full-time lobbyists at their Washington DC headquarters.[21] By 1945, the AAUW listed eleven staff members, including a General Director and a Financial Comptroller, as well as associates in Education, the Arts, International Relations, Social Studies, the Economic and Legal status of women, and a professional editor of the *Journal* and other publications.[22] Both the leaders and the members of national associations such as the AAUW and

the League in the post-war period took pride in their national prominence, their co-operation with federal government and their belief in their ability to contribute to national public policy. President of the LWV Anna Lord Strauss recalled that she was able to get an audience with President Truman remarkably easily, explaining, "It wasn't too hard to get an appointment either; you could often get it within three or four days of the time you asked for it. And he welcomed us because he knew we were a public interest group. We didn't have private axes to grind, and he wanted to know what we thought, and I think I'm not out of order when I say he had respect for the League of Women Voters."[23] President Eisenhower held a series of breakfast sessions with leaders of women's associations, who were each invited to tell the President about their association. Bertha Adkins, Executive Director of the Women's Division of the Republican National Committee and herself a member of the AAUW, organized these breakfast meetings, later explaining, "The breakfasts gave him, I think, an insight into the ways in which women's organized efforts were being used. Certainly it gave satisfaction to the heads of these women's organizations to be able to have this personal association with the President of the United States."[24]

Women's associations took great pride in reporting to their members the government connections of their leaders. The proceedings of the Sixteenth Biennial Conference of the South East Division of the AAUW, in Biloxi Mississippi in April 1954, reported on their President's recent conference with President Eisenhower. Describing the meeting as one in which their President, Susan Riley, could "report to the President the items on which American women had taken a stand," the report explained "[A]mong other things she advised the President that AAUW endorsed the educational section of the President's report to Congress, opposed the Bricker amendment, approved an extension of the Reciprocal Trade Agreements Act and encouraged the program of intercultural exchange."[25] This high-level access to national government was frequently represented by women's associations as an important part of their raison d'etre, ensuring that the voices of American women, regretfully so absent from mainstream politics, were nonetheless heard at the tables of power. Mary Donlon, a member of the Federation Business and Professional Women's Clubs, explained, "Women can sit at the tables where policy is formed only if women's organizations keep themselves strong and are determined that women shall be supported in the opportunity to speak for women and as people at policy councils."[26]

One measure of the status of women's associations was their access to political patronage, demonstrated by the appointment of their members to governmental and international positions. A 1948 AAUW pamphlet asserted, "The national organization frequently reminds public officials that well-qualified women are available for public service, and recommend them for appointment to important national and international bodies."[27] Working in coalition though the Committee on World Affairs, American women's associations lobbied to secure the appointment of American women—usually prominent members of their own associations—to international positions.[28] A career within women's associations provided prominent members of women's associations with an admirable CV in leadership, organization and political expertize. The journals of American women's associations celebrated the appointment of their members to national and international positions, such as Margaret Hickey, past President of the GFBPWC who was appointed to President Truman's panel to consider measures to strengthen the free world against communism, and Mabel Newcomer of the AAUW, appointed as a delegate at the Bretton Woods conference.[29] Anna Lord Strauss could boast an impressive array of government-appointed positions including posts to the President's Famine Emergency Committee, the Consumers Advisory Board to the OPA, Truman's Commission on Internal Security and Individuals Rights, and President Eisenhower's Commission on Education Beyond High School. In addition, Strauss took part in the State Department's Cultural Exchange program in Asia and was a member of the advisory board of President Eisenhower's Person-to-Person program.

The influence of individual associations and itheir ability to secure important positions for their members was increased by the custom of women's associations working in close collaboration with each other. The GFBPW legislation program dinner in 1950 included representatives of the AAUW, the LWV and the General Federation of Women's Clubs (GFWC), demonstrating the extent to which these organizations self-consciously understood their associations as part of a coalition.[30] It was common practice for women to hold multiple memberships of women's associations, leading to a tight clique of leadership and common interests. When the US government sought suggestions for a woman to serve as the US delegate to the UN Sub-commission on the Status of Women, the WB rallied their allies in women's associations to propose a candidate and block the efforts of the National Women's Party to secure an appointment who would favour international equal rights legislation.[31]

The WB coalition nomination, Dorothy Kenyon, not only had an enviable professional record as a lawyer and judge, and had served as an advisor to the League of Nations, but was also extensively networked within the women's associations' coalition. Aside from memberships in the kind of progressive, left-leaning associations that would later bring her to the attention of Joseph McCarthy, she could boast memberships in a host of more mainstream associations, including the LWV, the AAUW and the GFBPWC. Even across the boundaries of associations seemingly at odds with one another, American women seemed promiscuous in their associational affiliations. In an effort to get a consultative place on the US mission to the UN General Assembly in Paris in September 1948, Alice Morgan Wright urged the NWP President Alice Paul to remind Chester Williams, head of the US delegation, that Morgan Wright, beside her membership in the NWP, was also a member of the AAUW, the GFBPWC, Zonta International, the Women's Pan-Pacific Association and the Women in World Affairs Committee. Fellow NWP member Alice Parsons, who had successfully secured a place on the delegation was, Morgan Wright explained, going to represent the Pan-Pacific Associations, the National Council of Women, Women in World Affairs, Women United for United Nations and the Genocide Commission of the GFBPWC.[32]

The revival of women's associations in the post-war period depended on their ability to connect local civic interventions with this high-level national activism and access to political life. While local newspapers frequently reported the community-level work of women's associations on the social pages next to wedding announcements, there can be no doubt that the national work of women's associations was political in nature, with women's national bodies forming themselves into professional lobbying groups that worked in coalition with each other to secure access to national influence for their members. Voluntary membership groups such as the AAUW and the League served as "highways," to use political theorist Theda Skocpol's term, which connected their members to national public policy, giving members a sense of status and inclusion in national political life.[33] The relationship between local branches and national leadership, however, was complex and sometimes a fragile one. Historian Anne Firor Scott noted that one member of the LWV, who had worked in the national offices, believed that for many members, local concerns and agenda took priority over national issues, to the extent that there was a "gulf that separated what the national board thought the local units were doing and what they were really doing… [local work] was determined locally to a greater extent

than any but the most perceptive national leaders quite realized."[34] While taking pride in the activities and status of their national associations, many local branches reserved the right to disagree with the positions taken at the national level. Mary Swerson Miller has argued that the strong pro-United Nations stance of the LWV was particularly contentious. Miller explains: "Many national league positions were unpopular with the citizens in the State [Alabama] and public opposition to the LWVUS's United Nations and Foreign trade support was not uncommon. At times local leagues avoided publicising the national league's program items."[35]

The campaign against the poll tax demonstrates the complexity of the relationship between local branches and national associations. The poll tax, a fee charged to citizens who wished to register to vote, was a specifically Southern issue, being introduced into Florida, Alabama, Tennessee, Arkansas, Louisiana, Georgia, North and South Carolina, Virginia and Texas as part of a range of restrictions that aimed to disenfranchise African-American voters. The requirement for payment for voter registration also disenfranchised poor white voters, and had a significant impact on the number of registered women voters in these states. The Women's Division of the Democratic Party, hypothesizing that an increase in registered women voters would work to their advantage, launched an anti-poll tax campaign that focused on the detrimental impact of the tax on women voters. Others, however, saw anti-poll tax activism as mired in racial controversy. The Women's Division was told by the Party Chairman in no uncertain terms to stop its work on the poll tax, by order of the President. Roosevelt was allegedly concerned about the impact of party support for reform on southern Senators and Congressmen. Virginia Durr, who later became a prominent activist in the Civil Rights Movement, led the campaign against the poll tax, initially under the auspices of the Women's Division. When Durr asked First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt for support, Mrs. Roosevelt reported that the President told her he was not going to touch it "with a ten foot pole" and instructed her not to have any open part in the campaign.[36]

Durr doggedly continued her campaign, working as vice-chairman of a new group, the National Campaign against the Poll Tax. Hailing the fight against the poll tax as the "next stage" of the women's suffrage campaign, a number of women's associations also campaigned at a state level to challenge and overturn the tax. While some local branches of national women's associations threw themselves wholeheartedly into this campaign, national leadership, fearful of the impact of the racial politics of the issue,

were reluctant to commit their membership and national influence in support of anti-poll tax campaigns. Durr recalled that while the branches of established women's associations offered support and significant levels of activism, it proved impossible to get their national organizations involved. Durr complained that both the AAUW and the League of Women voters were overly bureaucratic and incapable of taking any action without first holding endless meetings. In 1941, the AAUW national committee agreed to consider national support for the Geyer anti-poll tax bill, but concluded that replies to their consultation had not indicated sufficient support of the bill. Historian Ronnie Podolefsky's research on the campaign reported that Durr complained that individuals and state divisions had "a personality of their own" and frequently worked on a local level for repeal, but that national leaders were "under pressure to drop certain issues in order to maintain cohesiveness within their organization."[37]

Despite these kinds of negotiations and differences within women's associations overall the local–national relationship was a remarkably successful one that facilitated the contribution of American women to public life on national and local levels. Effectively connecting the positive female activism of local networks to national and international influence, women's associations presented themselves as the post-war solution not only to women's individual isolation in their kitchens but also their collective absence from mainstream political life. In effect, American women's associations appropriated a quasi-governmental space, which mimicked the forms and practices of electoral politics. While American women's visibility in mainstream politics may have been paltry, the close relationship of their voluntary associations with government and the robust nature of their painstaking, sometimes laborious, democratic practices and structures created an alternative form of engagement. The emergence of women's associations as an influential quasi-official political force, operating outside the structures of mainstream politics, was not without its critics. Some saw the extent to which women's associations created an alternative to women's engagement in mainstream politics as an obstacle to women's full citizenship. The participation of women in American political life in the period between 1945 and 1965 was, by any measure, pitifully low. In 1951, there were only eight women in the House of Congress and one woman (Margaret Chase Smith) in the Senate. Despite their strong advocacy for women's increased role in public life, the strong and influential role of American women's voluntary associations may well have been responsible for holding women back from full entry into public life.

Dorothy McCullough Lee, who served as Mayor of Portland, Oregon, and was later appointed to the Subversive Activities Board by President Eisenhower, identified the existence of strong women's associations in the United States, as perhaps facilitating women's retreat from public life. "Too many women" she asserted, "have permitted themselves to become victims of their fears and inhibitions…we have not induced enough women who are leadership material to step out of the security of their organizations and as individuals to give their talents to the government."[38] The safe space offered by women's associations allowed American women a path to activism that did not fight against the ideological and instructional obstacles that faced women in American public life. While women's associations somewhat feebly asserted that they too wanted to see an increase in women in elected positions and decried the absence of women from political life, they were often forced to admit that their own success in gaining high-level access mitigated against this absence. Percy Lee, who served four consecutive terms as President of the League of Women Voters from 1950 to 1958, noted that while the vibrant voluntary sector was a benefit in American society, it did have an impact on women's entry into mainstream politics. "Invariably foreigners who visit the US and are interested in government" Lee noted, "ask why there aren't more women in public office." Lee argued, "our unique system of voluntary associations takes out of the hands of government many enterprises of a public character… I believe that this multitude of voluntary associations constitutes a tremendously important safeguard in American life…they do however, in a very real sense keep out of politics many worthy people."[39]

The resurgence of American women's associations in the post-war period was also a concern to those who were suspicious of the ideology and structure of these associations. Women's associations in the post-war period were subject to the same attacks that had had such a catastrophic impact in the 1920s. Those who believed that, despite their protestations of non-partisanship, the political activities of American women's associations were decidedly liberal were keen to denounce both the much-vaunted non-partisan position of women's associations and the claims of their leadership to represent and reflect, rather than to direct and dictate, the views of their members. Left-leaning women's associations, preaching liberalism to their followers, some asserted, were as much of a menace in the post-war period as their previous incarnations had been in the 1920s. These anxieties were amplified by concerns that the structures of American women's associations facilitated the power of an undemocratic

leadership, who had the ability to use their associations to disseminate propaganda throughout the far reaches of their organizational network of gullible women.

While American women's associations enthusiastically trumpeted their influence with, and access to, their government, at the same time, they gave their government selective access to their associations. The work that national women's associations performed as clearing houses, distributing material on issues of national and international importance was carefully framed as a non-partisan effort to educate, inform and stimulate debate, thus encouraging women to play their part as engaged citizens. A National Council of Women pamphlet in 1947, for example, explained that one of its functions was to serve as a clearing house for information on issues of national importance. "Through state councils and member organizations," the NCW declared, it would "develop a program to alert women to the serious problems affecting our democratic way of life. It will translate these national and international problems in terms of their effect on the average American Home."[40] The LWV served a similar role, working to communicate government plans and policy to their members and to the wider community. The League produced and distributed over a million pieces of literature about the Dumbarton Oaks proposals on international governance for distribution.[41] The League's background paper on the subsequent Bretton Woods Agreement was even inserted into the Congressional record as an exemplary exercise in public education on a complicated monetary issue.[42]

The use of women's associations to distribute information and to foster discussion on US foreign policy caused some concerns, both on the grounds of the perceived liberal international bias of many women's associations and because of anxieties around the level of authority and influence held by the leaders of these associations over their members. In October 1949, the *Chicago Daily Tribute* ran an editorial entitled "Women, Guided and Misguided" which noted that the left-wing Congress of American Women (CAW) had been listed by The House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC) as a communist front. The editorial argued, "A women's organization which is so blatantly communist as this is unlikely to mislead many American women" but warned that the real threat lay elsewhere. "More pernicious in their effects upon the thinking and political action of women," editorialized the *Tribune*, "are the numerous 'respectable' organizations with mass membership which are cunningly manipulated by a tight hierarchy of

national leaders."[43] Conservative or right-wing critics in the United States were quick to revive suspicions about the undue influence of the leaders of women's associations and their left-wing tendencies, first raised in the spider-web chart of 1920. In 1949, Lucille Cardin Crain and Anne Burrows Hamilton produced a supplement for the conservative magazine *American Affairs* adroitly titled "Packaged Thinking for Women." Focusing on the Women's Joint Congressional Committee, the supplement warned, "At briefing seminars the appropriate departments of government will sell their pet schemes to selected groups of women. Those who receive the official word pass it down thru the pyramidal structure of women's organizations till it is finally received by the millions of members at its base." Crain and Hamilton urged grassroots members to free themselves from the shackles of national control, suggesting, "local branches [should] insist on decentralization so that they will free themselves from a national leadership that controls their thoughts and actions."[44] The phrase "packaged thinking" quickly gained currency as a shorthand for the kind of lobbying and "representation" that American women's associations purported to offer. National Republican Committee member Alma Schneider warned her audience at the Weld County Republican women's club in April 1950 against "the growing tendency of American women to blindly accept thru their various organizations … 'packaged thinking'… thought-forming propaganda issued to women's clubs along with requests that members write their Congressman."[45]

Accusations that the leadership of American women's associations claimed to be representing groups that they were in fact brainwashing came not just from outside women's associations but also from within their own ranks. Occasional disputes between national leadership and local membership, accompanied by evidence of branch membership's rebellion from the national position, stoked concerns within women's associations that their leadership was misleading and misrepresenting their membership. In 1954, League President Percy Lee sent a telegram to Secretary of State Dulles assuring him of the League's support in his dispute with Senator McCarthy over Red China. The telegram promoted a furious response from some League members in McCarthy's home state of Wisconsin, with one branch member proposing that the League refrain from engagement in politics and limit itself to voter services. The *Waukesha Daily Freeman* editorialized disapprovingly, "In their zeal to make the League a power in politics rather than an observer and a student of politics, many who head

the national and state organizations, have fallen into the practice of promising partisan support of a multitude of issues."[46]

The El Paso branch of the AAUW also objected to the use of their membership as a political lobbying force. The branch used debate over the national position on racial policies on membership to launch an attack on what it saw as significant failings of the branch/national relationship. A letter from the El Paso branch, circulated to all other AAUW branches, singled out a Congressional hearing on the extension of the Office of Price Administration, in which Carolyn Ware (chair of the AAUW's Social Studies Committee) claimed to be speaking on behalf of 25 women's organizations with a combined membership of thirty million women. The El Paso branch asserted that 99% of these thirty million women had probably never heard of the bill, let alone supported a particular stance on it. While the position of national leadership might appear to be "grasping for power," the El Paso branch offered an insightful analysis of the precarious nature of the authority of the leaders of American women's associations:

> Most women who hold national officers are exceptional women, leaders in their fields … They are in a position to see things which need to be done, and they realise that strength is found in numbers, especially in politics in a democracy. They become enthusiastic and feeling that if women get together they can do miracles, they decide to take their ideas to women's organizations and get their backing. It is only natural to interpret the silence which meets their enthusiastic plans as meaning consent, but often this silence is not due to consent but to lack of understanding, or interest, or simply lack of time to devote to working on anything but three meals a day, family and a house… to the 94% [of members] clubs are social affairs not to be taken seriously … No AAUW national committee member or officers can truthfully say she represents 100,000 members on problems about which, to be charitable, only 50,00 have ever heard and even less know the stance the AAUW has taken."[47]

It is testimony to the influence and authority of women's associations as a force in the post-war period that they were able to withstand these criticisms. Even more impressive was their ability to withstand the pressures of McCarthyism and anti-communist hysteria, which significantly weakened so many American institutions in the early Cold War. The liberal internationalism of American women's associations certainly made them vulnerable to accusation of communist influence or sympathies. Given the political anxieties attached to the political gullibility of organized women,

it was inevitable that American women's associations would come under the spotlight. Definitely left-leaning women's associations, such as CAW, felt the full force of anti-communist persecution. The subject of a 1949 HUAC report, which explored the links between the Congress and the Soviet-supported Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF), CAW was unable to withstand the pressure of anti-communist attacks. Forced to register as an enemy agent, the organization had collapsed by 1950.[48] Groups where the connection to communism was less direct but who were brought to the attention of HUAC and its sympathisers as a result of their liberal, international or pacifist goals also struggled to withstand the pressures of anti-communism. The League of Women Shoppers (LWS), for example, formed in 1935 to harness the consumer power of American women on behalf of fair treatment of labor, was forced to dissolve in 1949 after it was named as a communist front organization. Membership in associations that had been seen in the 1930s as relatively benign groups was used in the late 1940s to attack several women government employees who had been members of the LWS and were associated with progressive, Popular Front or New Deal politics.[49] As the historian Landon R.Y. Storrs has demonstrated, women's groups who participated most actively in Popular Front coalitions, such as those working for pacifist, labor or consumer causes, found it most difficult to withstand the onslaught of anti-communist pressure in the post-war period.

Mainstream women's associations, particularly those who had an established place in the coalition of organizations that regularly worked in partnership with the government, fared better. The willingness of many women's associations to take a strong position of support for Cold War foreign policy enabled them to avoid the kind of pressures brought to bear on former allies who were less willing to identify as Cold Warriors.[50] Inevitably, there were attacks on both women's associations and on individual members, but as a rule, mainstream women's associations were able to withstand these attacks, and mount a defence of their right to support civil liberties. Even before anti-communism had become entrenched in American politics and society, the YWCA found itself under attack in 1945, with the release of the charmingly titled, "Behind the Lace Curtains of the YWCA." This pamphlet, written by Joseph Kamp, a one-man band of anti-communist passion, pointed to what he saw as telling signs of the YWCA's communist sympathies, including their National Board's 1936 decision to support the Scottsboro Boys, a group of African-American men sentenced to death for the alleged rape of two white women in Alabama. Further

evidence of the communist sympathies of the YWCA, Kamp alleged, could be found in "YWCA booklets and pamphlets, hymn books and prayer books, magazines and newsletters, in most of which the writings of Communist authors are recommended and advertised." The musical preference of the YWCA was equally suspect, as YWCA song sheets and songbooks included "the works of outstanding Communists – Langston Hughes, Earl Robinson, Woody Guthrie, Anna Louise Strong."[51]

When the YWCA grew increasingly vocal in its support for racial integration throughout the 1950s and the 1960s, accusations of communist subversion grew apace. As scholars such as Amy Swerdlow have noted, attempts by women's associations to work interracially and promote the cause of racial justice made them a target for anti-communist campaigns. Accusations by Southern segregationists that campaigns for racial integration were part of a communist conspiracy proved an effective method of opposing integration. "A recurrent theme coming out of the South," Jane Cassels Record argued in 1957, "describes desegregation as part of a gigantic communist scheme to subvert to American way of life."[52] Attacks on the CAW, as well as on individuals such as Virginia Durr and Anne Braden, demonstrate that white women who attempted to work alongside African-American women, or in campaigns for racial justice, were subject to accusations of being communist sympathisers.[53] The impact of these accusations on the YWCA was, however, minimal. The YWCA made public statements explaining that its policy with regard to communism was one of implacable opposition. "The YWCA is unalterably opposed to communism," it explained in 1953. "[our] Christian purpose commits the association to fight totalitarianism in any form and to work actively to safeguard and support democratic principles."[54]

The League similarly seemed well able to defend itself from accusations of being communist sympathisers. In 1947, studio boss Walt Disney's testimony to the House Committee on Un-American activities accused the League of Women Voters of being a communist organisation. Disney was forced to clarify his position, sending a telegram to HUAC carefully explaining, "My testimony referred to the year 1941 at which time several women represented themselves as being from the League of Women Voters. I want you to know I had no intention of criticizing the League of Women Voters as it is now."[55] A measure of the confidence of the League in its ability to withstand the fire of the anti-communist crusade was its decision to launch its Freedom Agenda campaign in 1954. The Freedom Agenda was a nation-wide educational campaign, designed to

stimulate discussions about the nature of individual liberty in American life. The League explained that the program would encourage citizens to "explore the problem of how to preserve our national security without sacrificing individual liberties."[56] The program did attract some criticism. The Un-American activities committee of the Westchester Country American Legion attacked some of the pamphlets distributed under the auspices of the program as being "designed to delude the public into believing that communism is a red herring," and the National Executive Committee of the Legion called on the League to disown the pamphlets.[57] The League was determined to do no such thing, and was confident that its reputation would make it the victor in any show-down with the Legion. League President Percy Lee issued a statement stoutly defending the program, explaining, "Believing as it does in the principle of free speech and free examination of all ideas …[the League] will not yield to intimidation or false charges."[58] The national mood seemed minded to back the League over the Legion in this spat. The *Washington Post* mocked the American Legion accusations, accusing them of exhuming Mrs. Catt, Jane Addams and Julia Lanthrop in order to accuse them of having "communist front records."[59] Tipping their hat to the League's formidable reputation, the *Spartanburg Herald* asked, "how thick-headed can one get? … The Legion heads should have known better than to do battle with an organized group of American women." The *Herald* opined, "they have insinuated that the Agenda handbooks are designed to subvert the mind. But no-one has found any evidence to support this. The reputation of the League itself makes this insinuation absurd."[60]

In March 1950, Dorothy Kenyon was named by Senator McCarthy as a communist sympathiser. Kenyon, a promiscuous joiner, had been a member of groups such as the American Committee for Democracy and Intellectual Freedom, the American Youth Congress, the Council for Pan-American Democracy, the American Civil Liberties Union and the National Council of American-Soviet Friendship, as well as the League of Women Shoppers. Kenyon, a stalwart of mainstream women's associations, vehemently denied the accusations, and was warmly supported by her colleagues in groups such as the AAUW and the League, many of whom had worked tirelessly to secure her appointment as the US representative on the Sub-commission on the Status of Women at the UN. The willingness of the AAUW to defend Kenyon (and Esther Brunauer, another member of the AAUW, also named by McCarthy) reflected their distaste for what they saw as the anti-democratic ideologies and practices of

McCarthyism.[61] The AAUW's Board of Directors issued a strong statement in support of Kenyon. Admitting that the hysteria of anti-communism had meant that the AAUW had for too long "sat back, more or less paralyzed," the AAUW determinedly asserted that the issue was now clear. Identifying communism and communist sympathisers as "the direct threat," the AAUW nonetheless argued "the indirect threat lies in what fear of communism may lead us to do to ourselves. We must not become like the thing we profess to hate."[62] As would become almost painfully familiar in the post-war period, the AAUW included in its defense of civil liberties an explanation of why this issue was of particular concern to the university-educated woman, explaining, "As educated women we should be able to distinguish between the truth and the half-truth, to spot the non-sequitur, the fake dilemmas and the emotion-loaded words of the rabble rouser."[63] The League and the AAUW took active stances in efforts to restrain anti-communism. In 1955, League President Percy Lee testified against what she saw as Senator McCarthy's abuse of Congressional investigations at a Senate sub-committee on constitutional rights. While the AAUW mounted a defence of members such as Kenyon and Brunauer, its members were not immune to anxiety over communist influence. Dr. Kathryn McHale, who had served as the General Director of the AAUW since 1929, resigned in 1950 in order to serve at the invitation of President Truman on his Subversive Activities Control Board, where she was a determined advocate of the need for rigor in seeking out communist influence.

In general, the reputation of American women's associations for their housewifely activism, maternal concern, non-partisan aloofness and political probity allowed them to evade many of the attacks that beleaguered other institutions in this period. The same HUAC report which condemned the Congress of American Women, far from seeking to "red tag" other women's associations through the process of guilt by association, instead specifically disassociated the CAW from more established American women's associations. The report painstakingly listed those women's groups it considered legitimate and authentic. "This member of the Communist solar system of front organizations," the report explained, "did not stem from any demand emanating from such long-established women's groups as the American Association of University Women, American Legion Auxiliary, the National Council of Catholic Women, the Daughters of the American Revolution, the General Federation of Women's Clubs, Hadassah, National Federation of Business and Professional Women's

Clubs, the Women's National Democratic Club, the Women's National Republican Club, the National Council of Jewish Women, the National Council of Negro Women, Inc., the National League of Women Voters of the United States, the Veterans of Foreign Wars Ladies Auxiliary, the National League of American Pen Women, or the Young Women's Christian Association."[64]

American women's associations were largely able to avoid the destructive consequences of McCarthyism, and to serve as broadly liberal institutions, embracing the causes of internationalism, good government and the protections of civil liberties. One increasingly pressing and urgent issue, however, was conspicuous by its absence. While the national conventions of women's associations paid lip service to the ethical imperative of racial justice and desegregation, with the notable exception of the YWCA, women's associations remained largely racially segregated and maintained a tactical silence on the issue of racial integration in American life. In the same period when women's associations were making a powerful case which celebrated their role in American life as the representative voice of American women, their supressed history of segregation and racial exclusivity was threatening to spill over into ugly and self-destructive debates which jeopordized the fragile coalition between branches and national leadership at the centre of their authority. White privilege and racial exclusivity was more than an inconvenient and trivial detail in the historical development of American women's associations. It was at the heart of their practices, authority and cohesion.

Racial segregation in American women's associations has a long history. In October 1920, Charlotte Hawkins Brown was travelling on a railroad car through Tennessee on her way to give an address at a women's conference organized under the auspices of the Commission on Interracial Co-operation (CIC). One of four prominent African-American women invited to address the meeting, Brown was a prominent African-American educationalist and clubwoman, an influential member of associations such as the North Carolina Federation of Colored Women's Clubs, the National Council of the Colored Women's Clubs, the International Council for Women of the Darker Races and the YWCA. Despite this impressive résumé of affiliations and her position as an African-American educator, Brown was subject to the inflexible racial segregation that prevailed in the Southern states in 1920. On her way to the CIC conference, Brown was accosted by a group of white men and forced to leave the Pullman carriage of her train and take a place in the Jim Crow carriage. Much

to her chagrin, as Brown was forcibly marched to the segregated coach, she passed several Southern white women, she noted bitterly, "passing for Christians," who were also on their way to attend the same meeting and to listen to her address.[65] In her speech to the conference, Brown was in no mood for compromise or moderation and delivered an impassioned complaint about the lack of respect for the African-American women of the South. In a speech that focused largely on the failure of white women to take decisive action against lynching, Brown made clear her frustration at the failure of women's clubwomen members to make common cause with their African-American sisters. "We have begun to feel that you are not, after all, interested in us, and I am going still further. The Negro women of the South lay everything that happens to the members of her race at the door of the Southern white woman."[66]

Brown's outrage spoke to the profound divisions between white and African-American women that were frequently exacerbated, rather than ameliorated, by patterns and practices of American women's associations. Some women's associations, particularly religiously based associations, had made some attempts towards interracial organizing amongst women. In 1919, the Women's Missionary Council, for example, sent two white observers to a conference of African-American women at the African-American Tuskegee College. Throughout the 1920s, the CIC developed interracial women's committees throughout the South, calling for the greater involvement of white women in the issue of racial injustice in the South; historian Gerda Lerner estimates that by 1929, there were over 800 county-level interracial committees in the Southern states.[67] The CIC women's division was, for its time, remarkable in its level of interracial interactions and membership. The six-woman membership of the Advisory Committee for the women's work division contained three white women and three African-American women, and the department was able to attract the involvement of influential African-American women such as Mary McLeod Bethune of the Federation of Colored Women's Clubs and Lugenia Burns Hope of the YWCA. As Alice G. Knotts has pointed out, "the roster of black leaders reads like a *Who's Who* listing."[68] Despite the participation of these activist women, this first substantial effort at women's interracial organizing was marked by timidity and inherent conservatism on the part of white women. The regional committees the women's division fostered produced sporadic and unconvincing results. Like its parent body, the women's division of the CIC frequently seemed to

see the act of interracial meeting as an end unto itself and failed to devise concrete programs of action. Where programs emerged, they were designed to promote arrangements in the South that would make African-Americans slightly more equal, but no less separate.

These efforts were the exception rather than the rule in American women's associations. Even where white women were brought to see the need for their intervention of issues of racial injustice—most notably on the issue of lynching—their activism rarely served to promote interracial activism or a more comprehensive understanding on the part of women of the broader experience or impact of racial segregation. The Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching (ASWPL), founded in 1930 by Jessie Daniel Ames, is an example of the limited nature of organized white women's intervention into racial issues. Ames stressed that the ASWPL was not an interracial movement, but rather a group of Southern white women concerned about the observance of the law.[69] At the centre of the ASWPL strategy for opposing lynching was the premise that a practice carried out in the name of the protection of white Southern womanhood could only be defeated if representatives of white Southern womanhood themselves rejected that protection. This strategic position, while powerful and indeed subversive in its own right, had consequences for the direction of the ASPWL. Specifically, it dictated that the ASWPL worked as a segregated, all-white association, which strenuously distanced itself from any suggestion that in attacking lynching, it was attacking segregation and the separation of the races in the South. Ames always maintained links with African-American women members of the CIC, who were invited to attend the ASWPL's annual meetings. This largely symbolic inclusion of African-American women, however, did not translate into any action that would allow them to take any meaningful role in the direction of ASWPL's work. As Cherisse Renee Jones argues, "[t]he ASWPL welcomed black women's prayers for its campaign, but it never welcomed black women as members."[70] The "Southern Women" alluded to in the title of the association were clearly white women, and white women only. Southern African-American women were excluded not only from the Association but also by implication, from the category "Southern women."

Both at the local community level, and in the subsequent organization of state and national women's associations, racial segregation dominated the landscape of women's associational efforts before 1945. To a certain extent, racial segregation within the branches of women's

associations reflected factors external to the associations themselves. Racial segregation in women's associations, as in so many aspects of American life before 1945, reflected both legal constraints and community practices. The possibilities for women's interracial organizing were severely curtailed by the existence of a plethora of laws preventing meetings between people of different races across the Southern states. The Montgomery Alabama City Code, for example, declared, "It shall be unlawful to conduct a restaurant or other place for the serving of food in the city at which white and colored people are served in the same room, unless such white and colored people are effectively separated by a solid partition extending from the floor upward to a distance of seven feet or higher, and unless a separate entrance from the street is provided for each compartment."[71] Such rigid regulations made public meetings between African-American and white women almost impossible.

The different needs and strategies available to white and African-American women also contributed to the development of segregated groups. The establishment and development of community-level groups was driven by women who sought to band together in their communities to address both the specific interests and problems of their members, and the particular needs of their local community.[72] Local women's groups followed lines of segregation not only as a result of the racially homogeneous formal and informal relationships between women on which community groups depended, but also as a consequence of the different problems and opportunities available to different racial groups. Linda Gordon has demonstrated that women's welfare activism in the period 1890–1945 was ideologically and strategically divided along racial lines as a result of the very different political realities of different racial groups; white women's groups, as a result of their political influence and access to governing authorities, developed plans which promoted government programs and intervention. African-American women, who had less access to mainstream and electoral political influence, developed programs based on principles of private institutional building and community self-help.[73] It is important to acknowledge the authenticity and independent genealogy of African-American women's groups, and the extent to which segregation within women's association was a reflection of the roots of local activism within communities that were themselves racially segregated. Stephanie Shaw has convincingly demonstrated the extent to which African-American women's organizing drew from a long tradition of mutual association, community activism and self-help.[74] Rather than seeing black women's

associations merely as an imitation of white women's clubs or as a forced response to the exclusion of black women from white women's groups, Shaw asserts that black women's associations were an authentic response to the particular problems facing black women. Their associations developed in relation to both the specific strengths of black women and of the weaknesses of a politically powerless community.

While these external factors were certainly a factor in the development of racially segregated women's associations, they should not lead us to overlook the preference for racial segregation amongst the membership—and in particular the white membership—of these associations. Membership in women's associations reflected not just a philanthropic desire to improve local moral, economic, physical or social landscapes but also a social impulse towards intimacy, companionship and social bonding. Women's associations frequently sought to strengthen the bonds of what Anne Firor Scott calls "homophily," by which she means "sociability with women of their own class or cast of mind."[75] Racial homophily was an obvious part of the sociability of women's associations. White women sought sisterhood with women of their own kind, and most would have found interracial practices within their community groups an aberration in lives that were otherwise strictly segregated.

The question of racial segregation in women's associations took on a new aspect as community groups banded together to form national associations. While the impulse towards national federations within women's associations served an important function in creating national prestige and authority for women's associations, it threw up a slew of troubling questions about the place of segregation within national associations and immediately problematized the relationship between branch autonomy and national authority. Would African-American groups band together exclusively with other African-American associations to form their own national associations, while white women's groups banded together to create exclusively white associations? Or would African-American groups and white groups join together in national federations which were segregated at the branch level, but integrated as national associations, forming hybrid segregated/integrated institutions? Could a national women's association thus reflect community practices of racial segregation while at the same time operating as an integrated national association of African-American and white women? Finally, was the issue of interracial membership a matter for branches or for the national associations? Could an all-white branch in the North, for example, decide to admit African-American women to

membership of their group, thus effectively making the national association an integrated one, potentially against the wishes of other members who preferred their national association to be segregated throughout?

In practice, with the notable exception of the YWCA, the process of building national women's associations rarely resulted in hybrid segregated local branches/integrated national association. Instead, American women's national associations in the period before 1945 were overwhelming racially segregated throughout their entire association. The process by which national women's associations became constituted as racially exclusive was driven by the willingness of Northern women to acquiescence to the determination of Southern women to maintain segregation. The WCTU, the GFWC and the NAWSA, argues historian Mary Jane Smith, all took strategic decisions to ignore the concerns of African-American women in favour of solidarity with Southern white women.[76] Prominent African-American journalist and activist Josephine St Pierre Ruffin, President of the Women's Era Club in Boston, believed that Southern white women were tireless in their efforts to exclude African-American women from any kind of participation in national associations. Addressing the first National conference of Black women's clubs in Boston, July 1895, Ruffin told attendees, "Years after years, Southern [white] women have protested against the admission of colored women into any organization on the ground of the immorality of our women."[77]

Certainly Ruffin's own experience with the GFWC illustrates tensions between Southern and Northern branches over the question of racially integrated membership. At the biennial conference of the GFWC in 1900, Ruffin demanded that she be allowed to take a seat. As the delegate of the Women's Era Club, an African-American women's association that had received accreditation within the national GFWC, Ruffin asserted that she had every right to attend the conference. GFWC President Rebecca Lowe was forced to admit she had accidentally accredited the Women's Era Club without realising it was for African-American women. A heated debate ensued within the GFWC, with Southern clubs, led by the Georgia State Federation, demanding not only that the Women's Era club be expelled but also that the federation pass a regulation explicitly denying accreditation to any African-American branches in the future. In a demonstration of the range of opinions on race within the Federation, some Northern clubs, led by the Massachusetts State Federation, insisted that the national federation do no such thing, and demanded the reinstatement of the Women's Era club.

At the 1900 convention of the GFWC, African-American educator Mary Church Terrell, attending in her capacity as President of the National Association of Colored Women (NACW), was denied even the courtesy of being allowed to bring official greetings from her association to the convention, as several southern white members of the GFWC objected and threatened to resign if she were allowed to address the convention.[78] Desperate to find a compromise in this tussle between branches, state autonomy and national authority, the National Board ruled at the 1902 convention that state federations would be allowed to screen clubs who wanted to apply for membership in the federation, and thus determine a racial policy on membership within their state-level federations. Final approval on national accreditation, however, rested with the national board, which had the authority to block an application even if it had been approved by the state federation and, conversely to approve national membership for a club who had been denied accreditation at the state federation level. This system was revised in 1922, when all clubs holding memberships in state federations were automatically granted membership in the national federation. As Jan Dolittle Wilson has argued, this move owed less to a commitment to racial integration, however, and more to the recognition that the compromise solution was complex and cumbersome.[79]

The antipathy and hostility of white women's groups to African-American women's groups was evident in all forms of women's organizations. The suffrage movement illustrated a similar willingness on the part of white women to prioritize their own prejudices and preferences above sisterhood with African-American women. As historians such as Rosalyn Terborg-Penn and Marjorie Spruill Wheeler have argued, white women's suffrage associations frequently colluded with segregation and racial injustice, utilizing racist discourses and strategies in order to convince the Southern states that female suffrage, far from opening the door to black suffrage, would serve as a bulwark against the entry of African-Americans into electoral politics. Efforts of African-American women to participate in the campaign for female suffrage met with a lukewarm and sometimes hostile reception from white women's suffrage associations. At the 1913 Washington DC suffrage parade, the forty-one African-American women who participated were treated differently to their white counterparts, and asked to march at the back of the parade. When African-American clubwoman and crusading journalist Ida B. Wells-Barnett tried to get support from the white members of the Illinois delegation to contest this decision, she found that white women were reluctant to risk the goal of female

suffrage by challenging Southern racial mores.[80] White women's suffrage associations repeatedly demonstrated their willingness to abandon any notion of interracial co-operation in order to mollify Southern branches. In her review of the racial politics in the struggle for female suffrage, Rosalyn Terborg-Penn has argued that the use of racism created "a cleavage in the women's movement that would be difficult to mend once the Nineteenth Amendment was ratified."[81]

The history of the WCTU illustrates the same internal struggles over racial policies. In the North, a number of unions accepted African-American women as members, but in the South, separate unions formed. When twenty-three African-American women in Georgia sought affiliation with the national union, they wrote to ask WCTU President Frances Willard if "black sheep must climb up some other way?" Willard's answer suggested the reluctance of national federations to take a position on racial integration that might alienate their white branch members. Willard opined, "The National could not make laws for a state. If the colored women of Georgia will meet and form a Women's Christian Temperance Union for the State it is my opinion that their offices and delegation will have the same representation in the National."[82] Willard's solution to the quandary of interracial work was to permit the development of segregated branches within a national association. Such a compromise was unwelcome to African-American women, who understood branch-level segregation as an expression of toleration of racial segregation by national associations, and as a humiliating expression of their lesser status. Historian Alison Parker sees the efforts of African-American women in the WCTU such as Frances Watkins Harper, Mary Lynch, Lucy Thurman and Emma Ray as a serious attempt at interracial co-operation. The unwillingness of white members of the WCTU to engage with African-Americans on terms of equality stymied these attempts, however, and by the late 1890s, influential women such as Frances Harper were choosing to put their efforts into the newly formed NACW, and to press for social reform through segregated associations.[83]

The development of racially exclusive women's associations was only rarely the result of an explicit national ban on African-American membership across the national association. The absence of an unequivocal ban on integration, however, should not deflect from the intent behind the processes by which white women sought to exclude African-American women from their associations. The lack of welcome for African-American women, and a willingness to consider the preferences of white Southern

women as more important than those of potential African-American members constituted a powerful disincentive for interracial activism. Continuous examples of the casual racism of organized white women encouraged African-Americans to insist on their own separate associational structures. African-American women frequently failed to see the value of forcing themselves into associations that, in any case, did not seem to be interested in dealing with problems relevant to African-American women, and instead they sought to direct their activism through their own vibrant associations. As Tiyi Morris has pointed out, African-American women's groups were not simply built on exclusion from white women's associations; rather they sought to construct and support a specific model of African-American womanhood and community-building.[84]

Mary Bethune's career in voluntary associations is a case in point. When the National Council of Women (NCW) organized the 1925 convention of the International Council of Women in Washington DC, Mary Bethune, President of the NACW, an accredited member of the NCW, was incensed to find that despite the assurances that had been made to her, the conference mandated racially segregated seating. This display of American racism in front of an international audience convinced Bethune of the need to establish a separate umbrella association for African-American women's groups, which would operate as a parallel organization to the NCW, rather than an unequal member. The National Council of Negro Women (NCNW) founded by Bethune in 1935 sought to collaborate with white women's national associations on equal terms and refused to allow the interests of African-American women to be represented or subsumed by white women's associations. When the nominations for organizations that would be permitted by the US government to send official observers to the San Francisco Conference which established the United Nations emerged, the NCNW were appalled to see that they included five women's associations, but not one specifically African-American women's association. The NCNW and the NACW sent a letter of complaint to Secretary of State Edward Stettinus, explaining that African-American women needed the opportunity to get "first-hand information" and vehemently insisting "none of the women's organizations named represent Negro women."[85] Stettinus, wearied by demands for representative status from a slew of associations, was unsympathetic to the NCNW's insistence that they could not be represented by white women's groups and declined the NCNW's request to accredit their association, but he did accede to the accreditation of their President, Mary Bethune, as a representative of the National

Association of Coloured People (NAACP). While Bethune was adept at working alongside white women, and indeed formed close relationships with women such as Jane Addams and Eleanor Roosevelt, she was adamant that working in organizations of their own was the only way that African-American women could ensure that the issues that were important to them were not ignored.[86]

The NCNW were determined to make sure that they were able to play an equal part in the WB coalition. As a result of her experience in the Negro Affairs division of the National Youth Administration and her close relationship with first Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, Bethune valued access to government circles highly and worked hard to ensure that well-qualified African-American women put themselves forward for government posts.[87] The NCNW participated in a range of programs alongside white women's associations as part of the WB coalition. Despite these efforts, the position of the NCNW was not as strong as white women's associations. WB historian Kathleen Laughlin suggests that the NCNW's relationship with the Bureau was less direct and intimate than those of white women's associations. Katheryn Blood, a relatively low ranking staff member facilitated the relationship between the WB and African-American women's organizations, and Frieda Miller, Director of the WB between 1944 and 1953, handled requests for speakers from the WB to address African-American women's associations very carefully, largely keeping them "off the record" in order to avoid alienating Southern branches of white women's associations.[88]

There were some notable exceptions to the racially segregated position of most American women's associations. The journey towards full integration within the YWCA reflected its particular structure and identity. From its establishment in 1870 the YWCA contained both all-white and all-African-American branches, frequently operating in different areas of the same city, and serving different racial communities. The uneasy and difficult attempts of the National Board of the YWCA to maintain a system of racially segregated associations within the same national association were constantly challenged, both by African-American members and their white allies. African-American women who forged careers under the auspices of the YWCA served as the racial conscience of the Y, insisting that their interests and position within the Association should not be subject to the whims and prejudices of southern white women. In a 1920 letter to the National Board signed by leaders representing "300,000 Negro Women of the South," African-American women protested the arrangement that

YWCA work amongst African-American women in the South would proceed "only so fast as Southern white women would permit." The women voiced their dissatisfaction, asserting, "the Southern white women does not understand us and therefore we ask that we are permitted to form independent organizations."[89] The Negro Leadership Conference, (NLC) established as a subgroup within the YWCA in 1913 as a solution to the problem that some YWCA regional meetings were not prepared to accept the attendance of African-American women, created a space for YWCA African-American women across the country to come together at the national level. The existence of this group, as well as the determinedly interracial and idealistic National Student Councils (NSC) of the YWCA, challenged the National Board to move beyond its toleration of segregation. The opportunities the YWCA created for interracial relationships between women ensured that the white women members of the association were unable to dismiss racial injustice as an abstract problem, rather than one that was essential to their association.

The Christian ethic of the YWCA was a significant factor in enabling key members to embrace the challenge of segregation. Christian belief gave many women the strength to risk the harmony and indeed unity of their Association in the pursuit of what they believed was a higher calling. These individuals—what sociologists Clark and Wilson call "purposively orientated" people—were committed to the idea that social change was more important than the cohesion of the organization to which they belonged. Christian faith provided a form of "insulation" from the criticism of colleagues and the disapproval of peers.[90] Certainly, YWCA and NCNW stalwart Dorothy Height was convinced that religious faith was crucial to the struggle to prioritize racial justice within the YWCA, reflecting, "I think that those who are driven by faith don't back down when they see difficulties, because their goal is higher than just this one little item…. The YWCA never would have achieved what it did, had it not a Christian purpose."[91] While religious faith was a significant factor in giving women the courage to take action on the issue of racial justice, it is important to recognize that religious faith on its own was not always decisive. "The power of Christian Love" laconically notes historian Abigail Sara Lewis, "often worked slowly."[92] Cherisse Jones's study of the United Church Women demonstrates that, despite a national policy of desegregation, African-American and white women continued to largely work in segregated groups within that organization. "Many white women" Jones concludes "were unable to translate Christian ideals into daily practice."[93]

It was the combination of the religious identification of the YWCA, with strong internal structures, determined leadership and deliberate policies to strengthen interracial relationships between women, which ensured that the YWCA was able to embrace and interracial charter in 1946, and to take a supportive role in the Civil Rights Movement in the 1950s and 1960s.

More radical women's associations were also less reluctant than the larger mainstream groups to challenge racial injustice. As the historian Jacqueline Castledine has ably demonstrated American women who campaigned for peace in the post-war period frequently did so on an interracial basis. For peace campaigners, Castledine argues, pacifism and social and racial justice were inextricably linked.[94] "Long before late-twentieth century feminists scholars presented their theories of 'intersectionality,'" Castledine asserts, leftist women in the 1940s and 1950s "recognized how their understanding of identity interacted to produce social inequality."[95] Embracing an ideology of social justice and pacifism, it would have been an anathema to the women in the groups described by Castledine to participate in segregated organizing or campaigning. As a result, women's peace activism in the post-war period was marked by the kind of collaborative interracial organizing that mainstream women's associations were struggling so hard to avoid. The Women's International League of Peace and Freedom (WILPF) had, since its establishment in 1915 sought to embrace racial justice. Melinda Plastas's work has shown how African-Americans fought to be part of the association, to take part in its pacifist work and to push it to consider racial justice as a non-negotiable prerequisite for peace.[96] Her study of the history of the WILPF reveals a radically different story of interracial organizing and co-operation that of women's groups such as the LWV and the AAUW. Post-war pacifist organizations were equally determined to be racially inclusive. Groups such as Women Strike for Peace (WSP), founded in 1961, were determined to embrace racial justice, both as part of their goal of social justice, and as an organizing principle within their association. Amy Swerdlow, as a participant and a historian of WSP, has documented the extent to which the group sought to practice racially inclusive practices.[97] The WSP delegate to the 1962 Disarmament conference in Geneva, Switzerland, was Coretta Scott King, wife of civil rights activist Martin Luther King Jr.

The history of women's associations in the United States reveals the extent to which they were able to carve out a significant place for themselves in American political life. Eschewing identification with feminist politics, their single-sex associations, built on an ideology of service

and informed civic engagement, facilitated women's public role in an era when mainstream political activism was unwelcoming to women. Operating in collaboration with their government, the leadership of these associations argued that they both represented and marshalled the activism of millions of engaged and influential American women. In doing so, they represented their associations as bridges between the private world of local friendship networks and social interactions, and the public world of national institutional life. Sara Evans has argued that this hybridity, powerful and effective as it was, brought with it significant limitations. "The free spaces of voluntary associations," Evans argues, "need to be understood precisely in terms of their location between state and private life, having characteristics of both the public and private and providing an essential link between the two."[98] Evans argues that the private and public spheres are markedly different. Significantly, she uses the example of racial, ethnic and class differences as illustrative of these differences; "One expects a similarity of ethnicity, race religion, education and class in private life, while differences along precisely these lines are constitutive of public life."[99] *The Kingdom beyond Caste*, a 1957 text distributed to Methodist women's groups, perfectly captured the vulnerability of the hybridity of voluntary associations. "Voluntary groups" the text explained, "bid fair to be the last strongholds of segregation in America and in other parts of the world. Being private in character, they are less subject to public opinion or to regulation by law than are such public facilities as schools or transportation systems. Further, a cardinal principle in their purpose is that of congeniality; they are enclaves in which birds of a feather flock together."[100]

In their claims for national significance, mainstream American women's associations purported to speak for American women and to serve an important role in encouraging and shaping their participation in American life. This participation, they insisted, was vital in the protection of a democratic America. Celebration of this role, however, tended to overlook just how select and exclusionary these associations were. As Nancy-Marie Robertson has astutely pointed out, the sleight of hand by which mainstream women's associations were able to ignore the limited and exclusionary nature of their membership was helped by the lack of modifiers in the title of what were, overwhelming, white women's associations. "White women of other classes and races," Robertson points out, "were referred to (in the language of the day) as industrial women, colored women, and so forth. That the General Federation of Women's Clubs was

in actuality the General Federation of White Women's Clubs, for example, is not readily apparent unless one knows about the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs."[101] The fact that the League of Women Voters and the American Association of University Women did not refer themselves as the League of White Women Voters or the American Association of University White Women spoke on one level to their lack of explicit racial membership regulations. Their understanding of who was included in the term "women voters" or "university women", however, rarely, if ever, included non-white women.

American women's associations did not merely *reflect* racial segregation; they were a significant part of the creation of racially separate worlds. Women's associations, as with other institutions in the South in particular, facilitated a particular worldview amongst women, which produced an unthinking, uncritical adherence to racial segregation. Even overlooking the probability that many northern women shared the racist views of Southern women, albeit perhaps in a less explicit form, their desire for consensus and harmony with Southern white women, together with their pragmatic understanding of the legal imperatives of segregation in Southern states made any top-down directives on racial integration highly unlikely. Understanding the impact of the toleration of racial segregation within women's associations is vital to an understanding of their difficulties in responding to the increasing demands for racial justice in the post-war period.

Notes

1. See, for example, Nancy Cott's *The Bonds of Womanhood* (Yale University Press, New Haven, 1977), Anne Firor Scott, *Natural Allies. Women's Associations in American History* (Urbana and Chicago, University of Illinois Press, 1993), Susan Lebsock, "Women and American Politics 1880–1920", in *Women, Politics and Change*, ed Louise Tilly and Patricia Gurin, (New York, Russell Sage Foundation, 1990): 35–62, Louise M. Young, "Women's Place in American Politics: The Historical Perspective", *Journal of Politics* 38 (August 1976): 295–335, Karen J Blair, *The Clubwoman as Feminist; True Womanhood Redefined 1868–1914* (New Jersey, Holmes Meier Publishers, 1980), Estelle Freedman, "Separatism as Strategy: Female Institution Building and American Feminism

1870–1930", *Feminist Studies* 5:3, (Fall 1979):512–529. Elisabeth Clemens. "Securing Political Returns to Social Capital: Women's Associations in the United States 1880s–1920s", *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 39:4 (Spring 1999): 613–638.

2. See Nancy Cott, "Feminist Politics in the 1920s. The National Woman's Party," *Journal of American History* 71:1, (June 1984) 43–68.
3. See Jan Dolittle Wilson, *The Women's Joint Congressional Committee and the Politics of Maternalism* (Urbana and Chicago, University of Illinois, 2007) and J. Stanley Lemons, "The Sheppard-Towner Act: Progressivism in the 1920s," *Journal of American History* 55:4 (March 1969): 776–786.
4. J. Stanley Lemons, "The Sheppard-Towner Act."
5. See Kirstin Marie Delegard, *Battling Miss Bosheviki: The Origins of Female Conservatism in the United States* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), Jo Freeman, *One Room at a Time: How Women Entered into Party Politics* (Langham, Rowman and Littlefield, 2000), Kim E. Nielsen, *Un-American Womanhood: Antiradicalism, Anti-feminism and the First Red Scare* (Columbus, The Ohio State Press, 2001).
6. See Landon R.Y. Storrs, *Civilizing Capitalism: The National Consumer's League: Women's Activism and Labor Standards and the New Deal Era* (Chapel Hill, The University of North Carolina Press, 2000).
7. See Eva Moskowitz, "It's good to blow your Top: Women's Magazines and a Discourse of Discontent 1945–1956," *Women's History Review* 8:3, (Fall 1996): 66–98.
8. LWV Montgomery Oral History Project, Interview with Rose Ellen Spurling by Mary and Louisa Weinrib, March 14 1990, box 1, League of Women Voters of Alabama. Records, 1915–1997 (Record Group 282), Special Collections and Archives Department of the Auburn University Libraries. (Hereafter LWV Oral History, LWV Alabama papers).
9. "The AAUW; What it is and what it does" box 4, file "Regional and National Correspondence 1945–1947," American Association of University Women, Auburn Branch. Records, 1937–1995 (Record Group 292), Special Collections and Archives Department of the Auburn University Libraries. (Hereafter AAUW Auburn papers).

