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series editors
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Before Brown Civil Rights and White Backlash in the Modern South

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Communism, Anti-Communism, and Massive Resistance

The Civil Rights Congress in Southern Perspective

Sarah Hart Brown

You who laid old Hitler low—
Don't be scared of old Bilbo.
Just like Hitler's friend, Tojo,
Bilbo, too, has got to go!

Civil Rights Congress rhyme, 1946¹

THE RETURN OF black soldiers who had "laid old Hitler low" clearly brought new spirit and energy to the fight against Jim Crow; confidence after the victory even encouraged some liberal white southerners to envision a coming revolution in race relations. But as the country's wartime rapprochement with the Soviet Union cooled and the Iron Curtain descended, idealistic expectations about a brave new postwar world became suspect and increasingly vulnerable. Segregationists in Congress, like the Mississippi senator referred to in the ditty above, suffered few qualms when Americans whom they considered "radicals" labeled them fascist or compared them to Hitler and Tojo.

On the other hand, when southern politicians labeled their liberal and leftist opponents "Communists" their epithets often hit easy marks. In the 1930s white supremacists vilified the Left, especially Communists, for such iconoclasm as advocacy of integrated unions for steelworkers and sharecroppers. A Communist-led legal organization, the International Labor Defense, publicized race-based southern justice during the prolonged trials of the famous "Scottsboro boys" rape cases, and although the party never enrolled large numbers of southerners, individual Communists enlisted in almost every southern campaign against racism and poverty. During the same period, Communists invented the term "popular front" to characterize alliances of the liberal center and the Left constituted to accomplish common goals.

Southern coalitions that developed in the 1930s included the South-

ern Conference for Human Welfare (SCHW, 1938–48), a nationwide reform movement supported by the Roosevelt administration and led by southern liberal politicians and social activists, but including a few Communists; and the Southern Negro Youth Congress (SNYC, 1937–48), an alliance of southern young people led by dedicated members of the Communist Party.² While the philosophical underpinnings of these two groups differed, their work on the ground had great similarities and included interests in voting rights, labor organization, and race relations. Though often very fragile unions, popular front alliances like SCHW and SNYC presented a public facade of left-liberal harmony in the years before and during the war. But southern popular front groups were early casualties of the cold war and a rising fear of racial change; these two groups thrived until 1948, when both died in a swirl of rumor and accusation, spurned by both center liberals and conservatives. By the late 1940s the idea that left-wing reformers had ulterior motives had become accepted gospel in the South; mass-action campaigns and protests added substance and fire to the claims of southern politicians and journalists that these crusaders bred un-American ideas. Anti-communism became not only a useful political tool for southern candidates but a respectable shield against changes in "the southern way of life." For at least a decade after the end of World War II—and beyond that period, though with gradually declining effectiveness outside the South—anti-communism served white supremacists well.

The Civil Rights Congress (CRC) was established in 1946, just as the Red Scare took wing and the influence of popular front groups like SCHW and SNYC reached a brief postwar high. Beyond all other leftist challengers, the CRC measured up to southern segregationists' expectations about the subversive nature of civil rights agitation. David Caute, an early scholar of postwar anti-communism, characterized the organization as a legal defense and advocacy group whose causes "were invariably the Party's causes," and evidence suggests that the CRC's leaders maintained close personal, if not institutional, ties to the Communist Party. Created from a merger of the International Labor Defense, the National Negro Congress, and the National Federation for Constitutional Liberties, the CRC existed under pressure from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and other federal agencies until 1956, when the Subversive Activities Control Board finally forced its dissolution. Its major legal cases involved either the defense of Communists (most famously the defense of eleven Communist Party leaders in the Foley Square Smith Act trials of 1949) or the defense of blacks indicted under questionable circumstances, especially rape cases.³