10. Constitution of the Amaranth Club, (1897) Records of the Amaranth Club, Birmingham Public Library, Birmingham Alabama, 21.6.1.1.
11. "What they studied through the Years" Records of the Amaranth Club, 21.6.1.1.
12. Description of Meetings, 19 January 1951. Records of the Amaranth Club, 21.6.1.1.
13. AAUW pamphlet, (not dated) box 4, file "AAUW workshop 1948," AAUW Auburn papers.
14. "Women of the Country Ready for Administrative Work," *Milwaukee Journal* (12 February 1946) 14.
15. Mabel Newcomer, "Let's Begin At Home" *Journal of the AAUW* 39:4, (Summer 1946) 235.
16. See Helen Laville, *Cold War Women. The International Activities of American Women's Associations,* (Manchester and New York, Manchester University Press, 2002).
17. "As the Branches See it: University women in their communities" *Journal of the AAUW* 39:1, (Fall 1945) 15.
18. Daniel Horowitz, *Betty Friedan and the Making of The Feminine Mystique. The American Left, the Cold War and Modern Feminism.* (Amherst, University of Massachusetts Press, 1998).
19. Kate Weigand, *Red Feminism: American Communism and the Making of Women's Liberation* (Baltimore, The John Hopkins University Press, 2001).
20. Erik McDuffie, *Sojourning for Freedom: Black Women, American Communism and the Making of Black Left Feminism* (Durham, Duke University Press, 2011).
21. Kathleen A. Laughlin, "Civic Feminists: The Politics of the Minnesota Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs 1942–1965" in *Breaking the Wave: Women, their Organizations and Feminism 1945–1985,* ed Kathleen A. Laughlin and Jacqueline L. Castledine, (London, Routledge, 2011) 17 and Kathleen A Laughlin, *Women's Work and Public Policy: A History of the Women's Bureau, US Department of Labor 1945–1970* (Boston, Northeastern University Press, 2000) 25.
22. "The AAUW. What it is and what it does," box 4, file "Regional and National Correspondence 1945–1947," AAUW Auburn papers.

23. Interview with Anna Lord Strauss by Richard D. McKinzie, 22 January 1973, accessed 16 July 2015, https://www.trumanlibrary.org/oralhist/straussa.htm#transcript
24. Interview with Bertha S. Adkins by John T. Mason Jr., accessed 19 June 2015 18 December 1967, 46. Dwight D Eisenhower Library, Abilene Kansas.
25. Proceedings of the Sixteenth Biennial Conference, South –East Division, AAUW 8–10 April 1954, box 2, file "Southeast Central Regional Conferences 1940–1966," AAUW Auburn papers.
26. Mary Donlon, "Our Next Hundred Years," *Independent Woman* 27:7, (July 1946) 196.
27. AAUW Pamphlet, box 4, file "AAUW workshop 1948," AAUW of Auburn papers.
28. See Helen Laville, "A new Era in International Women's Rights? American Women's Associations and the Establishment of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women" *Journal of Women's History* 20:4 (Winter 2008): 34–56.
29. "To Strengthen the Free World" *Independent Woman* 30:1 (January 1951) 24. "White House Conference on how women may share in Post-war Policy making" *Journal of the AAUW*, 38:1, (Fall 1944) 28.
30. Kathleen A. Laughlin, "Civic Feminists: The Politics of the Minnesota Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs 1942–1965," in *Breaking the Wave: Women, their Organizations and Feminism 1945–1985,* eds Kathleen A. Laughlin and Jacqueline L. Castledine, (London, Routledge, 2011) 17.
31. See Helen Laville, "A New Era in Women's International Rights?."
32. Alice Morgan Wright to Alice Paul, July 1948. National Woman's Party Papers, Reel 176, Microfilming Corporation of America.
33. Theda Skocpol, *Diminished Democracy. From Membership to Management in American Civic Life,* (Norman, University of Oklahoma Press, 2004), 133.
34. Firor Scott, *Natural Allies,* 5.
35. Cited in Mary Swerson Miller, *Lobbyists for the People: The League of Women Voters of Alabama 1920–1973.* (M.A. Thesis, Auburn University, December 1978), 124.
36. Virginia Durr and Studs Terkel, *Outside the Magic Circle: The Autobiography of Virginia Foster Durr* (Tuscaloosa, University of Alabama Press, 1990) 158.

37. Cited in Ronnie L. Podolefsky, "The Illusion of Suffrage: Female Voting Rights and the Women's Poll Tax repeal movement after then Nineteenth Amendment," *Columbia Journal of Gender and Law* 7 (1997–1998): 185–238, 216.
38. "Women. Their Interest in Public Affairs," 13 August 1959, McCullough Lee Papers, box 10, file 169, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts.
39. "Is it a Man's World?," speech to College Club of Hartford Connecticut, Percy M Lee papers, box 1, file 12, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts.
40. The National Council of Women of the United States pamphlet, May 1947, Records of the AAUW, Series VIII, reel 77.
41. The League of Women Voters *Forty years of a Great Idea* (1960) 32.
42. "The Lady who scares Politicians" *New York Herald Tribune* (3 November 1946) 9.
43. "Women, Guided and Misguided" editorial *Chicago Daily Tribute* (October 1949).
44. Lucille Cardin Crain and Anne Burrows Hamilton, *Packaged Thinking for Women* (American Affairs Pamphlet, 1948).
45. "GOP women hear Alma Schneider" *Greeley Daily Tribune* 18 April 1950.
46. "Members revolt against League in Politics" *Waukesha Daily Freeman* 5 February 1954.
47. El Paso Branch to Dr. Hottel (not dated) AAUW of Alabama papers, box 1, file "Correspondence 1941–1961."
48. Report on the Congress of American Women, Committee on Un-American Activities, 23 October 1949, accessed 23 May 2015, http://archive.org/stream/reportoncongress1949unit/reportoncongress1949unit_djvu.txt. See Amy Swerdlow, "The Congress of American Women: Left-Feminist Peace Politics in the Cold War" in *U.S. History as Women's History: New Feminist Essays,* eds Linda Kerber, Alice Kessler-Harris and Kathryn Kish Sklar (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1995): 296–312.
49. See Kenneth O'Reilly, "The Dies Committee v the New Deal: Real Americans and the Unending Search for UnAmericans" in *Little "Red Scares": Anti- Communism and Political Repression in the United States*, ed Robert Justin Goldstein, (Surrey, Ashgate, 2014): 237–260 and Landon R.Y. Storrs, "Red Scare Politics and the

Suppression of Popular Front Feminism: The Loyalty Investigation of Mary Dublin Keyserling" *The Journal of American History* 90:2, (2003): 491–524.

50. See Helen Laville, *Cold War Women. The International Activities of American Women's Associations,* (Manchester and New York, Manchester University Press, 2002).
51. Joseph P Kamp, *Behind the Lace Curtains of the YWCA,* accessed 19 July 2015, http://conelrad.com/books/print.php?id=368_0_1_0
52. Jane Cassels Record, "The Red-Tagging of Negro Protest" *The American Scholar* 26:3, (Summer 1957): 325–333, 325. See also Jeff Woods, *Black Struggle, Red Scare: Segregation and Anti-communism in the South 1948–1968* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University Press, 2004)
53. See Sarah Hart Brown, "Congressional Anti-Communism and the Segregationist South: From New Orleans to Atlanta 1954–1958", *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 80:4, (Winter 1996): 785–816, Irwin Klibaner, "The Travail of Southern Radicals: The Southern Educational Fund 1946–1976," *The Journal of Southern History* 49:2, (May 1983): 179–202, Catherine Fosl, *Subversive Southerner. Anne Braden and the Struggle for Racial Justice in the Cold War South*, (New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2002).
54. "Policy with respect to communism" 28 September 1953. Mary S Ingraham Papers, box 1, file 30, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts.
55. "Statement on Voter's League is Clarified" *The Lincoln Star* 28 October 1947. *The National Voter* (the Journal of the LWV) reported that Disney had confused the League of Women Voters with the League of Women shoppers. (*The National Voter*, January 1948).
56. "Statement of Activities, 1954" Lucile Koshland papers, box 1, file 9, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts.
57. "Freedom Agenda"; Pamphlet, Lucile Koshland papers, box 1, file 21.
58. "Legion Attacks Women Voters publication" *Spartanburg Herald* (North Carolina) (19 November 1955) 8.
59. Malvina Lindsay "Defending the Right to Discuss Freedom," *Washington Post* 21 November 1955.

60. "Legion's attack on League is absurd," *Spartanburg Herald* (North Carolina) (30 November 1955) 3.
61. See Elizabeth Collins, *Red Baiting Public Women: Gender, Loyalty and Red Scare Politics* (PhD Dissertation, University of Illinois, Chicago, 2008).
62. National Board of the AAUW, "The Communist Threat to Peace and Freedom," Accessed 11 July 2015, http://history.aauw.org/files/2012/09/red-menace.png
63. Ina Corinne Brown (Chair, AAUW Social Studies Committee), "These things we CAN do" *Journal of the AAUW* 45:2, (January 1952) 69.
64. HUAC Report on the Congress of American Women, accessed 3 November 2014, http://archive.org/stream/reportoncongress1949unit/reportoncongress1949unit_djvu.txt
65. See Sandra N. Smith, "Charlotte Hawkins Brown," *The Journal of Negro Education*, 51:3, (Summer 1982): 191–206, 200.
66. Charlotte Hawkins Brown, Speech Given at the Women's Interracial Conference in Memphis Tennessee October 8, 1920, accessed 8 May 2011, http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/learning_history/lynching/brown.cfm
67. Gerda Lerner, "Black and White Women in Interaction and Confrontation", *Prospects* 2 (October 1977): 193–208, 205.
68. Alice G. Knotts, "Methodist Women and Interracial Fairness in the 1930s", *Methodist History* 27:4, (July 1989):230–240, 232. African-American members included; Charlotte Hawkins Brown, Janie Porter Barrett, Jennie B Morton, Mary McLeod Bethune, Juliette Derricotte, Lugenia Hope, Nannie Burroughs, Mattie E. Colman, Mrs. H.C. McCrorey, Sallie Stewart, Marion Wilkinson and others.
69. See Jacqueline Dowd Hall, *Revolt against Chivalry: Jessie Daniel Ames and the Women's Campaign Against Lynching* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1979) 181.
70. Cherisee Renee Jones, *Repairers of the Breach: Black and White Women and Racial Activism in South Carolina 1940s–1960s.* (PhD Thesis, Ohio State University, 2003.)47. See also her monograph, *Crossing the Line: Women's Interracial Activism in South Carolina during and After World War II* (Gainesville, University Press of Florida, 2014).

71. Montgomery City Code, cited in *States Rights Advocate* 1:1, November 1956. Alabama State Archives, Montgomery, Alabama.
72. See Firor Scott, *Natural Allies.*
73. Linda Gordon, "Black and White Visions of Welfare; Women's Welfare Activism, 1890–1945," *Journal of American History* 78:2, (September 1991): 559–590.
74. Stephanie Shaw, "Black Club Women and the Creation of the National Association of Coloured Women," *Journal of Women's History* 3:2, (Fall 1991): 11–25.
75. Firor Scott, *Natural Allies,* 25.
76. Mary Jane Smith, *Constructing Womanhood in Public: Progressive White Women in a New South* (PhD dissertation, Louisiana State University, 2002).
77. Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin, "Address to the First National Conference of Colored Women," accessed 9 March 2015, http://www.blackpast.org/1895-josephine-st-pierre-ruffin-address-first-national-conference-colored-women#sthash.sRXZweLz.dpuf
78. Beverly W. Jones, "Mary Church Terrell and the National Association of Colored Women 1896–1901," *The Journal of Negro History*, 67:1, (Spring 1982): 20–33, 24.
79. Jan Dolittle Wilson, "Disunity in Diversity: The Controversy over the admission of black women to the General Federation of Women's Clubs 1900–1902," *Journal of Women's History* 23:2, (Summer 2011): 39–63.
80. Despite this lack of support Well-Barnett refused to accept a place at the back of the march, and waited in the crowd before joining the (white) Illinois delegation as the march was in progress. See, Patricia A. Schechter, "All the intensity of my Nature: Ida B. Wells, Anger and Politics," *Radical History Review*, 70 (1998): 48–77.
81. Rosalyn Terborg-Penn, *African-American Women in the Struggle for the Vote 1850–1920*, (Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 1998) 135.
82. Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, "The Women's Christian Temperance Union and the Colored Women" *African Methodist Episcopal Church Review reprinted* in Dorothy May Emerson, *Standing Before Us. Unitarian Universalist Women and Social Reform 1776–1936.* (Skinner House Books, Boston, 1999)93–100, 99.

83. Alison M Parker, "Frances Watkins Harper and the search for Women's Interracial Alliances" in Christine L Ridarsky and Mary M Huth (eds) *Susan B Anthony and the Struggle for Equal Rights* (University of Rochester Press, Rochester New York, 2012) 145–171.
84. Tiyi M. Morris, *Womanpower Unlimited and the Black Freedom Struggle in Mississippi* (Athens, University of Georgia Press, 2015).
85. Cited in Julie A Gallagher, "The National Council of Negro Women, Human Rights and the Cold War" in *Breaking the Wave: Women, their Organizations and Feminism 1945–1985*, ed Kathleen A. Laughlin and Jacqueline L. Castledine, (London, Routledge, 2011) 84.
86. See Audrey Thomas McCluskey, "Multiple Consciousness in the Leadership of Mary McLeod Bethune," *NWSA Journal* 6:1, (Spring 1994): 69–81, and Joyce Ann Hanson, *Mary McLeod Bethune and Black Women's Political Activism* (Columbia, University of Missouri Press, 2003).
87. Joyce Ann Hanson, *Mary McLeod Bethune and Black Women's Political Activism* (Columbia, University of Missouri Press, 2003).
88. Kathleen A Laughlin, *Women's Work and Public Policy: A History of the Women's Bureau, US Department of Labor 1945–1970* (Boston, Northeastern University Press, 2000), 30.
89. Letter to the National Board of the YWCA, 1920. YWCA papers, box 40.
90. P. B. Clark and J.Q Wilson, "Incentive system: A theory of organization," *Administrative Science* Quarterly 6, (1961): 129–166. For an application of Clark and Wilson's model see James R. Wood, "Personal commitment and Organizational Constraint: Church Officials and Racial Integration," *Sociology of Religion*, 33:3, (1972) 142–151, 142.
91. Dorothy Height Oral History with Holly Shulman, 24 January 2003, accessed 27 October 2014. http://classweb.uh.edu/wims/the-effects/southern-women/jan242003-dorothy-height-interview-by-shulman/
92. Abigail Sara Lewis, " 'The Barriers Breaking Love of God' The Multiracial Activism of the Young Women's Christian Associations 1940s to 1970s," PhD Dissertation, Rutgers University, 2008, 121.

93. Cherisse. R Jones, " 'How Shall I Sing the Lord's Song?' United Church Women confront Racial Issues in South Carolina," in *Throwing off the Cloak of Privilege: White Southern Women Activists in the Civil Rights Era,* ed, Gail S. Murray, (Gainsville, University Press of Florida, 2004) 131–153.
94. Jacqueline Castledine, *Cold War Progressives: Women's Interracial Organizing for Peace and Freedom* (Urbana and Chicago, University of Illinois Press, 2012).
95. Ibid, 3.
96. See Melinda Plastas, *A Band of Noble Women; Racial Politics in the Women's Peace Movement* (Syracuse, NY, Syracuse University Press, 2011).
97. Amy Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace: Traditional Motherhood and Radical Politics in the 1960s* (Chicago and London, University of Chicago Press, 1993).
98. Sara M Evans, "Women's History and Political Theory: Towards a Feminist Approach to Public life" in *Visible Women: New Essays on American Activism* eds Nancy A. Hewitt and Suzanne Lebstock (Urbana and Chicago, University of Illinois Press, 1993), 128.
99. Ibid, 131.
100. Liston Pope, *The Kingdom Beyond Caste* (New York, Friendship Press, 1957) 104.
101. Nancy-Marie Robertson, "Kindness or Justice: Women's Associations and the Politics of Race and History" in Walter Powell and Elisabeth S. Clemens, *Private Action and the Public Good* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1998) 196.

CHAPTER 3

The League of Women Voters

In 1969, when the LWV celebrated its 50th anniversary, newspapers across the United States picked up on one particularly telling anecdote. Senator Aiken of Vermont, when told that the membership of the League numbered only 150,000, retorted, "why I thought there were millions of them!" The message of the folksy story was underlined by the title of some of the stories marking the anniversary: "Women Voters has been a worrisome lot to many politicians" and "50 Vocal Years are marked."[1] A 1946 *New York Herald Tribune* profile of Anna Lord Strauss, president of the LWV between 1944 and 1950, was titled, "The Lady who scares Politicians." Strauss, the profile asserted, "is the friendly boss of a group which generates power far out of proportion to its membership of 62,000. This power stems from the fact that League members are well-informed, purposeful individuals."[2] The reputation of the LWV as a small, but fiercely active association was testament to the impact of the League's model of non-partisan, sex-segregated but non-feminist public activism. The central purpose of the League was more difficult to define than that of groups such as the American Association of University Women (AAUW), which had at its centre a defined area of interest and purpose in the college education of women. The core purpose of the League was more nebulous. While in the immediate aftermath of the extension of suffrage the League had claimed that women needed guidance in voting practices, its continued existence as a sex-segregated association for women voters twenty-five years after the mystery and novelty of women registering and casting

H. Laville, *Organized White Women and the Challenge of Racial Integration, 1945-1965*, DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-49694-8_3

their votes had first demanded their activism required some explanation. The League itself admitted in a 1953 discussion the incongruity of the continuation of sex-segregated associations so long after the extension of suffrage, and discussed the possibility of changing its name to "League of Active Voters (or some such)." The League admitted that the "historic reason for being a woman's organization [is] no longer valid … Trend is towards working with groups with common interest not based on sex." Nonetheless, a change in name and membership policy, the League worried, might lead to the neglect of the female leadership culture they valued: "Some people fear that men would gain control of the organization and would be the more forceful influence."[3]

The decision of the League to continue as a sex-segregated association reflected their confidence in their ability to justify the intervention of women into public affairs, channelled through their auspices. Presenting themselves as an acceptable non-partisan bridge between the public and private sphere was crucial to the success of the League in the post-war period, bringing women into public activism at a time when a resurgent feminine domestic ideal made such a political role problematic. While critical to the success of women's associations, the public/private hybridity of women's associations as a political form was also their weakness. The LWV, in a continuation of the racially exclusive practices of its predecessor, the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA), was an almost exclusively white membership association before 1945. In the period between 1945 and 1965, the League struggled with racial integration both as a facet of its own membership practices and as an increasingly urgent issue in American society. Study of the efforts of branches to marry the public demand for racial integration to previously private aspects of their organization exposes the privileges of class and race that lay at the heart of the League. The issue of racial integration threatened the legitimacy of these structures and ideologies, effectively challenging the foundations on which the association rested.

The LWV was founded on 14 February 1920 at a NAWSA conference. Following the achievement of female suffrage, the leadership of NAWSA recognized the need to evolve into a new association with a new set of purposes and goals. To a certain extent, the goals of the League were short term, transitional ones. Agnes McFadden, vice-president of the Atlanta League, explained, "The time may come when women will be content, like men, just to be 21 or over to vote … [but] … we are going through a transition period and there is a need of a political organization of women

to educate the eager new voters."[4] Aiming to inform newly enfranchised women, and to encourage them to participate in political life, the LWV was determinedly both non-feminist and non-partisan. Situating the new League firmly in opposition to the newly formed National Women's Party (NWP), Mrs. Brown, vice-president of the NAWSA, explained, "women do not like to set themselves apart from men in a Woman's Party … The great majority prefer to work in partnership with men and while they have their own organizations like the League of Women Voters for study of political questions, they are Republicans and Democrats as men are."[5] Many of the League's programs both at a national and a local level, focused on good government, and on the efficient and fair working of democracy. Beyond this good governance program, the League also supported a range of progressive causes, which it insisted fell within the special interest of women. Its 1920 conference in Chicago, for example, established an industrial program that called for the support of collective bargaining of all workers through trade unions, and urged especially the union organization of women workers.

From its very beginning, the concept of sex-segregated associations for women voters in a post-suffrage world drew criticism. In what can only be described as a gutsy determination not to play to his audience, Republican New York State Governor Nathan Miller gave an after-dinner speech at the annual convention of the LWV in his state, telling them the League was a "menace" with "no excuse to exist." The first president of the League, Carrie Chapman Catt, responded tactfully that perhaps Miller had misunderstood the purpose of the League. Like Miller, the League urged women to join the Republican or Democratic parties. Catt explained, "The League is not so much non-partisan as all-partisan – the beginning of what we hope will be an organization of all women throughout the country, irrespective of the parties to which they belong – to work for the protection of the home and the child, the protection of American institutions, better standards of living and the maintenance of a stable government."[6] Catt's defense posited that while women could and should work through partisan politics as enfranchised citizens, there was also a need for a complimentary association, which was non-partisan but which identified certain concerns as being of particular interest to women. Agnes McFadden concurred, suggesting that while there was an immediate need for the League in terms of voter education, it might also have a longer-term role. Gendered differences in the political interests of men and women, McFadden suggested, might mean that there would always be a

role for sex-segregated associations: "It may be that there will always be a need of an organization of women voters for there will always be certain legislation that appeals to women as a class more than it does to men."[7]

As part of the alliance of women's associations loosely grouped together by the Women's Joint Congressional Committee (WJCC), the League sought to support what it saw as non-partisan causes of special interest to women. Women's interest and concern in these causes, they implied, arose naturally from their gender and from women's particular interest in protecting the vulnerable. In practice, this assumption of the existence of non-partisan gendered politics ran into profound difficulties almost immediately. At a local level, efforts to unite even a narrowly constituted group of exclusively middle-class white women around supposedly non-partisan "women's causes" proved divisive. The work of Kathryn Nasstrom and Rod Clare on the history of the LWV in North Carolina demonstrates that the state League's support for strikers in the textile industries and efforts to promote protective legislation provoked the ire of many of its own members. The issue of the League's position on labor relations contributed to the almost-terminal decline of the League in that state in the period between 1928 and the late 1940s.[8] As the progressive causes the League had hoped would provide a common cause among organized American women became increasingly unpopular in the 1930s, the League struggled to find a role for itself and to attract members. In some southern states, the League became moribund and indeed, even non-existent, as many hard-pressed women failed to prioritize payment of membership fees to an association that lacked a compelling raison d'etre.

While the League struggled to define its core purpose in the period between 1930 and 1945, two key strategies contributed to a significant resurgence of the association in the period after the Second World War. First, the League enthusiastically promoted its function as a hybrid quasi-governmental association which constructed a public, non-partisan role for women. At the heart of the League's purpose was a sense that while sex differences did not map on to partisan politics, there remained nevertheless significant gender differences in the way in which men and women approached politics, and that these differences justified the continued existence of sex-segregated associations. In carefully constructing a public identity for women, the League was deliberately vague and non-prescriptive about its own purpose, urging activism on the impeccably non-partisan and benign grounds of "good governance."

The LWV played a leading role in the efforts of sex-segregated women's associations in the post-war period to present their activities as the acceptable face of women's public engagement. The membership development committee in Birmingham, Alabama, wrote a series of songs celebrating the League's mission to rescue intelligent women from domestic drudgery. One song, sung to the tune "I've grown accustomed to her Face" from the musical *My Fair Lady,* complained:

> She's grown accustomed to her rut, the same old day-in, day-out chores,
> she's grown accustomed to routine, the never-changing scene
> The pots, the pans, the dishpan hands are second nature to her now …
> She's completely unaware of world affairs … She hasn't read the news in weeks,
> She's grown accustomed to TV, How mundane can you be?
> The bridge, the teas, the shopping sprees.

The song explained that membership in the League could avert this sad fate, explaining, "We can make her care enough to do her share … She doesn't know she has a brain, which she must train, but we will get her to realize it needs some exercise."[9] Press coverage of the League was generally approving of the group's success in combining domesticity with public activism. A 1950 article on the Atlanta LWV in the *Atlanta Constitution*, entitled "Gad-about Mother brings 'better world' to children," wrote approvingly of Mrs. J.B. Pendergrast. Despite the mild censure of the term "Gad-about," the tone of the article was overall a positive one. Mrs. Pendergrast's "outside activities," the *Atlanta Constitution* asserted, "have helped her become the perfect mother and homemaker." Her "petite and childlike appearance," the article assured its readers, "completely belies the living dynamo that she is, and the intelligent manner in which she simultaneously manages a home and projects her energies into the city's civic affairs." While ending with the caveat that Mrs. Pendergrast spends "at least five hours daily with the children" and didn't recommend civic activism for mothers of preschool children, "unless they have competent servants and also the consent of their husbands," the article nonetheless concluded that Mrs. Pendergrast's work with the League was a legitimate expansion of her domestic responsibilities.[10] In presenting its portfolio in this way, the League effectively defined itself as a form of female non-political public activism. In her assessment of the retreat of women from the stormy realm of politics in the Cold War period, it is

notable that historian Amy Swerdlow specifies membership in the LWV as a method of non-political engagement. Swerdlow asserts, "In the period of Cold War consensus when political, cultural and gender-role dissent was deemed deviant and dangerous, most of these [potentially progressive activist] women had withdrawn from the larger political arena into the Parent teacher Associations (PTA), the League of Women Voters, Church or Temple social action groups, volunteer social services, local art centers or music societies."[11]

As national women's associations were enthusiastic in stressing, their branch membership was based on women's relationship to community politics as a form of extended housekeeping. The strategic deployment of "social housekeeping," which historians have recognized as a significant justification of women's public activism in a pre-suffrage era when women were formally excluded from political life, was equally important in an era when informal restrictions made American women's involvement in political life problematic. The LWV explained that the activism of American women in the post-war period, and their interest in the League, was not a distraction from, but rather a result of, their domestic concerns. An article in the *Milwaukee Sentinel*, entitled "President of the League of Women Voters Typifies Family-Civic Link," approvingly quoted League President Percy Lee, "a tall, slender … mother of four children … a typically conscientious homemaker who devotes much of her spare time to assuming the responsibility of a citizen." Lee explained that members of the League were predominantly housewives, who became involved in the League because they sought to address a problem which directly affected their families. "As a result of personal interest the new League member finds herself studying government systems and operations." Lee concluded, "Every housewife can be active in the League … and should be if she wishes to make herself more valuable to her community."[12]

In the period after the Second World War, the League's second significant strategy was a deliberate restructuring effort, which re-formed the League as a strong national association with more direct ties between local grassroots membership and national leadership. At the same time, leadership actively worked to revive the League in states where it had been in decline. These structural changes allowed the League to operate more effectively at the national level, using its strong emphasis on consensus building to maintain organizational cohesion, and link local activism with national and international positions. Fledging branches and a State League emerged in North Carolina in 1949, and was formally accredited by the National

League in 1951. In Alabama, where the State League had disbanded in the 1930s, local chapters were re-established in 1948. Mrs. Errol Horner, organizational secretary of the National League staff, toured Alabama in September 1948, reporting back to national president Anna Lord Strauss, "There is a great need of a League in every town I have visited."[13] Horner made visits to Tuscaloosa, Anniston, Montgomery, Mobile, Birmingham and Wetumpka, reporting to the *Tuscaloosa News* that "there is a trend toward greater interest in government in the Southern States on the part of Women."[14] Sarah Cabot Pierce, president of the provisional Wetumpka branch in Alabama, recalled that the Montgomery branch had been established when "three women at Maxwell Air Base had somehow gotten the word that the national LWV was going to change its tactics and become more democratic and reach out into states where there were no Leagues or where Leagues had died."[15] As a result of the efforts of National Board and the contributions of women such as Mrs. Couey, a former member of the Connecticut state board of the League who had moved to Montgomery when her husband was appointed as a psychologist at Maxwell Air Base, the Alabama State League received accreditation in 1951 and held its first state convention in Tuscaloosa in May 1951.

Mindful perhaps of the extent to which the earlier incarnations of the League in the South had foundered on their liberal politics, efforts of the League to re-establish itself in the South avoided an overly close identification with a liberal political position. Sarah Cabot Pierce recalled that Anna Lord Strauss had written to her to say that she had consulted with former First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt to seek her advice on contacts who might suggest the right women to approach to re-establish the League in Alabama. Roosevelt recommended Aubrey Williams, who she had worked with during his time as the executive president of the National Youth Administration. Williams had gained a reputation for progressive politics and a concern with the welfare of African-Americans. Pierce, however, was convinced that if the League was to be successful in Alabama, it needed to avoid identification with this kind of liberal position. She later recalled explaining to Strauss, "if you get Aubrey Williams we are sunk before we start. We are ruined; we are not going to get off the ground because he is too liberal."[16]

While eschewing an overtly political position, the League nonetheless worked hard to ensure that its members, both locally and nationally, were seen as a force to be reckoned with—leaders who had the influence, skills and responsibility to play a role in public life. The activities and programs of local chapters facilitated the significant public activism of

American women as community leaders. Women in groups such as the AAUW and the LWV were, historian Susan Levine argues, the volunteer backbone of their communities. Educated and affluent, these women had leisure time to devote to civic activism and saw in their volunteer associations a viable alternative to a professional career in what were still male-dominated private or public sectors. Montgomery League President Rose Sparling explained, "These women who were on the board would have been real career women if they had lived someplace else at another time. They were well educated, intelligent, capable people."[17]

The rigorous processes that local and state provisional branches had to go through in order to become accredited members of the national League were designed to promote the civic knowledge and influence of the League members at the local level. The "Know your town" surveys that the national LVW required in order to grant full status to local LWV branches involved producing detailed civic reports. These surveys served a dual purpose, making sure that branch members received an education in local politics and civic life, but also ensuring that local government could identify the members of the League as informed women of influence. The provisional Auburn LWV in Alabama conducted its local survey in 1957 and reported, "The process of doing research by the local survey committee has served to bring the project to the attention of most city officials and many townspeople. Co-operation offered denoted they have won the respect and interest of public officials."[18] The importance of having this kind of significant work to do was a motivating factor behind membership in local chapters, fostering both local friendship networks and the status of members as influential members of these communities. Anne Waldo, a member of the Montgomery LVW, recalled, "It was mainly feeling that I had some power and that there were lots of wonderful people that I would never have met otherwise that I really enjoyed knowing … It meant something to me that I was doing something worthwhile."[19] Alongside the "Know your town" survey, provisional League branches were required to decide upon a local state project to work on, which was in line with the national program but was of particular importance in their state. Efforts were made to ensure that these campaigns could both be understood as being part of the League's purpose of good governance and were non-partisan. The North Carolina LWV, for example, took up the issue of prison reform, while a number of southern branches selected the topic of the poll tax as their campaign.[20]

In order to become accredited branches of the League of Women Voters of the United States (LWVUS), local chapters also had to demonstrate their understanding of one of the League's central principles—the importance of study and consensus as a precursor to action. The reliance of the League on consensus rather than majority rule was designed to ensure that branches, states and indeed the League as a whole worked in a cohesive and united way, and avoided any sense of partisanship. A 1962 handbook explained, "Consensus in the League means agreement among a substantial number of members, representative of the membership as a whole, reached after a sustained study and group discussion. It is not just a simple majority, nor necessarily unanimity."[21] Discussion of any potential area for action would always be followed by a long period of study. The handbook explained that "the subject of most studies is known to League members for at least a year in advance of consensus." Consensus meetings themselves were anything but snappy, with the handbook advising that they should last at least two hours. Judgements as to what constituted consensus erred on the side of caution, with consensus being defined as "a very substantial majority … If there is considerable doubt that consensus was achieved it is probably better to conclude that it was not."[22] A record of discussion groups would be then sent to local Leagues, who could then decide whether to approve of a consensus position for their branch.

This emphasis on consensus undoubtedly maintained cohesion and consistency within the League, ensuring the League spoke with one voice. The by-laws of the Birmingham Alabama LWV branch explained to members that they could only speak in the name of the League after consensus had been reached and an agreed League position had been determined: "members may act in the name of the League of Women Voters only when authorized to do so by the proper Board of Directors."[23] Virginia Durr, a nominal member of the Montgomery LWV but more personally attracted to more engaged forms of activism, explained that the emphasis on consensus defined the purpose and identity of the League: "All that stalling and studying the issue, that seemed to me it was just keeping from any kind of action. But on the other hand, they were lovely people and they admitted that they were not a political organization – their aim was to educate rather than mass action."[24]

Efforts to rebuild the League in the South were accompanied by structural changes to strengthen national cohesion. In the period before 1944, the League had constituted itself as a federation of local branches, brought together in association at state and national levels. A 1924 publication of

the League had explained, "There is no such thing as membership for an individual in the national League," reflecting the position that women became members of their local branch, which in turn was affiliated with state and then national League bodies.[25] By the early 1940s, it had become obvious to many in the League that this form of federation was weakening the ability of the League to act as a dynamic national association, which could legitimately claim to speak for its geographically diverse membership. The convoluted process by which state Leagues proposed program study items to national departments had become highly specialized, resulting in a somewhat distant and function-driven report-producing national body. This process had led to the League's unimpeachable reputation for probity, but conferred an undeniably dull and unexciting character, that failed to capture the enthusiasm and activism of even its own members. Marguerite Wells, president of the League between 1934 and 1944, argued that the League had lost sight of its purpose, explaining, "A program participated in by the few rather than the many is alien to the League's purpose … Good citizenship requires not only knowledge but the ability to act."[26] Anna Lord Strauss concurred that the League's 1944 reforms were designed to wrest control of the League from a small handful of professional women, and hand it back to the members. Strauss explained, "I felt we had to get down to the individual member, to get her to take an understanding of government and what she could do about it."[27]

In an effort to ensure that the individual members were more involved in the program and work of the national association, the League reformed itself in 1944, making individuals members of the national League rather than their local branch. Renaming itself the LWVUS, the League hoped to increase the active engagement of members in local, state and national issues. Delegates to the national League conventions were instructed henceforth to vote as individuals, not as state or branch representatives. In strengthening the links and relationship between individual members and the national association in this way, the national leadership effectively disrupted to a certain extent the hierarchy of branch-state-national membership, emphasising membership in the national association over local and state loyalties. This restructure also allowed the national leadership the potential to assert a greater level of control and authority over branches who demonstrated an unacceptable degree of dissent from the national position.

The League's reconstruction of local/national relations met some challenge from its own branch members. In 1949, the Allegheny County branch in Pittsburgh was expelled from the national League for failing to comply with national by-laws on its name, policy and membership rules, and for transgressing the League's rules on non-partisanship by allowing its branch president, Mrs. Smith, to belong to a committee endorsing a specific candidate for the city's mayoral election. Mrs. Smith cast the branch's intransigence as a determination to resist the pressure to yield to national authority, regardless of the issue at stake. "The real schism," she explained, "is not so much the trivial changes in by-laws but in our refusal to accept packaged thinking from Washington." The officers of the Allegheny County branch alleged darkly that "the national group is prey to high pressure propaganda in Washington."[28] Mrs. Smith's group was expelled from the national League and a new group was formed in Allegheny County and quickly affiliated with the national League.

While the reforms and expansion of the mid-1940s suggested that the League was self-aware and able to adapt to changing times, its position on racial segregation and injustice seemed mired in the compromises and frequently unspoken assumptions of racial privilege that they had inherited from the NAWSA in 1920. The NAWSA had notoriously demonstrated a lack of interest in including African-American women in its fight for women's suffrage, exhibiting a willingness not simply to exclude African-American women from equal participation, but also to use actively racist ideologies to further its own purposes. The 1903 NAWSA convention declared its determination to advocate for female suffrage as a method by which white supremacy could be maintained. The same conference infamously adopted a "states rights" resolution which allowed southern white women to prohibit African-American women from joining their state chapters.[29] With some notable exceptions, the LWV seemed generally content to inherit NAWSA's implicitly segregationist position. In some cases this connection was more explicit. Historian Martha Swain has revealed that in 1922 the League's regional secretary complained that the president of the Greenwood, Mississippi branch of the League was also the women's organizer for the Mississippi Ku Klux Klan.[30] Alongside the racism of the white members of the League, low levels of African-American women's participation also reflected the lack of relevance that the League's approach had for African-American women. The focus of the League work on non-partisan voter education and instruction gener-

ally meant that African-American women, who despite heroic efforts were frequently excluded from the electoral process across the South, understandably struggled to see the relevance of voter education projects, or campaigns for electoral reform. As a result of both the racism of the white League members and the lack of relevance many African-American women felt the League had to their lives and the problems of their communities, the possibility of African-American women's participation in League work was never pursued.[31]

For American women's associations such as the League, the challenge of racial integration came at a point when they had successfully redefined their role in American public life. At the very moment when the League and other women's associations were triumphing in their ability to construct women's public activism in a way that both avoided raising the spectre of radical or self-centred feminism, and steered away from confrontation or conflict with domestic feminine ideal, they risked being fatally undermined by the challenge of racial integration. On 9 April 1939, the African-American contralto, Marian Anderson, took to a specially built stage over the steps of the Lincoln Memorial and began to sing "My Country 'tis of thee" to a racially integrated audience of 75,000. The concert, taking place in the nation's capital while Hitler's forces advanced across Europe, seemed to many Americans to strike a symbolic blow against the United States' toleration of racial injustice and segregation."[32] As the nation's capital, Washington DC served as the symbolic centre of the nation's judicial, administrative, political and ideological systems. However in 1939 the city was still strictly segregated. Dorothy Height, a member of both the National Council of Negro Women (NCNW) and the Young Woman's Christian Association (YWCA) recalled that when she moved to Washington in that year, "There was not a toilet downtown that a black person could use. Union Station was the only place a black person could get a sandwich."[33] When the African-American Howard College sought to book Washington DC's largest concert hall for a performance by Anderson, they fell afoul of the strict segregation of public accommodations that prevailed in the nation's capital. The Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR), who owned the Hall, rejected the booking, pointing to a clause in its rules which reserved Constitution Hall for white artists only.

The national controversy that greeted this refusal marked a significant turning point in national toleration of racial discrimination and segregation. Historian Scott Sandage argues the level of press hostility directed

towards the DAR after its decision was indicative of a cultural mood that made white Americans outside the South receptive to the appeals of African-Americans for racial justice for the first time after the reconstruction era.[34] Membership in the DAR was limited to those women who could prove they were related to someone who had aided the rebels in 1776. As only an estimated 5000 of the 400,000 soldiers in the American Revolution were African-American, membership was always going to be overwhelmingly white. The first African-American woman did not join the DAR until 1977, and as late as 1984, the association was subject to a lawsuit when its Washington DC chapter refused admittance to an eligible African-American woman. Despite the fact that the 1939 controversy was focused on the issue of segregation in public accommodation, rather than segregated membership, the storm around the DAR's actions inevitably threw a spotlight onto the ethical dimensions of membership in private associations that practiced or defended racial discrimination. In February 1939, First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, a stalwart of women's associations and a long-standing member of the DAR, wrote to the association tendering her resignation. Roosevelt explained, "you have set an example which seems to me unfortunate and I feel obliged to send in to you my resignation. You had an opportunity to lead in an enlightened way and it seems to me that your organization has failed."[35] The First Lady's resignation from the DAR signified not just a disapproval of its policies on racial segregation, but also reflected a position on the political and ethical responsibilities of associational membership.[36] In her *My Day* newspaper column, Roosevelt explained, "The question is, if you belong to an organization and disapprove of an action … should you resign or is it better to work for a changed point of view within the organization? … [DAR] have taken an action which has been widely talked of in the press. To remain as a member implies approval of that action, and therefore I am resigning."[37]

Eleanor Roosevelt's resignation from the DAR heralded a challenging period for women's associations, during which the racially exclusive practices which were either explicit or implicit in their membership policies and practices, came under increasing pressure. With a few noticeable exceptions, such as the YWCA and the American Friends Service Committee, American women's associations had developed along racially exclusive lines in response to local and national laws and customs, white women's deliberate implementation of segregation, and understandable preferences among African-American women for membership in associations which addressed the specific needs and operating strategies of their

own communities. In the period after 1939, and particularly after the end of the Second World War, the national consensus which had tolerated the existence of segregation since the *Plessy* vs *Ferguson* ruling of 1896 came under increasing pressure. Only a year before the Anderson affair, the Carnegie Foundation had commissioned Swedish sociologist and economist Gunnar Myrdal to produce a study on the position of African-Americans. Myrdal's study, titled *An American Dilemma*, argued that toleration of segregation and racial injustice in the United States had reached breaking point. A system so starkly in contrast with the "American Creed" of liberty, equality and justice for all, Myrdal argued, created an impossible dilemma for Americans.

This dilemma was inevitably intensified as a result of American involvement in the Second World War. F.P. Keppel, one of the trustees of the Carnegie Foundation, acknowledged in his foreword to Myrdal's study the unforeseen timeliness of the book, published in 1944. Keppel explained, "When the Trustees of the Carnegie Corporation asked for the preparation of this report in 1937, no one (except possibly Adolf Hitler) could have foreseen that it would be made public at a day when the place of the Negro in our American life would be the subject of greatly heightened interest in the United States, because of the social questions which the war has brought in its train both in our military and in our industrial life."[38] The involvement of the United States in a fight for freedom, and the participation of so many African-Americans in the struggle, both accelerated African-American demands for equality and made the United States's continued denial of equal rights for so many of its own citizens increasingly untenable.

African-American activists were quick to grasp that this changing ideological context represented an opportunity to demand reform. The Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), established in 1942, reflected African-American demands to an end to racial discrimination. Boycotts such as the "Don't buy where you can't work" campaign demonstrated African-American determination to wield their power as consumers to end discrimination. The "Double V" campaign launched in 1942 by the African-American newspaper *The Pittsburgh Courier* expressed the determination of many in the African-American community to match their efforts to defeat fascism abroad with a campaign to defeat racial segregation at home. Growing African-American activism on civil rights throughout the war contributed to a national sense that the end of the war would see a challenge to racial segregation in the United States. The post-war

international context further contributed to the pressure for racial reform, as the claims of the United States to be the spokesperson for freedom and democracy in the emerging Cold War drew attention to its continued failure to secure the rights of its minority population. As historian Mary Dudziak adroitly asks, "How could American democracy be a beacon during the Cold War, and a model for those struggling against Soviet oppression, if the United States itself practiced brutal discrimination against minorities within its own borders?"[39]

As the national toleration of racial segregation appeared to be wearing increasingly thin, the League seemed to be in a relatively strong position to address the issue. The 1944 restructure of the League made membership policy a matter within the jurisdiction of the national Board, not local chapters. Theoretically, this allowed the LWVUS to reiterate that its national membership policy did not permit racial segregation and to assert its right to overrule any preference southern League chapters may have had for segregation. In practice, however, the newly restructured League continued to turn a blind eye to the existence of racial segregation in its southern branches. The national leadership felt that prevarication was the only pragmatic response to the difficulty of enforcing integration in the South. Moreover, they were unwilling to create turbulence within branches, or to challenge the racial prejudices of some of their members. Simply put, the leadership saw no reason for the national association to support the integrationist preferences of some members over the segregationist preference of others. Evidence from the records and histories of local League chapters reflects the lack of a strong central lead on the issue of racial integration. Rather than develop plans and programs, the national Board took a reactionary position, responding to individual appeals and questions from branches on a case by case basis.

This compromise position, which allowed the national Board to insist the League was not a segregated association, while at the same time allowing local branches to exercise discretion on the matter, was accurately described in Eleanor Roosevelt's *My Day* Column. An active member of the League in the 1920s, in 1956, Roosevelt quoted from a letter she had received accusing the League of practicing segregation in its southern branches. "The writer of the letter," Roosevelt explained, "was trying to convey the fact that many organizations which stood for equality on a national level lost their courage and modified their standards out of fear of the feeling they encountered in the South." Roosevelt subsequently received and published a letter from League president Percy Lee

which explained, "The League has no policy of segregation and its services are, indeed, made available to all citizens." Roosevelt astutely concluded, "Evidently it is fairly well understood throughout the country what the national policy of the League is. But the point made by my correspondent seems to be correct on the local level. Even the League and its courageous members have had to bow to local prejudice."[40]

Left largely to their own devices, and lacking any national directives or instruction on racial integration beyond rather bland public assertions that the National League did not have racially exclusive membership policies, different branches of the LWV took different positions on integration. These different positions frequently reflected the strength of feeling among members, with the impetus for change coming from individual women who were determined to challenge the status quo within their branches. Shannon Frystak's nuanced and complex study of integration in the League in New Orleans (LWVNO), for example, details the efforts of specific individual members to raise the issue of racial justice and integration within their branches. The former branch president, Emily Blanchard, raised the issue of integration in 1947, but her efforts were set aside by the new president, Martha Gilmore, who stated that the League would like to avoid what she called "unfortunate publicity."[41] In 1953, Rosa Keller raised the issue of racial integration in the branch again, prompting the New Orleans Board to send letters to the national and state leadership requesting guidance from this higher level on the issue of integrated membership. As was overwhelmingly the case in the records of debates over integration within women's associations, the debate concentrated not on the principle of racial integration, either for or against, but on the practical consequences of integration. Specifically, the LWVNO was worried about the impact of integrated membership on its unit group system, whereby groups met at individuals' homes throughout the city. They wondered whether it might be possible to introduce two categories of membership, so that African-American women might be invited to join and be granted "general membership" but not attend the meetings in white members' homes.

Such a solution would avoid a challenge to either the segregated nature of social relationships in New Orleans, or the dependence of the League on the social relationships at the heart of its structure. Formal approval for such differentiated membership, however, would introduce officially sanctioned segregation into the LWV structure. The national leadership was unwilling to endorse this solution, instead advising that meetings be

held in public integrated spaces rather than private homes. The serving of refreshments during the meetings, the national League advised, should not be encouraged. The appeals of the LWVNO for national guidance on the issue of integration prompted the national Board to issue letters to all branches. The letters clearly indicated the League preference for allowing local context more weight than any national ruling, arguing that it would be self-defeating to allow the establishment of LWV branches for minority groups if the act of doing so destroyed the effectiveness of the League in that area.[42] As a result of this cautious advice from the national Board, the LWVNO decided not to push "actively" for integration, but to increase its community work, including efforts to work alongside African-American and integrated groups in their community.

The national League similarly preached caution in the face of activism from League branches in other states. Rod Clare's study of the LWV in North Carolina reveals that when national advisor Ruth Lurie visited in 1951 to advise on the issue of interracial membership, she warned the group against accepting African-Americans until meeting space for interracial groups could be secured—local Leagues, in effect, should take their cue from the mores of their local communities rather than from directives from the national League. Effectively advocating a policy of stalling, Clare references Lurie's claim, "Those who are sincerely interested in the North Carolina League will realize progress must be gradual."[43] Determined not to risk the growth of the fledgling state League by plunging them into controversy on the issue of integration, the national leadership advised that the LWVNC continue to treat African-American women as individuals who could be helped by the League, rather than as potential members and co-workers. Lurie advised that local members talk to any potential African-American applicants; "try to give experience in other places; and impress on them that we are eager to service them in any way we can work out."[44]

This effort to "service" African-American women without actually admitting them as members was also evident in the response of the national Board to a group of African-American women from Tuskegee who were eager to affiliate with the League. In 1950, Mrs. Horner, who had undertaken the 1948 tour of Alabama in order to encourage the establishment of new chapters, undertook another tour of that state. "A widely known speaker of great personal charm," according to *The Anniston Star,* Horner reportedly spent much of her time helping "new groups to form provisional Leagues, Leagues to attain local status and local Leagues to build towards state Leagues."[45] In response to her 1950 tour, Horner received

a letter from Mrs. Ashley Dickerson, the first African-American female attorney in Alabama. Dickerson told Horner, "The women of Tuskegee Institute have formed a local League of women voters and are desirous of becoming affiliated with national."[46] Highly anxious at this development, Horner visited Tuskegee to investigate, reporting back to Zella Leonard, the first VP of the League. Horner met with the "Committee of Voters", a group of twenty-five African-American women, all highly educated, most of whom, Horner noted, had MA degrees. Mrs. Dickerson, a friend of NAACP activist Rosa Parks, had visited the League's national office in about 1948 or 1949, and knew that there was no discriminatory clause in the national membership policy. Nonetheless, Horner explained, Dickerson had refrained from applying for membership in the Montgomery League chapter at that time, "because she does not wish to put the local League in a difficult position." She had continued to receive League publications, however, and had shared them with her group in Tuskegee.

Dickerson now proposed African-American membership in the League in a segregated branch system. Because the town of Tuskegee was about 75% African-American, Dickerson suggested, an exclusively African-American branch would be representative of their community—far more representative of their community than the existing all-white associations in Alabama towns whose population was 50% African-American. Mrs. Horner succinctly noted "I stayed clear of this," but explained that the League could not approve of an all-African-American unit within a local League because, while ostensibly promoting the membership of African-American women in the National League, it would at the same time seem to be condoning segregation at the state level. Horner endeavoured to dampen down Dickerson's interest in the League, subtly suggesting it would not be appropriate for the group of African-American women to join the League, given the League's patent lack of interest in racial justice. Horner explained that local branches of the LWV were constrained to work on programs approved at the national level and suggested these were "not necessarily things that they [the Tuskegee women] might desire to work on." In a somewhat loaded question, Horner asked, "what would be best for that group – working as an independent local citizens' committee, getting as much help as they desired from state and national with materials, speakers etc. – or trying to become a real League with limited participation because of restrictions in Alabama over which the League hasn't control?"[47] Horner admitted, "I dreaded the meeting" but concluded that it had not been difficult because Mrs. Dickerson was

"splendid" and agreed that the best solution was for the group to carry on as an independent committee of voters.

A similar quandary arouse in Anniston, Alabama, in 1954, when a group of local African-American women contacted the Anniston LWV for organizational tips. Proposals for the establishment of a segregated division in Anniston had come to the national League in March 1954, after the all-white LWV branch had shared printed material with a local African-American group. Zella Leonard wrote to the Anniston group explaining, "Since it is impossible to have segregated member groups in the League it would seem unwise and subject to future misunderstandings for the Anniston League to do anything that would seem to promote such an organization. Therefore we believe it would be better not to use any League organizational materials but to confine your help to general advice and specific suggestions for which you were asked." Leonard also reminded the branch of the need to act in step with the Alabama League, explaining, "It is important that action within a state be coordinated and worked-out."[48] The Anniston branch, while willing to share material, fretted that the "problems touching on sectional mores might arise in the future if any of the material specifies League's practice of admitting all women citizens to membership." The branch requested that the national Board send them material that they could share with the African-American women, but asked that "you choose (if possible) material which does not go into that phase of League practice having to do with wider-open membership."[49] This concern suggests an unspoken policy in some southern League chapters of simply hoping that potential African-American women did not realize that they could join the League.

In 1954, when the national leadership met with presidents of southern Leagues ostensibly to consider the issue of school integration in response to the Supreme Court's *Brown* vs *Board of Education* ruling, the meeting was also forced to consider its own racial membership, which was still a long way from being a settled question.[50] The meeting revealed the slow and patchy extent of change within the League. Some minimal racial integration of the League had taken place; of the eleven southern Leagues represented, six states (Texas, North Carolina, South Carolina, Arkansas, Tennessee and Virginia) had some African-American membership, although numbers were derisory. South Carolina boasted twelve to eighteen African-American women in their League; Virginia, twelve. The Nashville branch of the Tennessee League claimed to have eight African-American members out of a total membership of 300. Georgia, Florida,

Mississippi, Alabama and Louisiana had entirely white memberships. The group acknowledged "all were agreed that no application for membership can be turned down on account of race" but suggested "someone can talk with the person and she may withdraw her application for membership. If she does not wish to withdraw the application she must be taken in. Under our by-laws there is no way to circumvent that." It is impossible to overlook the lack of appetite from the group for both the idea of integrated membership and for the unavoidable controversy such membership would stir up. The meeting of the southern state presidents determined an approach to integrated membership that sought to accede to membership requests from African-American women only where they could not be dissuaded, and, above all, to avoid controversy. "You try to prevent anything happening that would be detrimental to the League," explained Zella Leonard of the national Board.[51] It was, as Rod Clare argues, "confusing and utterly noncommittal."[52]

The determination of the League to avoid controversy was challenged in 1956, when the Atlanta branch of the LWV underwent a crisis on the issue of integration. Sara Mitchell Parsons recalled that the crisis was, as in other branches, sparked not by national guidance but by the actions of an individual member. A new white member who had recently moved to Atlanta from the North took to the floor during the group's annual meeting and questioned the chapter's by-laws which stated "that any white woman may apply for membership." Pointing out that this meant the Atlanta chapter did not conform to the national League position, the member then moved that "the word 'white' be stricken from the by-laws of the Atlanta League of Women Voters." A heated debate ensued, with one member insisting in a voice that was "emotional and high-pitched, 'If we allow Negroes to join this proud organization we will kill it'."[53] In April 1956, the Georgia State League voted fifty seven to forty two to oppose proposals to maintain segregation in their state League. Eleven office holders of the Atlanta League resigned when Georgia state leadership issued a statement making it clear that all Leagues across Georgia must integrate in accordance with the stated national position.