In *We Cry Genocide*, an extraordinary volume about lynching in America, the founders of the CRC called southern apartheid part of a "consistent, conscious policy of every branch of the [U.S.] government," the goal of which was repression of dissent and protection of profits for a capitalist elite.⁴ To change the South and the nation, the CRC instituted a three-pronged program. First and continually, propaganda campaigns highlighted the indecency and injustice of the South's race-based society. In 1946, as a part of its first major southern crusade, the CRC invented the poetic indictment of Theodore G. Bilbo, the outlandish racist senator from Mississippi, recorded at the beginning of this essay. Just before it succumbed to pressure from the U.S. government and ceased operation in 1956, the organization sponsored the painstakingly documented *Genocide*, which it presented to the United Nations with great fanfare. In between, numerous, sometimes worldwide campaigns enlisted support for victims of Jim Crow justice. These efforts linked to the second part of the CRC's southern program, involvement in court cases, primarily those judged to be "legal lynchings." Sometimes the CRC provided lawyers and legal advice to defendants. When this option retreated in the face of local counsel or because attorneys of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) took responsibility, the CRC participated primarily as an instrument of propaganda, shining light on proceedings and treatment of prisoners and inviting public pressure and criticism. On the ground as cases progressed, working lawyers—even those hired by the CRC—occasionally saw this as helpful but often found it an irritant or worse. Lawyers laboring within the system to free their clients, especially in the South, sometimes complained that the appearance of outside interference, especially pressure from northern or leftist agitators, damaged their chances. Dissension between the CRC and its natural allies in the NAACP and other liberal civil rights organizations often resulted from such disagreements. The third prong of CRC southern strategy is the least known. Throughout the organization's ten-year history its leaders labored to establish local CRC branches, southern groups to help generate support for its legal and publicity efforts. While three local chapters experienced short-lived success, the combination of anti-communism and white supremacy, a lethal antidote to leftist (even liberal) organizing in the postwar South, largely defeated this effort in the region. This essay considers the CRC's ten-year drive to change the South—its publicity crusades, its branches, and the cases it championed—and attempts to assess its southern legacy.

Although the SCHW and SNYC had enlisted southern leadership,

with a few very notable exceptions the CRC's leaders were African Americans or Jews from the North and West (even if they lived in the South), and most of them were Communists.⁵ Fund-raising efforts by well-known left-wing celebrities and gifts from institutions such as the Robert Marshall and Field Foundations sustained the CRC's southern work as well as its civil liberties and civil rights efforts outside the South. William Patterson, born in the San Francisco area in 1890 and a graduate of the Hastings Law School of the University of California, headed the CRC from the late 1940s through the mid-1950s. The son of an immigrant from St. Lucia but on his mother's side grandson of a Virginia slave and her white master, Patterson had been involved in left-wing causes since World War I and a member of the Communist Party since 1926. He had worked on the Sacco and Vanzetti case in the 1920s and the Scottsboro trials in the 1930s. In its varied and very persuasive literature, CRC leaders always maintained that a politically diverse group of supporters created and sustained the organization, that its only interest lay in protecting constitutionally guaranteed civil rights and liberties, and that it was neither led nor controlled by the Communist Party. But both the political lineage of the chairman and of several members of the national staff and the sources of the CRC's funding point to a close, if unofficial, alliance with the party.⁶

Sometimes the statements of Chairman Patterson and his staff seemed designed not only to instruct their natural constituency but to shock conservative anti-Communists and centrist liberals alike. They never ignored the propaganda potential of their cases. In 1950 CRC members led a successful national campaign for Lieutenant Leon Gilbert, a twice-wounded World War II veteran sentenced to death for refusal to obey an order in Korea. After President Truman commuted Gilbert's sentence the organization issued a celebratory press release, but the writer of the CRC document still lamented that in his court-martial "Lt Gilbert was a victim of the government's criminal policy of Jim Crow," and criticized Truman's sentence of "twenty years at hard labor" as "an act of hypocrisy only a little less infamous than previous attempts to execute this Negro officer." Later, as CRC members lobbied for the lieutenant's early release, another CRC bulletin asserted that "What is needed in every city and town . . . is the unity of the Negro people, unity of Negro and white workers, unity of Negro and progressive white Americans. . . . Jim Crow can be smashed, the thought-control Smith Act repealed, and the Bill of Rights preserved."⁷ Patterson frequently asserted that black Americans should be taught to understand American racism as a systemic problem: "I think no opportunity

should be missed where the Negro people could be shown the effort made by high places to freeze them in a secondary category," he wrote to John Moreno Coe, a white attorney from Pensacola, Florida. He added that he did not believe the case being litigated for the CRC by Coe (or any case involving discriminatory southern justice) to be "an ordinary criminal case" but rather a highly political matter. Those associated with such cases had an obligation to make injustices known to "Negro youth in particular," he wrote to Coe. "The courts," he believed, "are not neutral . . . the courts are agents of reaction."⁸

The CRC's "Oust Bilbo" campaign surely reflected what white supremacists called "the party line," that is, a view subversive to southern custom and segregationist law that they linked to Soviet Communism and American treason. Despite the fact that the little rhyme's target had become an embarrassment to many in his own party (including many southern Democrats), the "southern white supremacy = fascism" equation it proclaimed made the "Oust Bilbo" campaign a red flag. At a time when, as Numan Bartley has said, "the very word *liberal* had disappeared from the southern political lexicon, except as a term of opprobrium," radical sentiments like those expressed by Patterson and public campaigns against entrenched southern politicians, even Bilbo, seemed tailor made for exploitation by supporters of the antebellum status quo.⁹