The dissenting, departing members of the Atlanta LWV couched their opposition to the integration of their branch, not in terms of a principled opposition to integration, but rather in terms of the relationship between national authority and branch autonomy and of the impact integration would have on the political effectiveness of the League in the context of a segregated Atlanta. The statement issued by the resigning members

and published in the *Atlanta Journal* explained: "recently it has become apparent to us that there is a serious division within the League itself as to its basic objectives. We are not in accord with the increasing centralization of authority on a national level, nor with the emphasis on conformity without regard for the individual needs of our League …. We feel the integration of our League at this time will raise so many problems that the effectiveness of the Atlanta League will be seriously impaired and that we can no longer properly function in the political life of our community."[54] One resigning member, who asked not to be named, told an *Atlanta Journal* reporter that they had resigned, not because of their own personal discomfort over meeting with African-Americans, but because the act of interracial meeting implied a liberal political stance that she was uncomfortable with: "some of the resigning members were not so much against having Negro members as they were against seeing the League become too liberal, she said … Liberal elements have joined the League, she said, because there is hardly any other outlet in Georgia for liberal thinking."[55] The departing members established their own, short-lived organization, the Atlanta Voters' Guild. The newly integrated Atlanta League changed the location of its meetings from the segregated Piedmont Driving Club to the Jewish Progressive Club.

The issue of integration within the Georgia LWV was not entirely settled by the membership crisis of 1956. In 1959, Georgia League member Frances Pauley wrote to Ruth Phillips, president of the national LWV, seeking guidance on how to reply if she was asked about African-American membership in the League. Phillips's reply reaffirmed that the policy of the League remained that which had been stated at the 1954 meeting of the national and southern League presidents, namely that "any women of voting age who believes in representative government is eligible to become a voter [a member of the League]." This clarification aside, Phillips went on to explain that the League's de facto policy was to leave racial issues in the hands of their local branches. Phillips explained, "for many people who have not lived in the South or travelled extensively there, it takes an effort of the imagination to realize how difficult it may be to carry out even these clear cut policies. For example, we know that in certain localities there is literally no meeting place where an ordinary League meeting could be held as a mixed group." Because of these localized difficulties, Phillips explained, the national League sought to be sensitive to regional differences: "We have felt, therefore, that while continuing to give state and local Leagues the best counsel we can, we must depend upon them

for on-the-spot appraisals of a given situation." Phillips acknowledged that "this undoubtedly means that League policy may seem – or perhaps be – inconsistent, but since the local people are the ones who must bear the brunt of public opinion – on one side or the other – they must be the ones to size it up." The role of the National Board, as Phillips saw it, was not to offer decisive and unequivocal support for integration, therefore, but rather "to help in keeping the question in proportion, in keeping the interests of the entire League in mind, in calling attention to possible effects on the whole program, in cautioning League officers and Boards to use more than ordinary care to follow standard League procedures." Phillips concluded, "As I see it, whatever they do, state and local Leagues in the South are going to have a difficult time steering between Scylla and Charybdis for a considerable time ahead."[56]

Georgia's experience had prompted a wave of anxiety throughout the southern Leagues. Ruth Brock, a member of the Montgomery LVW, recalled a meeting she presided over in 1956: "we had gotten word that Atlanta had had to admit a black and what would happen if someone came to the League, some black person, woman who wanted to be a member. It was like this; we just kept our fingers crossed that no one would come."[57] It is telling that the policy of dealing with the issue of interracial membership by hoping that no African-American women applied was, in fact, remarkably easy. The elite and exclusive reputation of the League ensured that many women—including many white women—simply assumed it was an invitation-only membership group like the socially select Junior League. Sarah Cabot Pierce, much as she had admired the work of the League when she lived in Georgia, had not applied to join because she had thought that membership was "not open to the public. You had to be invited."[58]

The failure of the League to address the difficulties of integrating its membership meant that the pace of change was glacially slow, with some branches clearly determined to avoid the issue of integration for as long as possible. A Board meeting of the Birmingham League noted in March 1965, "The League feels it was now at the point where Negro membership might approach us. It was pointed out that the League of Women Voters was open to all women and we must prepare ourselves."[59] At a state meeting in Montgomery in the same year, some members of local branches complained that other branches should inform them when they accepted African-American women as members. The state leadership responded wearily that "as these memberships are as routine as others," to

report them in this way "would be giving undue attention to them."[60] In September 1966, the Birmingham Board meeting reported that a request had been received from an African-American woman to join the branch, and that a white member had asked to bring an African-American woman who was interested in joining to the next orientation meeting. After discussion, the branch reached "consensus on a reaffirmation of the League's open membership policy."[61] The branch's review of the year 1965 noted wryly that this consensus was an uneven one. Four members of the branch had resigned because the League was "too fast moving." Another two members had resigned because the League was "too slow moving."[62]

The national League's deference to local knowledge and circumstances reflected an understanding that, since the state of race relations was not nationally uniform, it would be unwise, perhaps impossible, for the League to insist on a uniform League policy. The policy of national deference to local context meant that the national Board effectively ignored the appeals of more pro-integrationist members for a more active national leadership on the issue, and left branches or state Leagues to fight it out for themselves. Frystak notes, "[i]n effect, the national League provided a way out for those Leagues that were unwilling or unable to integrate."[63] Some pro-integration members of the League were disappointed at the lack of leadership from the national Board. One member of the Atlanta League, Nan Pendergrast, later recalled, "I remember being disappointed … because I had expected the national League to say, 'You must integrate or get out of the League.' But they didn't do it. They left the decision to us to make. And it was so crazy. Blacks had the vote. How could we call ourselves 'women voters' and not allow anyone who could vote, not encourage anybody who could vote, to come?"[64]

One of the significant challenges facing the League was reconciling the national imperative to move away from racial segregation with the preference of significant numbers of branch members on membership policies that reflected their social networks. Efforts to change the racially homogenous membership practices which dominated within the League challenged social convention and personal comfort levels; integration threatened to disrupt the "sociability" element on which branch membership was based. Women joined the League at least partly to become part of a social network. Recruitment efforts recognized and exploited the desire for social contact; a report in *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* entitled "Provide Pleasant Path to Civic Work" explained, "Painless is the word for the means the Allegheny County League of Women Voters is taking to make

members friends aware of League activities. Inviting people to a series of teas, they expect to sign up at least a part of the 1000 new members they have aimed for."[65] The importance of the social aspect of the League was reflected in the fact that branch activities were frequently reported in local newspapers on the social pages, next to news of weddings and other social events. While membership in the League was theoretically open to any woman, in practice, the League was aware that recruiting either working-class or African-American women would threaten the comfortable social bonds of the branch.

Even more difficult to manage was the fact that the pervasive model of relationships between African-American women and white women in the South was that of employer and domestic help. Montgomery League member Gerry Yeoman explained that it was "very standard" for all the League members she knew to have household help.[66] The intimacy and social intercourse implied by meetings in homes made the prospect of branch meetings that included white women and potentially, their domestic help, challenging for all concerned. Zecozy Williams, the first African-American member of the Montgomery LWV, was specifically invited to join the League by Virginia Durr.[67] She later recalled her feelings of discomfort at League meetings, explaining, "My impression of League prior to joining was that it was for the upper echelon of whites." Williams had worked as a domestic servant until she secured a position as a cook with the Headstart programme in 1966, and while she recalled that the white members of the League were "nice. Welcoming me and all," she reflected "I guess I didn't have the urge to mix and mingle because wasn't anybody there in my status."[68] Other issues also constrained African-American membership in the League. With employment more common among African-American women than white women, African-American women struggled to find the time to attend the League meetings. Williams explained, "The League met at lunchtime from 12 to 1. I had no lunchtime. I would say I did not have time to participate in the League, to be an active member."[69]

As Christina Greene's study of integration in Durham suggests, the integration of study groups or what the LWVUS called its "unit" groups, which usually met in members' homes, was uncomfortable. Such meetings were unlikely to foster the sense of mutual respect and equality on which the much-vaunted process of consensus depended. Employee and employer relations, as Greene points out, reflected not egalitarianism and parity, but rather "a racial caste system that required deference and subordination from black women."[70] Uncomfortable social relationships were

probably not helped by the kind of assumptions made by some members. White Montgomery League member Billie Pirnie recalled, "My recollection is that … several [African-American women] actually joined, but did not do anything in the activities of the League … They had never been in an organization with white women, with white people, let's put it that way. They may have been very uncomfortable." Prefacing her analysis with the proviso that "we never had much of an association with black people, being from another part of the country, so I really didn't understand them," Pirnie concluded that African-American members were somewhat out of their depth in a civic association, asserting "I knew they had never participated in anything that gave their time and effort for a public or a civic duty or obligation or whatever."[71] Meetings between African-American and white women, which were socially awkward and uncomfortable when they took place in private homes, were no less problematic if they took place in public accommodations. Efforts to overcome social anxiety and legal constrictions were cumbersome. In both Charleston and Nashville, for example, African-American women were members of the League, but were not included in the social luncheons.[72] The Charleston LWV, president of the South Carolina League, explained in 1954, "has not given up its luncheons, even though the Negro members cannot attend the luncheon. They can come in afterwards for the program."[73] Such practices were unlikely to promote bonds of sisterhood, equality and collegiality.

The failure of the League to take more decisive steps towards integration in its own organization was to have significant consequences for the position of local branches when civil rights crises hit their communities. At the same time that the League was uncomfortably wrestling with the issue of segregation within its own organization, the issue of desegregation throughout the United States was becoming ever more prominent. An association that claimed to be an influential force in American life, such as the LWV, felt under pressure to take a public position. Two months after the *Brown* vs *Board of Education* decision, the president of the League, Percy Lee, called a meeting of the Presidents of southern States in Atlanta, Georgia, to discuss whether the League should take a position on the issue of integration in schools. The opening statement explained the League's difficulty in responding to *Brown*, asserting: "Every effort must be exerted to protect the integrity of the League and its usefulness and at the same time promote the principles in which it believes. The League must find a way to exert a calm, unemotional and wise leadership

in the search for solutions."[74] The meeting agreed that rather than openly advocating integration, the priority of the League should be to work for calmness, "by not entering into controversial issues."[75] The conference agreed that state Leagues should support the legitimacy of the Supreme Court decision, while staying silent on the merits of the endorsement of integration which it implied. The minutes of the meeting reflected the absence of any open debate or position with the League on the issue of segregation noting, "The League would have no authority to oppose segregation because there is not now on the current agenda or continuing responsibility anything that would authorize action." Zella Leonard reminded the group of the purpose of their organization, asserting that the issue of school desegregation could not be other than central to that purpose. "The League of Women Voters owes something to the citizens of the United States," she asserted, "and this is a problem that faces all of us. We have an obligation to do what we can to help the citizen meet this problem."[76] While acknowledging this obligation, however, the League consistently avoided taking a position on the issue of racial injustice, insisting that it was not able to contribute to civil rights activism because this issue had not been proposed or agreed at one of its biannual national conventions as a topic for program making.

The logic of this position was that while the League acknowledged that racial justice was part of its purpose, activism in support of racial justice was not (until 1966) part of its program. Rather than seeking to correct this anomaly, the League chose to hide behind it, as a way of avoiding the controversy and internal dissent that proposing such a program would provoke. Before 1963, branches did not make use of the local branch suggestion process to prompt the national association to initiate study of racial justice. The absence of such suggestions from the local branches, however, did not necessarily mean that the national leadership was unable to take action. A 1958 letter about the general structure of program making in the *National Voter* defended the practice of the national leadership taking a dominant position in actively setting the associations' program: "National is in close touch with the great issues confronting us; its main business is the study of those issues so that it can supply League members with food for thought."[77] Throughout the 1940s and 1950s, however, the League avoided taking any national position on what many would have had no hesitation in defining as the great political and ethical issue of the time. The instinct of the Atlanta conference to avoid involving the League in a

controversial issue was supported by its guest speakers, George Mitchell of the Southern Regional Council and Phillip Hammer of the Committee of the South. Hammer assured the meeting, "The primary thing is to maintain the effectiveness of the institution through which you are working … to keep the temperature from getting too high might be a better job for the League than to back public schools."[78]

The southern Leagues sought to bring calm to the tense atmosphere, and to urge their communities to approach the issue with caution and patience: "It was generally agreed that time was a most important factor in meeting the problems involved in the segregation issue … most thoughtful Negroes think integration should come slowly." These "thoughtful Negroes" were neither named nor present at the meeting to discuss the League's position. The conference rejected an active position, and instead agreed that "the LWV could do more not by entering into controversial issues but by sticking to specifics when they begin to emerge; and emphasizing the necessity for calmness and a temperate attitude."[79] Such a position allowed local Leagues to stay out of the controversial race tensions that gripped their community. The policy of neutrality was illustrated when Mrs. Thomas Miller of Florence, North Carolina, wrote to the national Board enquiring about the Leagues' position on segregation. Dixie Drake, the program organization secretary for the League, responded, "The League of Women Voters on the United States has no position on segregation of the races, in public schools or otherwise."[80] Instead the League chose to focus on its existing national responsibilities: the United Nations, collective security, economic development, treaty-making powers, world trade, budgetary procedures, tax rate limits, inflation/deflation and Washington DC Home rule. The silence of the League inevitably led to some ambiguity over its position. While some felt that the failure of the national League to publically support *Brown* was tantamount to support for massive resistance, others took the opposite view. Mrs. Fisher, president of Mississippi League, wrote to Zella Leonard in 1954. "I have met with 3 coast Leagues and the Jackson League board," Fisher explained, assuring Leonard, "All agreed on the wisdom of our charted course of silence, publicly." However, she explained that outside the League, the position of neutrality met with a strong degree of criticism: "the outstanding citizens (men) with whom I have talked tell me that our not taking a stand for segregation is tantamount to saying we are for integration."[81]

The reluctance of the national Board to take a position on the issue of school integration meant that, as with the question of integrated branch membership, local chapters varied widely in their approach. The Georgia division of the League, widely considered one of the more liberal of the southern state divisions, collaborated with other women's groups in the state to write to Governor Talmadge as early as 1954 in support of public education. Other League branches kept their heads down and simply tried to avoid any engagement in the issue, even as their communities became the national focus points of racial protest. In Montgomery Alabama, for example, the new chapter of the League was emerging just as the city was rocked by the events of the Montgomery Bus Boycott—a monumental exercise in mass protest that many historians acknowledge as the starting point for the modern civil rights movement. The Montgomery League took no position and made no comment on the events on the boycott. Rose Sparling, president of the Montgomery LWV, recalled that the working methods of the League and its focus on study and consensus, "protected" it from having to respond to the boycott: "Feelings were so high and so intense … this business of studying and not suddenly adopting something that seemed popular and that was timely, that everybody is talking about, protected the League. They moved slowly in troubled waters."[82] While Sparling acknowledged the impact of the boycott on individual members, she explained that it was simply not considered within the remit of League business: "I should say that it affected us. It affected everybody. We were all talking about it, but I don't think it affected our League lives, our voter service or any of the things we did."[83]

So successful was the Montgomery chapter in defining civil rights as outside the remit of its activism that its policy of tactful silence on the issue continued into the 1960s, even when African-American women began to join the League. When Bea Cohen, a white member of the Montgomery League in the 1960s, was asked if the group had discussed the issue of civil rights, she responded, "I don't think that would be the kind of topic we could discuss. I think that this was something that was rather personal. Since it was not a subject that they were going to study."[84] African-American Johnnie Carr, who had succeeded Martin Luther King Jr. as president of the Montgomery Improvement Association in 1967, joined the Montgomery LWV in around 1968. During her time at the League, Carr's son was the plaintiff in a school board case, with the white husband of fellow League member Betty Robinson serving as the School Board attorney. When Robinson was asked if she and Carr ever talked about this in the

League meetings, she responded, "No, we really did not."[85] Carr felt that the white members of the League offered a form of what she described as "personal support" but argued that the idea of African-American and white women working together in common cause had simply not yet been accepted. Carr explained, "no other support did we get. It's just now [1990] becoming where we're working together in the various things that are going on in the community. At one time I was over here doing this and you were over there doing that."[86]

White members of the League in Montgomery later recalled that they did not feel able to intervene in civil rights activism, fearing the consequences for themselves and their families. Virginia Durr reflected, "I found in all the groups I belonged to that women were always terribly afraid about their husband losing his job or some kind of economic pressure on their husband."[87] The reluctance of white LWV members to engage with racial justice also reflected their assessment that such engagement would create a level of controversy that would render the branch ineffective. The annual report that Leagues delivered to the national Board required that chapters highlight their "Proudest achievement of the Year" Reporting on the year March 1957–1958, the president of the Montgomery League noted to her colleague, "if you can think of one, you are better at imagining than I am. About the only thing I can think of is that there is still a League in Montgomery."[88] A subsequent president, Sarah Cabot Pierce, described a meeting in Auburn when another member stood up, with tears in her eyes, to say that the League was not doing enough on racial justice. Pierce responded, defending the policy of caution: "Listen, I want to do everything we can do and still have a League. That means you do the best you can."[89]

Throughout the 1950s, the lack of any national position on civil rights and integration served as a mandate for the prevarication and inactivity of local branches. In the early 1960s, however, as the issue showed no signs of going away and, indeed, was becoming increasingly pressing, local branches in southern states saw the need to negotiate with national guidelines and to seek justification to intervene in civil rights as a matter of local concern. These interventions were promoted by an understanding that local conditions were particularly acute, and, irrespective of the lack of a formal national position on civil rights, circumstances demanded that local Leagues accept their civic responsibilities by making some kind of statement. In doing so, they interpreted civil rights crises as local branch issues, arguing that they had the authority to take a stance

on racial crisis in their community, without the need for a cohesive national position on the topic. By-laws of local chapters allowed for this kind of local action, as long as it could be defined as being in agreement with the Principles of the National League. The Birmingham LWV, for example, had introduced a by-law in 1960 which explained, "The League of Women Voters of Birmingham may take action on local governmental measures and policies in the public interest in conformity with the Principles of the League of Women Voters of the United States."[90]

While by-laws such as this seemed to suggest the possibility of local autonomy in responding to local pressure points in the civil rights movement, in reality, action was slow and ambiguous. In 1963, when the civil rights protests in Birmingham were gaining national and international headlines, Alabama state president Alice Hastings felt that state action was imperative. Hastings sent a letter to branches across the state declaring, "Many League communities in Alabama now face a threat to the climate of Law and Order" and asked local presidents to call emergency local meetings to consider whether they wished to issue a statement "in favour of law and order in the present racial crisis in the area, and also whether we wished the State League to do so." Hastings warned presidents of the strict, and possibly impossible, perimeters of the discussion, directing them, "There should not be discussion of integration vs segregation, what you are deciding is basic law and order as against anarchy … [members] may speak out for law and order or they may keep silence. They may not speak on behalf of mob rule of violence – anarchy to be exact – no matter by whom projected."[91]

Despite Hasting's view that the crisis in Alabama demanded that the state League take a position, local branches were divided. Out of the thirteen League branches in Alabama, nine agreed to "speak out." The Birmingham branch, which was closest to the drama, sent an open letter to both the Mayor and the City Council: "The League of Women Voters of Birmingham Alabama would like to reaffirm its position and speak out for law and order in our community … The League of Women Voters in Birmingham Alabama implicitly believes in and must be counted on the side of law and order against anarchy."[92] Four branches responded negatively to the proposal that either their local branch or the state League should speak out.[93] The Anniston League reported that it "strongly opposes any action on this subject at state level—either position or stand. We feel that this subject has too many facets to turn them off with a simple 'law and order' statement." The Anniston branch felt that any statement on the

position would inevitably be interpreted as taking a side, explaining, "We hesitate to endorse any state-wide action at this time on the grounds that it would be extremely vulnerable to misinterpretation as being partisan – either pro-Wallace or anti-Wallace." The branch reported that it had been unable to reach consensus on the seemingly simple statement expressing support for the rule of law, disagreeing among themselves over the connotation of the word "law," explaining "we feel that citizens have a right to protest and challenge a law they consider unconstitutional or unfair."[94]

Despite the lack of clarity and the refusal to address the rights and wrongs of the civil rights activism, Alabama LWV's statement was nonetheless a significant position for a state League to have taken. Sarah Cabot Pierce, later president of the Alabama League, reflected on the impact of the statement when a new president of the Auburn League expressed an enthusiasm for "doing something on the race question" in 1965. In response to the request, the Alabama League called meeting of the state board members to talk to representatives from Montgomery and Auburn. Pierce explained carefully that the 1963 statement had been a one-off, and should not be interpreted as a pro-civil rights state position or as new latitude within the League for state action without national consensus. Writing disapprovingly of League members who were "under the impression that a League could nip into the principles [of the National League] as a peg on which to hang an action item," Pierce reflected, "I realize we strayed from the fold on what seemed to be an earth shattering matter on law and order. I truly do not personally ever expect to go along on an extra-curricular matter like this again. I fear it, and only feel that we are safe when we follow our fundamentals of program, study and then action."[95]

While the vast majority of League chapters avoided intervention into issues of racial injustice generally, the issue of school integration, and in particular, the threat which massive resistance posed towards the principle of public education, proved to be something of a tipping point for many League members. The threat of school closure prompted many within the League to interpret school desegregation, not as an issue of racial justice, which they insisted was outside their association's interests and purpose, but as an issue of public education and the welfare of children. In Georgia, the LWV fought against the rising tide of massive resistance to school integration in its state, running a campaign against a state amendment that sought to circumvent school integration by providing public funds to private citizens for tuition in private schools. When school-closing laws were passed to ensure that the acceptance of an African-American student in any school in

the state would precipitate the closing of all the public schools, the League spoke out. "The issue of whether or not Georgia will have a public school system," explained the division president, "is larger than the one of personal convictions about segregation or desegregation."[96]

In Alabama, several local Leagues began to agitate to intervene in the school integration in 1962, only to find they were held back by the League's insistence on consensus and study before action. When the Montgomery branch board was considering a local agenda item "to finance and maintain public schools in Montgomery County" that would have meant taking a pro-integration position, it was visited by Mrs. Clark of the Arkansas state League who preached caution. Clark warned the Montgomery branch, "some of the other Leagues in the state … are not as far along as you are and may not have the support that you have in Montgomery. To be effective in supporting the public schools in Alabama, or for that matter in any state, Public School concern should be a state current agenda and have full support from all the Leagues throughout the state and have full membership participation … The League is a slow moving organization, but this is our greatest strength. We take time to study and look at all sides of the questions. This is particularly important in the school situation which is all too often a thing of emotions rather than the mind."[97] While acknowledging that the League would eventually have to take a position on school integration, Clark urged Montgomery to move carefully in making support for public education a local study item, warning, "before you can be really effective you should have the support of the state Leagues as well as the local Leagues throughout the state."[98]

In 1963, the Alabama state League began the slow process by which the state division could announce that it had reached consensus on a new item for local action, contacting local chapters to ask them to consider their position on public education and the preservation of public schools. In Birmingham, the branch reported, "Although we are not yet prepared to recommend specific measures to accomplish this … our members do unreservedly support preservation of public schools even if that means a degree of integration."[99] The branch's local newsletter, the *Birmingham Voter*, reminded its readers of the slow process of activism in the League and the need to avoid publicity before the state League was ready to commit itself to a position. The newsletter reported in September 1963, "This is a local consensus on a state item however and can only be announced and publicized by the state if and when the other Leagues throughout the state reach the same consensus. That is, there will be no statement regarding

the schools in the name of the League of Women Voters until consensus is reached by all the Leagues." Carefully outlining the parameters of action permitted by League members, the report explained, "Individual members other than Board members may express themselves, of course, as they see fit. A local League may present facts about a local situation to the public but may offer no opinion on a course of action. We may publicize how much a private school system has cost in other localities but we must not say a private school system is a good or a bad thing."[100] Pointing out the benefits of the League's procedures, the report concluded, "A local League cannot make a statement on a state item. This procedure ensures that when the League of Women Voters finally does say something it speaks with force because it speaks for the membership."[101]

In October 1963, following a state board meeting in Birmingham, the Alabama state League finally agreed on a position. Avoiding the use of the words "Negro" and "Integration," the statement rather focused on support for public education: "The League of Women Voters of Alabama supports the maintaining and improving of a system of free public education in Alabama. The LWV of Alabama upholds the belief that a system of free public education which provides equal opportunities for all its citizens is our best investment for the future."[102] In the wake of this state level consensus, the League was able to work to support public education, with the tacit acknowledgement that this put the League on the side of integration, however, minimal, rather than with the proponents of massive resistance. Following the model of the AAUW in Little Rock, Arkansas, who had produced and distributed a report on the costs of school closure, the Alabama League's school committee funded the state-wide distribution of a publication on the educational and economic effects of closing public schools. In the following years, the Alabama League made significant interventions into the debate over public education. In April 1967, for example, the Birmingham League sent a representative to speak at the Alabama Legislature panel on public education while its president, Mrs. Cecil Himes, issued a press statement in support of public education, declaring "Alabamians are law abiding citizens. We hope to see our schools permitted to be operated in peace and calm by local authorities, as all under court orders are now doing. Let us face this period with realistic maturity."[103]

Despite examples of local engagement on local issues of civil rights, the National League had maintained a policy of caution on civil rights issues as a national policy. In July 1963, League President Mrs. Phillips

sent a memo to all local League presidents entitled "Crisis in Civil Rights." The memo asked "What is the job of the League of Women Voters in the present Crisis on Civil Rights?" before carefully reiterating the League's policy of non-engagement: "We have no national current Agenda item on civil rights; we have no national consensus arrived at in the traditional manner." Nevertheless, Phillips explained, "we feel that Leagues need not sit with folded hands on the sidelines as events crowd upon us." Phillips encouraged local branch presidents to overlook the lack of a national position within the League and to consider doing local work at the community level.[104] Initial ventures into the field were cautious, and still maintained the League policy of careful neutrality. In August 1963, the DeKalb LWV compiled a summary of the proposed Civil Rights Bill, published in the *Decatur-Dekalb News*. Entitled "Women Voters summarize Civil Rights Measures," the article carefully explained, "It is important that the public understand that the League of Women Voters has NO STAND on any of these bills but is presenting the above only as information."[105]

It was not until 1964 that the national Board finally made racial justice—under the less emotionally charged title Human Relations—part of its national agenda. As more and more local branches reported back to the national League on their local efforts, the mood at the national conventions became more supportive of such activism, notwithstanding the lack of national backing. At the 1962 national convention, the New Orleans League president reported on the role of that branch in the city's desegregation crisis. *The National Voter* reported, it "was a story of such courageous responsibility in defense of ideals that it brought the 1800 listeners to their feet … Perhaps members of the New Orleans League drew strength in their lonely action from knowledge that the great majority of League members across the nation were behind them."[106] The demands of the civil rights movement, in particular the events of 1963, had finally prompted sufficient branches to request that racial justice be addressed as part of the national League's program. Delegates to the national convention in the following year voted to include a new item, "Development of Human Resources: Evaluation of policies and programs in the United States to provide for all persons equality of opportunity for education and employment" on the agenda for 1964–1966.[107] The League explained the move was "in part an outgrowth of concern expressed by League members during the long hot summer of 1963 … many League members believed it was time for the government to make some kind of move."[108] In the fall of 1963, the local Leagues used the program suggestions

system to suggest that members "wanted to begin studying problems involving the rights, well-being and opportunities of the people of the United States."[109]

The two years of League study that followed showed that members of the League seemed to feel that their lack of intervention on the issue of racial justice was no longer tenable. In 1965, Alice Hastings, president of the Alabama League of Women Voters, wrote to Julia Stuart, president of the national League, musing "It has occurred to me that you of the national Board and staff may have been wondering what, if anything, the Alabama League has been doing during this time of focus on voting rights and procedures in Alabama." Hastings referred to the ongoing demonstrations in Selma on voting rights, explaining the League's local inactivity. "We made no public statement on 'law and order' this time … We supported no marches nor any other demonstration. Yet the urgent need to 'do' something was stirring in all of us. As a League, we sat tight. For many of us this was not easy! Surely our League must do something, could do something under our Voting and registration law continuing responsibility, which has been on our program for a decade." Despite this anxiety, Hastings argued that the League's program of study and cautious action must prevail, regardless of temptations to the contrary;

> We have learned from other incidents that it is for the League to keep steady … The League does not, as an organization, make great sounds of either protest or acclaim in times of crisis … but it moves on through factual study and consensus to approve legislative action. This way of working has a definite role to play in civic and even social readjustment … It is difficult for some of us not to leave the steady, often quiet pace of the League which leads to the accomplishment of a less spectacular but none the less very important change. One of the most important functions of the League, it seems to me, is to provide for women a group in which she can find a way of working that can, without conflict, but with a spirit of moderation and goodwill bring about needed and desirable change.[110]

In March 1966, the Board proudly announced that national consensus had been reached and that "the League had a position on the development of human resources."[111] The League issued a statement explaining, "The members of the League of Women Voters of the United States believe that the federal government shares with other levels of government the responsibility to provide equality of opportunity in education and employment for all persons in the United States ….The League also

supports the federal effort to prevent and/or remove discrimination in education and employment and to help communities bring about racial integration of their school systems."[112] The statement gave official national sanction within the League for local and state Leagues to take action on the issue of racial justice.

Emergence of a national position did not result in the immediate transformation of the League into an activist civil rights group. While the national League was finally prepared to publically take a stand in support of civil rights, it remained somewhat timid in its approach to the issue of voting rights. Efforts to address the extent to which some voters in the South were disenfranchised because of their race would seem perfectly in keeping with the focus of the League. Local southern Leagues, however, shied away from taking a public position on the issue, although in some instances they acted surreptitiously in order to support African-American voting drives. The Voter Services Department of the Birmingham branch reported in January 1966 that "after the passage of the Voting Rights Bill last summer, we were asked a number of times to assist at drives aimed at either whites or negroes. We would not participate in any drive aimed at only one group with the deliberate exclusion of the other so we did nothing."[113] Anne Findley Shores, president of the Birmingham branch, explained to national officers in 1965 that her branch had deliberately avoided being seen to participate in efforts to register more African-American voters. Shores explained, "We could not engage in any drives aimed at only one group which had the avowed purpose of outvoting another group." The branch did, however, work to distribute its voting materials, including sample ballots in the city. These efforts were on the face of it, not directed at one particular group but Shores confessed, "knowing … that amongst the 17 candidates was a Ku Klux Klan Slate, we succumbed to the temptation to distribute the larger percentage of our ballots to the Negro Community."[114] The annual report of the branch's Voter's Services Committee 1965–1966 revealed the hope that these efforts might help ease the situation in Birmingham, explaining, "The election materials which we have distributed we have used as tools to initiate some communication with the Negro community … we feel that now we have established a few points of contact we will be able to be more effective in the future in both voter service work as well as possibly in the promotion of racial harmony." In the following year, the Voter Services Committee was more overtly engaged explaining, "We tried to reach the Negro Community in large numbers with our Voters Guide to both

encourage registration and League membership. We went to see the editor of the locally published Negro newspaper … he not only gave us the names of many Negro leaders who could help us with distribution of our voter guides but he published the guide in full."[115]

The Montgomery branch similarly avoided a deliberate identification with African-American voter drives while lending unofficial support to efforts to register more African-American voters. Dorothy Moore recalled that the Voter Services Committee of her League chapter printed sample ballots to help voters prepare to vote, and then gave a third of them to Rufus Lewis, who ran the African-American Citizen's Club dedicated to providing voter registration information. The League committee also printed 10,000 copies of a brochure listing the questions asked by the Board of Registrars to candidates applying to register, which they worked with Lewis to ensure were distributed among the African-American community. The brochure also contained a schedule of registration times in each precinct. When word got out that the League had distributed this information among African-American communities, Moore alleged that the Board of Registers hurriedly met to change their schedule. The Southern Regional Council immediately gave the League $500 to reprint the brochure with the updated schedule.

The ad hoc activities of members of the League illustrate the broadly liberal outlook of many of their members. Members of associations such as the League were potentially valuable resources in the struggle for racial integration. The assumption behind the White House conference in 1963 was that members of women's associations had not only the authority and influence but also the inclination to take the lead in their communities. Studies of community-level activism in support of integration would seem to bear this out. Branch members did see themselves as civic leaders, and were on the whole likely to be supportive of moderate positions. Indeed ad hoc women's groups which sprung up in communities across the South at crisis points in the civil rights period drew their numbers from the branch membership of women's associations such as the LWV. As this study of the League deminstrates, however, while individual and groups of members of existing women's associations often demonstrated a willingness to intervene in racial integration crises, the national associations to which they belonged were simply incapable of lending their infrastructure to the cause of racial justice. The auspices of existing associations were too fragile, too dependent on consensus, fundamentally too conservative as institutions to engage with racial justice. Having developed as an almost exclusively white association, the LWV felt compelled to avoid

confrontation with the issue of the racial integration of their membership, recognizing that engagement with the issue would force them to confront the weakness and structural tensions inherent in their associations.

Notes

1. Joan Hanover, "50 Vocal Years are marked by League of Women Voters" *Bridgeport Post* (Connecticut) 6 April 1969, 17, "League of Women Voters Explained," *Bennington Banner* (Vermont), 8 January 1969, 4, "Women Voters has been a worrisome lot to many politicians" *Anderson Herald* (Indiana), 4 April 1969, 10, Women Voters League has 50th Anniversary," *Standard-Speaker* (Hazletown, Pennsylvania), 11 February 1970, 17.
2. *New York Herald Tribune* 'The Lady who scares Politicians', 3 November 1946, 9.
3. "Arguments for and against changing the name of League of Women Voters to League of Active Voters (or some such)". Anna Lord Strauss, LWV Papers, Library of Congress, Washington DC, series III, box 1198.
4. Isma Dooly, "Current Events from a Woman's point of View" *The Atlanta Constitution,* 30 January 1921.
5. Mrs. Raymond Brown, "Women's Opposing Legislative Program," *The Evening News* (Harrisburg Pennsylvania), 30 June 1926, 16.
6. Clara Savage, "Women in Arms over Remarks of Governor," *The Charlotte News*, 30 January 1921.
7. Isma Dooly, "Current Events from a Woman's point of View" *The Atlanta Constitution*, 30 January 1921.
8. See Rod Clare, "Revisiting 'the Doldrums'. The League of Women Voters in North Carolina in the 1950s," *The North Carolina Historical Review* 86:2, (April 2009) pp. 180–207, Kathryn L. Nasstrom, "'More was Expected of us' The North Carolina League of Women Voters and the Feminist movement in the 1920s" *The North Carolina Historical Review* 68:3, (July 1991) 307–319.
9. Song skit (not dated) LWV of Alabama papers, box 15, file "Membership Development."
10. "Gad-about mother brings 'better world' to children," Margaret Turner, *Atlanta Constitution,* 27 June 1948.

11. Amy Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace: Traditional Motherhood and Radical Politics in the 1960s* (University of Chicago, Chicago and London, 1993), 7.
12. "President of Women Voters Typifies Family-Civic Link," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, 24 February 1955, 14.
13. Letter from Mrs. Horner to Anna Lord Strauss, September 1948, LWV of Alabama papers, box 15, file 21. "Correspondence 1930–1949."
14. "League of Women Voters Official Speaks here" *Tuscaloosa News* 19 September 1948, 22.
15. LWV Montgomery Oral History Project, Interview with Sarah Cabot Pierce, by Mary and Louisa Weinrib, 6 June 1989, LWV of Alabama papers, box 1.
16. Ibid.
17. LWV Montgomery Oral History Project, Interview with Rose Sparling, by Mary and Louisa Weinrib, 14 March 1990.
18. Report of the provisional League of Women Voters of Auburn, Alabama, 7 March 1958, LWV of Alabama papers, box 1, file 5.
19. LWV Montgomery Oral History Project, Interview with Anne Waldo by Mary and Louisa Weinrib, 13 June 1990.
20. Rod Clare, "Revisiting 'the Doldrums'."
21. Local League Handbook, (1962 edition) LWV of Alabama, box 1, file 22.
22. Ibid.
23. Birmingham Chapter By-laws 19,060, LVW of Birmingham Papers, Birmingham Public Library, Birmingham Alabama, 51.1.1.1.1.
24. LWV Montgomery Oral History Project, Interview with Virginia Durr by Mary and Louisa Weinrib, 24 May 1989.
25. The League of Women Voters of the United States, *Forty Years of a Great Idea*. 33.
26. The League of Women Voters of the United States, *Forty Years of a Great Idea*. 34.
27. Ruth Heimbuecher, "Ex-President awaits Male League Members," *The Pittsburgh Press*, 24 April 1964, 30.
28. "Vote League Groups open Allegiance Fight," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* 18 December 1948, p. 11.
29. Cited in Deborah White, *Too Heavy a Load. Black Women in Defense of Themselves 1894–1994*, (London and New York,

W.W. Norton, 1999) 41.See also Marjorie Wheeler, *New Women of the New South: The Leaders of the Women's Suffrage Movement* (Oxford and New York, Oxford University Press, 1993).

30. Martha H Swain, "In the Mainstream. Mississippi White Women's Clubs in the Quest for Women's Rights in the Twentieth Century," in Anne Payne, Martha Swain and Marjorie Julian Spruill, (eds) *Mississippi Women: Their Histories, Their Lives* Volume Two, (Athens and London, The University of Georgia Press, 2010): 269–286, 274.
31. Carrie Bowles, cited in Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, "In Politics to Stay: Black Women Leaders and Party Politics in the 1920s" in Vicki L. Ruiz and Ellen Carol DuBois, (eds) *Unequal Sisters: An Inclusive Reader in US Women's History* 4th Edition, (New York, Routledge, 2008), 298. See also, Priscilla A. Dowden, "To See Past the Differences" Racial Coalition within the League of Women Voters of St Louis', in Angela Boswell and Judith N. McArthur, (eds) *Women Shaping the South. Creating and Confronting Change* (Colombia and London, University of Missouri Press, 2006).
32. Russell Freedman, *The Voice that Challenged a Nation: Marian Anderson and the Struggle for Equal Rights* (New York, Clarion Books, 2004).
33. Dorothy Height, *Open Wide the Freedom Gates* (New York, Public Affairs, 2003) 97.
34. Scott. A Sandage, "A Marble House Divided: The Lincoln Memorial, the Civil Rights Movement and the Politics of Memory 1939–1963," *Journal of American History*, 80:1, (June 1993): 135–167; 137.
35. Letter from Eleanor Roosevelt to Mrs. Henry Robert Jr., 26 February 1939. http://docs.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/tmirhfee.html accessed 6 July 2015.
36. Allida M. Black, "Championing a Champion: Eleanor Roosevelt and the Marian Anderson 'Freedom Concert'," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 20:4 (Fall 1990): 719–736.
37. Eleanor Roosevelt, *My Day* 27 February 1939. http://docs.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/tmirhfee.html accessed 6 July 2015.
38. F.P. Keppel, "Forward" in Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* (Vol 1) (New York, 1944). http://www.unz.org/Pub/MyrdalGunnar-1944v01 accessed 13 May 2015.

39. Mary Dudziak, *Cold War, Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2000), 3. For more on the relationship between the Cold War and civil rights see for example, Manning Marable, "The Cold War in Black America, 1945–1954" (Ch. 2), in *Race, Reform and Rebellion. The Second Reconstruction and Beyond in Black America, 1945–2006,* third edition, (Jackson, University of Mississippi Press, 2007) and Cary Fraser, "Crossing the Color Line in Little Rock: The Eisenhower Administration and the Dilemma of Race for U.S. Foreign Policy," *Diplomatic History* 24:2, (Spring 2000): 233–264.
40. Eleanor Roosevelt, "My Day" 13 March https://www.gwu.edu/~erpapers/myday/displaydoc.cfm?_y=1956&_f=md003430, assessed 19 July 2015.
41. Shannon L. Frystak, "'With all deliberate Speed': The Integration of the League of Women Voters of New Orleans, 1953–1963," in Thomas Appleton (ed.) *Searching for their places: Women in the South Across Four Centuries* (Columbia, University of Missouri Press, MO, 2003): 261–283, 264. Frystak notes that Blanchard's attempt to convert the New Orleans LWV was carried out through the aegis of her own membership in the Southern Conference for Human Welfare, an organization which many in the South were convinced was a communist front. The New Orleans LWV were concerned that Blanchard's association with both organizations would mean that their own group would be tainted by association, and told that Blanchard that unless she resigned from the SCHW she would be asked to leave the League. Blanchard promptly resigned from the League.
42. Cited in Frystak, "With all deliberate Speed," 269.
43. Rod Clare, "Revisiting 'the Doldrums'," 186.
44. Ibid. 186.
45. "Voter's League invites Public to Study Aims," *Anniston Star* 31 October 1950, 7.
46. Letter to Rae Horner from Mrs. Ashley Dickerson, 29 November 1950. LWV of Alabama papers, box 15, file 22. "Correspondence 1950–1951."
47. Memo to Zella Leonard from Rae Horner, 19 March 1951 LWV of Alabama papers, box 15, file 22. "Correspondence 1950–1951."
48. Ibid.

49. Notes on Letter from Zella Leonard to Mrs. Edward Perkins, 15 March 1954, LWV of Alabama papers, box 15, file 25 "Correspondence 1954."
50. 18 August 1954, Minutes: Meeting of the Presidents of southern States held in Atlanta Georgia, 27–28 July 1954 Eliza K Paschall papers, Robert Woodruff Library, Emory University. Available online, http://larson.library.emory.edu/marbl/DigProjects/swh/images/Paschall%20532/0532-004.pdf, accessed 9 March 2014.
51. Ibid.
52. Rod Clare, "'Revisiting 'the Doldrums'," 201.
53. Sara Mitchell Parsons, *From Southern Wrongs to Civil Rights: The Memoir of a White Civil Rights Activist,* (Tuscaloosa, University of Alabama Press, Alabama, 2000), 21.
54. Mike Edwards, "11 Offices Quit the League" *Atlanta Journal*, 30 March 1956.
55. Ibid.
56. Letter to Frances Pauley from Mrs. Roper J. Phillips, President of the League of Women Voters, 12 June 1959.Frances F. Pauley Collection, Robert Woodruff Library, Emory University, box 5, file 1.
57. LWV Montgomery Oral History Project, Interview with Ruth Brock by Mary and Louisa Weinrib, 15 January 1989.
58. LWV Montgomery Oral History Project, Interview with Sarah Cabot Pierce, by Mary and Louisa Weinrib, 6 June 1989.
59. Board meeting, 29 March 1965, LVW of Birmingham papers, 51.1.3.1.17.
60. Organization report, 19 April, 1965. LWV of Alabama papers, box 9, file 'Organization 1964–1978'.
61. Board meeting, 6 September, 1965, LVW of Birmingham papers 51.1.3.1.18.
62. Local League Annual Report, Birmingham Alabama, 20 February 1965. LVW of Birmingham papers, 51.1.1.1.2.
63. Frystak, "With all deliberate Speed," 264.
64. Interview with Nan Pendergrast, conducted by Kathryn Nasstrom, Georgia Government Documentation Project, Series J. William Pullen Library, Atlanta, Georgia.
65. 'Provide Pleasant Path to Civic Work', *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* 5 March 1949.

66. LWV Montgomery Oral History Project, Interview with Gerry Yeoman by Mary and Louisa Weinrib, 7 December 1989.
67. The date of Williams' membership is not entirely clear. Virginia Durr recalls that she asked Williams to join "sometime after all the laws were passed in the late 1950s" (LWV Montgomery Oral History Project, Interview with Virginia Durr, by Mary and Louisa Weinrib, 24 May 1989), LWV of Alabama papers, box 1. Norma Brewer however recalled that in the mid-1960s the Montgomery League was all white. (LWV Montgomery Oral History Project, Interview with Norma Brewer, by Mary and Louisa Weinrib, 31 July 1990, LWV of Alabama papers, box 1). It may be that while nominally a member, Williams did not usually attend meetings, leaving many white members unaware of her membership.
68. LWV Montgomery Oral History Project, Interview with Zecozy Williams, by Mary and Louisa Weinrib, 31 August 1989.
69. LWV Montgomery Oral History Project, Interview with Zecozy Williams, by Mary and Louisa Weinrib, 31 August 1989.
70. Christina Greene, *Our Separate Ways: Women and the Black Freedom Movement in Durham, North Carolina*. (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 2005).
71. LWV Montgomery Oral History Project, Interview with Billie Pirnie, by Mary and Louisa Weinrib, 11 June 1990.
72. 18 August 1954, Minutes: Meeting of the Presidents of Southern States held in Atlanta Georgia, 27–28 July 1954 Eliza K Paschall papers, Robert Woodruff Library, Emory University. Available online, http://larson.library.emory.edu/marbl/DigProjects/swh/images/Paschall%20532/0532-004.pdf, accessed 9 March 2014.
73. Ibid.
74. 18 August 1954, Minutes: Meeting of the Presidents of Southern States held in Atlanta Georgia, 27–28 July 1954 Eliza K Paschall papers, Robert Woodruff Library, Emory University. Available online, http://larson.library.emory.edu/marbl/DigProjects/swh/images/Paschall%20532/0532-004.pdf, accessed 9 March 2014.
75. Ibid.
76. Ibid.
77. "From the Members Desk" *National Voter* March 1958.
78. Ibid.

79. LWV papers, series III, box 1164.
80. Letter from Dixie Drake to Mrs. Thomas Miller, 27 February, 1956. LWV papers, series III, box 1164.
81. Letter from Mrs. T. Chatfield Fisher, President of Mississippi State LWV to Mrs. Robert F. Leonard, Vice-president of the National League, 12 August 1954, LWV Papers series III, box 1164.
82. LWV Montgomery Oral History Project, Interview with Rose Sparling, by Mary and Louisa Weinrib, 14 March 1990.
83. Ibid.
84. LWV Montgomery Oral History Project, Interview with Bea Cohen by Mary and Louisa Weinrib, (not dated).
85. LWV Montgomery Oral History Project, Interview with Betty Robinson, by Mary and Louisa Weinrib, 17 May 1990.
86. LWV Montgomery Oral History Project, Interview with Johnnie Carr, by Mary and Louisa Weinrib, 13 March 1990.
87. LWV Montgomery Oral History Project, Interview with Virginia Durr by Mary and Louisa Weinrib, 24 May 1989.
88. Annual Report, April 1957 – March 1958, LWV of Alabama papers.
89. LWV Montgomery Oral History Project, Interview with Sarah Cabot Pierce, by Mary and Louisa Weinrib, 6 June 1989.
90. Birmingham Chapter LWV Papers, By-laws 1960, LVW of Birmingham papers, 51.1.1.1.1.
91. Letter from Alice Hastings to Local League Presidents, 27 May 1963, League of Women Voters of Alabama papers, box 35, file "Anniston Correspondence 1950–1963."
92. Special Meeting, Birmingham LWV 30 May 1963, LVW of Birmingham papers, Birmingham 51.1.1.1.15.
93. Letter from Alice Hastings to Local League Presidents 27 May 1963, League of Women Voters of Alabama papers, box 35, file "Anniston Correspondence 1950–1963."
94. Letter from Mary Jo Bridges (Anniston LWV) to Alabama State LWV (not dated) League of Women Voters of Alabama papers, box 35, File 5 "Anniston Correspondence 1950–1963."
95. Letter to Alice Hastings, President of the Alabama League of Women Voters, from Sarah Cabot Pierce, 11 June 1965, LWV of Alabama papers, box 16.file "Correspondence 1963–1964."
96. "President's Corner" *Georgia Voter* XX:3, (August 1959).

97. Letter to Mrs. Judd Sparling from Mrs. Lethan Clark, 17 February1962, LWV papers of Alabama, Auburn box 16, file 'Correspondence 1960–1962'.
98. Ibid.
99. Letter to Mrs. Paul Scheid, (Auburn Alabama) from Mrs. A.J. Tomisels, Secretary Birmingham League of Women Voters, 5 September 1963, LVW of Birmingham papers, 51.1.3.1.15.
100. *Birmingham Voter*, September 1963, LVW of Birmingham papers, 51.7.59.5.4.
101. Ibid.
102. Press Release, 14 October1963, LWV of Alabama papers, Box 16, file "Correspondence 1962–1970."
103. League of Women Voters of Birmingham Press Release, April 1967, LVW of Birmingham papers, 51.1.17.2.21.
104. Memo from Mrs. Phillips to local League Presidents, 9 July, LWV DeKalb County papers. Woodruff Library, Emory University.
105. *Decatur-DeKalb News*, 28 August 1963, box 13, LWV of Dekalb County papers, Woodruff Library, Emory University.
106. *The National Voter,* May 1962. LWV of Alabama papers, box 7, file 3.
107. Prospects for Education and Employment (not dated) LWV of Alabama papers, box 3, file 44.
108. National Current Agenda 1966–1968, LWV of Alabama papers, box 5, file 29.
109. Ibid.
110. Letter To Mrs. Stuart, President of National LWV from Alice Hastings President Alabama LWV, 20 March 1965, LWV of Auburn papers, box 16, file 'Correspondence 1965'.
111. National Current Agenda 1966–1968. LWV of Alabama papers, box 5, file 29.
112. Statement of Position, 28 March 1966. LWV of Alabama papers, box 5, file 29.
113. Voters Service Annual Report 4 April 1965 to 3 January 1966 LVW of Birmingham papers, 51.1.1.1.1.
114. Letter from Anne Findley Shores, President of the LWV of Birmingham to National Offices of the League of Women Voters, (not dated) LWV of Alabama papers, box 16 file 5 "Correspondence 1965."
115. Voters Service Annual Report 4 April 1966 to 3 January 1967, LVW of Birmingham papers, 51.1.1.1.2.

CHAPTER 4

The American Association of University Women

The American Association of University Women (AAUW) traces its history back to a small meeting in Boston in 1882 when fifteen female college alumnae met to discuss what they collectively could do to support and improve the standards of women's education and to promote the role of college-educated women in American life. Later that year sixty-five women gathered to establish the Association of Collegiate Alumnae (ACA). Over the next forty years, the association grew in membership, benefiting both from an increase in women attending university, and mergers that brought together female alumnae into a fast-growing organization with national reach. In 1889, the ACA merged with the Western ACA, and in 1921 the Southern Association of College Women (which had been founded in 1903) joined, with the newly merged association adopting the name American Association of University Women. In 1931 the association could boast 521 branches, and 36,800 members; numbers which had grown by 1949 to 1097 branches and more than 108,000 members.[1]

The initial aims of the ACA focused on the support of women's higher education. Its first charter described its purpose as being "for the purpose of uniting the alumnae of different institutions for practical educational work, for the collection and publication of statistical and other information concerning education and in general for the maintenance of high standards of education."[2] Institutional eligibility for membership in the AAUW was itself used as a tool to promote the purpose of the association in raising standards in women's education. Women were only eligible

H. Laville, *Organized White Women and the Challenge of Racial Integration, 1945-1965*, DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-49694-8_4

to join the AAUW if they had received an approved degree from an approved institution. The criteria for institutional approval included high academic standards, a foundation in liberal education, adequate provision for women students, professional recognition of women in administration and all faculties, and assurance of intellectual freedom for teaching and administrative staff. A General Director's letter on membership eligibility policy in 1946 explained, "AAUW membership policy has been used as a lever to lift and hold to high levels institutional standards with regard to the higher education of women."[3] When these criteria were not fulfilled, the prestige of being an AAUW-approved instruction was withheld. In one instance a Dean of Women at a college that the AAUW was on the verge of approving implored them to withhold the approval until the university committed to constructing a desperately needed building for its women students.[4]

Alongside this role of monitoring women's colleges, the AAUW sought to facilitate women's access to university through international, national and local fellowship schemes. One of the AAUW's precursors, the Western ACA awarded its first scholarship in 1888, launching what would become one of the association's core missions. In 1917, the association granted its first international fellowship to enable women to travel to the United States to study, and in 1927 the AAUW launched its million dollar fellowship fund, raising money to ensure a permanent fellowship scheme. Fundraising and the administration of national and international fellowships remained (and still remains) a core purpose of the work of the AAUW. In 1946, for example, the AAUW sponsored thirty-three women from formerly occupied nations to study in the United States.[5] These large nationally administrated efforts to encourage and support women to attend university were matched by smaller local branch level activity. One such effort was launched in the 1940s when the Mobile (Alabama) branch made a scholarship of one hundred dollars available to a female graduate of the Mobile public school system, subject to her agreeing to pursue higher education at an AAUW-approved institution.[6]

While the support for women in universities has always been a central concern of the AAUW, the purpose of the association was by no means limited to a narrow focus on women and education. On the contrary, the AAUW took an expansive approach to defining its purpose and responsibilities. Its concern with the broader role of women college alumnae in American life has enabled the AAUW to interest itself in a wide range of issues and activities. As early as 1905, the ACA had supported federal

investigations on women's pay, and had launched their own studies of equal opportunities and pay for American women. In the period after the Second World War, the AAUW played an important role in the expansion of the purpose and role of women's associations, taking part in a broad range of activities in coalition with other women's associations and with the US government and international organizations. Within this general expansion, the AAUW articulated what it saw as the growing responsibilities of the university-educated woman. A 1945 pamphlet "The AAUW: What it is and What it does" listed a broad range of functions including maintaining standards in education, study groups, community work, legislative programs, fellowships, the status of women and international relations. In 1949, the national convention adopted a resolution explaining the need for an expanded purpose beyond a narrow focus on education

> To meet these fundamental demands of our time we of the AAUW have a national program that is the fruit of sixty-seven years of common effort to put the higher education which we have all enjoyed at the service of the world in which we live. … Its core is education. But so intimate and extensive are the involvements of education with the whole world which it serves that it is quite impossible to carry on any educational program without constant regard to the organization of the society in which we live, from the local to the international level. Our programs in social studies and international relations are, therefore, indispensable to the accomplishment of our central undertakings in education.[7]

A handbook for AAUW leaders, published in 1962, admitted that the AAUW "began as a 'single purpose' organization in the 1880s" but explained, "it has through the years by convention action added, little by little, to its program."[8]

There seemed to be almost no area of activity in which the input of college-educated women was not of vital concern. While a wide range of American women's associations were adamant that the needs of the post-war world demanded American women expand their role and responsibilities, the AAUW claimed that university women had a particular interest in world affairs. "Our noble educational heritage" explained AAUW stalwart Luanna Bowles in a letter to the *AAUW Journal* "must spur us onward so that with other university women we may help to bring about and ensure the greatest of all international relationships."[9] Helen Dwight Reid, AAUW associate director in international education chimed in, "Never has it been more important for our AAUW committees on legislation and

international relations in our branches throughout the country to work together in watching international developments and be prepared to act effectively."[10] The AAUW collaborated with their government on a wide range of international programs, including exchanges and tours, and lobbied politicians on specific issues, such as proposals to cut funding to the Voice of America in 1951.[11] This concern with international affairs did not mean AAUW could let their responsibilities within the United States slide however. Far from it. "As the nation undertakes the task of reconverting industry to a peacetime basis," the chairman of the national AAUW's social studies committee explained in the AAUW's *Journal* in 1944, "the AAUW faces a responsibility because of its position of leadership in the consumer field."[12]

By 1955, the national standing committees of the AAUW included Education, Fellowship, International Relations, Legislative Programs, Social Studies and Status of Women. Expansive resolutions supported the mission creep of the association. In 1957, the association approved a new articulation of its policy which reflected this broad remit, "In keeping with its purpose the Association shall develop a program to enable college women to continue their own intellectual growth, to further the advancement of women and to discharge the special responsibilities to society of those who have enjoyed the advantages of higher education."[13] Branch charters reflected this ever-expanding role. The Birmingham (Alabama) branch explained its purpose in 1955 as "the uniting of the alumnae of different institutions for practical educational work, for the collections and publication of statistical and other information concerning education and in general for the maintenance of high standards of education." In 1957, this was changed, with the branch explaining, "The purpose of this branch shall be to unite the alumnae of colleges and universities which have been approved by the American Association of University Women for practical and educational works; to concentrate and increase their influence in the community."[14]

Within local branches, the AAUW sought to combine a sense of the expansive national and international interests and responsibilities of university women graduates, with local civic involvement and social and intellectual activities. In Huntsville (Alabama), for example, branch members participated in a tour of the region's historical homes in 1951, both to raise funds for AAUW fellowships and to improve awareness about the preservation of historical buildings. The branch also engaged in fundraising and political support for new Huntsville Library, lobbied the local

legislature for increased taxes for local schools, and presented a series of public discussions on jurisprudence titled "Justice is Everybody's Business." The branch also organized a series of study groups aimed at both self-improvement and intellectual engagement. Such groups included "World Affairs," "Readers," "Book Markers," "Morning Literature," "Creative writing," "Testing Values," "French Language," "Music," "Child Development" and "Art."[15] The activities of the Mobile Branch for 1948–1949 were listed as "the clean literature campaign, a study of local schools, the revision of the penal code of Alabama, opposition to the Equal Rights Amendment, the placement of a qualified woman on the School Board, the calling of a special session of the legislature for the purposes of releasing funds for teachers' salaries, the placing of an embargo on the shipment of munitions and war materials to Japan, [and] the provision of adequate temporary care for the mentally ill while they were awaiting transfer to state institutions."[16]

Meanwhile on the national stage, the leadership of the AAUW involved themselves in national and international affairs, determined to promote the intervention of college-educated women at the highest level. The AAUW took a leading role in the White House conference which asked "How women may share in post-war policy making" in January 1945, and contributed to preparing the Roster of Qualified Women which was developed as a result of the conference. The national and international work of the AAUW was duly reflected in appointment processes, as members of the association's national leadership took up positions within government bodies. Dr Helen Dwight Reid, for example, resigned from her post in the AAUW in 1947 to take up the position of Chief of the Division of European Educational Relations in the US Office of Education. Many of the branch membership felt proud of the national activism and prominence of the leaders of their association. The emerging model of female activism that the AUUW leadership represented, however, did not convince all members. Some members, like Florence Street from Pittsburg, Kansas, worried that the activist position of the leadership reflected "an increasingly feminist attitude." Street asserted that at the 1947 national convention, there had been a "delicate feeling" on the part of the homemakers in attendance that "the importance of the homemaker's contribution to society was not recognized."[17] Others fretted at the political leanings of the association. At the AAUW's biennial conference in 1951, a delegate from Wisconsin spoke out in protest at what she saw as partisan national activism. Arguing that the leadership of the association was "unquestionably left-leading,"

determinedly promoting tax and spend policies, Mrs Murray, the delegate from Oshkosh, complained, "the national legislature committee gets broad instructions from the biennial convention and then goes ahead to lobby for measures that they think fits these instructions and they are so broad that they could justify almost anything."[18]

It was certainly the case that it had become increasingly difficult by the 1950s to find an area of activity that did not fall under one of AAUW's standing committees and thus require the attention of the college women of America. One topic, however, seemingly remained resolutely outside the scope of the association. The majority of the AAUW branches and the national Board itself studiously avoided engagement with racial integration, even as it was rapidly becoming one of the most dominant issues in American life. The national program item on "social studies" did give some branches leeway to at least engage with racial issues on an intellectual level. Historian Louise Robbins' study of Bartlesville, (Oklahoma), for example, demonstrates that this branch of the AAUW was far in advance of its state and national association in addressing integration. In 1945, the branch formed a study group entitled "Racial Problems Study Group," which concluded that segregation was both undemocratic and wasteful. The branch co-sponsored an interracial conference in the city and lobbied (unsuccessfully) the Oklahoma State AAUW to adopt their proposals for a statewide study group on racial injustice.[19] The Auburn (Alabama) branch also used the auspices of its social studies committee to set up a study group in 1949 to study racial tensions.[20] Elsewhere, branches were determined to avoid engagement with the issue. In August 1946, Dorothy Tilly, the president of the Women's Society of Christian Service and stalwart of the Association of the Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching (ASWPL), wrote to influential women across the South, including the President of the Athens (Georgia) branch of the AAUW, to urge that women's associations in the South work together to revive the spirit of the ASWPL. "The matter is urgent," Tilly pleaded, asserting, "that we reorganize our forces is so important." Her request that the Georgia AAUW to participate in the rebuilding a women's coalition to counter rising racial tensions was tersely declined.[21]

At a national level throughout the 1950s and into the early 1960s, the AAUW steadfastly maintained the position that issues of racial segregation were not within their otherwise expansive remit. Even when the issue of racial integration became focused on educational institutions, an area that

would seem to have been of central concern to college-educated women, the AAUW still maintained their tactical silence on the issue of racial justice. This reluctance to take a position on racial justice reflected in part, an unwillingness to undermine the effectiveness of local branches, many of who would have found it difficult to operate within their local communities as a member of an avowedly pro-integration national association. The silence also reflected the consequences of the association's own difficult struggle with the question of racially integrated membership. The ability of the AAUW to avoid any active culpability in racially exclusive membership policies that had prevailed within their association before 1945 was a result, not of an explicit national policy on segregation but of the existence of membership practices that made the issue more or less moot in the period before 1945. The membership approval system that governed AAUW may well have been designed to protect and promote high standards in women's education, but it was also conveniently placed to guarantee an almost exclusively white membership pool, without the necessity of any explicit regulations excluding African-American women. Because of formal and inform systems of segregation in higher education, African-American women overwhelming attended racially exclusive black colleges. As a result of their poor funding, these colleges struggled to meet the criteria demanded from the AAUW in terms of the provision of facilities and support for students and staff.

African-American women graduates, rather than joining the AAUW, frequently sought to promote the interests of college-educated African-American women through their own organization, the National Association of College Women.[22] Black sororities, such as Delta Sigma Theta and Alpha Kappa Alpha, also served to inspire and direct college black women's activism. African-American membership in the AAUW was, as a result, unusual, although not unheard of. The existence of a handful of colleges in the North that admitted African-American students meant that there were a small number of African-American women before 1945 who, by virtue of their attendance at one of these colleges, were eligible for membership in the AAUW. In 1905, for example, prominent African-American educator and activist Mary Church Terrell became a member of the Washington DC branch of the AAUW. Terrell had graduated in 1884 from an AAUW-approved institution, Oberlin College in Ohio, one of the only colleges at that time to admit African-American students. Terrell illustrated the frequent and entirely understandable preference of

African-American women for associations that prioritized their needs and she resigned her membership in the AAUW in 1910.

By the end of the Second World War, the effective exclusion of African-American women, by virtue of the ineligibility of the overwhelming majority of their colleges and degrees, was starting to fray. All-black college still struggled to meet AAUW standards, but increasing numbers of African-American women were becoming eligible for membership because of their graduation from integrated colleges. The national AAUW's strategy on the issue of racial integration was initially to defer to local autonomy and the preferences of local branches. In November 1942, Louise Bache, Executive Secretary of the General Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs (GFBPWC), wrote in confidence to Dr Kathryn McHale, General Director of the AAUW, to ask if the AAUW was accepting African-American women in its branches, and if so how this had been achieved, "without creating disunity?"[23] McHale replied that membership in the national association was open to all women who met the requirement of having a degree from an approved institution. However, McHale also specified that branches had some discretion and that branches were not obligated to accept all who applied.[24] Janice Leone, in her article length history of the AAUW's engagement with the issue of integration between 1946 and 1949, explains that McHale responded to enquires from AAUW branches asking for clarification of the AAUW's national position on integration throughout this period by deferring to local knowledge and culture. "If [the African-American woman applicant] asks about branch membership," McHale explained, "I frankly reply she must know the mores and attitudes of her community better than I do; that branches have autonomy in respect to the selection for their group…. In each case where a branch seeks our opinion I have advised that a poll of members be taken… A branch can only move as permitted by their community cultural-anthropological pattern."[25]

By maintaining that membership was an issue for local branches, guided by local custom and practice, rather than the concern of national policy, the AAUW managed to effectively underscore the extent to which branch structure reflected the organic associational patterns of local communities (or, as McHale put it "cultural-anthropological patterns") while also maintaining a strategic silence on the complex issue of segregation. Because of this discouraging position, the period before 1945 saw only slight increase in the number of African-American members of the AAUW. In the mid-1940s, it was estimated that there were only several

hundred African-American members in the AAUW, among a total membership of 90,000 women.[26] McHale admitted she personally knew of only seven AAUW branches that had African-American women members in the period before the Second World War.[27]

As American women's associations became increasingly involved in international work after 1945, they could not fail to notice the importance of race relations to the US international reputation.[28] In 1949, the then President of the AAUW, Althea Hottel took part in a State Department-sponsored international tour, "World Town Hall of the Air," in which representatives from all walks of US non-governmental life toured the world, holding public meetings and discussing the American way of life. Hottel reported that she was forcibly stuck by the importance of issue of American race relations across the globe; "The point most persistently made to us around the world was our undemocratic practices at home, our discriminations against religious and racial minorities… Questions are raised on the democratic spirit, the sincerity and the reliability of America."[29] In the period following the Second World War, the conventions and publications of the AAUW and the League of Women Voters (LWV) both publicly acknowledged the relationship between US international prestige and the issue of racial discrimination. At the 1948 AAUW meeting of State Presidents, the President of Vasser College asserted, "It is increasingly apparent that the future of this nation, and perhaps the future of the world, rests upon the character of the decisions that we make at the present time in extending the democratic process. Only by seizing the opportunity to achieve greater unity by removing barriers of discrimination that separate group from group within our country, can we maintain and advance our own health and strengthen our position at home and our leadership among the world."[30]

While leaders of American women's associations sought to improve the general image of American race relations, however, they were conspicuously silent on the issue of discriminatory practices within their own associations, despite direct pressure from their international colleagues. Susan Levine, in her history of the AAUW, explains that the International Federation of University Women (IFUW), who had expelled the Italian, Austrian and German national associations in the 1930s for their racially discriminatory membership policy, made an unsuccessful attempt to persuade the AAUW to address the issue of segregation, asking the AAUW to include three African-American members as part of their one hundred and ninety member delegation to the IFUW's first post-war conference.[31]

The national leadership of associations such as the AAUW understood that if they were to have any credibility as national and international organizations, they would have to renounce the existence of segregation within their own associations. This position was not always shared by their rank and file membership. Crucially the long-standing permission given to individual branches or state divisions to enforce their own membership policies, irrespective of the national membership policy, meant that any national position on racial integration might be interpreted at the branch level as an attack on the autonomy of local branches. Wary of jeopardizing the national unity of their associations and bringing about a rupture between national leadership and branch membership, the AAUW sought to keep the issue of racial segregation in their organizations as quiet as possible.

Given the racial exclusivity of the AAUW, it is perhaps unsurprising that in the period before 1945 the issue of racial segregation had not been proposed by its own membership as a matter on which the AAUW should take a position. This strategic silence on the issue of racial exclusion was publically challenged in 1945. Echoes of the Marian Anderson controversy could be heard in AAUW's own crisis over integration, which was sparked when some members began to invite African-American guests to the association's clubhouse in Washington DC. This building was the national headquarters of the association and all AAUW members were entitled to use the facilities and invite guests. The all-white and determinedly pro-segregationist Washington DC branch now asked that the national Board of the AAUW enforce the Washington DC branch's policy that admission to the clubhouse be restricted to white women. The relationship between the Washington DC branch and national headquarters was a particularly complex one for both logistical and ideological reasons. The Washington DC branch had made the most significant contribution towards the purchase of the national headquarters building and contributed 49% of the running costs of the house. Susan Levine explains that the controversy was also particularly acute because of the political significance of Washington DC as the nation's capital. Levine astutely notes the symbolic importance of the capital, quoting Helen White, President of the AAUW from 1941 to 1947. "It is our Capitol City branch and it has a significance quite beyond that of the individual branch." White explained, "For them… to hesitate is embarrassing to all of us."[32]

While the national Board prevaricated over what action to take over admission to the clubhouse, matters became even more heated as Mary

Church Terrell sought to re-join the Washington DC branch of the AAUW where she had been a member in the early 1900s. In 1946, Terrell was eighty-three years old but had lost nothing of her determination to challenge racial injustice and segregation. As part of her campaign as Chairman of the Coordinating Committee for the enforcement of the D.C. Anti-Discrimination Laws, the tireless Terrell picketed downtown department stores and organized interracial groups to challenge segregated restaurants.[33] Since Terrell's departure from the AAUW Washington DC branch in 1910, the group had become an all-white branch, a position they now sought to defend, refusing Terrell's application for membership. In demonstration of the fact that not all members of the Washington DC branch sought to preserve racial boundaries within their group, Terrell's challenge was supported by a white ally, Janet Swift, who sponsored Terrell's application for membership.[34]

Initially the national Board of the AAUW attempted to handle the situation in Washington by deploying the same strategy of deference to regional expertise and autonomy that had been their policy throughout the early 1940s. The General Director gave the President of the Washington DC branch a letter which she said she "was in the habit of writing to Branches who wrote for advice in a similar situation which advised that a poll of the members be taken … Branches have autonomy in the selection of their group."[35] In response, the Washington DC branch dutifully polled their members, who voted 364-250 not to admit African-American members. Unprepared to let this stand, a minority group within the branch who favoured integration appealed again to the national Board. The Board of the AAUW, forced to take a side between warring branch factions, sided with the pro-integrationist camp. The Board issued a resolution in December 1946, upholding Terrell's application, asserting, "Under the national by-laws and under branch by-laws, which may not conflict with those of the national, there can be no authorization for any discrimination on racial, religious or political grounds." In reaching this decision, the Board made explicit reference to the national and international context which made their continued toleration of segregated membership untenable; "The Board… takes it for granted that the branches will practice within their own groups those principles which are in line with the Association's history, its expressed international policies, its membership in the International Federation of University Women, and its deep concern with all agencies seeking to rebuild a world shattered though discrimination and intolerance."[36]

The decision of the national Board of the AAUW to side with the pro-integrationist minority faction in the Washington DC branch reflected their understanding of the relationship between the national context and the status of their association, and, in particular, the AAUW's role as a public institution. While the AAUW relied at branch level on what looked remarkably like private relationships and networks, its legitimacy at the national level was based on its status as a public institution. Exclusionary branch membership policies would challenge the national legitimacy of the AAUW. In the wake of the *Brown* vs *Board of Education* ruling in 1954, and again in response to the 1964 Civil Rights Act, Southern states sought to re-establish and redefine institutions that had previously been public as private, in order to evade federal integration laws. It is notable that neither the AAUW nor any other national women's associations sought to use the right to private association as a defense against racial integration. While such a defense might have had some traction, it would have been tantamount to an admission that women's associations were purely private and social, and a repudiation of their claims to political and public influence.[37]

At their convention in Dallas in April 1947, the AAUW appointed a committee to clarify the AAUW's membership policies. The report of the committee, published in the AAUW's *Journal,* explained that according to the by-laws of the national association the sole membership criterion of the AAUW was possession of a qualification from an approved institution, and that individual branches would no longer be allowed to exercise their own preferences for segregation.[38] The Washington DC branch, however, continued to refuse to accept the authority of national membership policy above the right of individual branches to enforce their own membership criteria, and passed a by-law to their branch rules making admittance to their group conditional on the approval of their own board of directors. In an effort to dilute the racial connotations of their decision, the Washington DC branch insisted that branch power of veto over membership in their group was vital to maintaining a range of political and social standards within their group. The branch wrote to the national Board protesting, "Conformity to the recent interpretation of the national Board would force every branch of the American Association of University Women to admit without question, every eligible applicant to full membership, even if the applicant should be a patently undesirable person, a disruptive influence or a member of an obviously subversive group."[39]

The AAUW national Board initially sought private legal advice to support their position that membership policy was a national, not local matter.

Owen J Roberts, a former Supreme Court Justice, opined that "eligibility and admission are identical in the American Association of University Women".[40] Local branches did not have the right, in Robert's opinion, to construct branch by-laws that conflicted with national by-laws. Confident in the legality of their stand, the National Board asked local branches to examine their by-laws to ensure that they were compliant with national rules on membership and the Washington DC branch was told to comply or be expelled. The national Board made known its readiness to confer the title "AAUW of Washington DC" on the minority group within the Washington branch who were supporting integrated membership.

As both Susan Levine and Janice Leone have noted, the issue of racial integration was difficult for the AAUW to address because of their reliance on racially exclusive social networks. The dependence of branches on social contacts and networks resulted in a strikingly homogenous membership. The practice of holding meetings in member's homes served to highlight, sometimes painfully, the personal networks of social relationships on which branch membership was based. Exclusivity was furthered in the AAUW by the practice in some branches of requiring that new members be recommended by an existing member of the branch and by conducting visits to the home of the potential new member.[41] In her work on women's groups in Durham North Carolina, Christina Greene points out the particular problems the AAUW faced in integrating their study groups. As with the League of Women Voters unit meetings, Greene explains, these meetings were informal ones which usually took place in member's homes. The domestic setting all too often served as a reminder of the mistress/maid relationship.[42] In her study of the AAUW, Janice Leone quotes one member of the Washington DC AAUW branch explaining; "The time [for racial integration] has not yet come for organizations which meet as a social group – we are more social than anything in this organization though we are an educational group … I don't think the colored people have had a long enough experience to meet in social situations."[43]

The furore which followed National's expulsion of the Washington DC branch reflected not only this social tension, however, but also the frustration of many within the AAUW at what they saw as the increasingly dictatorial top-down leadership style of the national leaders, and their unease with the use of their associations as quasi-governmental institutions. Those branches and members who supported Washington DC's position determinedly—perhaps sometimes disingenuously—framed the crisis as a struggle over branch autonomy from an increasingly despotic

national rule, rather than a defining moment in racial relations. In a letter that entirely failed to make any reference at all to the issue of integrated membership, the Nashville branch wrote to presidents of the Southeast Central region, explaining they "had not been happy over the national Board's action in its attempt to set aside practices of many years in its dealings with the Washington Branch. The autonomy of the branch is very important in our thinking."[44] The President of the El Paso Branch similarly wrote in open rebellion against the national Board position to all branch presidents, "The El Paso Branch is becoming increasingly concerned over the growing tendency of the national Board to dictate to branches and members. We found that the AAUW has lost its identity as a democratic organization in which the national Board tries to carry out the wishes of its members. Instead the process has been reversed and the members are constantly working to carry out the wishes of the Associates who, as the Chairman of the standing committees, lay out the work of the AAUW and set its policy."

The wilful refusal of the El Paso branch to engage with the issue of racial segregation doubtlessly reflected a certain squeamishness over taking a stance that was explicitly pro-segregationist. Much of the debate over branch autonomy took the form of a proxy debate over membership policy that avoided a controversial descent into discussion of white supremacy. The increasing resentment of branch membership over national authority and specifically over the use of membership numbers to advance the positions and status of national leadership nonetheless has the ring of sincerity. No doubt many of the members of the AAUW who opposed the national Board's response to the Washington crisis were, in fact, pro-segregation. This does not mean they did not also feel deeply resentful over the increasingly top-down tendencies evident within the AAUW, or that their critique of the rise of American women's associations as quasi-governmental institutions lacked authenticity. It does mean that the issue of racial integration had exposed broader issues and concerns.

In a letter to national League President Althea Hottel, the El Paso branch explicitly denied the suggestion that their support of the Washington branch was motivated by pro-segregation ideology, although they acknowledged, "because the dispute concerns the touchy subject of race relations and prejudices, the real problem is likely to be overshadowed by the hysteria which usually accompanies any aspect of the 'colored problem' ". The branch insisted that the "real issue" was one that had "been

troubling many thinking members of the AAUW for some time; How much power does the national Board of Directors have and who is the final authority in the AAUW… The problem in the present dispute is not whether the Washington Branch should abide by national eligibility rules and admit Negroes to membership or not. The problem is whether the Board of Directors has the power to expel a branch from membership for this or any other reason."[45]

In her critique of the leadership of the AAUW, the President of the El Paso branch astutely critiqued the use of the association as a national political force by its leadership. "When Associates wish to present AAUW views in Congress" she argued, they referred to the AAUW "as a 'democratic organization of educated women' who have voted for the idea which the Associates are presenting at the moment. We feel that the privilege of 'interpreting' our ideas has been misused by the Associates and should be drastically curtailed."[46] On this issue, the El Paso branch reasoned, the decision of the general membership would have "far-reaching effects in all women's organizations, since the tendency of National Boards, committees and offices in almost all women's groups is to 'take over'."[47] The El Paso branch argued that the AAUW needed to take the opportunity of constitutional reform that had been created by the membership crisis and take steps to change the by-laws and limit the powers of the Board. They proposed a series of changes to national by-laws one of which would strike at the heart of the associations' vision of itself as a national quasi-governmental institution for the representation of the voice of American women, suggesting that the association "curtail legislative activity to educational and related matters." Another suggested by-law would enable to the AAUW to deal with the issue of African-American membership in the AAUW by providing for more than one branch in the community that wished for extra branches. This provision, which would introduce the segregated-by-branch system into the AAUW, was unacceptable to many in national leadership, as it amounted to approval for a system of segregation within the association.

For many southern branches, the actions of the national Board towards the Washington DC branch raised fears that national leadership was about to compel branches across the South to integrate immediately. Henrietta Thompson of the Alabama AAUW wrote to Althea Hottel, indignantly explaining, "Twenty-five years ago when the Southern Association of Collegiate Alumnae were invited to join in the founding of the American

Associations of University Women, the invitation would never have been accepted if it had been made clear to southern women that negroes would be members of their branches. There is every evidence today that Southern women will not accept without a revolt an interpretation of the constitution contrary to that which was given when they became part of the Association. There is real feeling on the manner in which the subject has been brought up." As is so frequently the case when someone is unhappy with the outcome of a process, Thompson attacked the process rather than the outcome itself; "It has not been referred to the branches, nor has an expression of opinion been secured from state Presidents. Such casual inquiry as I have made indicated that this may lead to a withdrawal of our Southern branches." Thompson explained, perhaps disingenuously, that it was not the issue of integrated membership that was the problem, but the high-handed manner in which the national Board had acted; "Acceptance of qualified members is not the point at issue but rather the speed with which the matter is being pushed and the lack of acceptance and of time for adaptation." Thompson undermined her argument somewhat by adding, "you may be interested to know that the South supports the Southern Senators in their stand today and many feel that their opponents are driven by political expediency rather than by sincere social service."[48] Thompson sent copies of her letter to the presidents of other southern state divisions, encouraging them to take a similar stance.

In an attempt to pour oil on troubled waters, Gillie Larew, South-Atlantic regional vice-president, wrote to Margaret Blair, President of the Georgia division, to offer reassurance that the investigation into by-laws did not mean that the national Board was determined to ensure a speedy desegregation of southern branches. Larew's letter made clear the preference of many in the AAUW leadership for a continuation of the associations' existing policy of gradualism and regional autonomy;

> We are not trying to adopt a new policy and we are all aware of the difficulties involved in honestly meeting those constitutional obligations that have always been ours. You and I know that it is not constitutional logic, but emotional reactions, that we must take into account. I want to assure you that these difficulties and dilemmas, especially in the part of country where there are strong segregation patterns are in the minds of all of us, and that there is no tendency to press too hard. We will have to rethink, I believe, some of our organization, but not prematurely. We must study the fundamental purpose of our association and answer our baffling questions in the light of these.[49]

AAUW President Althea Hottel also wrote to reassure Blair that the national association, while insisting on its authority over membership by-laws, was not seeking to impose a hasty top-down programme of racial integration. In a mealy-mouthed letter which never once used the words "Negro," "racial" or "integration" Hottel posited a policy of gradualism, suggesting, "In those states where there are public laws which prevent certain associations of different groups, it seems reasonable to expect that the branches could develop educational programs which would help them with the issues at stake. They could also associate themselves with the good forces in the community to help solve some of the inter-cultural problems. These things they could do without violating the laws of their state and ultimately they may find it possible in the years to come to be instrumental in changing some of those laws."

While seeking to reassure southern branches that the AAUW did not intend to launch an active and high-profile campaign of integration, national leadership was nonetheless insistent that the issue of membership policy was in the jurisdiction of the national Board, not regional branches. Without such an approach, they argued, the very existence of the AAUW as a public institution was fatally undermined. Hottel explained, "The national Board of directors must take leadership in the matter which refers to the very fundamentals of the Association; its membership. It seems reasonable to expect the branches to have their by-laws in conformity with those of the national by-laws."[50] Like branch membership, national leadership shied away from addressing the racial politics at the centre of the crisis and instead focused on the question of national authority and branch autonomy. A letter from the AAUW Board of Directors explaining the issue to state and branch directors on 12 August 1948 hardly mentioned the issue of race at all, other than a one line reference to the question whether the Washington DC branch had been "lawfully expelled for its refusal to admit Negroes to its membership."[51] The national Board focused instead on the importance of the issue to the authority and influence of the AAUW, arguing, "If we adopt a selective policy with reference to the admission of those who are eligible, the association is indicating to member colleges that some of their graduates are unsatisfactory and that we are a social rather than an educational organization"[52]

The national Board hoped that their tough position towards the Washington DC branch and their request that all branches re-examine their by-laws to ensure they were in harmony with the national position would settle the issue and put an end to the unfortunate publicity and bad

feeling that the controversy was engendering. The Washington branch was in no mood to accept their dismissal without a fight, however, and was still less minded to cede the substantial property rights of the branch to the minority integrationists. The majority group took their case to District County for the US District of Columbia, where the appropriately named Judge Laws found in their favor, issuing an injunction against national Board preventing them expelling the Washington DC branch. The National Board of the AAUW was forced to take the case to the Federal District Court, who also ruled in the Washington DC branch's favor, arguing that national membership by-laws said that graduates of an accredited institution "may" be eligible for membership, not that they "must" be eligible.

In what can only be described as a hugely ironic turn, the national leadership's previous policy of ceding to regional discretion was now cited as precedent, and used as evidence against their new effort to compel branch compliance. The ruling noted that there was no existing requirement in the association's by-laws to compel branches to admit to their ranks those members who had been admitted to the national association. The ruling pointed out that, on the contrary, the national association had long tolerated differing branch practices on membership and several branches had specific by-laws on membership policies. As late as 1945, the Federal District Court noted, Dr McHale, had written a letter on membership policy which asserted, "Branches can determine the management of their branch affairs"[53] A change in by-laws, securing authority on branch membership at the national level, would be required. The ruling also determined that the national Board had acted unlawfully in expelling the Washington DC branch without consulting the national convention.

The intransigence of the Washington DC branch and the decision of the Federal District Court forced the national Board to announce their intention to bring the matter to the national convention in Seattle in 1949, proposing that the national rules on membership be clarified and that educational eligibility would be the only criterion for membership. Washington DC branch took the offensive, writing to all branches of the AAUW asserting that while racial integration had sparked the current turmoil, the consequences of the proposed reforms went far beyond race and would result in a complete restructure of the AAUW. The branch insisted, "Ours is NOT a controversy over racial discrimination. It has gone far beyond that." The revision of the by-laws was "revolutionary in character… If these by-laws pass, for all practical purposes, future conventions

will function only as rubber stamps, our traditional democratic voice of membership will no longer be heard, our officers, committees, programs and policies will be handed to us. Our legislative lobbying will be extended even further beyond educational questions."[54] The DC branch rejected the international imperative of an open membership policy, explaining, "IFUW membership policy… indicates 'character and training' as being the qualifications in IFUW everywhere in its national units" and suggesting that branch autonomy was necessary in order to ensure this "character and training" requirement was met.[55] Quite how Mary Church Terrell was lacking in "character and training," and thus not worthy of admittance to their branch was not explained.

In advance of the Seattle convention, the national leadership of the AAUW initiated a debate on membership policy in the pages of their journal. The debate reflected the complexity of the issue for members. Mary Joy, of the New Jersey branch, spoke to the ethical obligations of racial equality, explicitly asserting the AAUW's responsibility to take the lead on issues of racial justice; "Our leaders know that the day of discrimination is passing in this country and feel a responsibility for the method of this change – whether it is to come in a peaceful, decent manner or with bloodshed and ill-feeling. They believe educated women should take the leadership on the side of a peaceful adjustment in domestic racial matters."[56] Ella Weibing of Kentucky concurred, arguing that "The AAUW is confronted now with a decision basic to its character: shall it continue in its pioneer heritage, attempting to work out within its membership those democratic principles to which we pay ardent lip service, or shall we shrink from the challenge, fearful lest someone disapprove?"[57] Other responses reflected a branch-level understanding of the relationship between the need for racial integration and the association's national and international standing. The North Carolina response asserted, "since we are an educational organization with an international affiliation, we should not have any other basis for membership than academic standing."[58]

The position of those who opposed the national position on integration is, perhaps, a more complex one to interpret. Some responses were straightforward in their hostility to the idea of integration. Regina West, a member of the AAUW in Mississippi explained that her fellow members were simply not willing to be part of a racially integrated group; "The fact is that the admission of Negro members to the AAUW in Mississippi would mean the resignation of most white members …. Mississippi members generally say that they would gladly help the Negro women to organize a

group of their own, but would not meet with them in the same group."[59] Other members, however, explained that their opposition reflected the difficult challenge faced by groups in the South who tried to integrate, and a concern that such a move would jeopardize the political effectiveness, if not the very existence, of their branches. Lucy Westbrook, of Jackson, Mississippi, insisted that most branches would find it difficult to accept African-American members, "not because the members themselves would not accept a Negro woman, but because customs and traditions are so strong in the community. It is the stirring up of feeling that we are afraid of, not the acceptance of a Negro woman."[60] Westbrook's position suggests a reading in which the members of the Jackson AAUW, themselves ready and willing to accept integration, were helpless in the face of the strength of local feeling on the issue.

Other presidents of southern branches of the AAUW positioned themselves more directly in accord with their local communities and spoke out against the imposition of what they saw as an overly hasty programme of racial integration by the national Board. Without directly addressing the principle of integration or their preference for segregation, some members argued that the top-down nature of the directive was unwelcome. Regina West explained that, "[t]here is also a strong feeling that it is undemocratic to leave a branch no autonomy in such a matter."[61] The position of those took this stance was, perhaps, disingenuous. Janice Leone has argued that the development of two discourses around the issue of integration—a public one which focused on branch autonomy and a private one which was more open in its interrogation of the ideology of integration—reflected that "blatant racism had become less acceptable; segregationists within the AAUW felt compelled to disguise their interests in making public pronouncements."[62] Similarly, in their study of the integration of the St Louis branch of the AAUW Anne Boxberger Flaherty and Carly Hayden Foster judge that while "ostensibly, the group argued that they were opposed to the national organization exerting its authority," evidence suggest another motivation; "It was quite clear from phone calls, discussions and correspondence … that the question of race was a primary concern."[63] Like those southerners who insisted that their opposition to school integration was based on an opposition to the interference of federal government into states rights, these women may have found a defense of branch autonomy a genteel front for a preference for segregation.

Alongside the debate within the pages of the *Journal*, the AAUW's national leadership attempted to prepare the ground for the Seattle

convention through personal engagement with branch membership. President Althea Hottel launched a visit to as many branches as possible to explain the position of the national Board. When Hottel attended the Alabama state convention in Mobile, the Board requested that no reference to be made to the membership question during the banquet itself. After the meal members retired to a private room, where Dr Hottel reviewed the details of the membership battle, endearing herself to the membership, one report noted, by "her great tact and rare courage… while very few present agreed with her on the membership question, everyone agreed that she handled a touchy problem in a very fine way."[64] The difficulty of the problem was explained by Katherine Vickery, President of the Alabama state League who recalled, "One member indignantly announced that if she had a Negro come to her home, her neighbors would cease to speak to her, and with that she flounced from the room. Another, with tears in her eyes, recalled a dear friend she had known while in college, but now was not able to visit because of the attitudes of people. She would gladly assist in obtaining Negro members. The extremes had demonstrated our problem."[65]

The Alabama division agreed to support the national position on membership policy, but at the same time, secured support for additional amendments that it hoped would buy their branches some time in dealing with the issue of an integrated membership. The new amendments strengthened the position of state divisions, giving them authority over the recognition of new branches. In addition, state divisions were given the right of review over difficulties arising in local branches—questions would only be passed on to the national Board when the state division was unable to provide a solution.[66] In 1949 in advance of the Seattle convention, the Birmingham branch of the AAUW debated membership policy, ostensibly agreeing with national policy that eligibility, in terms of possession of a degree from an accredited educational institution, was the sole requirement for membership in the AAUW. However, this agreement was rendered meaningless by their qualification that while African-American women in Birmingham with an accredited degree could join the AAUW, they could not join *their* branch, and must be segregated into a separate branch. The decision of the Birmingham branch was not a unanimous one and several members felt that the group had not taken the opportunity to discuss the issue. In a letter sent to all members of the Birmingham AAUW, one of these concerned women, Jordan Cowin, claimed that the vote had been rushed through in "a sincere effort to find an amicable

meeting ground for a majority." Cowin argued that the issue was too important to be dealt with in such a hurried fashion and argued, "it [is] proper to clarify and extend understanding by expression of personal views in minority."[67] Her letter, headed, "Not for the Public, Not for the Press," invited members to sign the minority report, requesting a more "thoughtful consideration" of the issue. The minority report, which was signed by 72 members of the Birmingham branch, took a bold and principled stand on the issue of integration throughout the AAUW, asserting,

> We believe that eligibility should be the sole requirement to membership in the American Association of University Women and its branches … in the light of our local law we do not know how the problem will be solved when a Negro makes application to the Birmingham branch, but we believe it can be solved and must be faced with goodwill … We believe that our privilege of higher education places upon us a necessity for imagination and courage in leadership and that justice is not served by evasion … First in importance, we believe that the ethics of our civilization demands, for all humanity here and abroad that we implement and extend the practice of the democratic faith of the United States.[68]

In a private letter to AAUW President Dr Hottel, Cowin explained her motivation for stirring up what she herself described as a "hornet's nest"; "I am perpetually indignant at the evasion, timidity, procrastination and even dishonesty in the face of a very serious problem … I decided against the advice of most of my best friends to blow it wide open, and, with very little able support, to give a little liberal leadership, which is as rare as hen's teeth in the South."[69] Dr Hottel wrote personally to Cowin to assure her that her "efforts and those of your associates are most encouraging. These have been trying years in the AAUW with reference to this membership problem but a ray of light comes from spots where one does not anticipate them and it gives members of the national Board the courage to face this issue squarely at Seattle."[70] The fact that Hottel felt that the national Board needed support and courage from embattled members of associations in the South, rather than seeing it as the role of the national leadership to support and give courage to pro-integrationist individuals in the South suggested the discomfort of national leadership in taking a strong, authoritative position on racial integration.

The proposed revision of by-laws presented at Seattle did not make explicit reference to race, but rather established firmly the authority of the national association, stating, "When the Association approves an

institution and degrees thereof, it is obligated to admit to membership, upon application, any woman graduate of that institution who holds an approved degree. The Association is an association of members, which functions though regional, state and branch divisions. It is not a federation of local groups."[71] Althea Hottel's opening address at Seattle continued the avoidance of direct engagement with the imperative of racial justice, and addressed the controversy in somewhat abstract, general terms. Entitled "Crossing frontiers in AAUW", Hottel's address stated, "There are frontiers we of the AAUW face today in our own association….At this convention the delegates will be called upon to make decisions that will determine how the college and university women from all regions of the United States can achieve unity. The members of AAUW represent women of different cultural patterns and of all races and religious. We vary in our material possessions as we differ in our intellectual, political, social and aesthetic interests…collectively, we represent the only large women's organization in this country incorporated for educational purposes. Our thinking and actions in the next few days cannot help but reflect the values liberal education has given us…. As educated women we cannot be indifferent to our social responsibilities."[72]

Hottel's lobbying tour might perhaps best be understood, not as an effort to persuade members to embrace integration, but rather an effort to assure skittish members that the association was not planning to take any drastic steps towards interracial membership. In the event, and as a result of the strenuous lobbying efforts of national leadership, the Seattle proposal was passed convincingly, with 2168 votes in favor and only 65 in opposition. The AAUW received citation of honor from the National Council of Negro Women (NCNW), signed by its President Mary McLeod Bethune. The citation commended the AAUW for revising its constitution and thus upholding "before the world the principles of democracy to which our American nation is committed".[73] The conference also adopted a resolution under its social studies section which seemed to support a more engaged position on racial justice, agreeing "The full functioning of democratic government is dependent upon wider citizen participation, the availability to greater numbers of people of the economic and cultural advantages of our society; and the removal of barriers which restrict the free participation of all people in community life."[74] The AAUW's *Journal* published worthy reflections, such as Ina Corinne Brown's 1950 article "Who would keep abreast of Truth?" reminding readers, "failings to achieve full democracy are serious handicaps to our relations with the

rest of the world … our own national life is weakened by our failure to utilize to its full capacity a tenth of human relations."[75]

Once the national leadership of the AAUW had secured the necessary revision to national policy, they took a timorous and unenthusiastic position. Despite the hopes of the AAUW's leadership that the Seattle convention would allow them to draw a decisive line under their membership crisis, branches continued to struggle both with the ideological imperative of integration and with the logistical challenges it posed. Even with the wide margin of support over membership policy at Seattle, the AAUW still had significant numbers of both individual members and local branches who were either fundamentally opposed to the integration of their branches or too fearful of community reaction to address the issue. At a Birmingham board meeting in July 1949, the branch agreed "if and when we have an application from an eligible Negro woman … the Birmingham branch [will] recognise the fact that our municipal laws take precedence over the laws of our National Association and that we recommend to the applicant that she organize a negro branch of the AAUW." As a measure of their goodwill, one of the members added the thoughtful amendment "and assure the applicant that the Birmingham branch will render any desired assistance."[76]

Not unsurprisingly, branches frequently looked to the national Board for direction in these struggles over the integration question. The national Board, still smarting from having been dragged into the branch in-fighting in Washington DC, proved itself reluctant to lend further support to integrationist forces within their own association. The St Louis branch of the AAUW entered into a protracted battle over the issue, with the group holding its own vote on integrated membership. As a result of the vote, in which 188 women out of a total membership of 385 voted against integration, the branch split in two. The larger group renamed itself "The College Club of St Louis," disaffiliated from the national AAUW and claimed ownership of the branch club house and assets. National AAUW leadership, argue historians Flaherty and Foster, offered little or no legal or moral support to the beleaguered pro-integration minority group in St Louis, having failed to develop any follow-up plan for the implementation of the new by-laws. "The burden of initiating change on the ground, where it was most challenging," they conclude, "was left to the branches."[77]

The issue of African-American membership in southern branches supposedly resolved at the 1949 convention, in fact dragged on. In January 1950, the AAUW's *Journal* stated proudly that branches in forty-one

states had reported that they had "some kind of program on minority problems and intergroup relations."[78] This "program," however, could be anything from a fully integrated branch meeting to a study group meeting or community project, and thus reflected, not a fully integrated AAUW, but an inconsistent and glacially slow approach to integration throughout the association. In 1953, Katherine Vickery, wrote to Mrs Murray, President of the Georgia division, regarding the application of an African-American graduate of Nashville's Fisk University to the Macon (Alabama) branch of the AAUW. While several members of the teaching faculty at Fisk were already eligible for membership in the AAUW because of their graduation from integrated northern colleges, Fisk itself only received AAUW approval in 1948. One of its graduates had now moved to Macon and was keen to join the all-white branch, and Murray had written to Vickery for advice. Vickery explained that while there were several African-American members of AAUW in Kentucky and Tennessee, there was still none in Alabama. "We in Alabama" Vickery wrote, "have been rather fortunate in that our liberals have not been too aggressive and our conservatives have not been too conservative. I feel that it is necessary for both of these groups to be willing to compromise and that if a Negro woman sincerely desires membership and the conservatives realize it is not something being pushed by the Liberals in the groups, they will probably make every attempt to adjust to having her as a member of the group. On the other hand" she added plaintively, "it is difficult on us."[79]

In the decade following the Seattle ruling, while many branches were not explicitly flouting the open membership policy, neither were they making an effort to actively seek out African-American membership. A membership statement by the Birmingham branch for 1960–1961 revealed that they were still limiting their recruitment activities to white women, reporting, "During the first half of the year we wrote for a list of white women graduates from thirteen colleges. We also got a list of all new white teachers from each of the five school systems who had degrees."[80] As late as 1960, the Atlanta AAUW was still struggling with the issue of integration. A board meeting on 21 May 1960 noted "that the coming year many be one of decision in regard to eligible Negro members and that the problem needs study and active participation on the part of all board members."[81] Mrs Howard, President of the Atlanta, Georgia branch met with representatives of the national association to discuss the issues raised by the application of an African-American AAUW member, who was moving to Georgia from Washington DC. Mrs Howard proposed, rather than

integrating their own branch, that they supported the establishment second, separate, segregated branch—a proposal that had first been mooted by some branches in 1949 but soundly rejected by national leadership. The particular problem that the Atlanta branch had with integration was that many of their members were public employees whose jobs would be threatened by their participation in an integrated group. After seeking independent legal advice the national Board explained, "Regardless of our by-law's basis of eligibility, the laws of the state (unless ruled unconstitutional) take precedence. Consequently, if your present branch is composed of some members who are public employees and whose economic livelihood would, under state law, be jeopardized through participation in integrated meetings, then the Atlanta branch could not in fairness to these members be expected to change its place of meeting to one where integrated meetings were permissible."[82]

Regardless of whether the personal preferences of branch membership were for segregation or not, the practical difficulties for branches in the South moving to integration were very real ones. Legislation in cities such as Birmingham did prevent public meetings of white and African-American women, and when branches across the South did decide to integrate they frequently had to change the locations of their meeting. Even before southern branches had themselves integrated, the issue of public accommodation proved vexing to the organizers of regional conferences. The meeting of the Southwest-Atlantic regional AAUW conference was held in Birmingham in 1952. Vickery asserted "There is no worse place in all the South to resist accommodating Negroes than Birmingham. It had been arranged for us to hold all meetings in the Chamber of Commerce building and all luncheons and dinners were cancelled … Then no Negroes came to the meeting."[83] The same regional conference was held in Biloxi (Mississippi) the following year, and special permission for African-Americans to attend meetings and to share meals in rooms that were reserved for the conference was secured from the Buena Vista Hotel. Accommodation was arranged, not at the hotel which was unprepared to accommodate African-American guests, but at members' homes in the community.

Atlanta's proposal for the establishment of a segregated branch was one of several of what the national AAUW membership committee called "straws in the wind" which prompted them to invite representatives of the LWV and the YWCA to their October 1960 meeting, noting "it would

be sensible to do some preparatory thinking." Reflecting that, regardless of their decision at Seattle, branches in the South were still struggling with the issue of integrated membership, the AAUW sought counsel from similar women's associations who were facing the same problems. Other factors which were increasing the pressure on the AAUW to address the slow pace of integration included; news of a group of twelve African-American women in Alexandria, Louisiana, wanted to form an African-American branch in a city where there was already an all-white branch, an African-American "member-at-large" who was reportedly "putting pressure on [the Little Rock] branch to accept her," and, finally, the prospect of the acceptance of an increasing number of African-American colleges in the South by the AAUW's Higher Education Committee. In 1961, for example, the African-American Spellman College in Atlanta and Morgan State in Maryland both received AAUW approval. The accreditation of these colleges raised the prospect of African-American eligibility beyond the largely theoretical level it had been at since 1949.

The 1960 review revealed the slow pace of change of the AAUW since Seattle. Of the 23 southern cities with populations of 100,000 or more, the AAUW reported that it had 211 branches. To the knowledge of the national Board only four of these branches—Miami, Nashville, Norfolk and Richmond—were integrated[84] At the October 1960 meeting in Washington DC, the AAUW reviewed the ramifications of what it called the "recent upsurge in the integration issue." Both the AAUW and the LWV confessed that their policy was to keep no official record of when local units integrated. Based on the premise that a community's process of integration would be accelerated if the three participating organizations worked together, it was agreed that Atlanta could be a pilot area for a nucleus approach in studying the state laws and giving the local units "greater courage."[85]

Despite this recognition that the pace of racial integration was quickening, racial justice remained a difficult question for the AAUW. With no determined action to address the issue of their own membership policy, branches were in an impossible position to deal with issues of racial integration as they became increasingly problematic within their own communities. In the absence of a national position on civil rights, branches were left to decide for themselves the terms on which they were prepared to intervene, or even comment on local situations. In some instances, the continued lack of African-American members inevitably meant that

branches took a conservative position, willing to back the forces of law and order and the status quo, even when this meant explicitly criticizing those working for racial justice. In 1961, Birmingham became the centre of civil rights activism when a group of activists working under the auspices of the Congress for Racial Equality (CORE) rode into the city on an integrated public bus as part of the "freedom rides." An angry mob greeted the freedom riders at the Birmingham bus station, and a riot ensued, leaving many of the riders seriously beaten and wounded. Given that the arrival of the riders was widely known, the decision of Birmingham's outspokenly segregationist chief of police, Eugene "Bull" Connor to give police in the city the day off to celebrate Mother's Day, looked at best like a dereliction of duty, at worse, like collusion with segregationist vigilantes. Birmingham AAUW felt compelled to speak out, calling on the officials of their city "to preserve and maintain law and order". The branch condemned both the "extremists…who provoked these people in Alabama" and the actions of those who "took the law into their own hands". While it tried to be even-handed, the Birmingham AAUW's statement offered support to Connor, asserting, "We condemn the breakdown of law and order and the violence which occurred in Birmingham on Sunday 14 May, and agree with Commissioner Connor's words that this was a 'regrettable and disastrous eruption of violence.' At the same time we commend the Police department of Birmingham for maintaining law and order since that time."[86]

The difficult position of branches concerning issues of racial justice was particularly pressing when events focused, not only on integration and public accommodation but also on school desegregation. As women whose organizational principle was the protection of high standards in public education, silence was particularly hard to defend. The national Board of the AAUW was reluctant to commit their branch membership in the South by taking a national position on school desegregation, and instead recommended that local branches avoid taking a direct vote on opinion as to the *Brown* vs *Board of Education* ruling. The national Board advised them to work on establishing lines of communication between their branches and African-American groups in their communities. Levine asserts that national advice focused on advocating that local branches work towards avoiding conflict, and in the words of the AAUW Social Studies chair, help to bring about "orderly change."[87] While some members of the AAUW National Board and staff argued that the AAUW had a responsibility to endorse the ruling, the Board avoided making any public statement.

The cautious approach of the AAUW on the issue of integration was, for some members, inexplicable. An Atlanta branch, board meeting on 13 November 1958 discussed a resolution from the National Council of Christians and Jews that protested the dynamiting of the Hebrew Benevolent Congregation Temple. The Temple's Rabbi, Jacob Rothschild, was well known for his progressive position on civil rights and integration, and the Atlanta AAUW debated signing a resolution expressing their support for the rabbi and his position. The branch shied away from taking such a strong position, agreeing to answer the letter with an explanation that they could not involve themselves in active work in the issue of integration. "The AAUW is in accord with the ideals set forth in the resolution," they explained, but "its program for the year is already planned."[88] One member of the Atlanta AAUW tendered her resignation in March 1959 in response to what she saw as the failure of the AAUW to take a position. Mrs Pfeiffer explained that she had worked with the AAUW for many years because she supported its avowed purpose of promoting "practical educational work" and "higher standards of education." "It seems to me" Pfeiffer argued "that an educational crisis is before this community at this time which offers an opportunity for leadership both practically and inspirationally. After carefully reviewing the present and projected activities of the Atlanta Branch, I can see no evidence that any policy in this crisis save that of a "hands – off" is being engaged in or contemplated at this time." Mrs Pfeiffer reported that she found it "shocking" that the branch was offering no speaker on the subject, was not engaged in any community action or research project, had not established a study group, in short "no opportunity is being offered to the membership to take a public stand by either rejecting or accepting a general resolution concerning public education."[89] Declaring her intention to put her efforts into working with local organizations which took "a less timid attitude" Pfeiffer explained, "I find myself unable to continue to support an organization which is unwilling to risk open and frank discussion of what to me is the most important matter in education in our community today." Pfeiffer was particularly disheartened that an association whose primary declared interest was education and which had "always been in the forefront of controversial problems of education" should be so timid in taking a position on this issue.[90]

It was not until the early 1960s, when the school desegregation crisis threatened to bring down public education across the southern states, that some local AAUW branches finally took a stand. The strategy of the

national Board was not to take a strong national position but rather to support and facilitate the action of individual local branches in community level work. The AAUW had two branches in New Orleans, one of which wanted to intervene in their local school crisis, but was prevented from doing so by the wishes of the other branch. The regional vice-president was forced to present a motion to the regional board to allow branches to take action without reporting to the inter-branch council, provided the action was clearly within the AAUW's program.[91] Local AAUW support was still carefully framed as support for public education, however, rather than for the principle of racial integration. The Georgia AAUW state convention in 1960 was similarly circumspect in the wording of its position, declaring, "The Georgia Division of the American Association of University Women reaffirms its support of public education and following a poll of its branches, endorses the local option plan as the better choice for keeping the schools open in this crisis."[92] The division wrote to Governor Vandiver in January 1961 to warmly congratulate him for his efforts on the behalf of public education, assuring him that a poll of their 300 members in spring 1960 showed that "a great majority endorsed a policy of open schools." Mrs Carter, President of the Atlanta AAUW, gushed, "your determination to enforce the law, your declaration to continue open schools, are gratifying and lead us and the public to be very optimistic that the united action of you and the General Assembly will arrive at a solution that will prevent a break in the continuity of the system, and make this stressing and distressing educational question acceptable, at least to a majority of people in the state."[93]

The reluctance of the national leadership of the AAUW to address the issue of integrated membership reflected their recognition that direct confrontation with the issue threatened the identity and continued effectiveness, or even existence, both of their local branches in the South and of the national unity of their association. As Susan Levine has argued, "Association unity, branch autonomy and the continued avoidance of conflict all hinged on the association's avoiding a confrontation with principle."[94] Fearful that direct confrontation with the issue of integration would bring about a crisis within their association, and failing to see the issue as a high priority the AAUW prevaricated, prizing organizational harmony above the principle of racial justice. The AAUW's move towards an integrated membership was, as a result, painfully slow. At a national level, the AAUW made gestures towards a pro-integration position. In 1958, for example, the AAUW bestowed their "Woman of the Year" award on Marian Anderson,

an action that clearly distanced them from the racially exclusive position of the Daughters of the American Revolution. At the local level, it is undeniable that many branches engaged with racial integration in a committed way. In August 1958, the Annapolis AAUW was awarded the Sidney Hollander Foundation Award in recognition of its outstanding contribution towards the achievement of equal rights as a result of its integration.[95] This integration, however, was achieved a full nine years after the National AAUW's success in Seattle. Consensus on position of the AAUW as a whole towards the issue of racial justice continued to be elusive. In 1968, the AAUW announced the establishment of a special fund to be called the "Coretta Scott King" Fund in honor of the wife of the civil rights leader Martin Luther King. The fund would support scholarships which would be awarded to a student studying in the field of African-American history, nonviolence, or peace. While on the face of it this fund suggested the AAUW's alignment with the cause of civil rights, there remained some within the association who were resistant to honoring the King name in this way. The executive committee of the Birmingham branch held lengthy discussions on the fund before recommending that they would "simply announce the establishment of the fund … we will not plan any branch fund-raising project and will not put news releases of the fund into local papers."[96]

While some branches did make some interventions into local issues, such intervention was limited by the lack of a clear identification of the issue of racial justice as part of the AAUW's national program. "It cannot be over-emphasized" explained an AAUW leader's handbook, "that in AAUW community action comes as a consequence of a specific study program or is otherwise logically and clearly allied with the subject-areas of AAUW concern."[97] The institutional instinct of the association, in the absence of national leadership on the issue, seemed to be for a tacit silence. Such institutional inertia or conservatism is not perhaps surprising. The 1962 AAUW leader's handbook explained the cautious nature of the association; "A constant threat to successful programming is the temptation to go beyond these limits, to adopt the program of some other organization which seems particularly useful, or to take up some 'worthy cause' in response to community pressures of one kind or another. Long experience has shown, however, the wisdom not only of doing a few things well, but also the national effectiveness of an organization all of whose members are working contemporaneously within a few selected areas." The limits of the association, the handbook explained, were those which reflected "the special responsibility to society of those who have enjoyed

the advantages of higher education."[98] The refusal to acknowledge racial integration as within the "special responsibility" of university women was a significant one. The AAUW's strategy of tacit silence on an issue of such magnitude, argues Christina Greene, "presaged its declining influence, as members relinquished action for abstract study and ceased to be players on the national stage."[99]

The legacy of racial segregation in women's associations was such that, in the AAUW and the LWV, white women simply did not see the issue of racial justice as their problem. One can certainly understand the very real difficulties and dangers of embracing interracial organizing which faced women in the south. What emerges from the study of the League and the AAUW in this period, however, is perhaps less a sense of fear and alarm, and more a sense of irritation and frustration at having to find integrated restaurants, negotiate with hotel staff or embarrassment at the potential awkwardness and social unease of meeting African-American women in private homes. The hesitation of the AAUW and League in addressing the issue of racial integration may have been a fatal one. For some historians, the period between 1945 and 1954 constituted a golden opportunity for the United States to address racial discrimination. African-American activists were ready to put the United States' toleration of discrimination to the test, significant numbers of white allies were ready to support a challenge to the post-reconstruction racial settlement and the international context gave a sense of urgency, making racial justice a pressing political, social and ethical issue. John Egerton, in his study of pre-civil rights southern moderates, has acknowledged that "one of the things I have come to see in retrospect is how favourable the conditions were for substantive social change in the four or five years right after World War II."[100]

The failure of the LWV and the AAUW to decisively address the issue of their own segregation before 1954 left them in a relatively helpless position when the issue of racial integration came to dominate national and local agendas after 1954. In the wake of *Brown*, several southern states enacted and enforced segregation laws with far more enthusiasm and rigor than they had done before 1954, making the gradual integration of organizations less, not more, possible than it had been in the pre-*Brown* period. As Christina Greene has argued, "The days of remaining neutral on racial matters of such momentous significance … were long gone, particularly for a national organization."[101] Their efforts of both the LWV and the AAUW to avoid taking a position on racial justice left them floundering, fearful that confrontation with the issue of racial integration

and racial justice would damage both the political effectiveness of their branches within their local communities and the consensus and bonds of social relations on which their branches depended.

Notes

1. "Our History" AAUW Website, http://history.aauw.org/, accessed 10 July 2015.
2. Charter of the AAUW, 1899, AAUW of Alabama papers, box 4, file "Constitution."
3. "General Director's Letter: membership Notes", May 1946, AAUW of Alabama papers, box 4, file "1947–1948."
4. Ibid.
5. "AAUW international Students 1946–1947" *Journal of the AAUW* 39:4, (Fall 1946) 20.
6. "Mobile Branch History, Activities 1948–1949," *A Half-Century of AAUW in Alabama 1927–1977* (Tuscaloosa Al, Committee on History of the Alabama Division of the American Association of University Women, Drake Printers, 1977) 116.
7. AAUW Resolutions and Index 1933–2011, accessed 19 July 2015. http://www.aauw.org/files/2013/02/1933-2011-AAUW-resolutions.pdf
8. AAUW Leader's Handbook, AAUW of Alabama papers, box 3, file "AAUW National Organization Publications, Miscellaneous." 7.
9. Letter from Luanna J Bowles, *Journal of the AAUW,* 40:4, (Summer 1947) 227.
10. Helen Dwight Reid, "The US in World Affairs," *Journal of the AAUW*, 41:1 (Fall 1947) 51.
11. "Stronger V.O.A. Urged by University Women" Press release, 18 April, 1951, AAUW Records 1881–1975 (Microfilming Corporation of American New York, 1980), III, reel 21.
12. Caroline F Ware, "Wanted: A Consumer Program for Reconversion" *Journal of the AAUW* 38:1, (Fall 1944) 67.
13. Charter and By Laws of the AAUW 1957. AAUW of Birmingham Papers, Birmingham Public Library, Birmingham Alabama, 164.1.1.1.1.
14. Ibid.
15. *A Half Century of AAUW in Alabama*, (Tuscaloosa, Drake, 1975), 98.

16. "Mobile Branch History, Activities 1948–49," *A Half-Century of AAUW in Alabama,* 115.
17. "Are we forgetting the Homemaker?" Letter from Florence K Street, 62 *Journal of the AAUW* 41:1, (Fall 1947) 62.
18. "'AAUW leadership too far Left' Oshkosh Women say," *Sheboygan Press Telegram,* 11 April 1951.
19. See Louise S. Robbins, *The Dismissal of Miss Ruth Brown: Civil Rights, Censorship and the American Library* (Norman, University of Oklahoma Press, 2000).
20. Katherine Vickery, "Report of the Auburn Branch AAUW" April 1949 AAUW of Alabama papers, box 4, file "AAUW 1948–1949."
21. Letter from Mrs. Tilly to Mrs. Blair, 15 August 1946, AAUW of Georgia Papers, Georgia State Archives, box 1, file 2–17.
22. See Linda M. Perkins, "The National Association of College Women: Vanguard of Black Women's Leadership and Education 1923–1954," *Journal of Education* 172:3, (1990): 65–75.
23. Letter from Louise Bache to Kathryn McHale, 28 November 1942, AAUW papers, VIII, reel 79.
24. Letter from Kathryn McHale to Louise Bache, 1 December 1942, AAUW papers, VIII, reel 79.
25. Janice Leone, "Integrating the American Association of University Women 1946–1949," *The Historian* 51:3, (1989): 423–445, 439.
26. Janice Leone, "Integrating the American Association of University Women," 426.
27. Susan Levine, *Degrees of Equality. The American Association of University Women and the Challenge of Twentieth Century Feminism* (Philadelphia, Temple University Press, 1995) 107.
28. For more on national associations co-operation with the US government see Helen Laville, *Cold War Women. The International Activities of American Women's Associations,* (Manchester and New York, Manchester University Press, 2002).
29. Althea K. Hottel, "Town Meetings around the World," *Journal of the AAUW*, 43: 2 (January 1950), 81.
30. "State Presidents Consider Program, Policy, Problems," *Journal of the AAUW*, 42: 2, (Fall 1948), 23.
31. Levine, *Degrees of Equality,* 111.
32. Cited in Ibid, 115.

33. See Dennis B. Fradin and Judith Bloom Fradin, *Fight on! Mary Church Terrell's Battle for Integration* (New York, Clarion Books, 2003).
34. Cited in Leone, "Integrating the American Association of University Women," 428.
35. History of the Situation in the Washington Branch, prepared by Mrs Wilhelm, President Washington Branch, 1 June 1946–31 May 1948. AAUW of Alabama papers, box 4, file "AAUW Workshop 1948."
36. Ibid.
37. It was not until the mid-1970s that the right of "private" associations to practice discriminatory membership policies was addressed in American courts. The first of these challenges were made, not on the basis of racial exclusion, but by women challenging their exclusion from all-male associations such as the Jaycees, the Rotary Club and the Kiwanis. See John D. Inazu, "Unsettling 'Well-settled' Law of Freedom of Association" *Connecticut Law Review* 43:1 (November 2010): 149–208, and Hyman Hacker, "Private Club Memberships. Where does Privacy end and Discrimination begin?" *St John's Law Review* 1:3, (Spring 1987): 474–501, accessed 5 August 2015, http://scholarship.law.stjohns.edu/law-review/vol61/iss3/5
38. "Report of the Membership Committee," *Journal of the AAUW* 41:2 (Winter 1948) 103–104.
39. History of the Situation in the Washington Branch, prepared by Mrs. Wilhelm, President Washington Branch, 1 June 1946–31 May 1948. AAUW of Alabama papers, box 4, file "AAUW Workshop 1948" Susan Levine notes the same effort to associate racial integration with fears of communist infiltration on the part of the San Diego branch. Threatened with racial integration, the branch warned that loss of regional autonomy over membership criteria would leave them "completely without protection against the dangerous subversive elements in this critical period in world history." Cited in Levine, *Degrees of Equality*, 123.
40. Letter to Mrs. Blair, President of the Georgia Division AAUW, from Althea Hottel, President of the National AAUW, 27 April 1948, AAUW of Georgia Papers, Georgia State Archives, box 2, file 17.

41. Leone, "Integrating the American Association of University Women."
42. Christina Greene, *Our Separate Ways: Women and the Black Freedom Movement in Durham, North Carolina* (Durham, University of North Carolina Press, 2005) 51.
43. Cited in Leone, "Integrating the American Association of University Women," 441.
44. Nashville Branch to branch Presidents of South-east central region 2 December 1948. AAUW of Alabama papers, box 1, file "Correspondence 1941–1961."
45. Letter from the El Paso Branch to Dr Hottel (not dated) AAUW of Auburn papers, box 1, file "Correspondence 1941–1961."
46. Letter from President of the El Paso Branch to all Branch Presidents, 27 October 1948, AAUW of Alabama papers, box 1, file "Correspondence 1941–1961."
47. Letter from the El Paso Branch to Dr Hottel (not dated) AAUW of Alabama papers, box 1, file "Correspondence 1941–1961."
48. Letter from Henrietta Thompson to Dr Althea Hottel 29 March 1948, AAUW of Georgia papers, box 3, file 2/17.
49. Letter from Gillie Larew, South Atlantic Regional Vice-president, to Mrs Blair, President Georgia AAUW, 5 April 1948, AAUW of Georgia papers, box 3, file 2/17.
50. Letter to Mrs Blair, President of the Georgia Division AAUW, from Althea Hottel, President of the National AAUW, 27 April 1948, AAUW of Georgia papers, box 2, file 17.
51. Letter from the Board of Directors to State and Branch Directors, 12 August 1948, AAUW of Alabama papers, box 4, file "AAUW 1948–1949."
52. Ibid.
53. District Court of the United States of the District of Columbia, Washington Branch of the American Association of University Women vs The American Association of University Women. *The Washington Law Reporter*, 46:33.
54. Letter from University Women's Club, Washington Branch of AAUW 27 May 1949, AAUW of Alabama box 4, file "Correspondence 1947–May 1949."
55. Ibid.
56. "AAUW State Presidents review membership policy" *Journal of the AAUW*, 43: 3, (Spring, 1949), 131.

57. Ibid, 136.
58. Ibid, 137.
59. Ibid, 134.
60. Letter from Lucy Westbrook, Jackson, Mississippi, *Journal of the AAUW,* 43:1, (Fall 1949), 26.
61. "AAUW State Presidents review membership policy" *Journal of the AAUW* 43:3, (Spring, 1949), 134.
62. Leone, "Integrating the American Association of University Women," 434.
63. Anne Boxberger Flaherty and Carly Hayden Foster, "Gateway to Equality: Desegregation in the American Association of University Women in St Louis Missouri," *Women's History Review*, 24:2 (August 2015):191–214, 13.
64. Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting, Mobile, Alabama, 8–9 April 1949, AAUW of Alabama papers, box 4, file "AAUW Convention April 1949."
65. *A Half Century of AAUW in Alabama*, 27.
66. Ibid.
67. Letter to all members of the Birmingham Branch AAUW, 16 May 1949, AAUW of Birmingham papers, 164.1.4.2.3.
68. Minority Report, Birmingham AAUW, 4 June 1949. AAUW of Birmingham papers, 164.1.4.2.3.
69. Jordan Cowin to Dr. Hottel, 4 June 1949, AAUW of Birmingham papers, 164.1.1.1.1.
70. Dr. Hottel to Mrs. Cowin, 2 June 1949, AAUW of Birmingham, 164.1.4.2.3.
71. Proposed revision of All By-Laws, Advance Printing from the Spring 1949 Journal of the AAUW. AAUW of Auburn papers, box 4, file "Correspondence 1947–May 1949."
72. "Dr Althea Hottel discusses new frontiers" AAUW of Alabama papers, box 3, file 1 "National convention 1949–1963."
73. Citation of Honour, accessed 20 August 2104, https://archive.org/stream/marymcleodbethun00smit/marymcleodbethun00smit_djvu.txt
74. AAUW Resolutions and Index 1933–2011, accessed 19 July 2015. http://www.aauw.org/files/2013/02/1933-2011-AAUW-resolutions.pdf
75. Ina Corinne Brown, "Who Would Keep abreast of truth?" *Journal of the AAUW* 44:1, (Fall 1950) 13–14.

76. Board Minutes, 15 July 1949. AAUW of Birmingham papers, 164.1.3.1.
77. Flaherty and Foster' "Gateway to Equality." 13.
78. "Minority Problems and Intergroup Relations," *Journal of the AAUW*, 43: 2, (January 1950), 103.
79. Letter to Katherine Vickery to Mrs. Murray, 17 April 1953, AAUW of Georgia papers, box 2, file 22.
80. Annual Report 1960–1961. AAUW of Birmingham papers, 164.4.2.9.
81. AAUW Atlanta Board Meeting, 21 May 1960., AAUW of Atlanta Papers, box 1, file 1.
82. Letter to Mrs. M.W. Howard from Mrs. L.R.S. Barnes, Associate, membership organization AAUW, 21 July 1960, AAUW of Georgia papers, box 2, file 3.
83. Letter to Katherine Vickery to Mrs. Murray, 18 March 1953, AAUW of Georgia papers, box 2, file 22.
84. Southern Cities with a population of 100,000 or more, AAUW of Auburn papers, box 5, file "Membership Committee meeting October 1960."
85. Minutes of the AAUW Membership Committee, Washington DC 27–28 October 1960, AAUW of Alabama papers, box 5, file "Membership."
86. Minutes of the Board, Birmingham Branch, AAUW of Birmingham papers, 164.1.3.1.8.
87. Levine, *Degrees of Equality*, 132.
88. AAUW Board meeting, 13 November 1958, AAUW of Atlanta papers, box 1, file 1.
89. Letter from Mrs. Pfeiffer to Miss Ida Lois Daniel, Treasurer, Atlanta AAUW, 4 March 1959, AAUW of Georgia papers, box 2, file 3.
90. Ibid.
91. Virginia Sherman (Chair, National Membership committee AAUW) to Katherine Cater, 22 February 1961, AAUW of Alabama papers, box 5, File "Membership Committee."
92. State Convention Resolution, 1960. AAUW of Atlanta papers, box 1, file 1.
93. Letter from Mrs. James Carter, President Atlanta AAUW, to Governor Vandiver, 16 January 1961, AAUW of Georgia papers, box 2, file 3.

94. Levine, *Degrees of Equality,* 109.
95. "Annapolis University women get 11th Hollander Award," *The Baltimore Afro-American* (30 August 1958) 24.
96. Meeting of the Executive Committee, 4 September 1968, AAUW of Birmingham, 164.1.3.1.25.
97. AAUW Leader's Handbook, AAUW of Alabama papers, box 3, file "AAUWW National Organization Publications, Miscellaneous." 11.
98. AAUW Leader's Handbook, AAUW of Auburn papers, box 3, file "AAUW National Organization Publications, Miscellaneous." 7.
99. Christina Greene, *Our Separate Ways: Women and the Black Freedom Movement in Durham, North Carolina* (Durham, University of North Carolina Press, 2005) 54.
100. John Egerton, *Speak Now Against The Day. The Generation before the Civil Rights Movement in the South.* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 10.
101. Christina Greene, *Our Separate Ways*, 54.

CHAPTER 5

The National Women's Committee on Civil Rights

While less newsworthy than the March on Washington that civil rights associations were planning for the following month, the White House women's conference in July 1963 was nonetheless a significant moment in the struggle for racial justice in the United States. The conference was one of a series of White House meetings, all designed by the Kennedy administration to rally support for his proposed civil rights bill. Finally signed into law after Kennedy's death by President Johnston in July 1964, this bill marked a turning point in American history. "The passage of the Act and the debates leading to it," explained the United States Information Agency (USIA) in a booklet announcing the Act to the world, "represent a determination by the people and the Government of the United States to overcome prejudice and racism and to assure that citizens of minority groups shall not suffer disadvantages as a result of that prejudice."[1] After a century of protest, African-American demands for justice had finally taken centre stage. Painfully aware of the dependence of his own Democratic Party on the support of southern democrats, President Kennedy had initially seemed unwilling to initiate presidential efforts to challenge racial inequality. Despite the near decade of high-profile African-American protests that had taken place since *Brown* vs *Board of Education* had ruled segregation in public schools unconstitutional, Kennedy remained skeptical of public support for presidential action on behalf of the rights of African-American citizens. In early 1963, Kennedy had opposed the idea of expressing his support for civil rights legislation.[2] Without a reasonable

H. Laville, *Organized White Women and the Challenge of Racial Integration, 1945-1965*, DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-49694-8_5

expectation of success, Kennedy was unwilling to risk the unity of his party and his chances for a second presidential term on the outcome of presidential sponsorship of civil rights legislation.

The civil rights protests in Birmingham, in May 1963 significantly altered Kennedy's position. Kennedy himself commented that the photographs of police dogs attacking peaceful protests "sickened" him. Perhaps more significantly, the national and international publicity that the police response to the Birmingham protests generated convinced Kennedy that the chances of success for presidential legislation to address racial inequality had finally reached a tipping point. On 11 June 1963, Kennedy gave a television speech announcing his plans to introduce a new civil rights bill. Kennedy's words spoke directly to the exclusion and inequality that African-Americans had been forced to endure in the century following the civil war and the emancipation proclamation. "One hundred years of delay have passed since President Lincoln freed the slaves, yet their heirs, their grandsons, are not fully free," declared Kennedy, before taking presidential responsibility for redress; "Next week I shall ask the Congress of the United States to act, to make a commitment it has not fully made in this century to the proposition that race has no place in American life or law."[3]

Despite Kennedy's assessment that the time was finally ripe for presidential action on civil rights, the President and his administration were nonetheless acutely aware of the opposition such action would provoke. The President's proposals faced a tough battle in Congress, with southern Congressmen seemingly implacable in their hostility to legislation to secure federal protection for African-Americans in their states. Despite Kennedy's conviction that the violence which had erupted in Birmingham had resulted in a sea change in the national mood, he was nonetheless aware of the considerable difficulties he would face in getting a strong civil rights bill through the House of Congress; the already weak civil rights bills of 1957 and 1960 had been considerably watered down in Congress.[4] It was clear to Kennedy that the bill required, in the words of his biographer Robert Dallek, "an all-out lobbying effort."[5] Even if a bill could be secured in Congress, the massive resistance that had sprung forth from southern states in response to *Brown* suggested that the implementation of further federal directions on racial equality risked the kind of community backlash and civil disorder which had already proved so damaging to the reputation of the United States on the international stage. To have any chance of success in securing a decisive end to racial injustice in the

United States, President Kennedy's bill needed the political and social support of influential, well connected and well organized citizens, capable of recognizing racial justice as a moral imperative and acting on that recognition both at the national and local level.

Kennedy's inspiring television address and his determination to cast racial justice as a moral crusade seemed to have some success in rallying the kind of support he would need to secure both the civil rights act and its subsequent implementation. Only two days after the address Margaret Price, vice-chairman and director of women's activities for the Democratic National Committee, wrote to the President to express her support, and that of her influential allies in women's networks, for his position. Price assured Kennedy that "As wives, mothers and homemakers, women are personally affected by the daily incidents of racial disturbances" and suggested that the White House reach out to American women for support, proposing a conference at the White House for 300 to 400 leaders of women's associations. "These women's groups" Price asserted, "have demonstrated that they can be a practical force in existing community efforts. Through their membership they can provide an effective channel of mobilizing the women of America to launch an 'Operation Support' project in favour of your total program, both local and federal, for the implementation of Civil Rights."[6] On 9 July 1963, both President Kennedy and Vice-President Lyndon Johnson welcomed over 300 American women to the White House to urge them to use their influence and resources to support the federal government's decision to secure federal legislation on civil rights.[7] Fired with enthusiasm, and seemingly sharing Kennedy's realization that the time had come to take a moral stand on the issue of racial justice, the women who had been invited to the White House as representatives of American women's associations formed a continuation committee, the National Women's Committee for Civil Rights (NWCCR) on 24 July. By September, an office was opened in Washington, based in the Women's Bureau of the Department of Labor. Shirley Smith, director of Special Projects for the African-American Institute, took a one-year leave of absence from her position in order to work for the NWCCR as its executive director. Mrs. Mildred Horton, wartime head of the Women's Auxiliary Voluntary Emergency Services, and Patricia Harris, an assistant professor of law at Howard University, were appointed as the bi-racial co-chairwomen of the committee.

The establishment of the NWCCR reflected the widespread recognition of the significant place of American women's associations at both the

national and community level of American life. It was the hope of those responsible for the establishment of the NWCCR that it would serve as an umbrella organization, directing the resources and authority of American women's associations toward the promotion of racial justice. In the event, however, the NWCCR was to be a short-lived organization whose achievements were, at best, nebulous. The committee's 1964 report claimed; "We made a difference," but admitted that, "in the national effort to secure the enactment of the Civil Rights Bill, the promulgation of which we rejoice, our part was necessarily a small one. In the movement to secure racial justice, in which we have a deep commitment, we have been but one of many groups working."[8] Patricia Harris noted that it was "difficult … to measure results. We know that women are taking a more active part in civil rights, but whether or not activities … would have taken place without the stimulation of the NWCCR it is impossible to say."[9] While the significance of the NWCCR is difficult to quantify, analysis of its history is nonetheless worthwhile, since study of the NWCCR reveals the complex connections between the national organizational position of women's associations on race relations and the response of their community branches.

The administration's call for the involvement of American women's organizations went beyond the need to garner support for the passage of legislation. Members of women's associations were respected and influential members of their local communities, and the guiding vision behind the establishment of the NWCCR was that these influential women could be inspired to activism within their own communities on behalf of improved race relations. The identification of influential members of women's associations with the desegregation of public accommodations in their communities could help avoid potential resistance and outbreaks of violence. Kennedy's call to women to mobilize their community standing on behalf of the implementation of civil rights demands, however, was a far more difficult, contentious and dangerous task than that of mobilizing support for the passage of civil rights legislation, and one which the NWCCR conspicuously failed to achieve. The NWCCR demonstrated the extent to which American women's organizations lacked internal consensus on the issue of race relations and demonstrated the significant disconnection between national associations and branch membership on the issue. While the national leaderships of women's organizations were ready to throw their weight behind efforts to secure the passage of federal legislation, they lacked the commitment and sense of urgency necessary to encourage, inspire or demand that their branch membership dedicate themselves to

community activism in support of racial justice. Moreover, branch membership steadfastly resisted call calls to action, insisting that desegregation was a local, not national issue. The failure of the NWCCR to bring about activism at the grass roots level ultimately served to convince several of its key members that, while the role of white women in improving race relations in their communities could be a vital one, intervention under the aegis of women's national associations was an ineffectual way of securing their participation.[10]

The NWCCR was not the first effort on the part of women's organizations to collaborate on issues of racial justice. In 1956, the National Council of Negro Women (NCNW) had written to the presidents of white women's associations, noting that, "women's organizations have always been in the forefront of the direct effort to influence public opinion and alert the nation to its moral responsibilities." The NCNW invited representatives of women's associations to attend a conference at the Willard Hotel in Washington DC in November 1956 to discuss ways women could work together to advance racial justice.[11] The 1956 conference failed to achieve any lasting impact. Kennedy's invitation to the leaders of American women's organization took this kind of ad hoc organizing in a different direction, giving it a place in the quasi-governmental work of women's associations, alongside the other forms of collaboration that had been fostered in international affairs and civil defense. The conference was part of a wider governmental strategy to shift the civil rights momentum towards the development of community-based campaigns. While acknowledging the necessity for federal action in the form of the civil rights bill, Kennedy's administration hoped that, once the act was secured, the federal government would be able to turn its attention away from the contentious and difficult issue of civil rights, which had proved an unwelcome distraction from their foreign policy agenda.[12] Once legislation had been secured, the momentum would shift away from federal intervention and towards securing local compliance with what would then be the nationally acknowledged and legally mandated position. The move from national to local level was to be partnered with a move from governmental to non-governmental activism, with the Kennedy administration seeking the participation of voluntary associations, businesses, professional institutions, churches and philanthropic organizations.[13] The Voter Education Project was an example of this national-to-local, public-to-private strategy, with the government encouraging and facilitating the co-operation of private foundations in voting projects in the South.

Kennedy's efforts to stimulate the involvement of private groups in civil rights activism included a series of meetings with lawyers, religious leaders and businessmen. On 21 June 1963, a group 244 lawyers met with the President at the White House, later forming the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights under Law.[14] The group was brought together partly to encourage lawyers to offer their services to address racial discrimination, for example, by providing the legal services in support of civil rights campaigns in Mississippi. The group also involved itself in public advocacy, lobbying in support of the 1963 Civil Rights Act and the 1965 Voting Rights Act. The Lawyers Committee also accepted a responsibility to take a lead in creating a climate of opinion that would further the acceptance of civil rights legislation in local communities. Prominent lawyer, civil rights activist and member of the Executive Committee of the Lawyers Committee, Morris Abram explained: "The national bi-racial committee would have the responsibility of not only establishing an appropriate national consensus but of persuading a majority of the American people to accept it as well as a program for implementing it."[15] Other White House conferences on civil rights targeted labor leaders, religious leaders, educators and members of business councils.

Esther Peterson, director of the Women's Bureau, served as liaison between the heads of women's organizations and the federal government. While the committee initially benefited from administrative support from the Women's Bureau, the Kennedy administration insisted that the committee operate independently from government direction. The initial aims of the White House conference were modest and rather vague. Esther Peterson claimed that the meeting was simply an attempt to get African-American and white women together in the same room to talk about the issue of race relations. If a general consensus and fellow-feeling could be achieved, Peterson argued, then the group could be asked to think about specific ways their organizations could rally support for the civil rights bill and for desegregation in their local communities.[16] Other members of the Kennedy administration were more direct in their encouragement of the NWCCR's efforts on behalf of the civil rights bill. Robert Kennedy, the Attorney General, attended a meeting of the steering committee of the NWCCR on 17 September 1963 to urge the women to provide support for the legislative passage of the Bill, explaining "he felt strongly that women were a key to success in the passage of the legislation and that it was very important for the various organizations represented on the

NWCCR to get their membership working in the key districts in the country where prodding of Senators and Congressmen is particularly important in order to assure passage of the bill."[17]

As Morag Simchak, a staff member at the Women's Bureau reminded Esther Peterson, requests to women's associations for a lobbying campaign needed to be handled very carefully, since the regulations of many of the women's groups precluded their involvement in partisan politics. Simchak described the situation as "ticklish" and suggested that Peterson herself not take a prominent role in the effort since "we must be very careful to avoid an appearance of Administration pressure."[18] Robert Kennedy sought to avoid linking the issue of the civil rights bill to partisan politics, carefully explaining that, "he recommended the action of all women on the grounds of morality, not politics."[19] A regional meeting of the NWCCR was addressed by Margaret Price, who urged on her listeners to be mindful of the importance of "a non-partisan approach." Price explained that, "on this matter it was best to use the phrase non-partisan in preference to bi-partisan just to point up more fully that this bill should be kept out of the political arena."[20] The Kennedy administration, as well as allies in the Women's Bureau and the Democratic Party, thus sought to define racial justice as the kind of non-partisan cause that women's associations could legitimately claim was in their remit as concerned citizens.

The committee responded enthusiastically to Kennedy's call for support for the civil rights bill. Both the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) and the Washington DC branch of the LWV distributed summaries of civil rights legislation, accompanied by guides on corresponding and speaking to Congressmen.[21] The Pennsylvania Federation of Democratic Women sent letters to Senators and Congressmen in their state urging them to support Kennedy's civil rights bill, asserting that the cause "transcends any consideration of partisan politics or regional prejudice."[22] The NWCCR took part in the "Write for Rights" campaign, encouraging individuals and organizations to write to members of Congress in support of the Civil Rights Act. The Write for Rights factsheet urged that, "every woman of goodwill, regardless of her other commitments must act now to flood Congress with letters or even postcards to urge our lawmakers to support the President's legislative package for Civil Rights."[23] Alongside this letter-writing campaign, the NWCCR stationed volunteers on every floor of the House during the debate and organized visits to the offices of every Congressman to make sure they were available to vote. One woman

reported, "I'll stay as long as you need me. The kids, aged 14 and 16, are cooking dinner this week – that's their contribution to civil rights. My husband is eating what they cook. That's his contribution."[24]

Notwithstanding this appeal to women's associations to work for change at a national level, Robert Kennedy saw the primary goal of the NWCCR to be the fostering of women's involvement in better race relations at the community level. The minutes of a NWCCR meeting noted that Robert Kennedy "emphasized the need for action before a crisis. He used as an example Atlanta, Georgia, and the work of women there which influenced peaceful [school] integration."[25] The Attorney General stressed the importance of women's role as community leaders in the peaceful implementation of integration, explaining that if he had to send troops into Birmingham, it would mean that martial law had been imposed. As had been painfully evident during the Little Rock School desegregation crisis, such intervention would inevitably serve to alienate the local community and provide dramatic evidence to a watching international audience of intransigent resistance to racial justice.[26] Local women campaigning in their communities for peaceful compliance with integration would be immeasurably preferable to sending in federal troops. Robert Kennedy actively sought to enlist the help of the NWCCR in building support for the kind of desegregation of public accommodations that would become mandatory once the act had been passed. In July 1963, Esther Peterson read a letter to a meeting of the NWCCR from Robert Kennedy, in which he asked for assistance in Pine Bluff and Hot Springs, Arkansas. The desegregation of the cinemas there, Kennedy explained, had resulted in the almost complete withdrawal of white citizens from attendance at those cinemas, and the theatre owners had appealed to the Attorney General for advice. The NWCCR agreed that the representatives of the national organizations attending the meeting would ask local groups to alleviate the situation by attending the desegregated cinemas and publicizing their support for the desegregated businesses.[27]

Beyond this case of encouragement from national leadership for branch participation in a specific location, however, the NWCCR struggled to develop meaningful community level work among their members. At the White House Conference in July 1963, the women had been fired up with enthusiasm for their cause, but a little unsure about the methods by which their ideological zeal could be transformed into concrete action and activism. Suggestions had ranged from the largely symbolic—"The possibility of a device such as a symbol to raise the status of women participating in

civil rights efforts should be considered, similar to the sticker used in World War II in homes of servicemen"—to the vague—"Action to overcome unemployment and provide more housing"—to the devious—"Women should get their husbands who are on real estate boards to accept people for what they are without regard to color."[28] Despite their failure to suggest a concrete plan of action, the NWCCR was initially optimistic about the possibility of encouraging the membership of their constituent associations to create an approving climate for integration in their local communities. Peggy Roach, of the National Council of Church Women (NCCW), one of the members of the NWCCR, opined that, "Women's organizations throughout the country under the umbrella of the NWCCR can be mobilised in a united effort to create the climate in their communities not only for compliance with the law but … they can change the overall climate of public opinion in these critical years in race relations."[29] In their communications to member organizations, the NWCCR stressed that this community function was in fact their raison d'etre: "Whereas segregation has long been the acceptable pattern, it is now important to make desegregation acceptable … If women, personally and collectively, can work to create opinion favorable for human rights in general and compliance with a strong civil rights bill in particular, they will render the kind of public service for which the NWCCR … came into being."[30]

The grass roots activism that Roach envisaged amounted to an effort to use what historians have recently begun to call "social capital," defined by Elisabeth Clemens as "the skills and capacities of individuals for social action or to the web of ties among individuals."[31] Clemens argues that pre-suffrage women's associations had demonstrated the successful use of social capital, in their ability to harness their networks and capacities in order to take collective action and secure meaningful social change. "The genius of nineteenth century voluntary associations" suggests Clemens, "lay in both their cultivation of transposable routines for acting collectively … and their elaboration of national federations grounded in the sociability of communities and friendship networks"[32] Both Roach and the Kennedy White House hoped that the success of pre-suffrage women's associations in their deployment of their social capital could be repeated in the direction of this capital towards the implementation of civil rights in local communities. Roach, and indeed the Kennedy administration were not alone in believing that appealing for the intervention of women with social capital, would mean that this "capital" could then be spent in the cause of racial justice. Historian Christina Greene explained

that civil rights lawyer Pauli Murray had expressed a similar hope that the efforts of both African-American and white women, previously made manifest in their civic activism, could seamlessly be diverted to support the open school movement. In an open letter to her home town of Durham, Murray explained, "I see the civic spirit of the women of Durham which has produced such breath-taking beautiful gardens, reaching beyond the country clubs to Negro and white mothers on a new level of mutual co-operation and respect."[33] Efforts by the Kennedy administration to exploit the social capital of the constituent members of the NWCCR, however, was a difficult task. Simplistic approaches to "social capital," overestimate the transferable nature of social capital and the task of transferring social capital from beautiful garden projects to support for racial integration was not as simple as the "social capital" model suggests.

The NWCCR made some efforts to persuade its composite associations to direct the social capital of their branch members in support of the implementation of racial justice in their communities. In August 1963, the NWCCR distributed a form letter to its members encouraging them to use their power as consumers in order to support businesses which had voluntarily desegregated. The letter also suggested writing and visiting businesses that had yet to desegregate and pledging support, concluding that, "action from your members on the local level is essential to encourage the continuation of this desegregation and to assure owners that citizens will support them."[34] The NWCCR suggested that local branches of member organizations could take an active role in assisting the peaceful desegregation of schools in communities where tensions over the integration of schools were still high. A leaflet urged women to "talk with the local Board of Education" and to attempt to build alliances with African-American community groups such as the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs, the NCNW, the Urban League and the NAACP. Conversations with local police officials, religious leaders, newspaper editors and radio and television editors were suggested as ways of promoting a positive community response towards compliance with all civil rights legislation.[35] Recalling the notorious photographs and television images of the Little Rock crisis, which showed white women jeering African-American students, or standing by doing nothing to intervene in an increasingly ugly situation, the NWCCR devised the "Take a Hand Program" which suggested that, "outstanding members of the organization … could meet the Negro parents and their children and literally 'Take a hand' of the Negro parents and the Negro child and walk with them into

the school building."[36] Esther Peterson admitted that this program was not very successful, perhaps because of the high publicity and risk attached with these actions.[37]

The central reason for the failure of the NWCCR to bring about meaningful activism at the community branch level was that national leadership, while willing to work as national organizations to help to secure civil rights legislation, was fundamentally unwilling to commit their local membership to support for the implementation of that same legislation in their local communities. The members of the steering committee of NWCCR, who represented the national leadership of their individual associations, were more than happy to show their support for improved race relations by issuing statements, advice and information. The murder of four young girls in the Birmingham church bombing on 15 September 1963, for example, encouraged the NWCCR to take a strong moral position. Making reference to the role of women as mothers, the NWCCR issued an open letter to the women of Birmingham asking for their involvement: "We have too long accepted passively the fact of racial bigotry. The privileged among us took good fortune as their right. The underprivileged accepted deprivation as their fate. But this has changed since we have seen that children, women's special care, have now become the victims of our apathy. The time has come to care about the kind of world we want for children – white or yellow, red or black."[38]

While this ringing denunciation of bigotry may have helped foster a sense of righteousness among the women of the NWCCR, it achieved little in terms of actually advancing the implementation of civil rights in the South. Robert Kennedy himself reminded the women of the NWCCR that, "women are needed to give leadership and guidance on a local level, not just statements."[39] The NWCCR's executive director, Shirley Smith, enthusiastically responded to Kennedy's appeal, developing plans for women's participation in the Birmingham situation.[40] Efforts to encourage the NWCCR committee members to stimulate local branches towards pro-civil rights work within their local community, however, proved problematic. Local branches steadfastly rejected the idea that their organization's leadership should be directing their branches towards a position on race relations, and the national associations who constituted the NWCCR were unable or unwilling to commit their local branch membership to direct community activism.

The NWCCR's caution was in part a reflection of the different positions taken on integration by the different associations within their umbrella

organization. The steering committee included women from a variety of groups representing different positions on integration and civil rights. At the more conservative end of the spectrum, the steering committee included representatives from the General Federation of Women's Clubs, the American Association of University Women (AAUW), the National Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs and the League of Women Voters. The committee also included representatives who had a far more activist position, including the YWCA and the NCNW. Consultants to the committee included Dorothy Tilly of the southern Churchwomen's group the Fellowship of the Concerned, a representative from the National Urban League and the civil rights activist Diane Nash Bevel, representing the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), although there is no evidence that she took an active role in the work of the NWCCR. Some members hoped that the very act of bringing together women who represented such disparate positions would in itself be helpful. Peggy Roach argued that the bringing together of groups through the NWCCR might serve to promote the goal of racial justice within the more conservative organizations, arguing that, "it does not matter that a particular organization is at a certain stage of development in its involvement in the Civil Rights area – like individuals, organizations work through stages of awareness and commitment to involvement … Perhaps because of our strong commitment and involvement, we can point the way for our sister organizations as they assume a more active role in Civil Rights."[41] Esther Peterson noticed the way in which the interracial membership of the NWCCR served to illustrate the gulf in communication and understanding between white and African-American organizational leaders, recalling that after one NWCCR one of the white women leaders confided that, "she had learned something that she didn't know, which was that there were differences of opinion among Blacks. She expected them to be a block."[42]

While positive benefits might come from groups working alongside each other, the steering committee of the NWCCR was anxious that this represented a voluntary choice, rather than any pressure on individual organizations. The NWCCR avoided any risk of over-committing their membership, announcing that, "the NWCCR is a clearing house for information on civil rights for women's organizations … [with] no membership scheme or formal recognition plan for local and state groups … each related national organization speaks for itself on the Civil Rights issue and the NWCCR does not speak for them collectively or individually."[43] Many

of the women who attended the July meeting and subsequently worked with the committee viewed their NWCCR membership as being based on their private individual position, rather than as representatives of their organizations, explaining that, "members of the Steering Committee are acting as individuals who may or may not be in position to speak authoritatively for their organizations. Their recommendations to related organizations do not obligate their own organization."[44] The caution of the leadership of the NWCCR reflected the disparate aims, purposes and membership of the various groups gathered under its umbrella. While some, such as the YWCA, were already committed to civil rights, other associations did not recognize the struggle for racial justice as a central cause for their organizations, and were wary of committing themselves to such a controversial goal.

In July 1964, the president of the service organization Altrusa International Inc., who had initially participated in the NWCCR, wrote to Mildred Horton to explain the reasons for their withdrawal from the committee. Altrusa, founded in Tennessee in 1917, was a service organization, primarily made up of professional and businesswomen dedicated to community service and vocational education. While Altrusa's leadership were willing to endorse the goals of the NWCCR as individuals, it lacked the authority or appetite to bring about a similar alignment within the association as a whole. Its president explained, "Altrusa is a service organization and its constitution and bylaws prohibit endorsement of legislation or participation in controversial matters without approval of the executive committee." When membership of the NWCCR was presented to Altrusa's executive committee members, they agreed that they were not ready to commit their association to the goals and programs of the NWCCR, determining that that their association should not participate in the activities of the NWCCR in view of "the highly controversial nature of the issue at the present time."[45]

The NWCCR thus struggled to maintain cohesion as a group at a national level, while remaining sensitive to the different position of their constituent members. Even more ominous for the committee's prospects of success was the dawning recognition that the initial hope that the national leadership could stimulate activism at the community level was seriously misplaced. Simply put, the NWCCR was unwilling to press any of its member organizations to make this effort. While the Kennedy administration had envisaged the member organizations of the NWCCR working as vertical structures, with national leadership inspiring and directing community

activism, the members of the NWCCR themselves recognized that their associations simply did not operate in that way. Their own interpretation of the role of the NWCCR was that if local branches independently sought to participate in pro-integration work in their communities, then they could apply to their national leadership who, through their contacts at the NWCCR, could give them support and information to facilitate the development of local groups, possibly on an interracial basis.

The steering committee reflected the position of the leadership of national women's associations who had experience with the delicate relationship between branch membership and national leadership and were wary about the possibility of simply directing branches to enter the fray. However, key figures within the NWCCR failed to understand the relative weakness of national associations and sought a far more active role for the NWCCR in initiating, rather than just facilitating, the development of community level groups. Executive Director Shirley Smith and special consultant Polly Cowan were convinced of the significant potential of influential white women at the community level and saw the objective of the NWCCR as being the involvement of these women, through their membership in women's associations, in community level programs to promote racial justice. Significantly, neither Cowan nor Smith came to the NWCCR with a background in women's voluntary associations. Polly Cowan was a wealthy and successful businesswoman, a television and radio producer turned committed social activist, who had been a hard-working and dedicated volunteer for the NWCCR and was appointed by them to serve as a special consultant.[46] Cowan's impassioned letters demonstrate the high level of her personal commitment to the cause of racial justice. In a letter to the NWCCR director, Cowan questioned why others did not share her own sense of moral outrage, asking, "Where is everybody out there? One look at this morning's headlines: 'Negro Woman slain in Jacksonville Riot' should have brought a bale of money and a flood of volunteers to the Committee office. Is it fear or apathy that causes this paralysis?"[47] Cowan's commitment to the potential of the NWCCR to make a difference included significant financial contributions to the committee. In March 1964, she offered the NWCCR 1000 dollars, explaining, "I will send the $1,000 as a life-line so that the office can be kept going while the organizational plans are re-vamped. I cannot sit on this money while the Committee dies."[48]

Shirley Smith's background was in public service, where she had been an assistant public affairs officer for the Department of State and the USIA.

The Washington Post reported that the "attractive 36-year-old blonde took a 50% reduction in salary in order to manage the … [NWCCR's] activities."[49] Beyond her experience in government, Smith had been an early participant in the direct action civil rights movement as a Freedom Rider. Smith had suffered significant trauma as a result of her experiences in that campaign. In 1961, Smith had been arrested with five other white girls and transferred from Hinds Country jail to the Mississippi State Penitentiary. Her journey to the penitentiary was a difficult one as she later explained: "the driver would slam on his brakes at unexpected moments and hurl us all up against the cab. He thought this was a great way to treat us since, as he pointed out, [we] were the lowest form of white 'nigger loving' females."[50] On her arrival at the penitentiary Smith was subjected to a humiliating search on the "alleged suspicion that the civil rights demonstrators were sneaking dope into the penitentiary." Smith explained "I am not a person who can face violence in a non-violent manner … I fought off those three women until they threw me on a cot and holding me down did the so-called search." Smith's personal experience of brutal treatment informed her conviction that white women in the South had an important role to play in ensuring the better treatment of women in southern prisons, explaining to prominent Birmingham lawyer Charles Morgan that, "it has been my feeling that if we could get local southern women to rally around and visit the jails out of a concern for human decency, this would be very worthwhile … They may not like the reason for a civil rights demonstrator being in jail, but I do think that they would not approve of this kind of treatment."[51]

Smith and Cowan's conviction of the central importance of white women to the civil rights struggle, and their understanding of the need to support and encourage southern white women in a context of community fear and tension, was increased by personal visits that they both made to southern cities. Smith and Cowan visited Selma in early October 1963, followed by a trip to Atlanta. Cowan and Smith's belief that the NWCCR could do more to encourage and support pro-integration southern white women to take a stand was encouraged through their work to establish a pro-integration group in Atlanta. Polly Cowan explained that despite the work of women in organizations such as Help Our Public Education (HOPE) to secure the peaceful integration of Georgia's schools, she and Smith saw Atlanta as being at a crucial stage. Cowan explained that, "a tarnish is beginning to show on the surface of integration of Atlanta's 30 downtown stores, shops and restaurants … Senator Johnson, Georgia's

only Negro State Senator, told us that before October ended a united Negro effort would be launched to expose the 'unreal Atlanta image' of being a half-way open city."

Cowan believed that Atlanta was in a perfect position to serve as a test case of the kind of work the NWCCR could be doing to encourage community activism among women. Not only was the city the target of a sustained civil rights campaign by its African-American citizens, a good number of women who had attended the White House meeting came from Atlanta. Cowan argued that these women now needed "a follow up 'spur' to catalyze them into action."[52] Cowan felt strongly that it was the role of the NWCCR to serve as that spur and bring about the kind of community activism among women that would not otherwise take place. Women in Atlanta had demonstrated their reluctance to direct their activism on race relations though co-operation with existing pro-integration groups. Cowan explained that women's groups on a local level had said that they were unwilling to identify organizationally with groups such as the Atlanta Human Relations Council in order to work with them on joint ventures in civil rights because they were concerned that the Council leadership was too outspoken on civil rights issues and wanted to move at a faster pace than the broad membership of women's associations would be comfortable with.[53] At a meeting in Atlanta under the auspices of the NWCCR, with encouragement from Cowan and Smith, the Atlanta group formed an inter-organization association dedicated to working for the peaceful acceptance of civil rights legislation in Atlanta. The group issued a statement of belief, which asserted: "We feel that all community leaders have a special responsibility to speak out. Other cities where respected leadership remained silent are now suffering fearful consequences."

As an initial plan of action the group agreed to endorse the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce statement that, "all businesses soliciting business from the general public do so without regard to race, creed or color." The women asserted that, "we can thus buttress the Chamber's determination to keep Atlanta growing." The women agreed to circulate a statement to leading citizens explaining, somewhat fawningly, "your outstanding service to the community prompts us to invite you to join us in signing the attached statement." The statement, which began with the rallying cry "We believe in Atlanta!," explained that "as women deeply concerned with the welfare of our city we endorse and commend the appeal of the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce …. We pledge our economic support to those businesses who continue to recognize their responsibility to the city.

We affirm our faith in Atlanta and the Atlanta way of Progress!"[54] The group encouraged its members to use their consumer power in support of integration, asking its members to send letters to business that complied with integration rulings stating that, "since you have made the American way your way of doing business we will make it our business to eat or stay with you whenever we can. What's more we will encourage our husbands, our friends and all members of organizations to which we belong to do so regularly."[55]

The Atlanta group, which initially called itself "Georgia Women for Progress" (later Partners for Progress), was radical to the extent that it was itself integrated. The second meeting was chaired by Grace Towns Hamilton, a prominent African-American citizen of Atlanta and one of the first African-American members of the Atlanta League of Women Voters. The group included women such as Betty Vinson, former president of the Atlanta League of Women Voters, and Nan Pendergrast, who had been heavily involved in the campaign to support desegregation in order to keep public schools open in Atlanta. In many ways, however, the group used conservative strategies, such as trading on the appearance of affluence and respectability in support of desegregated facilities. Nan Pendergrast recalled that during the visits of interracial teams of women to desegregated restaurants; "we would be very well dressed … I remember that we had to wear white gloves." Pendergrast admitted that this strict dress code, "almost dealt me out."[56] Partners for Progress devised a series of programs to support integration and racial justice in their community including visiting desegregated businesses in a show of support, writing to local hospitals to urge desegregation of facilities and services, supporting school boards facing increased desegregation, visiting local courts to determine levels of equality in treatment and sponsoring human relations courses at local universities and colleges.[57]

Smith made a return visit to Selma on 31 October 1963 in order to meet with both African-American and white women. Smith was advised and accompanied by Dorothy Tilly, the only southern woman to have served as a member of President Truman's 1947 Commission on Civil Rights. Tilly, who served as a consultant for the NWCCR, was a Methodist churchwoman who had been an active member of the Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching (ASWPL). Tilly had subsequently founded a successor group, the Fellowship of the Concerned, in 1949, in order to encourage and support white southern women to work for racial justice. Tilly and Smith were subject to police harassment during their trip,

with state trooper cars following them, and making it impossible for them to make some of their planned visits. When the women were stopped and asked to provide their driving licence, they were advised that the sheriff of Selma, Jim Clark, well known for his opposition to civil rights, had issued orders that all cars from out of Dallas County should be stopped. He had given a special warning for Hertz rental cars. Smith later reported that the Dallas County Grand Jury were probing the issue of "outsider agitators" coming into the state, and that a summons for her, as well as one for Dorothy Height of the YWCA and NCNW to appear before the Grand Jury was served at the SNCC office in Selma.[58] Smith's understanding of the climate of fear and oppression in Selma was further increased when she meet with white women in Selma. One of the women reported: "We are in a white island in a black sea. We are in our fortress and it is under siege. It will fall, but if I do anything to help, then I will have no friends on the inside when it is all over." Smith reflected that, "the hopelessness of it all and the helplessness of both of us to make any dent in Selma was terribly depressing." Smith and Tilly travelled on to Birmingham, which they found equally discouraging. Smith reported that the only interracial event of any kind in Birmingham was the cultural lecture series at Miles College. In an explanation of the coded language of southern segregation, Smith reported that the programme was open "to the general public," explaining "[i]t is the custom in Birmingham that if it is announced in the press as being 'open to the public' that means whites only [and] that open to the general public is all inclusive."[59]

Smith and Cowan's field work on behalf of the NWCCR and their efforts to encourage grass roots activism demonstrated both a deeper commitment to the goals of racial justice and a different understanding of the ways the committee should work than those of the leaders of women's national association who made up the NWCCR steering committee. In November 1963, Smith and Cowan met with Reuben Clark of the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights under Law. The meeting was also attended by Jack Pratt of the National Council of Churches and Birmingham lawyer Charles Morgan. The aim of the meeting was to discuss ways in which the NWCCR could be effective in aiding the acceptance of civil rights in southern communities.[60] The lawyers enthusiastically confirmed the feelings of Cowan and Smith that the status of middle-class women could be an invaluable resource for the peaceful acceptance of integration and civil rights in the South. Clark told the women: "It will be revolutionary … in places like Selma to have white

society ladies coming in from outside to pressure them … The idea of sending teams of women into the South is of the utmost importance … fresh educated cultured ladies, impeccable in every way – they will be someone for the white power structure to talk to."[61]

Smith was convinced that the NWCCR should do more to stimulate community level activism, rather than to just react when such activism organically came into being. Her ambitious assessment of the potential effectiveness of the top-down intervention of the NWCCR was shared by government officials, who hoped to press the leaders of national women's associations through the NWCCR into encouraging community activism. Burke Marshall of the US Justice Department attended a steering committee meeting of the NWCCR in April 1964, asking that committee members submit the names of "sympathetic contacts" in forty southern cities. Marshall suggested that the Justice Department could then make indirect contact with these women.[62] Efforts to extend the Atlanta model throughout the South by using the local contacts of national associations, however, proved disappointing. Shirley Smith wrote to Pauline Tompkins, general director of the AAUW, asking her to write to AAUW members across the South in an attempt to stimulate community activism in support of community desegregation efforts Smith's vision of the NWCCR's methodological approach was that national leaders of women's organizations, who, after all, had issued statements in support of integration, should encourage the members of their local branches in the South to form community associations in support of desegregation. However, even those organizations such as the AAUW who had ostensibly aligned themselves with the principle of racial justice as national associations proved reluctant to insist on a top-down position on racial justice. Their efforts to stimulate pro-civil rights grassroots activism within their branch membership were lukewarm and marked by ambivalence.

In August 1963, Tompkins wrote to AAUW branch presidents across the South asking if they would be willing to work in support of the integration of public schools in their communities. Tompkins suggested that women should be prepared to talk to local head teachers, and members of boards of education to see if they could help to ensure peaceful desegregation, concluding: "We hope that you will find it possible to help in this most important matter. Let us hope that as a result of our efforts this year will find an absence of overt hostility as our Negro neighbors seek to avail themselves of their just right to education in our democracy."[63] While Tompkins agreed to write exploratory letters to AAUW branches, these

letters were written under the aegis of the NWCCR, and she made clear her reluctance to frame these letters in a form which would suggest that such activism was part of the AAUW's own program. Tompkins warned Smith that, "these women will not be approached on the basis of membership in AAUW, but rather as informed and potentially helpful lay women in assessing the situation for the NWCCR."[64] In June 1964, Tompkins wrote again, asking women to support NWCCR efforts to secure a supportive climate for the desegregation of public accommodations through the "Open Facilities" Project, by participating in forming local interorganizational women's committees.[65] Eleanor Reid, president of the Little Rock AAUW, who had played an important role in the Little Rock School desegregation crisis, was enthusiastic about Tompkins' suggestion. Reid reported on a series of seminars held by the Little Rock branch on compliance with integration of public accommodations and on plans for the production of a report to counter common arguments against the Act.[66] Mrs. Eakin of the Louisiana branch also responded positively telling Tompkins, "I share with you the concern over the Civil Rights Bill both nationally and in our community … thank you for asking me. I do hope we see the day come soon when the madness of such Negro-white conflicts will just be a nightmare."[67] In many other instances, however, Tompkins was unable to find women from the branches who were willing to get involved.

As with the debate over membership policy in 1949, branch membership argued that attempts by the national AAUW leadership, operating under the aegis of the NWCCR, to push local branches to confront issues of race relations would force the closure of branches. Lucy Howarth, a member of the Monteagle, Tennessee branch, explained that, "if anyone closely identified with the AAUW should become prominently identified with such a committee as you suggest, I think it would cause this dissolution of the branch."[68] Katherine Vickery wrote to Tompkins explaining her failure to rally Alabamian women to the cause. Vickery explained that she had been careful only to approach those women whom she suspected of being very sympathetic to the cause of civil rights. Even within this select group, Vickery was unable to find anyone to join a pro-civil rights group, reporting that, "one assured me that it would do no good in her community, and that she did not want to dissipate what influence she had as she hoped to help with the school situation when it was faced there. Another … felt that the owners of such properties [restaurants and hotels] would not appreciate any interference with their businesses … The

first person simply said she was in no position to "stick her neck out." Vickery asserted that, "feeling is such in this area that I hope moves of the nature you suggest will not be made in the name of the AAUW. It is the purpose of those of us in the region to ride out this storm and maintain an active and representative AAUW if possible."[69] Vickery explained that since the AAUW was "reputed to be a group concerned primarily with the education of women" she did not personally believe that the work of the NWCCR was an AAUW matter and so had made the phone calls to potential participants at her own expense. The Lafayette, Louisiana branch, was similarly unable to muster a group of willing women. Mary Dickman explained to Tompkins;

> I have not written to you before this since I hoped that I would be able to find two or three women out of the university group who would be willing to make the visits that you suggest to restaurants and hotels. So far, however, I have been unsuccessful. There are several prominent women in town who are, I feel, in sympathy with the civil rights movement or who at least are in favor of supporting the law of the land, but they do not wish to step into action … These are very uncertain times and one must to a certain extent feel one's way if she is to accomplish good rather than evil.[70]

A further concern for the AAUW was that significant numbers of their members were connected with education and felt that their jobs would be at risk if they spoke out in favour of desegregation. Mrs. Coker of Jackson, Mississippi, explained that, "at this time I am under contract to teach in the Jackson Public School system and it would be virtually impossible to act in both of these areas at once. Quite simply I would be fired forthwith."[71]

In other instances, Tompkins encountered groups where one or more members were willing to become activists once approached by national leadership, but who faced opposition from within their own branch. In these instances, both sides attempted to claim the support of the national leadership. In response to Tompkins' request, Mrs. Bernard Jacobson of Pensacola Florida volunteered her services. However, the rest of her branch was anxious that the AAUW not formally associate itself with civil rights work. The branch president wrote to Dr. Tompkins:

> It has come to my attention that the activities of Mrs Jacobson tend to annoy and embarrass the Pensacola branch of the AAUW. It would seem that Mrs Jacobson leaves the impression that her work as a convenor is

> under the auspices of the local AAUW. The branch does not appear to be opposed to civil rights per se, but it does object to being directly linked with activities which offend local attitudes and local attempts to solve complex social problems in other ways. The branch is so disturbed over being linked with Mrs Jacobson's activities that the branch is considering the desirability of disbanding. Because of the disapproval within the branch, the branch itself is not in a position to restrain her, yet it suffers from use of the name of the association or innuendos of relationship between her activities and the Association.[72]

The experience of the AAUW in Tallahassee, Florida, demonstrated the deep division of opinion within the AAUW on the role of the organization in support of civil rights. Louise Blackwell, a young member of the AAUW enthusiastically responded to Tompkins' call, using the AAUW name to help her establish an inter-organizational group on civil rights issues. Blackwell's group, the Tallahassee Women's Inter-group Committee (TWIC), was far from radical. She explained to Tompkins that, "I have not at any time insisted that the women who support what we are doing should 'believe' in integration. My approach has been to solicit the support of women who were willing to work for law and order and continued harmonious race relations in the city, now that the bill has been passed. So far we have avoided giving prominent offices to people who are already identified in the community as 'integrationists' or 'believers in civil rights.'"[73] The group's newsletter explained that, "TWIC is not a pressure organization; it is concerned only with peaceful and voluntary compliance with the law. It believes that law and order is one of the foundations of our American way of life."[74] Despite this moderate position, Blackwell's efforts were greeted with consternation by older members of the Tallahassee AAUW. Mrs. Turner, who described herself as a "long-time member of the AAUW," wrote to Pauline Tompkins to express her concern over Blackwell's activities and her use of the AAUW name. Turner complained that, "if the individual in question has your support and the support of the national organization I believe that we should have been prepared for her arrival so that we could govern ourselves accordingly. These are dangerous times which require careful conduct on the part of everyone."[75]

The struggles of the AAUW to negotiate the relationships between their branch membership and national leadership were matched by struggles within the NWCCR to define associational relationships within their organization. At a meeting in January 1964, the NWCCR steering

committee felt the need to clarify the relationship between the NWCCR, the national organizations that were affiliated to it and the development of new local community groups. The committee reviewed the pattern of the establishment of local efforts, and noted that in every case but one, where local state and city committees had been established, this had been achieved by women who had attended the White House conference on 9 July 1963, and then returned to their homes inspired to organize community level work. Only in the case of Atlanta had the initiative for local-level community organization come directly from the National Office of the NWCCR, who had actively sought to encourage the formation of a pro-integration community support group in that city. The steering committee endorsed this somewhat reactionary role on the part of the national office of the NWCCR, agreeing that, "the NWCCR would continue its current practice not to initiate the development of local groups but to service them with information if they develop and request such information."[76] The steering committee further sought to clarify the position of local branches of constituent NWCCR national associations should a group be set up in their community: "If members of one organization related to the NWCCR start a community or state program they should not embarrass units of other national bodies if the rules of the latter do not permit participation. It is the responsibility of national organizations to keep their local units aware of the extent to which they should participate, a matter over which the NWCCR has no authority."[77] Such a clarification reflected the determination of the NWCCR to respect the autonomy of its constituent associations. It also reflected the NWCCR's unwillingness to serve as a means of building a collective pro-integration position among the members of its members at the community level.

As Smith and Cowan worked more closely with groups that were more directly focused on racial justice than were the constituent members of the NWCCR, they became increasingly enthusiastic about involving the NWCCR in more direct action. Smith wrote to Mildred Horton in February 1964, reporting a conversation she had had with Paul Anthony of the Southern Regional Council (SRC). Smith reported Anthony's "grave concern" about the impact of the civil rights bill in the South, and repeated his conviction that the NWCCR had a role to play in stimulating local activism. Smith explained that, "it is Paul's hope that our Committee can help by having groups related to us pinpoint key women in the towns where this 'private school panic' is developing who might meet with women from some of the Southern towns who have faced this crisis and

held on to the public school system."[78] Smith, travelling to Atlanta at the expense of the SRC, became convinced of the need for the NWCCR to take a more activist approach; "My trip to Atlanta … convinces me of the real need to bring national women leaders together to discuss a united effort for law and order after the passage of the bill. There is a real feeling that if we can't succeed in developing a public consensus for compliance with the bill in the major cities of the south, that it will be necessary to integrate every hamburger stand and filling station with a court order."[79]

By March 1964, both Cowan and Smith were becoming increasingly disillusioned, not only by the lack of commitment to the cause of racial justice displayed by the members and directors of the NWCCR but also by the inability of the structures of national women's associations to facilitate community level activism. The introduction of the Civil Rights Bill to Senate on 30 March 1964, together with the urgent promptings of Cowan and Smith caused the NWCCR to question its future role and identity. Mrs. Horton ignored the pressure from Cowan and Smith for the NWCCR to develop more of an activist role explaining carefully that, "when the Steering Committee was established, it seemed valuable to maintain a clearing house – temporarily – to disseminate the information and inspiration of the meeting with President Kennedy but there was pressure to keep it small, inexpensive, undemanding."[80] Horton acknowledged that the National Women's Committee needed to decide if it should either go out of business as a committee or increase its involvement in community activism. In a note to her co-chair Patricia Harris and to Smith, Horton made clear her own disinclination to expand the work of the NWCCR, explaining that, "I think I made it very plain that I was not at all sure that our Steering Committee would want to carry on."[81] Horton told Smith that she had no cause for the despondency she was feeling at the failure of her efforts to push the NWCCR to a more engaged position; "Believe me," she assured her, "that you have won a place of confidence and respect as a truly dedicated civil rights worker." Horton argued, however, that the original conception of the committee had been "a non-operative but wholly coordinating group."[82]

Shirley Smith, unwilling to lend her efforts to a group with such limited and passive aims, formally resigned as the executive director of the NWCCR in March 1964, although she continued to be informally involved in the committee's work as a result of her strong belief that the committee had an important role to play in the struggle for racial justice. At a meeting on 8 April 1964, the steering committee recorded: "it was felt that the

Committee had fulfilled the function for which it was organized last July." Mindful of the call to action from Cowan and Smith they decided "that the committee should not fade out, at this time … that it should continue until 9 July 1964 and at that time reorganize to fit current needs."[83] Smith's memo for the steering committee meeting attempted to encourage the committee to move forward and to both recognize the scale of the problem in the South and understand their potential contribution to its solution:

> The job of lessening racial tensions in the USA cannot be done by spontaneous or accidental encounters between white and Negro leaders. We have to realize the full dimension of the communications gap between Negro and white women … It is a fact that we do not have one single city in America which can truly be called an 'open city' Therefore we have no community in which there is an established pattern of easy social or inter-organizational contact between white and Negro women in their various peer groups …. We must understand that we are not trying to strengthen existing bonds between Negro and white women – there are virtually no bonds. The continuing effort of the committee will be to create bonds from scratch while focusing on civil rights[84]

The memo laid out in stark terms the failure of the NWCCR model thus far to achieve its goals of community activism. Smith concluded that dealing with the leaders of national organizations through written appeals for funds or action was not an effective way of building activism. As a result of her experience and communication with women across the South, Smith was convinced that the potential and willingness of these women to become involved in community support for integration was present, but she argued that the NWCCR was not operating in such a way as to release and support that activism. Smith concluded that the willingness of women to take action in their communities indicated that they had been "under challenged" both by the National Women's Committee and their national organizations. Smith argued that the volume and tone of demands of women at the community level for information and guidance had altered the direction of the committee from a top down to a bottom up dynamic, asserting that, "it has been the mail coming into the office daily with thoughtful and often courageous expressions of concern and requests for guidance which has given the Committee its raison d'etre." Smith called on the steering committee of the NWCCR to accept their responsibility as a collective representing the national leaders of individual

associations and to recognize the crucial importance of leadership on this issue. Smith insisted that, "a more effective National leadership is called for on this issue. Whether or not the National Women's Committee for Civil Rights rallies to this challenge … depends upon the members and consultants of the Steering Committee."[85] Smith concluded that its organizational structure and approach were ineffective in motivating women to work for civil rights.

Smith was convinced that the situation called for some kind of national leadership but was increasingly unsure that the NWCCR was capable of providing it. In June 1964, the NWCCR struggled to deal with the logistical issues it would undoubtedly face if it became a more permanent and active organization, chief among which was the issue of funding. The committee began discussion on drafting articles of incorporation, in order to be eligible for tax-exempt status, and wrote to its constituent members asking for financial contributions. Arguing that, "the Civil Rights Bill needs continued and persuasive support from all segments of the community" and that "[t]he work of its advocates is not done," the committee sought to raise 10,000 dollars to cover the running costs of the NWCCR for another year.[86] Privately many of the steering committee members were skeptical that, with so many other claims on their budgets, member associations would be prepared to make meaningful financial contributions to the running of the NWCCR. Meanwhile, Shirley Smith was beginning to ask hard questions about the efficacy of the NWCCR as a method of encouraging community activism. In a letter to Horton, Smith reflected on the founding meeting of the Atlanta Partners for Progress group, wrestling with the nature of the relationship between local community activism and the NWCCR. Smith explained: "It is hard to envision the future of the Committee, though I still feel there is a need for a woman's movement, independent of organizations and of government."

Smith had had a "a very intense meeting" with Mr. Powers and Mr. Oberdorfer of the Justice Department, reporting that, "the men there all saw and welcomed the potential of the Women's Committee as supportive in the community to the businessmen, lawyers and teaching the general public in this crucial period of compliance." The men were enthusiastic about the Atlanta meeting, and Smith was "abashed" when she thought that these women might not be as active as the men hoped. Francis Pauley, who had attended the meeting, told Smith that she thought there was a strong possibility of women in Atlanta working together on an interracial basis, partly as a result of the fact that "a number of Negro and

white women … had co-operated on the movement to keep the schools open." However, Pauley, like Smith herself, questioned the efficacy of using national women's associations to stimulate this community level co-operation, suggesting, "you don't always reach women through organizations."[87] In a conclusion that spoke volumes about Smith's disillusionment with regard to the activist potential of women's associations she ended by saying that, "I wonder if it wouldn't be better to let the organizations stick to their knitting, be advisory to us, and we remain apart and advisory to them at their request."[88]

At a meeting of the steering committee of the NWCCR, 9 July 1964, the committee discussed its future. Finance had always been a problem for the group, who relied largely on private donations, to sustain their operations. The group discussed the idea of expanding their operations by applying for funds from charitable foundations to support a range of possible programs.[89] However, the membership lacked the commitment to proceed with any such expansion in their role. At a meeting of the steering committee on 18 November 1964 held at her office in the Department of Labor, Esther Peterson told the group "the charge that the late President gave us was like throwing a pebble in the water and getting a lot of circles." Peterson suggested that the establishment of the Community Relations Service by the Civil Rights Act might provide a way forward for the NWCCR. The Community Relations Service had established a number of sub-committees, including a women's sub-committee. Peterson proposed that the NWCCR could fold itself into this new group.[90] Mrs. Yanell Jacobs of the NCCW, who was a member of the NWCCR steering committee, was chair of this new sub-group, assuring continuity of the NWCCR aims. While the merger of the NWCCR with a government agency meant that some of the more strictly non-governmental, non-partisan members of the NWCCR, such as the League of Women Voters, could no longer contribute, the steering committee still felt the move was a sensible one and resolved that, "in view of the establishment of the Women's Subcommittee of the National Citizens Committee, under the Community Relations Service the NWCCR will end its present activities and will lend its support to the Women's Subcommittee and make material available to them."[91]

The failure of the NWCCR to encourage local activism among its constituent membership reflects the extent to which national organizations had long compromised on racial justice, tolerating segregation within their branches out of respect to a "local situation" which they felt unable

or unwilling to confront. Letters from southern branches of the AAUW argued that compliance with the national position would jeopardize the very existence of both the southern branches and thereby the national organizations itself. Given this choice, most of the NWCCR prioritized the stability of their own organizations over improved race relations, a decision made possible by the very loose and non-coercive structure of the NWCCR. In a personal letter, Mildred Horton argued that existing organizations were in fact in a weak position to promote activism on the part of their members on such a controversial issue as race relations, explaining: "I have a hunch that organizations tend to be more protective of themselves that some individuals have to be. The AAUW or the United Church Women or other groups are always conscious of their own minorities and the leadership feels responsible for not disrupting the whole organization."[92] The impact of this position was that while the leadership of national women's associations was happy to meet at a national level to discuss racial issues, they were reluctant to press their branches to discuss racial issues at the community level. In May 1964, one of the members of the NWCCR steering committee, Norma Gordon of the American Nurses Association, pointed out the lack of attention to community work in the NWCCR's list of its functions. Apologizing for "continually playing the dissenter," Gordon argued that:

> There appears to be too much emphasis on the national level and not enough on the local community level, where, it seems to me, this type of grouping could have its major impact … I do not believe that the National Women's Committee for Civil Rights should be responsible for planning and organizing national conferences but rather should assist our affiliates in organizing local conferences to bring together and gain the involvement of as many women as possible in local community action.[93]

While individuals such as Gordon, Smith and Cowan pressed the NWCCR to become more active at the community level, its constituent members were reluctant to press such a course of action on their branch membership.

The records of the NWCCR provide illuminating evidence of the importance of conviction and moral certainty as a precursor for activism. The NWCCR was itself a predominately white organization, with a seeming inability to confront its own habits of segregation. At their very first meeting, the NWCCR voted "to ask the President to appoint a Negro Woman to serve as co-chairman … as a symbolic recognition of the concept

of equality which is the committee's motivation."[94] This "symbolic gesture" painfully illustrated the lack of pre-existing interracial relationships within many of the member organizations of the NWCCR. Moreover, the NWCCR showed little commitment to improving their interracial credentials. In March 1964, Shirley Smith expressed her surprise, and a hint of exasperation, at the absence of African-American women at a recent meeting of the group. "I suggested that an extra effort be made on the next meeting to fill this vital gap," she said, as "it appeared to me that only the National Council of Negro Women were invited and when Mrs Barnes could not come, that was it!"[95] The records of the NWCCR demonstrate the vast gulf between those who saw racial justice as an unequivocal moral cause and those who were less committed to the cause. In December 1964, Smith drafted what she called a "Women of Conscience" letter intended to rally the membership of the NWCCR to greater effort. Mrs. Horton's unwillingness to endorse Smith's moral certainty regarding the civil rights movement was illustrated in her discomfort at the use of the phrase "women of conscience." Horton explained, "I question the wisdom of the phrase 'women of conscience' to imply that other people do not have a conscience if they disagree with us. It seems to me to engender possible ill-will … What would you think of the phrase 'women of conviction' which implies that they are willing to take some action, but does not impugn the conscience of people with whom we disagree?"[96] Robert Kennedy's suggestion that women should see support for civil rights as a moral issue, rather than a political one seemed not to have struck a chord with Mrs. Horton.

The Kennedy administration's initiative behind the NWCCR sought to enlist the influence and activism of women in communities throughout the South on the basis of their membership in a national organizations. However, while enlisting the national organization was a relatively simple matter, the support of local membership remained elusive. It is certainly the case that membership in a branch of a women's association served as an excellent indicator of an individual's willingness and ability to get involved in community activism in order to deal with crises in race relations. The ad hoc groups which sprung up in southern communities in response to crisis situations in racial integration revealed a high correlation between membership in a voluntary association and willingness to join community groups tackling the consequences of racial integration orders. In New Orleans, Rosa Keller, Gladys Cohn and Betty Wisdom all from the New Orleans branch of the LWV formed "Save Our Schools"

in response the New Orleans desegregation crisis. Lillian Burnstein, one of the few white women in Jackson Mississippi willing to work with the Wednesdays in Mississippi project to promote improve race relations, was a member of the National Council of Jewish Women, the AAUW and the League of Women Voters. In fact it would be unusual to find members of these emerging civic groups who did not have previous experience in established women's organizations. The assumption of the White House conference that those women who were both most likely to become active and who had community influence were those in existing women's associations was accurate. However, the assumption that these women could be activated at branch level through national direction was deeply flawed. Leaders of national organizations were willing to affiliate themselves at the national level with the NWCCR, but made only token effort to stimulate community activism throughout their branches. In turn, local community groups either preferred or had become accustomed to dealing with local racial politics at the community level, without interference or direction from national leadership.

The NWCCR was an effort to provide a national framework and support system that would be motivated and capable of stimulating community-based activism to ensure the successful implementation of civil rights legislation at the local level. The Kennedy administration's effort to build pro-integration support was in stark contrast to the failure of the previous administration to take action to ensure the peaceful reception of federal rulings on racial integration. Most significantly, the campaign of massive resistance and very public rejection by some southern states of the Supreme Court decision of *Brown* vs *Board of Education* in May 1954 had delivered a salutary lesson on the consequences of a federal laissez-faire approach to the state and local level reception of rulings on racial integration. Efforts on the part of the Kennedy government to stimulate local programs looked to the members of American women's associations and their tradition of civic influence and activism, to lead efforts towards the implementation of integration in their communities. In calling on the national leadership of American women's associations to stimulate and coordinate the pro-integration activism of their members, however, the Kennedy administration placed too much dependence on the a top-down national authority of these associations. In fact, as the history of associations such as the AAUW and the League, as well as the hesitancy of the NWCCR as an umbrella organization demonstrated, efforts at a national level to stimulate local activism were, at best, timid, with national

leadership frequently unwilling to risk the harmony and cohesion of their association by demanding pro-integration activism, or even consensus on the goal of a racial integrated society.

Notes

1. America's New Civil Rights Act, United States Information Agency, July 1964.
2. See David Benjamin Oppenheimer, "Kennedy, King, Shuttleworth and Walker: The Events leading to the Introduction of the Civil Rights Act of 1964," *University of San Francisco Law Review* 29: 645 (1994).
3. Cited in Robert Dallek, *John F Kennedy: An Unfinished Life 1917–1963* (New York, Bay Back Books, 2003) 604.
4. For the legislative history of the Civil Rights Bill see Robert D. Loevy, "The Presidency and Domestic Politics: The Civil Rights Act of 1964" in *Understanding the Presidency* (New York, Longman, 1997), eds James P Pfiffner and Roger H. Davidson, 331–343.
5. Robert Dallek, *John F Kennedy. An Unfinished life 1917–1963* (London, Penguin, 2003), 641.
6. Margaret Price to John F Kennedy, 13 June 1963, Papers of John F. Kennedy. Presidential Papers. President's Office Files. Subjects. Democratic National Committee: General, 1963: 26 April-28 October.
7. Report on White House Conference on Civil Rights with Women's Organizations, 9 July 1963, Records of the Women's Bureau, Department of Labor, National Archives, Maryland (Hereafter WB papers), box 19.
8. "We made a difference" Report of the NWCCR, July 1964, American Association of University Women Archives 1881–1976 (Microfilming Cooperation of America), hereafter AAUW papers, reel 146.
9. NCWWR Steering Committee minutes, 9 July 1964, AAUW papers, reel 146.
10. The NWCCR was not the first combined effort on the part of national women' associations to address the issue of racial justice. In 1959, the Women's Division of the American Jewish Congress sponsored a meeting, consisting primarily of women's religious

associations, on the impact of school integration. This meeting lead to the establishment of the National Organization of Women (NOW) for Equality For Our Children. The lack of references to NOW suggest it was a relatively ineffectual group.

11. Letter to National Organizations concerning Convention, 8 August 1956, LWV papers, series 1: 1300.
12. Taylor Branch, *Parting the Waters. America in the King Years 1954–1963* (New York, Simon and Schuster, 1988).
13. For efforts by the Kennedy and Johnson administrations to manage the issue of civil rights see David Alan Horowitz, "White Southerners' Alienation and Civil Rights: The Response to Corporate Liberalism, 1956–1965," *Journal of Southern History* 54:2 (May 1988): 173–200, 199.
14. While the Lawyers Committee was initially conceived as a temporary group to address the civil rights crisis of 1963, it evolved into a permanent organization. See Lawyers Committee: About, www.lawyerscommittee.org/about accessed 15 February 2011.
15. Memo from Morris B Abram to Harrison Tweed and Bernard Segal, Co-chairs of the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, 14 February 1964, WB papers, box 19.
16. Esther E Peterson Oral History Interview, number 3, 2 November 1970, 89.
17. Subject meeting of the Steering Committee, NWCCR, 17 September 1963, AAUW archives, reel 146.
18. Memo to Esther Peterson from Morag Simchack, 23 July 1963, WB papers, box 19.
19. Letter to members of the NWCCR from Mrs. Harris, 21 October 1963, WB papers, box 20.
20. Memo to women attending the meeting of the North-East States, 3 November 1963, WB papers, box 25.
21. Letter to the President from the NWCCR (not dated), WB papers, box 21.
22. Pennsylvania Democratic State Committee form letter to Senators and Congressmen, 29 July 1963, Papers of John F Kennedy, Presidential Papers, White House Central Files, HU:2:MC:General.
23. Write for Rights Factsheet (not dated), NCNW papers, series 1, box 5, file 13.
24. "How Women in Washington Helped," NWCCR newsletter, 1: 2, March 1964, AAUW papers, reel 146.

25. NWCCR Newsletter, 21 October 1963, WB papers, box 21.
26. For more on the impact of sending Federal troops in to deal with the crisis in Little Rock see Cary Fraser, "Crossing the Color Line in Little Rock: The Eisenhower Administration and the Dilemma of Race for U.S. Foreign Policy" *Diplomatic History* 24:2 (Spring 2000): 233–264 and Mary L. Dudziak. "The Little Rock Crisis and Foreign Affairs: Race, Resistance, and the Image of American Democracy" *Southern California Law Review* (1997): 1641–1716.
27. Minutes of meeting 24 July 1963 WB papers, box 20.
28. Report on White House Conference on Civil Rights with Women's organizations, 9 July 1963, WB papers, box 19.
29. Peggy Roach, NCCW to the NWCCR Study Committee, 3 August, 1964, AAUW papers, reel 146.
30. Memo to related organizations and State and City groups from the NWCCR, 17 April 1964. AAUW papers, reel 146.
31. Elisabeth Clemens, "Securing Political Returns to Social Capital: Women's Associations in the United States 1880–1920," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* XXIX:4 (Spring 1999): 613–638.
32. Ibid, 615.
33. Cited in Christina Greene, *Our Separate Ways: Women and the Black Freedom Movement in Durham, North Carolina* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 2005).
34. Form letter from NWCCR, 9 August 1963, SRC papers, reel 198.
35. Pamphlet produced by the National Women's Committee for Civil Rights, 15 August 1963, AAUW papers, reel 146.
36. Ibid.
37. Esther E Peterson Oral History Interview, number 3, 2 November 1970, p. 90.
38. Open letter to women of Birmingham, 18 September 1963, AAUW papers, reel 146.
39. Minutes of the Steering Committee, 17 September 1963, WB papers, box 20.
40. Shirley Smith, "Plans for Women's participation in Birmingham Situation" 20 September 1963, memo sent to Louis Oberderfer, Department of Justice. WB papers, box 21.
41. Peggy Roach, NCCW to the NWCCR Study Committee, 3 August 1964, AAUW papers, reel 146.
42. The Reminiscences of Esther Peterson, Oral History Research Office, Columbia University, 1986. Conducted by Scott Bruns, p. 301.

43. NWCCR Steering Committee Minutes 13 January 1964, WB papers, box 20.
44. Ibid.
45. Letter to Mrs. Horton from Edith DeBush, President of Altrusa International, 25 July 1964, NWCCR papers, box 21.
46. In her letter recommending that Cowan be made a consultant to the group, Smith noted that Mrs. Cowan was "our second most important non- organizational donor. Mrs. Cowan's gift of $250 made it possible for me to go the Selma." Memo to Mrs. Peterson, Mrs. Horton and Mrs. Harris from Shirley Smith, 3 December 1963, WB papers, file 19.
47. Letter to Mrs. Horton from Polly Cowan, 24 March 1964, WB papers, box 19.
48. Ibid.
49. "And her New Field is Civil Rights" *Washington Post*, 19 September 1963.
50. Letter to Mr. Charles Morgan, from Shirley Smith, 4 March 1964, WB papers, box 19.
51. Ibid.
52. Draft outline of book by Polly Cowan, Polly Cowan papers, National Council of Negro Women Library, Bethune House, Washington DC, series 1, box 1.
53. Ibid.
54. Draft Statement presented by Ad Hoc Committee to Atlanta "Women for Progress," 8 October 1963 National Council of Negro Women papers, series 10, box 5, file 15.
55. Ibid.
56. "Nan is Still Fighting" *Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, 18 October 1979.
57. Report on activities of Partners for Progress by Mrs. Edward Vinson (not dated), SRC papers, reel 198 and "Women Try to Speed Integration" *Sarsota Herald Tribune* (4 May 1964) 28.
58. Letter to Dorothy Till from Shirley Smith y, 21 November 1963, Southern Regional Council Papers, VIII: 125.
59. Southern Journey 2, Shirley Smith, 27 October – 3 November, WB papers, box 21.
60. Report of the Selma Meeting, 22 November 1963, WB papers, box 19.
61. Ibid.

62. Minutes of the Steering Committee, 8 April, 1964, WB papers, box 21.
63. Letter to AAUW branch Presidents from Pauline Tompkins AAUW, Savannah Georgia, Brunswick Georgia, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, Burlington North Carolina, Charleston South Carolina, Panama City, Florida, Pensacola Florida, 15 August 1963, AAUW papers, reel 146.
64. Letter to Shirley Smith from Pauline Tompkins AAUW, Executive Secretary NWCCR, 25 September 1963, AAUW papers, reel 146.
65. "Open Facilities Project" letter, June 1964 AAUW papers, reel 146.
66. Eleanor Reid to Dr. Tompkins, 27 June 1964, AAUW papers, reel 146.
67. Mrs. Paul Eakin to Dr. Tompkins, 7 July 1964, AAUW papers, reel 146.
68. Lucy Howorth to Dr. Tompkins, 7 July, 1964, AAUW papers, reel 146.
69. Katherine Vickery to Dr. Tompkins, 11 June 1964, AAUW papers, reel 146.
70. Mary Dickman to Dr. Pauline Tompkins, 1 July 1964, AAUW papers, reel 146.
71. Frances Coker to Dr. Tompkins, 10 June 1964, AAUW papers, reel 146.
72. Mrs. Douglas Tomkies to Dr. Tompkins, 13 October 1964, AAUW papers, reel 146.
73. Louise Blackwell to Dr. Tompkins, 11 July 1964, AAUW papers, reel 146.
74. TWIG Newsletter, 1:1, AAUW papers, reel 146.
75. Mrs. John Turner to Dr. Pauline Tompkins, 5 July 1964, AAUW papers, reel 146.
76. NWCCR Steering Committee Minutes, 13 January 1964, WB papers, box 20.
77. Ibid.
78. Shirley Smith to Mildred Horton, 14 February 1964. WB papers, box 19.
79. Shirley Smith to Mrs. Horton, 3 March 1964, WB papers, box 19.
80. Mrs. Horton to Polly Cowan, 24 March 1964, WB papers, box 19.
81. Memo to Mrs. Peterson, Patricia Harris and Shirley Smith from Mrs. Horton (not dated), WB papers, box 19.

82. Mildred Horton to Shirley Smith, 19 March 1964, WB papers, box 19.
83. Minutes of the Steering Committee, 8 April 1964, WB papers, box 21.
84. "Future prospects for the Committee," Shirley Smith, 1 April 1964, WB papers, box 20.
85. National Women's Committee for Civil Rights, Memorandum, 8 April 1964, Southern Regional Council papers, VIII: 169.
86. The NWCCR to Dorothy Tilly, 16 June 1964, SRC papers, reel 199.
87. Shirley Smith to Mrs. Horton, 26 June 1964, WB papers, box 20.
88. Ibid.
89. Proposal for a Foundation grant from the Taconic Foundation (not dated), AAUW papers, reel 146.
90. Minutes of the Steering Committee, 18 November 1964, NCNW papers, series 10, box 6 file 6.
91. Ibid.
92. Mildred Horton to Mrs. Loeb, 10 October 1963, WB papers, box 25.
93. Norma Gordon to Mrs. Harris, 7 May 1964, WB papers, box 21.
94. Report on White House Conference on Civil Rights with Women's Organizations, 9 July, 1963, WB papers, box 19.
95. Memo to Mrs. Harris, Mrs. Horton and Mrs. Peterson, from Shirley Smith, 6 March 1964, WB papers, box 19. Despite the failure of the NWCCR to fully engage with the NCNW, the organization was their single biggest financial supporter, paying the salary of Susan Goodwillie as a fulltime secretary from October 1963 to March 1964, when she returned to the NCNW to work on the Wednesdays in Mississippi project.
96. Mildred Horton to Shirley Smith 24 March 1964, WB papers, box 19.

CHAPTER 6

Wednesdays in Mississippi

In October 1963, Polly Cowan and Shirley Smith, increasingly frustrated with the NWCCR's seeming apathy in the face of increasingly difficult race relations in the South, joined Dorothy Height and Dorothy Ferebee, both former presidents of the National Council of Negro Women (NCNW), on a visit to Selma. The initial plans for the trip were relatively modest. As tensions in Selma were on the rise because of voting campaigns in the city, James Forman of the SNCC called on the assistance of Height and the NCNW. Rather than envisaging the direct intervention of the NCNW in voter registration campaigns, Forman looked to this established and respected association for moral support and for the public endorsement of the efforts of younger civil rights activists. Height later recalled, "They [SNCC] were really trying to build more of a climate of support around these young people and … to bring to public attention the way they were being treated."[1] Perhaps hoping to elicit more of a commitment from a timid and seemingly ambivalent NWCCR towards direct-action campaigns in the South, Height invited Cowan and Smith to join her on her trip, to become witnesses to the crucial need for women's activism in southern communities. Cowan and Smith's trip to Selma, accompanied as it was by a series of mishaps, served to convince the women of the lamentable absence of southern white women from struggles to extend civil rights in southern communities. Disillusioned by the lacklustre efforts of the constituent national associations of the NWCCR, Cowan planned to launch a new project, independent of ties to existing women's

H. Laville, *Organized White Women and the Challenge of Racial Integration, 1945-1965*, DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-49694-8_6

associations. Focusing initially on Mississippi, Cowan's plan aimed to use the cultural authority of northern white middle-class gentility in support of southern moderate women, who would then be inspired and supported to offer support to more direct activist civil rights work. In the context of massive resistance and the high tensions of the South in the early 1960s, a "moderate" position of any kind was akin to a radical and dangerous stance. The term "moderate" in this context included those who held pro-integration beliefs, as well as those who, while not personally particularly enamoured of racial integration, nonetheless preferred it to the alternative of mob rule, closed schools and an emerging local and regional reputation for lawlessness.

The new program, WIMS, which emerged in part from the failures of the NWCCR, shared its core belief in the potential resource of white women's social capital and its conviction that this social capital could be exploited for the benefit of racial justice. Cowan was convinced that the implementation of civil rights legislation could only succeed if more support was given to white southerners, particularly white women who were otherwise too intimidated by the forces of massive resistance to integration to take a stand. While both existing individual national women's associations and collective efforts such as the NWCCR had seen efforts to foster grassroots activism as a threat to their own cohesion and effectiveness, Cowan nonetheless remained adamant that white women in the South could have a decisive role to play in the Civil Rights Movement. Arguing that moderate white women had been completely overlooked, Cowan sought to develop networks of support independent from the institutional limitations that had plagued the NWCCR. While WIMS freed itself from the institutional shackles of existing women's associations that had worked against white women's involvement in racial justice, its initial work failed to address the ideological issues that had rendered white women's involvement in the cause of racial justice largely superficial. In its later years, however, WIMS learnt from its early experience, and worked towards the development of a far more meaningful and committed programme.

Cowan's experience in Selma and her conviction that white women in the South were powerless to intervene in the civil rights struggle came about through a series of errors and miscalculations in what was initially intended as a meticulously planned and carefully executed visit. On 4 October 1963, Cowan and Smith, together with Height and Ferebee, affectionately referred to in Cowan's recollections as "the Dorothys," left

Atlanta, where they had attended an NWCCR-sponsored meeting with Dorothy Tilly to discuss the possibility of working with white women in the South. Tilly had been asked by Esther Peterson of the Women's Bureau in the Department of Labor to accompany the women on what she referred to as a "study trip." Tilly was willing to participate but delayed her journey to Selma until 7 October, explaining, "considering conditions in Selma – such a large group should not go together."[2] Cowan, Smith, Height and Ferebee flew to Montgomery, meeting with James Foreman and the African-American comedian and activist Dick Gregory on their flight.

None of the women were ignorant of the tensions and simmering atmosphere of hostility in Alabama, or of the kind of hostile reception anyone involved in civil rights could expect to find there. As a result, they made careful plans to ensure than their visit avoided the appearance of a civil rights mission. The women decided that once they reached Selma, Cowan and Smith should appear not to know Height and Ferebee, in order to avoid raising suspicions that they were travelling together as an integrated group. When the group landed at Montgomery airport, however, local civil rights activist Amelia Boynton, who had previously agreed to drive Height and Ferebee to Selma, had some unexpected passengers in her car and no space for the visiting women. The four women were thus forced to ride together in Cowan's rental car. Cowan later recalled that Height and Ferebee reluctantly got in the back seat of the car and instructed Cowan "flatly" that if they were stopped, she was to say that they were her cooks.[3]

Riding in an integrated car was an inauspicious start to a trip that aimed to establish contact with the frightened white women of Selma. Worse was to come. Informed that there were children waiting at the First Baptist Church who wanted to speak to the "two very important Negro Ladies," Cowan and Smith drove directly to the church, and found themselves at a freedom rally. The event included a program of speakers on registering to vote, interspaced with freedom songs and fund-raising speeches by Dick Gregory and Dorothy Height. After the official program had ended, Smith and Cowan stayed to speak with the mothers of girls who wanted to speak privately without men present. The women talked about the treatment of their daughters in prison, telling Cowan and Smith of the threats of the prison warden to the girls that "if they didn't behave the men prisoners would be let into their cells."[4] Both Cowan and Smith were aware that if their involvement in civil rights activity in Selma was known to the white women they had come to visit, they would become

persona non grata, despised "outsiders" seeking to meddle with southern life. Nonetheless, once a series of accidents had brought the women to the First Baptist Church, they found themselves unable to resist participating in the rally. For Shirley Smith, the rally must have reminded her of her days as a freedom rider, a welcome relief after her many months of frustrating caution and inactivity at the NWCCR. Cowan, too, recognized the thrill of direct action. Reflecting later on her behaviour at the meeting, she recalled,

> We had first decided that we should not even go to the mass rally at the Church on Friday night … Our curiosity and interest betrayed us. Then Jim Forman's invitation, which I turned down at first, but on seeing his disappointment (and I must admit feeling his scorn at what I believed to be his feeling that I was afraid to go up to the platform) I decided against my better judgement to go to the platform to assure these people, who hear so little from the sympathizers in the North, that many of us are indeed concerned with their problems.[5]

When Cowan and Smith tried to leave the church, it quickly became apparent that their decision to attend the rally would not go undetected. A group of between thirty and sixty state troopers were gathered outside the church. Cowan later found out that there were two members of the police in plain clothes in the church that evening, who had recorded events and taken notes. Cowan and Height, albeit unintentionally, had begun what was intended as an inconspicuous trip to establish connections with white women in Selma with a high-profile attendance at an interracial rally for justice. A little ruefully, Cowan reflected that her actions, however well intentioned, had put her mission of forging a connection among the white women of Selma in jeopardy, concluding, "It may be best to follow the inclinations of your head and not of your heart under these circumstances."[6]

The next day, Smith and Cowan began their quest to contact the white women of Selma, meeting up with a woman who had been described to them by Dorothy Tilly as an "anguished liberal." In an emotional meeting with this woman and three of her friends, Smith and Cowan discovered the extent of resistance to civil rights legislation in Selma and the overwhelming feeling of helplessness that had overtaken the white women in the community. One of the women reported that she had gone to the mayor and asked what she could do to help the situation, only to be told,

"go home and lock your door until it's over. Nothing is going to make us change around here." Smith and Cowan encouraged the women to make contact with some of the African-American women in Selma, but reported that the women "had to be reassured as to what they would say to the Negro ladies." Cowan and Smith assured them that common ground could be found by discussing their mutual interest in protecting children and doing their best to help their city avoid trouble. Despite their reluctant acquiescence to interracial meetings, the white women stuck to the codes of racial etiquette, explaining that it was inconceivable that any such meeting would take place in a white home, and that it must be held in the home of one of the African-American women.[7] Cowan and Smith left Selma the next day, depressed at the atmosphere of fear they had witnessed, but hopeful that they could build their rapport with these white women into a relationship of trust and work with them to improve the climate of racial understanding in Selma. Smith noted the difference between the white and African-American women she met in the South, concluding, "one is struck with how calm these [African-American] women are compared with how tense and strained the white women were. The Negro woman feels that change is coming and it is change that she wants. The white woman by contrast feels that change is coming that she does not want."[8]

The fragile trust which had begun between Cowan and Smith, and the white women they had met in Selma was quickly threatened when on 6 October, the local newspapers in Selma reported on Smith and Cowan's attendance at the First Baptist Church meeting and revealed Shirley Smith's background as a freedom rider. Dorothy Tilly, who flew into Selma on 7 October, was due to be met at the airport by Kathrine Cothran, the director of Christian education at the First Presbyterian Church in Selma, one of the white women who had met with Smith and Cowan. Ominously, Cothran did not arrive. When Tilly telephoned Cothran from the airport, Cothran furiously told her, "We have been betrayed. These women, Mrs Polly and Shirley, told us they came because they were interested in this community. But they have been with <u>those</u> people."[9] Tilly reported that Cothran "felt we were there to advance the cause of the Negroes, when we had said that we were there to help make possible communication across racial lines."[10]

While Cowan and Smith's own beliefs and convictions on the ethical imperative of civil rights were unquestionable, their experience in Selma convinced them that direct action and an overt commitment to civil rights

were incompatible with efforts to work with many of the white women of Selma. Shirley Smith put aside her personal feelings of allegiance to the civil rights cause and made a concerted effort to soothe the outraged feelings of the white women she had met in Selma. While Smith refused to apologize for having attended the meeting, she did acknowledge her mistake in not telling the white women about her presence there. In a letter to one of the women, she explained, "It was my bad mistake not to have told you of my impressions of that evening. By hearing from Mrs Tilly of the distress that …[you]… felt over my having been to the Church meeting on voter registration I have learnt a valuable lesson." Nonetheless, Smith defended her actions in attending the rally, explaining, "Clearly it is my responsibility to see and hear all and every indication of community opinion. When I can't do that in this country without causing either suspicion or hurt feelings, then we are indeed caught up in a frightful situation."[11] In her letter to another of the white women, Smith explained, "I am sure that you know what a responsibility I have to the National Women's Committee for Civil Rights to make broad contacts and see all sides from any issue that is causing tension. The question of an opportunity to register to vote is critical in Selma, my visit to the voter rally seems, therefore, very logical."[12]

It is notable that in these letters, Smith explained her actions in attending the rally as the result of her administrative duties and responsibilities, rather than as a manifestation of her personal passionate commitment to the cause of civil rights. Like Smith, Cowan's sympathies lay with the African-American women in the South and she admitted she initially found it difficult to understand, let alone empathize with, the position of the white women she met in the South. Reflecting on her trip to Selma, Cowan noted, "We went to the Negro side of town where the action was, where there was warmth and appreciation. It was easier, but not very wise, to identify with and enjoy the Negro section of town, rather than to work on the white side… The morning after the rally we had an appointment with two of the 'good' white women of Selma. I realized later that I could hear what was being expressed by these women, but I could not emphasize. It took both several visits to Mississippi in the next years and many person-to-person talks, before I could easily understand the point of view of the white women."[13] Cowan concluded that whatever her personal convictions, too strong an association with civil rights activists would jeopardize her chances for working with white southern moderate women. She reflected, "I think we must conclude from this

experience that it is best if women go into these communities quietly and anonymously."[14]

In the months before their trip to Selma, Cowan and Smith had become increasingly frustrated with the NWCCR and the refusal of their membership to commit to more direct and assertive action, a frustration that increased after their experience in the South. In December 1963, Smith proposed that the NWCCR undertake targeted programs to support school integration. In a memo to the NWCCR president, Smith explained, "It has troubled me for some time that the only useful action project we have initiated in the South has been Atlanta Women for Progress. We ought to be able to do so much more."[15] Smith outlined a plan for the NWCCR to send "fact-finding teams" to southern communities facing desegregation of public schools. Despite the problems Smith had experienced with national women's associations, she still felt they could serve a useful role, suggesting that the presidents of national women's associations could nominate suitable women for these teams, and that local branches serve as convenors for the teams in communities. Her proposal met with little support at the NWCCR, who were reluctant to commit themselves to this form of direct action. Cowan, too, was becoming passionately convinced of the need to develop a new project, which would share many of the same ideological and strategic assumptions of the NWCCR, but would escape the institutional inertia that had stymied that organization. Since her attendance at a June 1963 fundraising breakfast meeting in New York sponsored by the Taconic Foundation, Cowan had been looking for ways to encourage and support the contribution of white women to civil rights activism.[16] Cowan recognized the need for a different kind of activism, which would work alongside the direct-action civil rights campaign, but would seek to address and involve the middle-class community structures in improved race relations at the community level. The NWCCR had demonstrated the potential of organized women's associations in the South to contribute to improved race relations, but had also revealed the inability of pre-existing women's organizations, either though ideological reluctance, structural obstacles or institutional barriers, to address the problem with sufficient dedication and conviction.

Like the NWCCR, Cowan's new project, WIMS, was predicated on the power and influence of middle-class white women in southern communities. On a trip to London in November 1963, Cowan had scribbled down the inspiration for what was to become WIMS, emphasizing the power of respectability to defuse potentially violent situations. As Cowan told

women's groups in London of the adventures of the bi-racial expedition to Selma, she was repeatedly asked, "How did you stay out of trouble?" Cowan found herself explaining, "The upper-middle class appearance was our main protection." Expanding on this thought, Cowan developed her concept of what the authority and status of middle-class women could accomplish:

> From having had to explain this to a variety of groups, a chain reaction began to work on me with the following result. Could we organize a group of wealthy and powerful women (women of influence, connections, stature in their communities) who would go to several trouble areas simultaneously? I would recommend chauffeur-driven cars be sent South ahead of an airplane arrival by the women. Or, in the case of women who live within driving distance and have status symbol cars of their own, they might drive themselves … The raison d'etre for these women being in troubled spots should be the same as Mrs Tilly's Fellowship of the Concerned; because they care, they want to know the truth, they want to help. The distinguished look of the car's occupants will almost certainly put some fear into the power structure at the local level…. Bobby Kennedy says the women can do it. I think by this method they could!'[17]

Cowan's focus here on the appearance of status and affluence, with her specific mention of chauffeur-driven cars, the ownership of "status symbol" cars and the "distinguished look" of the upper-class activists, emphasize that from its early origins, the strategy of WIMS utilized social capital, as well as class and social influence, as tools for improving race relations in the South. WIMS's strategic use of femininity and gentility, reflected in the reoccurring motif of respectable appearance and white gloves, was strikingly similar to the strategy developed by the Women Strike for Peace (WSP). Like WIMS, the emergence of WSP reflected an impatience and frustration with the overly-bureaucratic structure of existing forms of activism; in the case of WSP founders, the hierarchical systems and slow pace of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) was as frustrating to them as the inertia of the NWCCR was to Smith and Cowan.[18] While there is no evidence that Cowan drew her inspiration for WIMS from the work of WSP, press coverage of the WSP protests in Washington DC in 1961 was widespread and frequently focused on the contrast between the passion and righteous conviction of their demands and their benign appearance as well-to-do housewives and mothers. The effectiveness of their strategic deployment of respectable femininity

to significantly undermine the credibility of the House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC) may not have been lost on Cowan, who was to advocate a similar approach to the use of feminine respectability in the work of WIMS.

The opportunity for Cowan to put her conviction into action came in May 1964, when Dorothy Height asked Smith and Cowan to attend a meeting in Jackson, Mississippi. The meeting was organized by the inter-organizational committee in Jackson, Mississippi, a group of women who had attended an off-the-record meeting in March in Atlanta, Georgia, called by the National Council of Church Women (NCCW), the National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW), the National Council of Negro Women (NCNW) and United Church Women (UCW) under the auspices of the Fellowship of the Concerned (FOC). The meeting discussed common concerns over treatment of women and girls arrested and jailed following protest demonstrations. The Atlanta meeting had discussed the need for a greater number of white women to identify themselves with civil rights causes, and to create a supportive climate for civil rights in the South, explaining, "This identification could be attained by a ministry of presence. Perhaps women could be on the street when a demonstration takes place or in the courtroom when demonstrators' cases are heard. They need not say a word, but perhaps because of their presence, the police treatment would be more humane, the court more courteous."[19]

One of the logistical arrangements for the Atlanta meeting was to have far-reaching consequences; women were asked to sit, not with familiar fellow members of their organizations, but with women of different organizations from the same city. Many of the women, despite the fact they were influential leaders of women's associations in their hometowns, had never met across the colour line before. Dorothy Height recalled the surprise and joy the women had felt at finding out that there were like-minded women in their community across the lines of racial segregation: "They were thrilled to get to know each other and place after place they said, 'Well I didn't know there were white women thinking like this.'"[20] The white women at this 1964 Atlanta meeting found their meetings with educated and charismatic African-American women invigorating. As Polly Cowan explains, "They didn't know there were black women who had the education, or had the grace that these women had."[21] Over ten years after the Montgomery Bus Boycott had launched the modern Civil Rights Movement, the distance between white and African-American women in the South remained as wide as ever.

The Atlanta meeting focused on the problems being experienced by women and girls across the South who were participating in civil rights activities, with women from the "hotspots" of Selma and Birmingham in Alabama; Albany and Atlanta in Georgia; Danville in Virginia; Charlottesville in South Carolina; and Jackson in Mississippi attending. At the Atlanta meeting, as with her trip to Selma, Cowan was shocked at the fear many of the southern women attending exhibited at the thought of taking action in support of civil rights. Despite the meeting's aim of publically identifying white women with the struggle for racial justice, preparations revelled the climate of fear and anxiety among women in the South; Cowan reported that some white women refused to attend the Atlanta meeting, because they did not want to meet Mrs Tilly after she had been reported in the newspapers as working to promote integration.[22] Cowan reported that even those women who steeled themselves to attend the meeting exhibited a reluctance to get involved in continuing activities or even to agree to the idea of remaining in communication with their fellow attendees: "many women wanted no communication at all for fear of discovery."[23] Attendees were similarly anxious when a picture was taken of the presiding officer and panellists at one session. Cowan recalled, "Two or three women jumped as though they had been caught in an illicit act and later begged the camerawomen to destroy the picture, even when she assured them they were not in it."[24]

Despite these discouraging signs, Cowan found that the meeting suggested some scope for further activism. Much to Cowan's surprise, when the group was asked if it was helpful to have "outsiders" from national associations attend meetings in the South, the women from Mississippi were the most enthusiastic. The spokesperson for the Jackson delegation was Claire Collins Harvey, a leading African-American businesswoman, who had been instrumental in founding the "Womanpower Unlimited" organization, originally an ad hoc response to the need to provide practical and emotional support to the freedom riders who had come to Mississippi in 1961. Harvey reported, "We black and white Mississippi women around the table have met for the first time. We will never be the same. We need our national bodies for, like a long handled spoon, you can reach in and stir us up."[25] Harvey's response was perhaps somewhat disingenuous, since it downplayed the significant work she had been involved in through Womanpower Unlimited since the freedom rides. Womanpower had quickly escalated from a group that aimed to support the actions of the freedom riders to a significant protest group in its own

right, establishing a further group, the Council of Women's Organizations (CWO), to promote voter registration, a boycott of stores in Jackson and support for school integration. Womanpower had already sought to reach out to white women through its "Chain of Friendship." These contacts were primarily friends and allies of Harvey, gathered in part through her work with WSP, whose support and influence she had then solicited on behalf of Womanpower. The Atlanta meeting presented an opportunity for Harvey to significantly expand these links, developing a network of connections with both African-American and white women throughout the South. One outcome of the Atlanta meeting was the establishment of an interracial prayer fellowship in Jackson, to develop and grow interracial contacts between women in that city.[26]

This enthusiasm was encouraging to Cowan, as it suggested approval of her plan to bring women of the North to work with women in the South. The purpose of the follow-up meeting of the inter-organizational committee in Jackson in May 1964 was to explore the possibility of sending women into Mississippi to ease the tensions which were expected to accompany the targeting of the state by the Council of Federated Organizations (COFO)-sponsored "Freedom Summer" of civil rights activism. Cowan explained, "It had been felt in Atlanta that the women of Jackson had wanted the help of 'outsiders' – but Shirley and I were to see whether or not this position had changed in the light of more publicity about the influx of students, and in terms of the 'hot summer of 1964'."[27] At the meeting, Cowan and Smith were able to talk with women from local branches of the YWCA, the NCCW, the NCNW, UCW and the NCJW. Cowan was shocked by the levels of ignorance about the racial situation in Mississippi displayed by the white women she met: "No woman had had, in the heat of the riots which followed the Medgar Evers funeral last summer, any specific information via radio or TV or the press. It took many months for some of them to find out about police brutality and mistreatment of women and young people. … the women of Jackson are too frightened of reprisals to find out for themselves any facts relevant to the safety of women and children who will be participating in the projects planned by the students this summer."[28]

Cowan reported that women in the South, both white and African-American, told her they would welcome the involvement of women from the North: "Without exception, the women interviewed welcomed our visit … These women were unable to formulate a plan for women of the North that would be most helpful to the women of the South, but they

all agreed that women coming into the state might help, and most of them said words to the effect of 'try it – try anything'." Dorothy Height reported that Claire Harvey believed that "if northern women could visit us regularly during the summer, to act as a quieting influence by going into areas that are racially tense, and to try and build bridges of communication between us, between our black and white communities, to be a ministry of presence among us, it would be of tremendous help to us."[29] Harvey's position on the WIMS mission was an interesting one. Tiyi Morris explains that Harvey, herself a member of WSP, had discouraged a WSP plan to launch a mission to Mississippi earlier in the year believing that while the sentiment of support was right, the mission might have a detrimental impact on the fragile coalition building and grassroots work that was going on in the state. With plans for Freedom Summer underway, however, Harvey's position changed, and she encouraged Cowan to launch her plans for WIMS on a remarkably similar model to that which WSP had proposed and modelled on their own pilgrimages to Geneva, Accra and Rome.[30]

As a result of their visits to Selma and Jackson, Cowan, Smith and Height drew up plans for a program to facilitate the visits of northern women to Mississippi during Freedom Summer, and to support beleaguered moderate women in that state. Initially called "Visiting Wednesdays," a phrase that could not fail to evoke images of social visits between women, the project eventually took the title "Wednesdays in Mississippi." The title remained problematic to the group, giving something of the superficial "daytrip" impression to their work. In one of her memos to community co-ordinators in July 1964, Polly Cowan had asked them "try not to mention 'Wednesdays' too much in discussing the project. Since the visits actually cover a part of Tuesday and Thursday as well as all day Wednesday 'weekly visits' would be a better phrase."[31] In 1967, the project changed its name from "Wednesdays in Mississippi" to "Workshops in Mississippi" to reflect the changing nature of the program.

The draft proposal for the project explained its concept of a ministry of presence: "It is important that many private citizens of status and influence make it known that they support the aspirations of the citizens of Mississippi for full citizenship, that they deplore violence and that they will place themselves in tension-filled situations as a point of contact and communication to try and initiate both understanding and reconciliation." The initial plan for WIMS carefully constructed its mission as what might

be termed "non-direct action" work, explaining, "At no time did Southern women ask northern women to participate in the community projects or in any activities surrounding these projects."[32] The key point of the WIMS project was that these visiting private citizens, while broadly sympathetic of civil rights, were not in Mississippi to take part in civil rights works or to support civil rights activists. Rather, they sought to support those white individuals in Mississippi who were too terrified and intimidated to speak out in favour of any measure of compliance with racial integration. In other words, WIMS aimed to support, not civil rights activists, but that much-beleaguered group, the southern moderates. In her reflections on the work of WIMS, Cowan explained, "Before our attempts, the middle class had been entirely neglected, written off. The Southern 'moderate' neglected by the majority of the Civil Rights workers was nevertheless there and had to be reached by someone."[33]

In aiming to reach the southern moderates, rather than to support direct civil rights action in Mississippi, the leaders of WIMS chose to distance themselves from direct civil rights organizations. WIMS was very explicit about its independence from civil rights organizations, explaining to team members, "No-one is paying our way. We are not part of the Student Non-violent Co-ordinating committee (SNCC) or the Council of Federated Organizations (COFO); we have not been 'sent' by any groups, we have, in fact, come to Mississippi in response to repeated requests from women and community leaders in Mississippi."[34] Notwithstanding the fact that the women behind WIMS had founded the project at least in part because of their disappointment with the lack of moral or ethical commitment to civil rights within the NWCCR, Cowan understood the fragile atmosphere in the South and advocated a non-confrontational approach that did not align WIMS with direct civil rights efforts. Cowan later explained to the US Commission on Civil Rights: "we still had to recognize some of Mississippi's irrational attitude and that a head-on collision would not serve our objective and would diminish progress towards conciliation."[35] In an application for funding, WIMS explained, "At no time were any of the women asked to participate in any of the student projects or in any of the activities surrounding these people. They focused their attention on identifying additional support for civil rights among Mississippi's white middle and upper class women and on the development of communication between these women … and women in other parts of the nation in an effort to promote greater understanding and thereby co-operation."[36]

A report of WIMS activity in 1966 explained, "WIMS is not an activist group in the Civil Rights Movement … We believe that the communications gap plays a significant part in separating Negro from white, both in North and South, and our program … has been directed towards bridging that gap."[37] The protestation that WIMS was not affiliated with the civil rights activism of the COFO-sponsored Freedom Summer was somewhat disingenuous. The Executive Committee of the NCNW had recommended that the council "make an active and effective contribution to the Mississippi Summer projects planned and sponsored by the Council of Federated Organization in Jackson Mississippi."[38] Susan Goodwillie, a full-time staff member of the NCNW, was asked by Dorothy Height to work in Mississippi on behalf of the NCNW and was seconded to WIMS work. While it was not publically stated on any of their material, WIMS was effectively sponsored and financed by the NCNW.

In lieu of a mission of racial justice, WIMS explained its activism as being prompted by maternal concern, representing itself as a group of women who were troubled by the threat of violence in Mississippi. In some instances, this concern was less about the conditions of Mississippian African-Americans and more about the northern white volunteers taking part in Freedom Summer. For some, this concern was an immediate one. Cowan speculated that many of the northern women who participated in WIMS were also the mothers of northern COFO volunteers and thus had a personal interest in working to secure a peaceful atmosphere in the state. Cowan asserted, "Some women say in their own reports that the reason they went to Mississippi in 1964 was because they had children there and wanted to understand them and what they were doing. Sometimes they thought they could save them if they were in trouble in the state."[39] This was certainly a position Cowan must have had some sympathy with; both of her two sons were COFO volunteers during Freedom Summer.[40]

Beyond this individual maternal interest, WIMS also expressed broader maternal concerns of women towards the young and vulnerable. Both Cowan and Smith argued that while white women might be reluctant to intervene in the civil rights crisis, they would see it as their duty to act to prevent the abuse of young people. At the Atlanta NWCCR-sponsored women's meeting in 1963, Cowan had commented, "I believe it must be said that we could never have met together to discuss civil rights as such. A concern for humanity in trouble in terms of police brutality and jail treatment was accepted as having need of discussion with an eye to alleviating

misery. These women felt their obligation to humanity as a religious duty. And they accepted this responsibility for fellow humans. But for many that is it; the cause of all civil rights as moral and just has not yet been faced by the group as a whole."[41]

Her vision of the aims of WIMS in place, Smith met with representatives of the Justice Department in June 1964 to discuss the project. Given the enthusiasm of the federal government for the NWCCR, and the high hopes they had had that women could be the key to securing peaceful acceptance of civil rights in the South, the Justice Department was unsurprisingly welcoming of the WIMS project. Smith reported to Height and Cowan that the men responded with "unqualified enthusiasm" to the proposal, expressing the hope that "it will add a missing dimension that will help to hold down violence."[42] Smith reported that Bob Owen, the Mississippi Justice Department desk officer, requested that the women involved in WIMS report incidents of police brutality and told Smith that he could be contacted either at his office or at home by both WIMS staff and visitors if there was any trouble. The approval of the Justice Department secured, the WIMS project launched itself into its work. WIMS teams from the North were small, consisting of no more than six members from as wide a cross-section of women's organizations, religious affiliation and professions as possible—Cowan even advised, "Try to get one or two nuns in your team."[43] These interracial teams, recruited from northern cities, flew into southern cities, where, mindful of the need to avoid too close an association with civil rights, and hoping to avoid unwelcome publicity, the teams separated along racial lines at the airport. Susan Goodwillie described the strange parting of the teams at the airport where she, her colleague Diane Vivell and the African-American Mississippi coordinator Doris Wilson waited to greet the visiting teams.

> Diane and I would stand in the airport lobby, looking out the big plate glass window, waiting for the plane to arrive, and Doris would be standing at the same window, only no-where near where we stood. We of course could not speak or even acknowledge one another, and when the plane disgorged the WIMS team, black and white, who'd flown together from their home city up north, the women knew to separate as they came through the gate. The black women were greeted by Doris as the white women moved toward Diane and me. They had been trained to make it seem as if there was no connection between them. (It was at moments like these that I had to pinch myself to remember that I was really still in the United States of America.)[44]

African-American women from the North were taken to meet African-American women in Mississippi, aided by the contacts and networks of Womanpower Unlimited. The African-American teams frequently visited the Freedom Schools, with the northern women often taking with them donations of books and supplies for the schools. Meanwhile, white women from the North went to visit Mississippi's white women, attempting to encourage them to work towards building interracial contacts in their community. While there were plenty of African-American women in Mississippi willing to work with northern women, Goodwillie reported that she had difficulties persuading white Mississippian women to meet with the visitors. The first WIMS northern team was made up of two African-American women and six white women, a strategic balance in repsonse to the more welcoming nature of the African-American host community in Mississippi. Dorothy Height explained, "The black women had a whole community to greet them: the white women met with a lot of white community hostility, so we made sure there were enough of them to reinforce their courage and commitment."[45] While African-American women were frequently invited to stay in the homes of their hosts, it is notable that the white women of Mississippi did not extend the same offer to their northern visitors. Nonetheless, Goodwillie managed to facilitate connections between white northern women and white southern women. In July 1964, for example, a white visitor from Minneapolis was taken to a coffee meeting with members of the open schools support group, "Mississippians for Public Education," and on to tea parties with other white Mississippian women. Goodwillie reported, "we're beginning to get around and about in the white community and perhaps we shall yet make some strides."[46] A meeting organized under the guise of a League of Women Voters session was unpromising. While the League members in attendance were also members of Mississippians for Public Education, Tiyi Morris explains that this did not translate into support for the COFO workers or WIMS.[47]

The climate of fear and hostility that swamped the efforts of WIMS to work with white southern women should not be underestimated. In a meeting between Smith and Cowan, and three white women in Jackson on 8 May 1964, the Mississippian women explained that they had organized a women's meeting after the violence that had greeted James Meredith's attempts to integrate the University of Mississippi in Oxford in 1962. The women had organized what they called "Friday groups" involving over 150 women in discussions about what they could do to support the

implementation of civil rights in their communities. However, the group quickly broke up with a final meeting attended by ninety women who found themselves unable to agree to sign a simple statement saying "I am for an open school policy." A small nucleus of the group continued to meet, but quickly became aware that they were under police surveillance. The frightened women reported to WIMS "all Citizen Council people have radio with intercom, spot all cars and follow them … all licence plates are taken by police at all interracial meetings … No sanity prevails; a careful letter to the editor still means reprisals."[48] Goodwillie reported that at the first meeting of white women in a private house, one of the southern women walked in and drew all the curtains. Goodwillie added, "This was at 10 o'clock in the morning." One woman explained, "If anybody sees me here my husband will divorce me," while another commented drily, "It helps to be a widow of independent means."[49]

WIMS decision to work in racially segregated groups reflected both the tension in the state and the outside advice they had received. At a meeting in Selma in November 1963, Rueben Clark of the President's Lawyers Commission on Civil Rights had advised Cowan and Smith against bi-racial teams, explaining, "if you really want the white power structure to give an inch, you don't go in bi-racial groups."[50] Reports from the co-ordinators in Mississippi confirmed the rigid and uncompromising state of race relations. Goodwillie later recalled the difficulties she had finding a place where she could meet her colleague Doris Wilson. Goodwillie's apartment was in a building owned by "staunch members of the White Citizens Council" who would "certainly not have countenanced Doris walking in the front door for a visit… Had she carried laundry in through the back service entrance, that might have conformed to the 'local custom' but none of us were about to consider it."[51] Goodwillie and Wilson were finally able to persuade the director of the African-American branch of the YWCA to allow them to meet on the Y premises.

The extreme caution taken by WIMS to abide by Mississippi's segregation patterns also reflected the hard lessons learnt by Cowan and Smith during their experience in Selma. Kate Wilkinson's research into the work of WIMS explained, "The events in Selma eventually played a major role in shaping policies for 'Wednesdays in Mississippi'. Violation of the existing norms of the Southern society had made the trip to Selma self-defeating. They had generated heat where the original purpose had been to generate light."[52] As a result, the interracial WIS teams went to great lengths to avoid identification with each other while in Mississippi. This caution at

times was so extreme as to involve secrecy and even deception. Wilkinson asserts that "the majority of white women in Jackson who participated in the WIMS project did not know there was a Negro staff or Negro WIMS members in the city."[53]

Cowan argued that African-American women in Mississippi were quick to understand this strategy, "They appreciated that WIMS had no 'magic' with which to solve this deep rooted problem, but was attempting thoughtful enterprise rather than force open doors that had been closed." However, she noted, "Northern-born women often voiced disappointment and sometimes disagreed with our view about how best to deal with this double standard. Constantly I had to face the fact that we were not as daring as some of the 'direct action' women would have wished."[54] Cowan explained the conundrum WIMS faced over integrated teams: "If we consistently maintained our Northern attitudes we could function less efficiently in the Mississippi climate; if we separated by race in order to influence more people, we betrayed our own standards."[55] Many of the northern women were extremely uncomfortable with this strategy. Wilkinson recounted the dilemma of one of the participants, "The meeting we had the day before the Boston team went to Mississippi, … was most disturbing to me. It almost caused me to cancel my trip. I was shocked to find that we were going to travel as a segregated group. I wondered why, if we were going to Mississippi to tell what we believed in, we should do this… when we got to Mississippi I discussed this problem with the Negro member of WIMS staff who explained to me the customs and what we were trying to do, outlining our role so well that I thought I was not betraying my principles by adhering to the segregated system."[56]

Cowan was perpetually on her guard against WIMS being pushed into direct civil rights activity. In July 1964, Claire Harvey took two African-American visitors, Dorothy Height and Marion Logan, into the Sun n' Sand Motel restaurant in Jackson.[57] This visit happened days after the passage of the Civil Rights Act, which became law on 1 July, and Harvey assured the visitors in a whisper, as the atmosphere became increasingly tense and the other patrons, all white, left the room, that their presence there was "strictly legal." The manager approached the women, asserting, "you must be from out of town." When Harvey responded that she was in fact from Jackson, he snarled, "If you're from Jackson you must know how dangerous it is for you to be in here. You know that your people aren't supposed to be comin' in here." Height felt they were fortunate to escape unharmed from the restaurant, and believed only the intervention

of the African-American staff protected the women from attack.[58] Cowan pointed out that not only was the physical safety of the women visitors put at risk, but that an attempt to integrate the restaurant would jeopardize the future work of WIMS. Cowan asserted, "I think we must be careful that we do not get 'pushed' into other activities to suit anyone who does not care about our stated purpose – in fact, downgrades it."

The incident reminded Cowan of her experience in Selma, and her failure to resist the temptation to become more directly involved in civil rights activism, "when Jim Forman pushed us."[59] Cowan warned the Mississippi fieldworkers to be on their guard against any future "pushing" explaining, "all of you will have to be on the look-out for your teams. We have been clear in identifying the purposes of these trips – our role if you like- to all the women who are coming. I am depending on all of you to maintain the integrity of these missions."[60] Cowan argued that attempts at direct action and integration were contrary to the aims of the WIMS program and flew in the face of the extensive efforts of WIMS to distance themselves from the direct civil rights campaign. Integration efforts, Cowan argued, "will make for the wrong kind of publicity and the story will break that we are there to demonstrate and integrate instead of to support and report."[61] Certainly WIMS staff members in Mississippi worked hard to stick to the remit and goals of the project, even when their instincts may have been for stronger, or more direct action. In a letter to WIMS New York office, Goodwillie wrote from Jackson recounting her attendance at a round of coffee meetings and tea parties, noting sardonically, "We're just about 'lady-ed out'."[62]

Accompanying the reluctance of WIMS to become involved in any direct action was a strategy of zero publicity for any aspect of the work of the organization. In her report to the US Commission on Civil Rights, Cowan explained, "If the project were given publicity the Mississippi staff would be discovered and their ability to broaden Southern contacts would be curtailed. It would also compound the risks taken by the many Southern women of both races who have talked to us frankly but off the record. We believe that many of the doors which have been opened with such effort would slam shut immediately if the Southern press drew attention to the concept and organization of the project."[63] As with her approach to direct action work, Cowan found women in the South were quick to understand and appreciate the no-publicity policy, while northern participants were sometimes less co-operative. Despite the meticulous care taken by WIMS in selecting suitable teams of volunteers, there were, inevitably, those who either did not understand or did not agree with her

strategy. The Minneapolis team, who visited Mississippi in July 1964, were particularly troublesome. Cowan was incensed that the husband of one of the volunteers arranged a press reception for the homecoming women at Minneapolis airport. Cowan explained, "I called Mr Cunningham, whose sweet little idea this had been and fought with him for an hour. He is simply of the opinion that we are wrong and so had arranged for the press, photos etc."[64] Cowan called the managing editor of the local newspaper and persuaded him to drop all reference to WIMS, and instead imply that the Minneapolis Committee for Civil Rights had organized the visit. Cowan's plan was to give no publicity to WIMS projects while they were ongoing, but to release a statement on the work of the group after the Democratic Convention in Atlantic City. This statement outlined the achievements of the organization mentioning the eight WIMS teams of fifty women from six northern cities, who had visited Mississippi and made contact with about 300 southern women. Cowan's targeting of "high status" women appeared to have been successful, as reports included the fact that northern participants in the programme included women such as Mrs Meyner, wife of a former governor of New Jersey, and Mrs Benjamin, wife of one of United Artists Corporation's chairmen.

The northern press, who frequently represented the northern participants as brave missionaries, lauded the aims of the WIMS in Mississippi. A report in the *New York Journal-American*, 30 August 1964, praised "A Bold Journey South" announcing, "A group of socially prominent women paid their own way to Mississippi this summer for an almost secret project to establish lines of communication between Negro and White Women."[65] Other newspapers and periodicals inevitably played up the "society lady" aspect of the story with headlines such as "Society women in Rights Project"; "Ripping the 'Cotton Curtain' is their summer project"; and "High Heel Splendour Bridges Racial Gap."[66] The *Chicago Daily News* reported, "White Gloves, High Heels, Helps Promote High Ideals," and focused on the extent to which the project sought to "gentrify" civil rights. "'We wore our white gloves and we avoided arguments' said participant Mrs Montgomery. 'The idea was to show the people of Mississippi that the believers of Civil Rights aren't beatniks or communists or some sort of monsters."[67]

Despite WIMS's initial focus on the importance of the respectability and high status of their teams, Cowan was wary of the participants being labelled as dilettantes, or patronizing, bored housewives looking for a project. In September 1964, Cowan wrote to team organizers, "I hope

the publicity in your town did not get out of hand. I apologise for the title attached to some of the news stories which involved the words: 'Society Ladies'. I am sure it annoyed you as much as it did me. I consider every one of us as hard-working, dedicated women with a job, or many jobs to do."[68] In fact, WIMS explicitly sought to ensure that the teams were made up of professional women rather than simply society ladies. WIMS reasoned that the serious and challenging nature of the project meant that they needed to attract participants who were "busy, active women of all faiths who are leaders in their own communities or in local and national affairs, or are professional women" who "could observe intelligently, assess and evaluate what they saw, and bring back first hand reports about conditions in Mississippi to significant national organizations and worthwhile community bodies who would listen to them."[69] WIMS believed that it was important that the women from the North had a high status, in order to impress women in the South: "It was felt that it would mean more to the sympathetic but silent women of Mississippi if they realized that they had become the concern of some of the nation's busiest and most influential women."[70]

Cowan's faith in the status and the overt, almost ostentatious, appearance of status is worth noting. Cowan's faith in the power of feminine respectability continued undaunted throughout the project. In her report on WIMS for the 1966 board meeting of the NCNW, she explained: "High level women have unique abilities to offer people in troubled places. Initially, they have access to people – it is hard to turn away or ignore a tidy smiling lady with white gloves and high heels. When you combine experience, determination, knowledge, understanding and a desire to help with femininity, you have a force to reckon with."[71] Throughout her time with WIMS, Cowan continually emphasized this idea of respectability as fundamental to the authority of its participants. In particular, she argued that the respectable appearance of the participants of WIMS marked their difference from the civil rights activists. In her reflection on her initial visit to Selma, Cowan concluded, "Don't worry too much about credentials. No one will disturb you if you come from an established women's group … Our middle class respectability is a great help; the big hatred is for those who look like 'SNCC trouble-makers'."[72]

Susan Goodwillie and Diane Vivell, the WIMS field workers in Mississippi, made strenuous efforts to distance themselves from a suspicion that they were engaged in pro-civil rights work in Mississippi, not only creating an impeccably lady-like cover story that they were researching a

cook book, but also taking enormous pains with their appearance. One of the WIMS visitors reported: "They lived in a pleasant apartment at a good address and wore plain chic clothes and white gloves for respectability."[73] This appearance of respectability was in marked contrast to the appearance of the COFO field workers, which had been greeted across Mississippi with consternation. Patt Derian, one of the few white women active in civil rights in Mississippi, reported to Cowan, that while the casual, frequently slovenly appearance of the COFO volunteers was not an issue for her, others were less forgiving; "It is the chief complaint among friend and foe. That they do not wash etc."[74]

While the women from Jackson who had attended the off-the-record meeting in Atlanta had welcomed the idea of outside help, others were less enthusiastic. In the South, press coverage of the WIMS project brought an indignant response, particularly critical of the notion of the need for "outside" assistance. A letter in the Jackson *Clarion-Ledger,* responding to the article, "Yankee Women Visit State on Civil Rights Mission," made clear that despite the efforts of WIMS to distance itself from the activism of Freedom Summer, its mission was inextricably linked in the minds of some Mississippians with that effort. The letter, addressed to "Polly Cowan, amongst others," explained, "Each of you came to Mississippi this past summer. Each of you came uninvited, unwanted and uninformed. I would like to say at the outset that this 'invasion' of Mississippi along with the attempts at unseating our Congressman is part of the communist conspiracy."[75] A letter in Gulfport Mississippi *Daily News*, September 1964, was indignant both at the idea that southern women needed outside help and at the implication that racism was a purely southern phenomenon: "One source of surprise is that so many have the time and effort to give to us when their own are crying so loudly… It does seem that groups such as this could find a better use for their talents. Since when have Southern white women needed 'a bridge' built by highly educated Northern women in order to talk about Negro women? However, if the so-called 'bridge' means planning and plotting only to see how much trouble can be made for both races, perhaps it is advisable that the ones who desire this meet in northern territories where they might also be given a tour of your 'hotspots'."[76]

At the end of the first year of their project, a 1964 report claimed that forty-eight WIMS team members had visited Mississippi, meeting with over 3000 women. Many of these participants met in Washington DC in November 1964 at the NCNW convention for two days of discussion

and planning. The future of WIMS was uncertain, as the drawbacks and limitations of the program were discussed. Eventually the NCNW reported, "It was the women of Mississippi who attended the meeting who tipped the decision. With a great deal of difficulty these women, who had benefited by the project, literally begged that the program be continued … They felt that with extended civil rights activity in Mississippi during the summer of 1965 the presence of eminently respectable groups of persons who could not be branded activists would be needed more than ever to supplant violence with reason."[77] Polly Cowan claimed that there had been a small but significant shift in the climate in Mississippi between 1964 and 1965: "The first summer the women knew that they were courting trouble in many cases if they worked interracially. In 1965 this was less obvious … It is important to note that a bolder position was healthy (and possible) for the work WIMS had to do in 1965, just as prudence was healthy for the work of 1964."[78] Some 400 women took part in the 1965 WIMS program, which broadened to include work on specific projects such as HEADSTART and co-operation with a Catholic anti-poverty mission. Women from WIMS also taught or served as consultants to the Institution on the Problems of Desegregation at the University of Mississippi. Women flew into Jackson on Tuesday and spent Wednesday in communities within a 100 mile radius of Jackson. The teams stayed for about two days, making contacts with both white and African-American women.

In its second year, WIMS demonstrated a capacity for self-reflection, and an ability to recognize the ideological assumptions and limitations of its initial project, making significant revisions to its approach, and placing far more emphasis on interracial communication "to try and build a bridge between the races by finding a common ground and mutual concerns."[79] The program sought to develop these bridges by facilitating interracial groups that were based not on a common concern in race relations, but rather by identifying mutual interests and shared projects that would bring women towards recognition of what united them, rather than what divided them. WIMS's spring 1965 outline explained, "recognition is given to the importance of the Human Rights and Human Relations Committees which are functioning in many parts of the state. But the simple framework of common working goals, common concerns of women, the sharing of literacy and musical pleasures, make a mutuality of interest which cannot be found by the sole contact of races when they sit next to each other at formal meetings."[80] This strategy signified recognition by WIMS

of the impact that segregation had wrought on the southern society, and reflected the first step towards building women's organizing on an interracial basis. Crucially it reflected their understanding that organizing for mutual benefit and on common ground would actually be more productive than organizing specifically in the cause of racial justice. By building common cause and networks, WIMS hoped that white women's concern for racial justice would become an organic and shared concern rather than an artificial and abstract belief.

Most significantly, WIMS made the important decision to discontinue its practice of abiding by segregation in the South, and instead acceded to the wishes of the northern participants to both practice, and thereby encourage integration. In WIMS's second year, Cowan argued, "We want to try to do everything possible for integration this year. Enough with the separatism. We're wasting time effort and everyone's money if we just play the same game."[81] In a report on the 1965 program, Cowan argued that this new policy had been a success: "The fact that our teams were always integrated served as a model for the future. We were careful not to offend the mores of the community by flouting our own integration, but it was known that women of both races moved and worked together as much of the time as was feasible."[82]

The shift away from the strict observance of segregation meant that WIMS was able to serve as a catalyst for interracial meetings, rather than merely encouraging white women in that direction. WIMS staff member Caroline Smith reported, "The most frequent interracial events were the luncheons held in hotels where local Negro and white residents met the Negro and white members of the WIMS team. These luncheons had the value of accustoming Jacksonians eating in hotels to seeing integrated groups, an unusual occurrence."[83] A WIMS meeting with Episcopal women in Jackson produced the first city-wide integrated meeting of the Episcopal churchwomen. Smith recounted, "One of the Grande Dames of Jackson looked around her at the goodly number of Negroes present and was heard to murmur 'It is queer, but I suppose we must get used to it'."[84]

In October 1965, a panel at the annual NCNW conference came together to discuss the future of WIMS. The meeting reported the continuing resentment of some of the southern women towards the WIMS teams. Hope Ackerman, a WIMS staff member, explained, "One women spoke of us as 'two day wonders' who came to Mississippi to look them over and then go back home to report critically. This sort of feeling – that we are judgemental, not sympathetic or understanding of their special

problems or aware of the positive steps that have been made, was repeated in many ways."[85] After two years of work, all members of the panel felt that WIMS should continue in some form, but were divided on the direction it should take. Some members felt that they should move beyond Mississippi, and work in other "simmering areas," such as Alabama. Others felt that the project should bring white southern women on trips to the North, or begin working in northern urban areas. One woman with particularly strong views was Wilhelmina Adams, an NCNW district leader in Harlem, who echoed the argument of many in Mississippi that WIMS had plenty of work to do in improving race relations in the North. Adams informed the panel, "There is a bridge of understanding that is necessary in all communities in the North as well as the South. … I want to say to you, you don't have to go down South. You can stay right in Harlem."[86] Jean Benjamin, an African-American team member from Harlem, reported her disappointment at the impact her team had made in Mississippi, reporting, "As far as the white ladies we met were concerned, I don't think that our visit had much effect on them. On the whole, I imagine that some of them are pretty much mystified as to why we came at all. Some … probably feel we are meddling in things that shouldn't concern us and that we should stay home and 'do good' in Harlem."[87]

As a result of these criticisms, WIMS sought to develop in two directions. First, WIMS moved to make more explicit the importance of communication between women in Mississippi. The "Conversation Caravans" project they initiated was a project which brought women together simply to talk in depth about social issues. Alongside this project, they established the "workshops in Mississippi" project aimed at contacting and relating to a different group of southern women. The WIMS newsletter in March 1967 explained, "Through the device of workshops in Mississippi we are finding more and more groups of women representing the hard-core poor on farms and in the cities who trust us and the National Council of Negro Women."[88] The move to the workshop format, rather than the "visiting" format of Wednesdays in Mississippi, symbolized a willingness to respond to the criticism of the Mississippi women that the northern visitors were patronizing and fleeting in their engagement with Mississippi. Furthermore, it reflected a significant shift away from trying to contact and work with influential white women in the Mississippi, towards an effort to engage with the problems of poor Mississippian women. The move to the workshop format also represented a move to co-operation with the US federal government. Staff from WIMS worked with the

US Department of Agriculture and the Opportunities Rural Services Program. Cowan explained in a letter to Ira Kaye of the OEO-CAP, Rural Services Program, 15 April 1967, "As the needs changed we [WIMS] became more of a technical assistance program, rather than a building of understanding program."[89] WIMS co-ordinated and put together bids for support for programs to help women in rural communities. In 1967, for example, it received a grant of $6893 for a program working with women in Sunflower country, Mississippi, where the per capita income was $644, although this grant was vetoed by Governor Paul Johnson since it involved interracial work.

WIMS's second response to the criticism raised by Mississippian women was to try to extend its work to northern cities. In her statement to the US Commission on Civil Rights hearings in Jackson in August 1964, Cowan explained that from the outset of the WIMS program, the organizers understood that the impact of the program would be felt in the North as well as the South, "As the project progressed, even before the Wednesday visits began, we realized that this process of working with the Southern women in order to open their eyes, their hearts and their minds, would also cause northern women to re-examine and re-evaluate themselves in their northern world … The ripples will continue long after the waves have subsided."[90] As both the broader Civil Rights Movement turned its attention to injustices in the North and the Mississippian women questioned the complacency of the northern visitors, WIMS acknowledged that the "liberal, integrated" North was, in many places, neither liberal nor integrated. Cowan, in a letter to Paul Jones of the Community Relations Service in November 1965, observed, "You told the women [at the NCNW Conference] what they had not wanted to hear i.e. that urban communities could use WIMS. I have been convinced of this for some time… There are a lot of reasons why I think we should try a test in an urban northern community … In general the problems are the same; no communication, no understanding."[91]

Cowan herself was hopeful that WIMS could move forward and, as the broader Civil Rights Movement begin to turn its attention to northern urban problems, Cowan hoped WIMS could serve to support these efforts. At a WIMS session at the 1965 annual NCNW conference, Cowan suggested that the next steps for WIMS might be a move into the war on poverty and into the national picture beyond Mississippi.[92] Cowan reported that "the government people" [the panel was co-sponsored by the Women's Bureau] were "united about one thing, they definitely want

WIMS to continue – in whatever direction that would best serve its goals and purposes."[93] For many within WIMS, the obvious direction in which WIMS could develop would be to turn its attention to race relations in northern areas. In its 1966 report, the organization explained:

> WIMS discovered that we could not recruit interracial teams in certain northern cities because community leaders – Negro and White – simply did not know each other. Awareness was sharpened by the unrest and rioting in Watts and the bitterness surrounding the school integration issue in New York and Boston. It has been sharpened by the experiences in Mississippi. Many of our people thought that they believed in integration all their thinking lives. Not until they teamed up with Negro colleagues and lived side by side with them in the South did they begin to understand how truly cut off from each other they had been.[94]

Cowan explained to Richard Shapiro at the US Commission on Civil Rights that NCNW representatives from urban areas had approached her and asked her to provide a WIMS program in the North.[95]

At a meeting in February 1966, a group of twenty-five women met with ten WIMS team members to discuss possible work in Boston. The African-American women at the meeting objected to WIMS plans to concentrate their efforts in the predominately African-American area of Roxbury, explaining that they "took exception to the idea that the people in Roxbury needed 'outsiders' to help them establish communications between the races, because these are the people who have been working very hard for many years, on interracial committees, with problems of housing and education. The fact that they have not been more successful in achieving their goals is due to the resistance of the white Catholic community, and not due to lack of persistence or 'know-how.'"[96] At a further meeting to discuss the Boston program in March, it was agreed that WIMS should not follow the "outsiders" strategy they had put so much stock by in Mississippi. Rather they argued, "Boston problems must be solved by Bostonians" and suggested that WIMS serve as consultants to facilitate improved community relations.[97] The Boston project mirrored the Mississippi project. WIMS argued that the extent of isolation and ghettoization in Boston was similar to the racial segregation in Mississippi: "Boston is fragmented into isolated groups – geographically, ethnically, racially and according to religion … There is little cooperation or communication between the various segments of the population."[98] A more positive parallel between Boston and Mississippi was the existence of liberal whites who were eager for

change—at the February meeting, WIMS reported: "Catholics who were at this meeting seemed most willing and anxious to change the image of the Catholics in Boston – almost as the white Mississippian wants to change the image of Mississippi."[99] The first report of the project explicitly stated: "Our hope was that we could use the techniques developed in our work in Mississippi to help build bridges of communication between white and Negro women in Boston."[100] WIMS began work in the North in April 1966—in Boston, Massachusetts; Danville, Virginia; and Paterson, New Jersey. Three women leaders from the North, when asked why they had not joined forces before the WIMS program, explained, "WIMS gave the opportunity they had never before had; it took an 'outsider' to bring together the insiders." Cowan commented, "If WIMS need a justification for its existence, this is it."[101] Despite the ambitions that Cowan had for broadening the scope of WIMS work, however, the project in the North lacked the infrastructure necessary for continuing work. Cowan increasingly turned her attention to work to address poverty issues throughout Mississippi through the auspices of the NCNW.

WIMS was born out of the conviction that white women in the South needed outside support in order to take a stand in support of integration efforts and that national associations were failing to provide that support. As with many of the organizations in this study, assessing the impact of WIMS is a difficult task. Certainly their goals were modest; in the words of one historian, they sought "incremental progress, not revolution."[102] Caroline Smith, a white staff member on the WIMS team, reported in 1965 that they had been successful in stimulating leadership, strengthening existing groups and establishing personal relationships between southern women. However, she admitted that WIMS had been unsuccessful in establishing specific action projects, and "were helpful only in a supportive way without offering basic or long term help."[103] Cowan asserted that many of the white women reached by WIMS later got involved in pro-integration work: "many of those Southern women subsequently joined the effort of other women who were working to keep the public schools open or to liberalize their churches and their organizations."[104] Caroline Smith claimed that WIMS had made significant progress in Philadelphia and Oxford, in developing leadership, explaining that the work of the WIMS teams among the white women in Philadelphia was crucial to the efforts of "Mississippi for Public Education," to support integration in Mississippi's public schools.[105] Smith reported that visits from the WIMS teams created a vital emotional space for southern women to discuss their position: "Sometimes long, marathon talks, from

integration to existentialism and back to integration took place. These lasted sometimes until 3.00 am. Often there was an intensity of feeling, and on more than one occasion a Southern woman wept at the dilemma in which the South placed her."[106] Such emotional intensity has led one historian to characterize these meetings as "'consciousness raising' before American feminisms began using the term."[107]

It seems likely that the efforts of WIMS to reach out to southern white moderates did have an impact, even in the short time that WIMS was active. However, as one of the southern white woman who helped co-ordinate the visits warned, it would be difficult to assess the value of their visits: "When we are talking about impact on the community, and especially the white community, there is just no way for them to know."[108] The experience of WIMS revealed the gulf between white and African-American women, and suggested that any efforts on the part of white women to work on behalf of racial justice required genuine commitment and self-reflection. Efforts to exploit the social capital of white women, without a commensurate effort on the part of these women to understand their own racial position and privilege, inevitably caused frustration and resentment. In her reflections on the demise of the NWCCR, Smith had speculated, "Civil Rights have to become a personal matter to the white women leaders before they can identify effectively with their Negro counterparts."[109] While WIMS had freed itself from the institutional barrier what white women faced in engagement with civil rights work, the ideological barriers which led them to believe they could trade on their social position, and class and racial prejudices on behalf of racial justice, initially remained unchallenged. The dedication of WIMS to self-reflection through its workshops enabled it to respond to criticism and to acknowledge the assumptions, prejudices and naivety of some of its volunteers.

Notes

1. Dorothy Height, interviewed by Polly Cowan for the *Black Women Oral History Project* vol 5, (Westport and London, 1991), 174.
2. Dorothy Tilly – Visit to Selma, Alabama 7 October 1963, SRC papers, series VIII, reel 23.
3. Speech by Polly Cowan to the National Council of Jewish Women, Chicago, 16 October, National Council of Negro Women papers, Bethune House, Washington DC (hereafter NCNW papers), series 19, box 4, file 20.

4. "The Freedom to Vote," report by Polly Cowan, NCNW papers, series 19, box 2.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. Report on Trip to Selma, Alabama, 4–5 October by Polly Cowan, Records of the Women's Bureau, Department of Labor, National Archives, Maryland. (Hereafter WB papers) box 20.
8. Southern Journey 2, Shirley Smith, 27 October–3 November, WB papers, box 21.
9. Ibid.
10. Dorothy Tilly – Visit to Selma, Alabama 7 October 1963, SRC papers, series VIII reel 23.
11. Shirley Smith to Joyce Miller, 18 October 1963, WB papers, box 24.
12. Shirley Smith to Mrs Cothran, 18 October 1963, WB papers, box 24.
13. Polly Cowan, chapter 1 of draft book, NCNW papers, series 19, box 4, file 22.
14. "The Freedom to Vote," report by Polly Cowan, NCNW papers, series 19, box 2.
15. Memo to Miss Peterson, Mrs Horton and Mrs Harris from Shirley Smith, 20 December 1963, WB papers, box 20.
16. Debbie Z Harwell, *Wednesdays in Mississippi. Proper Ladies working for Radical Change, Freedom Summer 1964* (Oxford, University of Mississippi Press, 1963).
17. Polly Cowan "Women in the Civil Rights Movement – Variations of a Theme," November 1963, NCNW papers series 19, box 2, file 2.
18. See Amy Swerdlow, "Ladies' Day at the Capitol: Women Strike for Peace versus HUAC," *Feminist Studies*, 8:3, (Autumn 1982) pp. 493–520.
19. Report on Atlanta Consultation, 15–16 March 1964, AAUW papers, (Microfilming Corporation of America) reel 146.
20. Interview with Dorothy Height by Polly Cowan, *The Black Women Oral History Project,* 1980, 182.
21. Ibid, 182.
22. Report on Atlanta Consultation, 15–16 March 1964, AAUW papers, reel 146.
23. Consultation Program: Inter-Organizational Committee, Editorial Comment by Polly Cowan, Program Consultant NCNW, NCNW papers, series 19, box 8, file 2.
24. Ibid.

25. Cited in a Speech by Dorothy Height (not dated), Polly Cowan Papers, Mary McLeod Bethune House, series 1, box 1.
26. Tiyi M Morris, *Womanpower Unlimited and the Black Freedom Struggle in Mississippi*, (Athens and London, The University of Georgia Press, 2015), 82.
27. Preface to Polly Cowan's draft account of WIMS, 28 May 1964, NCNW Papers box 19 file 22.
28. Ibid.
29. Cited in Dorothy Height, *Open Wide the Freedom Gates* (New York, PublicAffairs, 2003), 165.
30. Tiyi M Morris, *Womanpower Unlimited and the Black Freedom Struggle in Mississippi*, (Athens and London, The University of Georgia Press, 2015), 119. Morris credits Harvey with "the idea" of bringing women in from outside the state to support the Freedom Summer. Cowan's work with the NWCCR suggests she had been thinking along the same lines even before Harvey's intervention. Cowan's own account of the genesis of WIMS does not credit Harvey with the idea.
31. Polly Cowan, memo no 6 to Community Co-ordinators, NCNW papers, series 19, box 9, file 9.
32. Wednesdays in Mississippi (internal outline), 9 June 1964, NCNW papers, series 19, box 3.
33. Written by Polly Cowan (not dated). NCNW papers series 19, box 4, file 22.
34. "Team Member's responsibilities," kit Material, 1965, NCNW papers, series 19, box 8, file 10.
35. Consultation Program: Inter-Organizational Committee, Editorial Comment by Polly Cowan, Program Consultant NCNW, NCNW papers, series 19, box 8, file 2.
36. Foundation Appeal material, NCNW papers, series 19, box 6, file 22.
37. 1966 Report, NCNW papers, series 19, box 7, file 13.
38. Susan Goodwillie to Shirley Smith, 24 March 1964, WB papers, box 20.
39. Polly Cowan, draft outline of book, Polly Cowan papers, series 1, box 1.
40. See Paul Cowan, *The Making of an Un-American* (New York, Viking, 1970).
41. Consultation Program: Inter-Organizational Committee, Editorial Comment by Polly Cowan, Program Consultant NCNW, NCNW papers, series 19, box 8, file 2.

42. Memo from Shirley Smith to Dorothy Height, Polly Cowan and Jackson Staff, 12 June 1962, NCNW papers, series 19, box 3.
43. Memo Number 3 to Community Co-coordinators from Polly Cowan, 15 June, 1964, NCNW papers, series 19, box 9, file 6.
44. "Susan Goodwillie remembers Doris Wilson," accessed 12 January 2012, WIMS website http://www.history.uh.edu/cph/WIMSS/
45. Wednesdays in Mississippi website, accessed 28 February 2012, http://www.history.uh.edu/cph/WIMS/
46. Letter to Deborah Loft from Susan Goodwillie 20 July 1964, NCNW papers, box 19, file 18.
47. Tiyi M Morris, *Womanpower Unlimited and the Black Freedom Struggle in Mississippi*, (Athens and London, The University of Georgia Press, 2015), 128.
48. Report on Jackson visit, Polly Cowan, 8 May 1964, meeting at Hotel Hiedelbery, Mrs Gotthelf, Mrs Gootch and Mrs Burnstein. NCNW papers, box 1.
49. Wednesdays in Mississippi Broadcast, 4/20/01, accessed 10 March 2009 WAMU, available online, http://www.wamu.org/pi/show/piarc_020121.html
50. Report of Selma meeting, November 1963, WB papers, box 24.
51. "Susan Goodwillie remembers Doris Wilson," accessed 12 January 2012, WIMS website http://www.history.uh.edu/cph/WIMS/
52. Kate Wilkinson, *A Sociological Analysis of an Action Group: Wednesdays in Mississippi,* 37, MA Thesis, University of Mississippi July 1966.
53. Ibid. p. 43.
54. Polly Cowan, Report to the US Commission on Civil Rights, Hearings in Jackson, August 1964. NCNW papers, box 4, file 22.
55. Polly Cowan, Report to the US Commission on Civil Rights, Hearings in Jackson, August 1964, NCNW papers, box 4, file 22.
56. Wilkinson, *A Sociological Analysis of an Action Group,* 50.
57. Polly Cowan, Report to the US Commission on Civil Rights, Hearings in Jackson, August 1964. NCNW papers, box 4, file 22.
58. Height, *Open Wide the Freedom Gate.*
59. Letter from Polly Cowan to Doris, Susie and Diane, 11 July 1964. NCNW papers, series 19, box 2, file 18.
60. Ibid.
61. Letter to Doris Wilson from Polly Cowan, 1 August 1964, NCNW papers, box 19, file, 18.

62. Susan Goodwillie to Deborah Loft, 30 July 1964. NCNW papers, box 2, file 18.
63. Polly Cowan, Report to the US Commission on Civil Rights, Hearings in Jackson, August 1964. NCNW papers, box 4, file 22.
64. Letter from Polly Cowan to Doris Wilson, 1 August 1964. NCNW papers, series 19, box 2, file 18.
65. Al Kuettner, "A Bold Journey South," *New York Journal-American* 30 August 1964.
66. *New York Times*, 30 August 1964, *The Washington Post* 31 August 1964, *Houston Chronicle* 31 August 1964.
67. Patricia Moore, "White Gloves, High Heels, Help Promote High Ideals" *Chicago Daily News* 25 September 1964, NCNW papers, series 19 box 10, file 9.
68. Memo Number 15 to Community Co-coordinators from Polly Cowan, 15 June 1964, NCNW papers, series 19, box 9, file 6.
69. "Wednesdays in Mississippi Report," Educational Foundation of the National Council of Negro Women, 1964, NCNW papers, series 19, box 12, file 8.
70. Ibid.
71. Report on WIMS for NCNW Board Meeting, 29 January 1966, NCNW papers, series 19, box 2.
72. "The Freedom to Vote," report by Polly Cowan, NCNW papers, series 19, box 2.
73. Report on a trip to Mississippi, 2–23 July 1964, Mary Cushing Niles, Baltimore, NCNW papers, series 19 box 13, file 1.
74. Letter from Patt Derian to Polly Cowan, 1965, NCNW paper, series 19, box 12, file 9.
75. Letter to the Editor from J.H. McDaniel, *Jackson Clarion-Ledger* Jackson Mississippi, 5 March 1965.
76. "Yankee Women visit State on Civil Rights Mission," *Jackson Clarion-Ledger* 4 September 1964, NCNW papers, series 19, box 10, file 9.
77. "Wednesdays in Mississippi Report," Educational Foundation of the National Council of Negro Women, 1964, NCNW papers, series 19, box 12, file 8.
78. Polly Cowan, Report to the US Commission on Civil Rights, Hearings in Jackson, August 1964, NCNW papers, box 4, file 22.
79. Polly Cowan, "Wednesdays in Mississippi" in *The Church Woman* May 1965, accessed 9 October 2009, http://www.iath.virginia.edu/vcdh/WIMS/creation/PC_CWU_article.html

80. Wednesdays in Mississippi – Outline. Spring 1965. NCNW papers, series 19, box 3.
81. Polly Cowan, Notes for Ossie and Caroline on the Chicago Team, (not dated) NCNW paper, series 19 box 13, file 11.
82. Ibid.
83. Caroline Smith, "Views Conclusions and Recommendations" NCNW papers, series 19, box 13, file 4.
84. Ibid.
85. Hope Ackerman and Polly Cowan, "Report on a trip to Jackson, Mississippi," 2–7 March 1965, NCNW papers, series 19, box 9, file 18.
86. Transcript of Tape – Future of WIMS, October 1965 NCNW papers, series 19, box 19, file 1.
87. Jean Benjamin to WIMS, 27 July 1964, NCNW papers, series 1, box 12, folder 7.
88. WIMS newsletter, March 1967, NCNW papers, series 19, box 10, file 10.
89. Polly Cowan to Ira Kaye, 15 April 1967, NCNW papers, series 19, box 10, file 10.
90. "Wednesdays in Mississippi" Report from Polly Cowan, NCNW papers, series 19, box 2.
91. Polly Cowan to Paul Jones, 16 November 1965, NCNW papers, series 19, box 2, file 24.
92. Polly Cowan to WIMS team members, 9 October 1965, NCNW papers, box 19, file 1.
93. Notes on the NCNW – The Future of WIMS. NCNW papers, box 19, file 1.
94. Report on 1966 Program, NCNW papers, series 19, box 7, file 13.
95. Polly Cowan to Richard Shapiro, 16 November 1965, NCNW papers, box 2, file 24.
96. WIMS – Boston Project – Meeting at Ruth Batson's, 10 February 1966, NCNW papers, series 19, box 2.
97. Boston project, meeting at Packard Manse, 22 March 1966, NCNW papers, series 19, box 2 file 2.
98. WIMS – Boston Report, November 1966. NCNW papers, series 19, box 2 file 11.
99. WIMS – Boston Project – Meeting at Ruth Batson's, 10 February 1966, NCNW papers, series 19, box 2.

100. WIMS – Boston Project –Progress report, 18 February 1966, NCNW papers, series 19, box 2.
101. Polly Cowan, 'WIMS Work in the North' (1966), NCNW papers, box 1.
102. J. Todd Moyne, "Discovering what's already there: Mississippi Women and Civil Rights", in *Mississippi Women: Their Histories, Their Lives* Volume two, eds, Anne Payne, Martha Swain and Marjorie Julian Spruill, (Athens and London, The University of Georgia Press, 2010):249–267, 258.
103. Caroline Smith, "Outline for WIMS report." NCNW papers, box 1.
104. Polly Cowan, "Wednesdays in Mississippi" in *The Church Woman* May 1965, accessed 9 October 2009, http://www.iath.virginia.edu/vcdh/WIMS/creation/PC_CWU_article.html
105. Caroline Smith, "Views Conclusions and Recommendations," NCNW paper, series 19 box 13, file 4.
106. Ibid.
107. Moyne, "Discovering what's already there," 259.
108. Report from Mrs Ann Hewitt, accessed 11 November 2009, http://www.history.uh.edu/cph/WIMS/
109. Memo: Review of Committee Operations, by Shirley Smith, 8 April 1964, WB papers, box 24.

CHAPTER 7

Conclusion

In June 1960, the American Association of University Women (AAUW) issued a press release containing the views of its general director, Dr Tompkins, on the important role of voluntary organizations in American life. Her analysis, while acknowledging the positive contributions of such associations to political and social life, also noted the extent to which the organizational form could serve as a conservative force, resistant to change and cushioning its members from active engagement with the demands of outside life. Participation in an organization, Tompkins argued, sometimes worked at "keeping us busy and providing us with a cosy little creed which relieves us of our dreadful responsibility for the awesome and frightening problems our generations have precipitated." Tompkins urged members of the AAUW to make their organization a more dynamic one, arguing "an organization is disdainfully neutral; if it becomes a suffocating cocoon, it is because we have made it so for our own unworthy reasons. But we may also choose to make it a catalyst."[1]

In the post-war period, American women's associations formed a coalition which constituted something of a women's auxiliary in national politics. While a significant number of American women took advantage of the extension of suffrage in 1920 by taking an active role in mainstream political life, many women found partisan politics unwelcoming and hostile to female participation. As a result both of this hostility and of the recognition of the positive female values inculcated and celebrated in women's association, sex-segregated associations in the post-war period were able

H. Laville, *Organized White Women and the Challenge of Racial Integration, 1945-1965*, DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-49694-8_7

to define a role for themselves as significant quasi-governmental national associations. While avoiding identification with ideological or partisan politics, American women's associations nonetheless claimed they had a nationally significant role in encouraging, channelling and representing American women's public activism.

While forging a public role for themselves, American women's associations overwhelmingly avoided engagement with the policies of racial exclusion and privilege, and of private relationships on which their authority was based. Study of the engagement of organized white women with the issue of racial justice reveals the ways different organizations served as either a suffocating cocoon or as catalyst for their members. Some groups, such Wednesdays in Mississippi (WIMS), sought a role as a transformative organization, whose activism was directed not just at the manifestation of racial injustice which threatened the harmony and reputation of their nation and communities, but also at the personal attitudes and prejudices of their members. The efforts of the leadership of the AAUW and the League of Women Voters (LWV) to avoid confrontation with the issue of integration were almost certainly a product in part of their lack of personal commitment to the cause of racial justice. However, their determination to avoid engagement with the issue also reflected their understanding that racial integration would disrupt, perhaps irrevocably, the membership structure on which their associations were based. Study of women's associations in the period when racial segregation was being challenged and overturned in public life exposes the structural and ideological weaknesses of these associations as hybrid institutions that claimed a public position and authority, but depended on private networks. The steady dismantlement of racial segregation in American public life inevitably threatened the credibility of supposedly public groups that were, in fact, dependent on homogenous social groups.

It is worth noting that the challenges which the AAUW and the LWV faced over racial integration were internal membership struggles, not external legal challenges. The legal position of the membership policies of private associations was not addressed by the Supreme Court until 1984, when women challenged the membership policies of the United States Jaycees association on the basis that they discriminated against women.[2] While Judge Douglas had explained in the *Moose Lodge No 107 V Irvis* case in 1972 that "Government may not tell a man or woman who his or her associates must be," the *Jaycees* case ruled that only private associations so small as to be considered "intimate" could exercise discriminatory

membership policies on the basis of freedom of association.[3] Associations such as the League and the AAUW, however, did not need to wait for the 1984 Supreme Court ruling to tell them that evoking the defense of "private association" to justify racially discriminatory policies, while legally legitimate, would necessitate the definition of their organization as essentially private and social. The move towards the desegregation of the public sphere in the United States after 1945 meant that an association which purported to have a public role could not defend exclusionary membership policies.

Confrontation with the issue of racial inclusiveness, while necessary in order to maintain the credibility of women's voluntary associations as public institutions, exposed the racial homogeneity and patterns of private relationships upon which these associations rested. The impact of racial segregation on the membership of women's associations was a profound one, and efforts to dismantle it required an interrogation of personal prejudices, preferences and assumptions. Moreover, it demanded that white women acknowledge the frequently unspoken assumptions of racial privilege that underpinned membership patterns. The LWV and the AAUW actively avoided engagement with the myriad of traditions, customs, behaviours and prejudices that had brought about the bi-racial structure of women's associations. Having amended their national membership policy to reflect changing public sentiment towards the toleration of segregation, they did little else to foster interracial relationships within their association.

The headline of a story in the *Kingston Daily Freeman* newspaper in February 1968 asked "What's it like to be a Negro, Jew, Catholic or Wasp?" The report narrated the work of the Panel of American Women, established in Kansas City in 1957 by Esther Brown, herself a committed activist who had provided much of the local support for the *Brown* vs *Board of Education* case. The Panel of American Women was a simple organization, run entirely by Brown, who invited groups of three or four women representing different ethnic and religious groups to speak to community groups about their experiences and identity. The talks were deliberately non-political. "As a matter of fact we don't appoint women when they are overtly committed on civil rights," explained Brown, "They become too impatient… I know some of the civil rights people think we don't go far enough. But they admit we are reaching people they could never reach."[4] The panels were informal and loosely structured. Each member of the panel gave a five-minute speech about her own experiences,

before answering questions from the audience. “In many communities,” explained Brown, “the appearance of the panel is the first time issues like racial intermarriage, school segregation or separation of church and state have been discussed in the open. It gets people to think about members of minority groups as individuals not just blank masses.”[5]

While the panels were structured informally, volunteer panellists were given guidance as to how to approach their task. “The Negro Role,” the 1969 briefing note explained, “is the vital role on the Panel, for you are the least understood person of all. *You* know the majority audience because you’ve had to figure us out in order to survive, had to develop a dual personality, one for your own survival and one with your own people. When you become a panellist,” the briefing notes advised, “you don’t drop this right away, but don’t let a chip on the shoulder show … The Negro has to go out of her way to write the kind of speech that is important for white people to hear… Audience doesn’t know you as a person or individual, knows you only as the group stereotype ‘big and Black, unambitious, illegitimate children, on welfare’.”[6] Instructions to white participants explained, “Tell the audience how to change without literally telling them. NO preaching; No Lecturing.”[7] The guidelines for all speakers advised speakers to “tell Personal stories and make it *dramatic*. Surprise audiences with *lightness*…You must be *Liked*” and instructed panellists to “avoid words – prejudice, discrimination, brotherhood … Give human answers not intellectual answers. Answer with a personal example where possible.”

The impact of the Panel of American Women is difficult to gauge. A *Women’s Day* story reported personal experiences as transformative ones. “For the first time in my protected life,” gushed one participant, “I was meeting people to whom prejudice happened and learning how it affected their children.”[8] One white speaker confessed that “for years she had taken her white Protestant majority privileges for granted; ‘I just never noticed who *wasn’t* there in neighbourhoods, clubs, schools’.”[9] The informal atmosphere allowed people to ask the kind of questions that they might otherwise be afraid to ask, with one African-American panellist being asked, “Where did you learn to speak English so well?”[10] The frank discussion between the panellists and their audiences prompted reflection at the extent of the division between racial and ethnic groups in the United States. One white panellist reflected, “The lesson I learned today was that black people have the same questions as white people, but communication has been nil between the two communities. If we are going to halt

the division of the races, we have to bring black and white together and get people talking to one another."[11] Another participant mused, "It's like throwing a stone into a pool… you don't know where the ripples are going to end. But I do know that we have introduced many middle class white audiences to their first Negro counterparts to whom they can talk. We have made a psychological climate where change is possible."

Personal responses to the work of the Panel of American Women seem to modern readers to reflect a hopeless ignorance and naivety. In fact, they stand as testament to the deep divisions that racial segregation had wrought on American society. While the national leadership of mainstream women's associations acknowledged the need to repudiate racial segregation, they often settled for ringing announcements and meaningless gestures, avoiding any effort to acknowledge or readdress the divisions wrought by segregation by developing programs which facilitated and supported the kind of interracial understanding that the Panel of American Women sought to develop. As a result, their commitment to integration was a shallow one. As civil rights activist and member of both the League and the AAUW, Virginia Foster Durr observed, "You couldn't integrate by saying 'I'm for integration' without doing something about it."[12] The contrasting histories of those associations that "did something about it"—such as WIMS—with those that didn't—the AAUW, the League and the NWCCR offer a salutary story of the impact of unspoken white privilege on institutional forms.

Notes

1. "Dr Tompkins analyses problems of organizational life," 23 June 1960, News release, AAUW Records 1881–1975 (Microfilming Corporation of American New York, 1980), 00698.
2. See Gerald L. Edgar, "*Roberts V. United States Jaycees:* Does the Right of Free Association Imply an Absolute Right of Private Discrimination?" *Utah Law Review* 373 (1986): 373–398.
3. Ibid, 376–377.
4. What's it like to be a Negro, Jew, Catholic or Wasp? *The Kingston Daily Freeman* 9 February 1968, 14.
5. Ibid.
6. "The Negro Role" Guidelines, 1969. Panel of American women papers, file 3, box 2, Western Historical Manuscript Collection, University of Missouri Archives, Kansas City Missouri.

7. The Catholic Role, Guidelines, 1969. Panel of American women papers, file 3, box 2.Western Historical Manuscript Collection, University of Missouri Archives., Kansas City Missouri.
8. "The Panel of American Women" *Women's Day* March 1968.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. Irene McMahon, "Sisters, we are all brothers" *US Catholic Jubille* February 1971, Panel of American Women, Kansas City Branch, Western Historical Manuscripts Collections, Kansas City, Outsized folder.
12. LWV Montgomery Oral History Project, Interview with Virginia Durr by Mary and Louisa Weinrub, 24 May 1989, League of Women Voters of Alabama papers, box 1.

Bibliography

Archives

National Archives for Black Women's History, Mary McLeod Bethune House, Washington DC

National Council of Negro Women papers.
Polly Cowan papers.

Sophia Smith Library, Smith College, Massachusetts

Eleanor Gwinnell Coit papers.
YWCA National Board papers.

Robert Woodruff Library, Emory University, Atlanta Georgia

YWCA of Greater Atlanta papers.
League of Women Voters of DeKalb County papers.
Frances Pauley papers.
Nan Pendergrast papers.
Dorothy Tilly papers.

H. Laville, *Organized White Women and the Challenge of Racial Integration, 1945-1965*, DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-49694-8

Birmingham Public Library, Birmingham Alabama

AAUW of Birmingham papers.
YWCA of Birmingham papers.
Amaranth Club.

Georgia State Archives

AAUW of Georgia papers.

Auburn Library, Auburn Alabama

AAUW of Alabama papers.
LWV of Alabama papers.

John Fitzgerald Kennedy Library, Boston Massachusetts

Papers of JFK, Presidential papers.

Schlesinger library, Radcliffe College, Boston, Massachusetts

Mary S. Ingraham papers.
Dorothy McCullough Lee papers.
Percy Maxim Lee papers.

National Archives, Washington DC

Records of the Women's Bureau.

Library of Congress, Washington DC

League of Women Voters papers.

University of Missouri Archives, Kansas City Missouri

Panel of American Women Papers, (Western Historical Manuscript Collection)

Microfilm Collections

AAUW Records 1881–1975 (Microfilming Corporation of America, New York, 1980)

Student Non-violence Coordinating Committee papers, 1959–1972 (Microfilming Corporation of America, New York., 1982)

Southern Regional Council papers 1944–1968. (University Microfilms International, Ann Arbor 1983)

Articles

Naomi Abrahams, "Negotiating Power, Identity, Family and Community," *Gender and Society* 10 (1996): 768–796.

Kathryn Anderson, "Practicing Feminist Politics: Emily Newell Blair and U.S; Women's Political choices in the early Twentieth Century," *Journal of Women's History* 9:3 (1997): 50–72.

Brent J. Aucion, "The Southern Manifesto and Southern Opposition to Desegregation," *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 55:2 (1996): 173–193.

Nicholas Babchuk and Alan Booth, "Voluntary Association Membership: A Longitudinal Analysis," *American Sociological Review* 34:1 (1969): 31–45.

Tony Badger, "'The Forerunner of Our opposition': Arkansas and the Southern Manifesto of 1956," *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 61:3 (1997): 353–360.

Tony Badger, "Southerners who refused to Sign the Southern Manifesto," *The Historical Journal* 42:2 (1999): 517–534.

Henry E. Barber, "The Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching," *Phylon* 34:4 (1973): 378–387.

Paula C. Barnes, "The Junior League Eleven: Elite Women of Little Rock Struggle for Social Justice," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 57:1 (1998): 46–61.

Bernice McNair Barnett, "Invisible Southern Black Women Leaders in the Civil Rights Movement: The Triple Constraints of Gender, Race and Class," *Gender and Society* 7:2 (1995): 162–182.

Allida M. Black, "Championing a Champion: Eleanor Roosevelt and the Marion Anderson 'Freedom Concert'," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 20:4 (1990): 719–736.

Melissa Estes Blair, "'A Dynamic Force in Our Communities': Women's Clubs and Second-Wave Feminism at the Grassroots," *Frontiers: A Journal of Women's Studies* 30:3 (2009): 30–51.

Judith R. Blau, Charles Heying and Joseph R. Feinberg, "Second-Order Cultural Effects of Civil Rights on Southern Nonprofit organizations: The Atlanta YMCA," *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 25:2 (1996): 174–189.

Mary E. Boyce and Carol Ann Franklin, "From Integration to Racial Justice. Organizational learning in the YWCA," *Journal of Organizational Change Management* 9:5 (1996): 91–101.

Virginia Boynton, "Fighting Racism at the YWCA," *Chicago History Magazine* 29:1 (2000): 22–38.

Dorothea Browder, "A 'Christian Solution of the Labor Situation': How Working Women Reshaped the YWCA's Religious Mission and Politics," *Journal of Women's History* 19:2 (2007): 85–110.

Sarah Hart Brown, "Congressional Anti-Communism and the Segregationist South: From New Orleans to Atlanta 1954–1958," *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 80:4 (1996): 785–816.

Herbert Brownell, "Eisenhower's Civil Rights Program: A Personal Assessment," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 21:2 (1991): 235–242.

Joan C. Browning, "Invisible Revolutionaries: White Women in Civil Rights Historiography," *Journal of Women's History* 8:3 (1996): 186–204.

Richard W. Byrd, "Interracial Cooperation in a Decade of Conflict: The Denton (Texas) Christian Women's Interracial Fellowship," *Oral History Review* 19:1/2 (1991): 31–53.

Rod Clare, "Revisiting 'the Doldrums'. The League of Women Voters in North Carolina in the 1950s," *The North Carolina Historical Review* 86:2 (2009): 180–207.

P. B. Clark and J. Q Wilson, "Incentive system: A theory of organization," *Administrative Science* Quarterly 6 (1961): 129–166.

Elisabeth Clemens, "Organizational Repertoires and Institutional Change: Women's Groups and the Transformation of U.S. Politics, 1890–1920," *American Journal of Sociology* 98:4 (1993): 756–798.

Elisabeth Clemens, "Securing Political Returns to Social Capital: Women's Associations in the United States 1880s–1920s," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 39:4 (1999): 613–638.

Sharlene Voogd Cochrane, "Compelled to Speak: Women Confronting Institutional Racism 1910–1950," *New England Journal of Public Policy* 7:2 (1991): 47– 59.

William E. Cole, "The Role of the Commission on Interracial Co-operation in War and Peace," *Social Forces* 21:4 (1943): 456–463.

Graeme Cope, "'A Thorn in the Side?' The Mothers League of Central High School and the Little Rock Desegregation Crisis of 1957," *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 57:2 (1998): 160–190.

William G. Cornelius, "The County Unit System of Georgia: Facts and Prospects," *The Western Political Quarterly* 14:4 (1961): 942–960.

Nancy Cott, "Feminist Politics in the 1920s. The National Woman's Party," *Journal of American History* 71:1 (1984): 43–68.

Lynda F Dickson, "Toward a Broader Angle of Vision in Uncovering Women's History: Black Women's Clubs Revisited," *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 9:2 (1987): 62–68.

Leslie W. Dunbar, "The Southern Regional Council," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 357:1 (1965): 108–112.

Charles W. Eagles, "Toward New Histories of the Civil Rights Era," *The Journal of Southern History*, 66:4 (2000): 815–848.

Gerald L. Edgar, "*Roberts V. United States Jaycees:* Does the Right of Free Association Imply an Absolute Right of Private Discrimination?" *Utah Law Review* 373 (1986): 373–398.

Sara Evans, "Women's Consciousness and the Southern Black Movement," *Southern Exposure* 4:4 (1964): 10–44.

Glenn Feldmann, "Soft Opposition: Elite Acquiescence and Klan-sponsored Terrorism in Alabama, 1946–1950," *The Historical Journal* 40:3 (1997): 753–777.

Anne Boxberger Flaherty and Carly Hayden Foster, "Gateway to Equality: Desegregation and the American Association of University Women in St Louis, Missouri," *Women's History Review* 24:2 (2015): 191–214.

Cary Fraser, "Crossing the Color Line in Little Rock: The Eisenhower Administration and the Dilemma of Race for U.S. Foreign Policy," *Diplomatic History* 24:2 (2000): 233–264.

Estelle Freedman, "Separatism as Strategy: Female Institution Building and American Feminism 1870–1930," *Feminist Studies* 5:3 (1979): 512–529.

Lorraine Gates, "Power from the Pedestal: The Women's Emergency Committee and the Little Rock Crisis," *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 66:2 (2007): 194–223.

Linda Gordon, "Black and White visions of Welfare: Women's Welfare Activism 1890–1945," *The Journal of American History* 78:2 (1991): 559–590.

Hyman Hacker, "Private Club Memberships. Where does Privacy end and Discrimination begin?" *St John's Law Review* 1:3 (1987): 474–501 http://scholarship.law.stjohns.edu/lawreview/vol61/iss3/5

Jacqueline Dowd Hall, "Second Thoughts: On Writing Feminist Biography," *Feminist Studies* 13:1 (1987): 19–37.

Jacqueline Dowd Hall, "'You must remember this': Autobiography as Social Critique," *Journal of American History* 85:2 (1998): 439–465.

Jacqueline Dowd Hall, "The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past," *Journal of American History* 91:4 (2005): 1233–1263.

Virginia Hein, "The Image of 'A City too Busy to Hate': Atlanta in the 1960s," *Phylon* 33:3 (1977): 205–221.

Darlene Clark Hine, "Black Women's History, White Women's History: The Juncture of Race and Class," *Journal of Women's History* 4:2 (1992): 125–133.

Alton Hornsby Jr, "Black Public Education in Atlanta, Georgia 1954–1973: From Segregation to segregation," *Journal of Negro History* 76:1 (1991): 21–47.

David Alan Horowitz, "White Southerners' Alienation and Civil Rights: The Response to Corporate Liberalism, 1956–1965," *Journal of Southern History* 54:2 (1988): 173–200.

John D. Inazu, "Unsettling 'Well-settled' Law of Freedom of Association," *Connecticut Law Review* 43:1 (2010): 149–208.

Jenny Irons, "The Shaping of Activist Recruitment and Participation: A study of Women in the Mississippi Civil Rights Movement," *Gender and Society* 12:6 (1998): 692–709.

Jordynn Jack and Lucy Massagee, "Ladies and Lynching. Southern Women, Civil Rights, and the Rhetoric of Interracial Cooperation," *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 14:3 (2011): 493–510.

Elizabeth Jacoway, "Down from the Pedestal: Gender and Regional Culture in a Ladylike Assault on the Southern Way of Life," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 56:3 (1997): 345–352.

Joan Maria Johnson, "'Drill into us … the Rebel tradition'. The Contest over Southern Identity in Black and White Women's Clubs in South Carolina, 1898–1930," *Journal of Southern History* 66:3 (2000): 525–562.

Beverly W. Jones, "Mary Church Terrell and the National Association of Colored Women," *The Journal of Negro History* 67:1 (1982): 20–33.

Emma Coleman Jordon, "Crossing the River of Blood Between us: Lynching, Violence, Beauty and the Paradox of Feminist History," *The Journal of Gender, Race and Justice* 3 (1999): 545–580.

William E. Juhnke, "President Truman's Committee on Civil Rights: The Interaction of Politics, Protest and Presidential Advisory Commission," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 19:3 (1989): 593–610.

Michael J. Klarman, "How *Brown* Changed Race Relations: The Backlash Thesis," *The Journal of American History* 81:1 (1994): 81–118.

Michael J. Klarman, "Why Massive resistance?" *University of Virginia School of Law Public and Legal Theory Research Papers*, Working paper no 03–7, accessed October 3, 2012, http://ssrn.com/abstract_id+410062

Irwin Klibaner, "The Travail of Southern Radicals: The Southern Educational Fund 1946–1976," *The Journal of Southern History* 49:2 (1983): 179–202.

Alice G. Knotts, "Methodist Women and Interracial Relations in the 1930s," *Methodist History* 27:4 (1989): 230–240.

Anne Meis Knupfer, "Towards a Tenderer Humanity and a Nobler Womanhood. African-American Women's Clubs in Chicago 1890–1920," *Journal of Women's History* 7:3 (1995): 58–76.

Anne Meis Knupfer, "If you can't Push, Pull, If you can't Pull, Please get out of the Way: The Phyllis Wheatley Club and Home in Chicago 1896–1920," *The Journal of Negro History* 82:2 (1997): 221–231.

James H. Laue and Leon McCorkle Jr, "The Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching: A commentary on the role of the 'Moderate'," *Sociological Inquiry* 35:1 (1965): 80–95.

Kathleen A. Laughlin, Julie Gallager, Doirothy Sue Cobble, Eileen Boris, Premitta Nadasen, Stephanire Gilmore and Leandra Zarnow, "Is it Time to Jump Ship? Historians Rethink the Wave Metaphor," *Feminist Formulations* 22:1 (2010): 76–135.

Helen Laville and Scott Lucas, "Edith Sampson, the NAACP, and African-American identity," *Diplomatic History* 20:4 (1996): 565–590.

Helen Laville, '"If the Time is not right, then it is your job to Ripen the time!' The Transformation of the YWCA in the USA from Segregated Association to Integrated Organization 1930–1965, *Women's History Review,* 15:3 (2006) 359–383.

Helen Laville, "A New Era in Women's International Rights? American Women's Associations and the establishment of the UN Commission on the Status of Women," *Journal of Women's History* 20:4 (2008): 34–56.

Helen Laville, "Women of Conscience" or "Women of Conviction"? The National Women's Committee on Civil Rights', *Journal of American Studies* 43:2, (2009): 277–295.

Janice Leone, "Integrating the American Association of University Women 1946–1949," *The Historian* 51:3 (1989): 423–445.

Gerda Lerner, "Early Community Work of Black Club Women," *The Journal of Negro History* 59:2 (1974): 158–167.

Gerda Lerner, "Black and White Women in Interaction and Confrontation," *Prospects* 2 (1977): 193–208.

Holly J. McCammon, "Out of the Parlours and into the Streets: The Changing tactical Repertoire of U.S. Women's Suffrage Movements," *Social Forces* 81:3 (2003): 787–818.

Audrey Thomas McCluskey, "Multiple Consciousness in the Leadership of Mary McLeod Bethune," *NWSA Journal* 6:1 (1994): 69–81.

Neil R. McMillen, "White Citizen's Council and Resistance to School Desegregation in Arkansas," *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 30:2 (1971): 95–122.

Andrew McNeill, "The Limits to Improving Race Relations in the South: The YMCA Blue Ridge Assembly in the Black Mountain, North Carolina," *North Carolina Historical Review* 86:4 (2009): 404–436.

Benjamin E. Mays, "Atlanta- Living with Brown Twenty Years Later," *The Black Law Journal* 3 (1973): 184–192.

Michael S. Mayer, "With Much Deliberation and Some Speed: Eisenhower and the Brown Decision" *The Journal of Southern History* 52:1 (1986): 43 –76.

Paul E. Mertz, "'Mind Changing time all over Georgia' HOPE inc and School Desegregation 1958–1961," *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 77:1 (1993): 41–61.

Kathryn L. Nasstrom, "'More was Expected of us' The North Carolina League of Women Voters and the Feminist Movement in the 1920s," *The North Carolina Historical Review* 68:3 (1991): 307–319.

Kathryn L. Nasstrom, "'Down to Now': Memory, Narrative and Women's Leadership in the Civil Rights Movement in Atlanta Georgia," *Gender and History* 11:1 (1999): 113–144.

David Oppenheimer, "Kennedy, King, Shuttlesworth and Walker: The Events leading to the Introduction of the Civil Rights Act of 1964" *University of San Francisco Law Review* 29 (2009): 645–679.

Linda M. Perkins, "The National Association of College Women: Vanguard of Black Women's Leadership and Education 1923–1954," *Journal of Education* 172:3 (1990): 65–75.

Thomas F. Pettigrew and Earnest Q. Campbell, "Faubus and Segregation: An Analysis of Arkansas Voting," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 24:3 (1960): 436–447.

Michael Pierce, "Historians of the Central High Crisis and Little Rock's Working Class Whites: A Review Essay," *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 70:4 (2001): 468–483.

Charles Kirk Pilkington, "The Trials of Brotherhood: The Founding of the Commission on Interracial Cooperation," *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 69:1 (1985): 55–80.

Francesca Polletta, "'It was like a Fever…' Narrative and identity in Social Protest," *Social Problems* 45:2 (1998): 137–159.

Kimberly A. Powell, "United in Gender, Divided by Race: Reconstruction of issue and identity by the Association of Southern Women for the prevention of Lynching," *Communication Studies* 46:1 (1995): 34–44.

Kimberly A. Powell, "The Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching: Strategies of a Movement in the Comic Frame," *Communications Quarterly* 43:1 (1995): 86–99.

Linda M. Perkins, "The National Association of College Women: Vanguard of Black Women's Leadership and Education 1923–1954," *Journal of Education* 172:3 (1990): 65–75.

Ronnie L. Podolefsky, "The Illusion of Suffrage: Female Voting Rights and the Women's Poll Tax repeal movement after then Nineteenth Amendment," *Columbia Journal of Gender and Law* 7 (1997–1998): 185–238.

Robert Putnam, "The Strange Disappearance of Civic America," *American Prospect* 34 (1996) 34–48.

Jane Cassels Record, "The Red-Tagging of Negro Protest" *The American Scholar* 26:3 (1957): 325–333.

John Shelton Reed, "An Evaluation of an Anti-lynching Organization," *Social Problems* 16 (1968): 172–182.

Jacqueline Anne Rouse, "Out of the Shadow of Tuskegee: Margaret Murray Washington, Social Activism and Race Vindication," *The Journal of Negro History* 81:1 (1996): 31–64.

Paul Rich, "Female Freemasons: Gender, Democracy and Fraternalism" *Journal of American Culture* 20:1 (1997): 105–110.

Leila Rupp, "'Imagine my Surprise' Women's Relationships in Historical Context," *Frontiers: A Journal of Women's Studies* 5:3 (1980): 61–70.

Linda Rynbradt, "The 'Ladies of the Club' and Carline Bartlett Crane: Affiliation and Alienation in Progressive Social Reform," *Gender and Society* 11:2 (1997): 200–214.

Scott A. Sandage, "A Marble House Divided: The Lincoln Memorial, The Civil Rights Movement and the Politics of Memory 1939–1963," *The Journal of American History* 80:1 (1993): 135–167.

Patricia A. Schechter, "All the intensity of my Nature: Ida B. Wells, Anger and Politics," *Radical History Review* 70 (1998): 48–77.

Terrianne K. Schulte, "Citizen Experts. The League of Women Voters and Environmental Conservation," *Frontiers* 30:3 (2009): 1–29.

Anne Firor Scott, "After Suffrage: Southern Women in the Twenties," *Journal of Southern History* 30:3 (1964): 298–318.

Anne Firor Scott, "Most Invisible of all: Black Women's Voluntary Associations," *Journal of Southern History* 56:1 (1990): 3–22.

Arnold Shankman, "Dorothy Tilly, Civil Rights and the Methodist Church," *Methodist History* 18:2 (1980): 95–108.

Stephanie Shaw, "Black Club Women and the Creation of the National Association of Colored Women," *Journal of Women's History* 3:2 (1991): 11–25.

Harvard Sitkoff, "Harry Truman and the Election of 1948: The Coming of Age of Civil Rights in American Politics," *The Journal of Southern History* 37:4 (1971): 597–616.

Theda Skocpol, "The Tocqueville Problem. Civil Engagement in American Democracy," *Social Science History* 21:4 (1997): 455–479.

Sandra N. Smith, "Charlotte Hawkins Brown," *The Journal of Negro Education* 51:3 (1982): 191–206.

Anne Stefani, "A Dissenting Voice in Alabama: Virginia Foster Durr's Correspondence (1951–68)," *Revue Francais D'Etudes Americaines* 2:120 (2009): 65–78.

Landon R.Y. Storrs, "Red Scare Politics and the Suppression of Popular Front Feminism: The Loyalty Investigation of Mary Dublin Keyserling," *The Journal of American History* 90:2 (2003): 491–524.

Landon R.Y. Storrs, "Attacking the Washington 'Femmocracy': Antifeminism in the Cold War Campaign against 'Communists in Government'," *Feminist Studies* 33:1 (2007): 118–152.

Verta Taylor, "Social Movement Continuity: The Women's Movement in Abeyance," *American Sociological Review* 54:5 (1989): 761–775.

William B. Thomas, "Conservative Currents in Howard Washington Odum's Agenda for Social Reform in Southern Race Relations 1930–1936," *Phylon* 45:2 (1984): 121–134.

Seneca Vaught, "The White Citizen Council of Montgomery, 1955–1958: The Politics of Countermovement, Moral Culture and Civic Bigotry," *Hooks Institute for Social Change* 3:3 (2003).

Kate Weigand, "The Red Menace, The Feminine Mystique and the Ohio Un-American Activities Commission: Gender and Anti-communism in Ohio 1951–1954," *Journal of Women's History* 3:4 (1992): 71–94.

Judith Weisenfield, "The Harlem YWCA and the Secular City 1904–1945," *Journal of Women's History* 6:3 (1994): 62–78.

J. Harvie Wilkinson, "The Supreme Court and Southern School Desegregation 1955–1970: A History and Analysis," *Virginia Law Review* 64:4 (1978): 485–560.

Sarah Wilkerson-Freeman, "The Second Battle for Woman Suffrage: Alabama White Women, the Poll Tax and V.O. Key's Master Narrative of Southern Politics," *The Journal of Southern History* 68:2 (2002): 333–374.

C. Fred Williams, "Class: The Central issue of the 1957 Little Rock School Crisis," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 56:3 (1997): 341–344.

Jan Dolittle Wilson, "Disunity in Diversity: The Controversy over the Admission of Black Women to the General Federation of Women's Clubs 1900–1902," *Journal of Women's History* 23:2 (2011): 39–63.

John Wilson and Marc Musick, "Who Cares? Towards and Integrated Theory of Volunteer Work," *American Sociological Review* 62:5 (1977): 694–713.

James R. Wood, "Personal commitment and Organizational Constraint: Church Officials and Racial Integration," *Sociology of Religion* 33:3 (1972): 142–151.

Jean Fagin Yellin, "DuBois 'Crisis' and Women's Suffrage," *The Massachusetts Review* 14:2 (1973): 365–375.

Louise M. Young, "Women's Place in American Politics: The Historical Perspective," *Journal of Politics* 38 (1976): 295–335.

Books

Karen Anderson, *Little Rock: Race and Resistance at Central High* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2010).

Thomas Appleton, ed., *Searching for their places: Women in the South Across Four Centuries* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2003).

Numan Bartley, *The Rise of Massive Resistance and Politics in the South during the 1950s* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1969), 1999 edition.

Stephanie Bayless, *Obligated to Help: Adolphine Fletcher Terry and the Progressive South* (Arkansas: Butler Center Books, 2011).

David T. Beito, *From Mutual Aid to the Welfare State. Fraternal Societies and Social Services 1890–1967* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

Juliet Bell and Helen Wilkins, *Interracial Practices in the Community YWCA: A Study under the Auspices of the Commission to gather interracial experiences* (New York: National Board of the YWCA, 1944).

Virginia Bernhard, Betty Brandon, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, Theda Perdue, Elizabeth Hayes Turner, eds., *Hidden Histories of Women in the New South* (Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 1994).

Karen J Blair, *The Clubwoman as Feminist; True Womanhood Redefined 1868–1914* (New York: Holmest Meier Publishers, 1980).

Angela Boswell and Judith N. McArthur, *Women Shaping the South. Creating and Confronting Change* (Colombia and London: University of Missouri Press, 2006).

Cherisse Jones Branch, *Crossing the Line: Women's Interracial Activism in South Carolina during and after World War II*, (Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida, 2014).

Taylor Branch, *Parting the Waters. America in the King Years 1954–1963* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988).

Winifred Breines, *The Trouble Between Us: An Uneasy History of White and Black Women in the Feminist Movement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

Vivion Lenon Brewer, *The Embattled Ladies of Little Rock 1958–1963. The Struggle to Save Public Education at Central High* (Fort Bragg, California: Lost Coast Press, 1999).

Carole Stanford Bucy, *Women Helping Women: The YWCA of Nashville 1898–1998* (Nashville: J.S.Sanders and Co., 1998).

Jacqueline Castledine, *Cold War Progressives: Women's Interracial Organizing for Peace and Freedom* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2012).

William Henry Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights: Greensboro, North Carolina and the Black Struggle for Freedom* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1981).

David Chappell, *Inside Agitators: White Southerners in the Civil Rights Movement* (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1994).

David Chappell, *A Stone of Hope, Prophetic Religion and the Death of Jim Crow.* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

Jeffrey A. Charles, *Service Clubs in American Society: Rotary, Kiwanis and Lions* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993).

Catherine Clinton, ed., *Half Sisters of History: Southern Women and the American Past* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1994).

Janet L Coryell, Martha H Swain, Sandra Gioia Treadway and Elizabeth Hayes Turner, eds., *Beyond Image and Convention* (Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 1998).

Karen L. Cox, *Dixie's Daughters The United Daughters of the Confederacy* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003).

Paul Cowan, *The Making of an Un-American* (New York: Viking, 1970).

Vicki Crawford, Jacqueline Anne Rouse and Barbara Woods, eds., *Women in the Civil Rights Movement 1941–1965* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993).

Jane Dailey, Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore and Bryant Simon, eds., *Jumpin' Jim Crow. Southern Politics from Civil War to Civil Rights* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2000).

Robert Dallek, *John F Kennedy. An Unfinished Life 1917–1963* (London: Penguin, 2003).

Rebecca H. Dartt, *Women Activists in the Fight for Georgia School Desegregation 1958–1961* (Jefferson, North Carolina and London: McFarland and Co. Inc., 2008).

John Dittner, *Local People. The Struggle of Civil Rights in Mississippi* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1995).

Kate Dossett, *Bridging Race Divides: Black Nationalism, Feminism and Integration in the United States 1896–1935* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2008).

Mary Dudziak, *Cold War, Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2000).

Anthony P. Dunbar, *Against the Grain. Southern Radicals and Prophets 1929–1959* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1981).

Virginia Durr, Hollinger F. Barnard, ed., *Outside the Magic Circle: The Autobiography of Virginia Foster Durr* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1985).

John Egerton, *Speak Now Against the Day: The Generation before the Civil Rights Movement in the South* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1995).

Linda Eisenmann, *Higher Education for Women in Post-war America 1945–1965* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2007).

Dorothy May Emerson, *Standing Before Us. Unitarian Universalist Women and Social Reform 1776–1936* (Boston: Skinner House Books, 1999).

Glenn T. Eskew, *But for Birmingham* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1997).

Sara Evans, *Personal Politics. The Roots of Women's Liberation in the Civil Rights and the New Left* (New York: Random House, 1979).

Adam Fairclough, *Better Day Coming. Blacks and Racial Equality 1890–2000* (New York: Penguin Books, 2002).

Crystal N. Feinster, *Southern Horrors: Women and the Politics of Rape and Lynching* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2009).

Glenn Feldman, ed., *Politics and Religion in the White South* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2005).

Myra Marx Ferree and Patricia Yancy Martin, *Feminist Organizations* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995).

Abbott L. Ferriss, *Indicators of Trends in the Status of Women* (New York: Russell Sage, 1971).

Tracey A. Fitzgerald, *The National Council of Negro Women and the Feminist movement 1935–1975* (Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, 1985).

Catherine Fosl, *Subversive Southerner. Anne Braden and the Struggle for Racial Justice in the Cold War South* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002).

Dennis B. Fradin and Judith Bloom Fradin, *Fight on! Mary Church Terrell's Battle for Integration* (New York: Clarion Books, 2003).

Judith Bloom Fradin and Dennis B Fradin, *The Power of One: Daisy Bates and the Little Rock Nine* (New York: Clarion Books, 2004).

Ruth Frankenberg, *White Women: Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness* (London: Routledge, 1993).

Jo Freeman, *One Room at a Time: How Women Entered into Party Politics* (Langham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000).

Russell Freedman, *The Voice that Challenged a Nation: Marion Anderson and the Struggle for Equal Rights* (New York: Clarion Books, 2004).

Paula Giddings, *When and Where I Enter. The Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America* (New York: Bantam Books, 1985).

Michele Gillespie and Catherine Clinton, eds., *Taking off the White Gloves: Southern Women and Women Historians* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1998).

David R. Goldfield, *Black White and Southern. Race relations and Southern Culture 1940 to the Present* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1990).

Robert Justin Goldstein, ed., *Little 'Red Scares': Anti- Communism and Political Repression in the United States* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2014).

Sondra Gordy, *Finding the Lost Year. What Happened when Little Rock Closed its Public Schools* (Fayetteville: The University of Arkansas Press, 2009).

Christina Greene, *Our Separate Ways: Women and the Black Freedom Movement in Durham, North Carolina* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2005).

Jacqueline Dowd Hall, *Revolt against Chivalry: Jessie Daniel Ames and the Women's Campaign Against Lynching* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979).

Joyce Ann Hanson, *Mary McLeod Bethune and Black Women's Political Activism* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2003).

Sharon Harley and Rosalyn Terborg-Penn, eds., *The Afro-American Woman: Struggles and Images* (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1978; reprinted ed., Baltimore, MD: Black Classic Press, 1997).

Cynthia Harrison, *On Account of Sex: The Politics of Women's Issues 1945–1968* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).

Anna L. Harvey, *Votes without Leverage: Women in American Electoral Politics 1920–1970* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

Debbie Z Harwell, *Wednesdays in Mississippi. Proper Ladies working for Radical Change, Freedom Summer 1964* (Oxford: University of Mississippi Press, 2014).

Joanne V. Hawks and Shelia L. Skemp, eds., *Sex, Race and the Role of Women in the South,* (Jackson: University of Mississippi, 1983).

M.J. Heal, *American Anti-Communism: Combatting the Enemy within 1830–1970.* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1995).

Dorothy Height, *Open Wide the Freedom Gates* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2003).

Nancy Hewitt, *Southern Discomfort: Women's Activism in Tampa, Florida, 1880s –1920* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993).

Nancy Hewitt and Susan Lebsock, *Visible Women: New essays in American Activism* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993).

Ruth Edmunds Hill, ed., *The Black Women Oral History Project* vol 5, (Westport, London: Meckler, 1991).

Daniel Horowitz, *Betty Friedan and the Making of The Feminine Mystique. The American left, the Cold War and Modern Feminism* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1998).

Elizabeth Huckaby, *Crisis at Central High: Little Rock 1957–1958* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1980).

John C Inscoe, ed., *Georgia in Black and White: Explorations in the Race Relations of a Southern State 1865–1950* (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 1994).

Elizabeth Jacoway and David R Colburn, eds., *Southern Businessmen and Desegregation* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1982).

Elizabeth Jacoway, *Turn Away Thy Son. Little Rock, The Crisis that Shocked the Nation* (New York: Free Press, 2007).

David K Johnson, *The Lavender Scare: The Cold War Persecution of Gays and Lesbians in the Federal Government* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

Eugenia Kaledin, *American Women in the 1950s -Mothers and More* (Boston: G.K.Hall and Company, 1984).

Linda Kerber, Alice Kessler-Harris and Kathryn Kish Sklar, eds., *U.S. History as Women's History: New Feminist Essays* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1995).

Alice G. Knotts, *Fellowship of Love. Methodist Women Changing American Racial Attitudes 1920–1968* (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1996).

Kevin M. Kruse, *White Flight. Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

Matthew Lassiter and Andrew Lewis, eds., *The Moderate's Dilemma: Massive Resistance to School Desegregation in Virginia* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1998).

Kathleen A. Laughlin and Jacqueline L. Castledine, eds., *Breaking the Wave: Women their Organizations and Feminism 1945–1985* (London: Routledge, 2011).

Kathleen A Laughlin, *Women's Work and Public Policy: A History of the Women's Bureau, US Department of Labor 1945–1970* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2000).

Helen Laville, *Cold War Women. The International activities of American women's Associations* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2002).

Susan Levine, *Degrees of Equality. The American Association of University Women and the Challenge of Twentieth Century Feminism* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995).

Susan Levine, *School Lunch Politics. The Surprising History of America's favourite Welfare Programme* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2008).

Peter Ling and Sharon Montieth, eds., *Gender and the Civil Rights Movement* (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1999).

Judy Barrett Litoff and David Clayton Smith, eds., *What Kind of World do we want? American Women Plan for Peace,* (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources Inc., 2000).

Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider* (Berkeley: The Crossing Press, 1984).

Susan Lynn, *Progressive Women in Conservative Times: Radical Justice, Peace and Feminism 1945 to the 1960s* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1992).

Manning Marable, *Race, reform and Rebellion. The Second Reconstruction and Beyond in Black America, 1945 – 2006* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2007 (3rd ed.).

John Patrick McDowell, *The Social Gospel in the South. The Woman's Home Mission Movement in the Methodist Episcopal Church South 1886–1939* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1982).

Erik McDuffie, *Sojourning for Freedom: Black Women, American Communism and the Making of Black Left Feminism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).

Danielle L. McGuire and John Dittmer, eds., *Freedom Rights. New Perspectives on the Civil Rights Movement* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2011).

Danielle L. McGuire, *At the Dark End of the Street. Black Women, Rape and Resistance. A New History of the Civil Rights Movement from Rosa Parks to the Rise of Black Power.* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 2010).

Neil McMillen, *The Citizen's Councils: Organized Resistance to the Second Reconstruction* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994).

Diane McWhorter, *Carry Me Home: Birmingham, Alabama: The Climatic Battle of the Civil Rights Revolution* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2001).

Joanne Meyerowitz, ed., *Not June Cleaver: Women and Gender in Postwar America 1945–1960* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994).

Nina Mjagkij, *Light in the Darkness: African-Americans and the YMAC 1852–1946* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1994).

Nina Mjagkij and Margaret Spratt, eds., *Men and Women Adrift. The YMCA and the YWCA in the City* (New York: New York University Press, 1997).

Charles Morgan, *A Time to Speak* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964).

Tiyi M Morris, *Womanpower Unlimited and the Black Freedom Struggle in Mississippi* (Athens and London: The University of Georgia Press, 2015).

Sara Alderman Murphy, *Breaking the Silence: Little Rock's Women's Emergency Committee to Open our Schools, 1958–1963* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1997).

Gail S. Murray, ed., *Throwing off the Cloak of Privilege. White Southern Women Activists in the Civil Rights Era* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2004).

Kathryn L. Nasstrom, *Everybody's Grandmother and Nobody's Fool. Frances Freeborn Pauley and the Struggle for Social Justice* (Ithica and London: Cornell University Press, 2000).

Louise Newman, *White Women's Rights* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

Mark Newman, *Getting Right With God. Southern Baptists and Desegregation 1945–1995* (Tuscaloosa and London: University of Alabama Press, 2001).

Kim E. Nielsen, *Un-American Womanhood: Antiradicalism, Anti-feminism and the First Red Scare* (Columbus: The Ohio State Press, 2001).

Lynne Olson, *Freedom's Daughters: The Unsung Heroines of the Civil Rights Movement from 1830–1970* (New York: Touchstone, 2001).

Ted Ownby, ed., *The Role of Ideas in the Civil Rights South* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2002).

Sara Mitchell Parsons, *From Southern Wrongs to Civil Rights: The Memoir of a White Civil Rights Activist,* (Tuscaloosa, Alabama: The University of Alabama Press, 2000).

James T. Patterson. *Brown Vs Board of Education. A Civil Rights Milestone and its Troubled Legacy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

Anne Payne, Martha Swain and Marjorie Julian Spruill, eds., *Mississippi Women: Their Histories, Their Lives* Vol 2 (Athens and London: The University of Georgia Press, 2010).

James P Pfiffner and Roger H. Davidson, eds., *Understanding the Presidency* (New York: Longman, 1997).

Kasey S. Pipes, *Ike's Final Battle. The Road to Little Rock and the Challenge of Equality* (Los Angeles: World Ahead Media, 2007).

Melinda Plastas, *A Band of Noble Women; Racial Politics in the Women's Peace Movement* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2011).

Liston Pope, *The Kingdom Beyond Caste* (New York: Friendship Press, 1957).

Walter Powell and Elisabeth S. Clemens, *Private Action and the Public Good* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

Fred Powledge, *Free at Last? The Civil Rights Movement and the People who Made it* (New York and London: HaperPerennial, 1991).

Florence J. Radcliffe, *A Simple Matter of Justice. The Phyllis Wheatley YWCA Story* (Florida: Exposition Press of Florida Inc., 1985).

Beth Ray, *Bitters in the Honey. Tales of Hope and Disappointment across Divides of Race and Time* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1999).

Christine L Ridarsky and Mary M Huth, eds., *Susan B Anthony and the Struggle for Equal Rights* (Rochester, New York: University of Rochester Press, 2012).

Louise S. Robbins, *The Dismissal of Miss Ruth Brown: Civil Rights, Censorship and the American Library* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2000).

Nancy Marie Robertson, *Christian Sisterhood, Race Relations and the YWCA 1906–46* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2007).

Jeff Roche, *Restructured Resistance. The Sibley Commission and the Politics of Desegregation in Georgia* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1998).

Kim Lacy Rogers, *Righteous Lives: Narratives of the New Orleans Civil Rights Movement.* (New York and London: New York University Press, 1997).

Renee C. Romano and Leigh Raiford, eds., *The Civil Rights Movement in American Memory* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2006).

Doug Rossinow, *Visions of Progress. The Left-Liberal tradition in America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008).

Jacqueline Anne Rouse, *Lugenia Burns Hope: Black Southern Reformer* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1994).

Vicki L. Ruiz and Ellen Carol DuBois, eds., *Unequal Sisters: An Inclusive Reader in US Women's History* (4th edition, New York: Routledge, 2008).

Leila J Rupp and Verta Taylor, *Survival in the Doldrums: The American Women's Rights Movement 1945 to the 1960s* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).

Dothory Sabiston and Margaret Hiller, *Toward Better Race Relations* (New York: The Woman's Press, 1949).

Debra L. Schultz, *Going South. Jewish Women in the Civil Rights Movement* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2001).

Anne Firor Scott, *Natural Allies. Women's Associations in American History* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993).

Wendy B. Sharer, *Vote and Voice. Women's Organizations and Political Literary 1915–1930* (Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 2004).

Sheila L. Skemp and Joanne V Hawkes, *Sex, Race and the Role of Women in the South* (Oxford: University Press of Mississippi, 1983).

Theda Skocpol, *Diminished Democracy. From membership to management in American Civic Life* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2004).

Theda Skocpol and Morris P. Fiorina, eds., *Civic Engagement in American Democracy* (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 1999).

Sarah Slavin, *U.S. Women's Interest Groups: Institutional Profiles* (Santa Barbara, California: Greenwood Publishing, 1995).

Paul M. Sniderman, Phillip E Tetlock and Edward G Carmines, eds., *Prejudice Politics and the American Dilemma* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993).

Jason Sokol, *There Goes My Everything: White Southerners in the Age of Civil Rights 1945–1975* (New York: Vintage Books, 2007).

Lorraine Nelson Spritzer and Jean B. Bergmark, *Grace Towns Hamilton and the Politics of Southern Change: An African-American Woman's Struggle for Racial Equality* (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 1997).

Patricia Sullivan, *Freedom Writer. Virginia Foster Durr, Letters from the Civil Rights Years* (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 2006).

Mary Stanton, *Journey towards Justice. Juliette Hampton Morgan and the Montgomery Bus Boycott* (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 2006).

Barbara Stuhler, ed., *For the Public Record: A Documentary History of the League of Women Voters* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2000).

Amy Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace: Traditional Motherhood and Radical Politics in the 1960s* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1993).

Rosalyn Terborg-Penn, *African-American Women in the Struggle for the Vote 1850–1920* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1998).

Jeanne Theoharis and Komozi Woodard, eds., *Groundwork. Local Black Freedom Movements in America* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2005).

Louise Tilly and Patricia Gurin, eds., *Women, Politics and Change* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1990).

G.N. Tuck, *Beyond Atlanta. The Struggle for Racial Equality in Georgia 1940–1980* (Athens and London: The University of Georgia Press, 2001).

Elizabeth Hayes Turner, *Women and Gender in the New South* (Wheeling: Harlan Davison, 2009).

Pamela Tyler, *Silk Stockings and Ballot Boxes. Women and Politics in New Orleans, 1920–1965* (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 1996).

Anders Walker, *The Ghost of Jim Crow: How Southern Moderates used Brown vs Board of Education to Stall the Civil Rights Movement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

Susan Ware, *Beyond Suffrage: Women in the New Deal.* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1987).

Clive Webb, ed., *Massive Resistance. Southern Opposition to the Second Reconstruction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

Althea Webb, *The Limits of interracial sisterhood: The Phyllis Wheatley Branch of the Louisville YWCA* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2008).

Kate Weigand, *Red Feminism: American Communism and the Making of Women's Liberation* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2001).

Judith Weisenfeld, *African-American Women and Christian Activism: New York's Black YWCA 1905–1945* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1998).

Marjorie Spruill Wheeler, *New Women of the New South: The Leaders of the Women's Suffrage Movement in the Southern States* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

Deborah Gray White, *Too Heavy a Load. Black Women in Defense of Themselves 1894–1994.* (New York and London: W.W. Norton, 1999).

Booby M Wilson, *Race and Place in Birmingham: The Civil Rights Neighbourhood Movements* (London: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000).

Jeff Woods, *Black Struggle, Red Scare: Segregation and Anti-communism in the South 1948–1968* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 2004).

C. Vann Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974). (Third Edition).

Louise M. Young, *In the Public Interest. The League of Women Voters 1920–1970* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1989).

Dissertations

Kayla Foster, "We Cannot be Still: The Story of Claudia Saunders" (MA diss., College of Charleston, 2008).

Cherisee Renee Jones, "Repairers of the Breach: Black and White Women and Racial Activism in South Carolina 1940s–1960s" (PhD diss., Ohio State University, 2003).

Abigail Sara Lewis, "'The Barriers Breaking Love of God': the Multiracial Activism of the Young Women's Christian Association, 1940s to 1970s" (PhD diss., Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, 2008).

Mary Swerson Miller, "Lobbyists for the People: The League of Women Voters of Alabama 1920–1973." (MA diss., Auburn University, 1978).

Laura A Miller, "'At Any Rate': Irene Gaston Samuel and the Life of a Southern Liberal." (MA diss., University of Arkansas at Little Rock, 1990).

Mary Jane Smith, "Constructing Womanhood in Public: Progressive White Women in a New South" (PhD diss., Louisiana State University, 2002).

Althea Webb, "The Limits of Interracial sisterhood: The Phyllis Wheatley Branch of the Louisville YWCA" (PhD diss., University of Kentucky, 2008).

Kate Wilkinson, "A Sociological analysis of an Action Group: Wednesdays in Mississippi" (MA diss., University of Mississippi, 1966).

Web Sites

Southern Women and Race Co-operation: A story of the Memphis Conference October 6–7, 1920. Electronic edition. http://docsouth.unc.edu/nc/racecoop/racecoop.html accessed 10 May 2011.

Wednesdays in Mississippi website. http://www2.vcdh.virginia.edu/WIMS/ accessed 12 November 2008.

Radio Broadcast: Wednesdays in Mississippi Broadcast 20 April 2001, 'Public Interest with Kojo Nnomdi, WAMU http://www.wamu.org/pi/show/piarc_020121.html accessed 23 March 2011

Will the Circle be Unbroken? A Personal History of the Civil Rights Movement in Five Southern Communities. Episode 23; 'Crow and Molasses.' http://unbrokencircle.org/scripts23.htm

Will the Circle be Unbroken? A Personal History of the Civil Rights Movement in Five Southern Communities. Episode 14: 'The Lost Year. Little Rock Arkansas' http://unbrokencircle.org/scripts14.htm

Oral Histories

Virginia Foster Durr, 13, 14, 15, March 1975, G-0023-1, Southern oral History Programme Collection #4007, available online http://docsouth.unc.edu/sohp/G-0023-1/G-0023-1.html accessed 15 December 2012.

Grace Towns Hamilton, 19 July 1974, Interview G-0026, Southern Oral History Project, #4007, http://docsouth.unc.edu/sohp/G-0026/menu.html

Pat House, Oral History Research office, Columbia University, 1972.
Frances Pauley, by Cliff Kuhn, 11 April and 3 May 1988, Georgia Government Documentation Project, Special Collections, Pullen Library, Georgia State University, Atlanta Georgia.
Frances Pauley, by Jacqueline Hall, 18 July 1974, Interview G-oo46, Southern Oral History program Collection #4007, Documenting the American South. available online http://docsouth.unc.edu/sohp/G-0046/G-0046.html
Nan Pendergrast, by Kathryn Nasstrom, Georgia Government Documentation Project, Series J. William Pullen Library, Atlanta, Georgia.
Esther Peterson, by Scott Bruns, Oral History Research office, Columbia University, 1986.
Irene Samuels, 30 December 1970, Little Rock, Columbia University Oral History Collection, Part IV, no. 175. Eisenhower Administration project. (Microfilming Corporation of American 1974) Vol 5, Edited by Ruth Edmonds Hill, (Meckler, Westport, London, 1991).
Thelma Stevens, 13 February 1972, Interview G-0058, Southern Oral History Project #4007, http://docsouth.unc.edu/sohp/G-0058/G-0058.html
Anna Lord Strauss *The Reminiscences of Miss Anna Lord Strauss* (Oral History Research Office, Columbia University).
Josephine Wilkins, 1972. Interview G-0063. Southern Oral History Program Collection (#4007) in the Southern Oral History Program Collection, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.
The Black Women Oral History Project Vol 5, Ed Ruth Edmonds Hill, (Meckler Westport, London, 1991).

Index

H. Laville, *Organized White Women and the Challenge of Racial Integration, 1945-1965*, DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-49694-8