Despite the confusions about policy and control as the Communist Party mutated from "party" to "association" and back again in 1945 and 1946, it remained clear to both blacks and whites that southern Communists and their allies were uniquely willing to organize and fight publicly against inequality and injustice. In addition, a review of the CRC's activities and accomplishments would indicate to most observers that its leaders illustrated genuine interest in the legal, social, and economic issues involved in the cases they undertook and real concern about the personal welfare of their oppressed and underserved constituency. In other words, the CRC's agenda was not merely or exclusively political, and few poor southerners expressed concern to the anti-Bilbo campaigners of 1946 about whether American Communists followed Moscow's line or, as was frequently charged, "used" black followers or poor workers for their own purposes. At the first meeting of the Texas CRC, Colonel Roscoe Conklin Simmons "warned against being influenced by name-calling. 'If you believe in liberty, they call you a Communist,' he said; 'Anything that will free me, that's what I am.' Obviously Communists saw African Americans as potential revolutionary workers and racial discrimination as fodder for anti-establishment

propaganda; still, they expressed concern about civil rights issues in times and places when others were silent. Economic intimidation and outright terrorism always limited the public activities of the CRC's potential allies, but their experiences also endowed black southerners with a real appreciation of the risks taken by the small band of "outside agitators" who came to labor in the South.¹⁰

Although few southerners enlisted openly as workers for the CRC, opposition to Bilbo had long been a popular cause among black Mississippians, and, in fact, among African Americans and white liberals North and South. First elected in 1935, the senior senator from Mississippi issued campaign harangues containing some of the most toxic racial oratory in the annals of American politics. Especially during and just after World War II, Bilbo, like some other southerners in Congress, found race-baiting very useful for the maintenance of his political position. According to biographer Chester M. Morgan, despite Bilbo's early and earnest support for the New Deal, his "infamy as the 'archangel of white supremacy' was richly deserved." As incitements to violence and intimidation, few public statements surpass his well-known assertion that "the way to keep the nigger from the polls is to see him the night before." He filibustered against the Fair Employment Practices Commission (FEPC), berated the liberal press, targeted "old lady Roosevelt, Harold Ickes and Hank Wallace, together with all the Negroes, Communists, negro lovers and advocates of social equality who poured out their slime and money in Mississippi," and wrote a tract Morgan calls a "volatile defense of white supremacy": *Take Your Choice: Separation or Mongrelization*.¹¹ In the year after the Allied victory against Hitler and his "friend Tojo," Bilbo's bigotry conspicuously echoed not only the designers of the "Mississippi Plan" to disfranchise and segregate blacks in the 1890s but the ideas of the recently defeated fascist foes themselves. The CRC's leaders highlighted these similarities in their campaign literature.

They found willing allies for the 1946 "Oust Bilbo" campaign among SNYC leaders who had been working as organizers in Birmingham since the late 1930s. During World War II, Esther Cooper Jackson and Louis Burnham had promoted a Double V campaign, led voter-registration drives in concert with the NAACP and other groups, monitored FEPC hearings, and continued their local work for racial justice. "Most black Communists," Robin Kelley asserts, "believed the war would inevitably alter Jim Crow in the South," but "they also understood—better than the national Party leadership—that change would not happen by itself."¹²

When Tennessean Laurent Franz, a recent University of North Carolina student and now the southern organizer for the fledgling CRC, came to call on the Birmingham activists in 1946, they had already formed a political agenda for that election year. Reflecting their youthful optimism about the future, SNYC leaders made a voter-registration campaign aimed at black veterans their first order of business after the war. The organization joined the NAACP, the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) Political Action Committee, and the new state committees of the SCHW in "a loose regional confederation to promote the democratization of southern politics." When it began work in Mississippi, SNYC's drive to increase the vote joined the CRC's simultaneous campaign to defeat Senator Bilbo.¹³

In September, Franz (who, like SNYC's leaders, had become a Communist while in college) reported from Mississippi about efforts to influence the Senate against Bilbo. Although realistically he did not believe mass meetings or sending large delegations of black Mississippians to Washington would be possible, Franz hoped that by "working through the national organizations which have Negro membership in Mississippi, working through the Negro churches, and keeping up a well-planned campaign in the Negro press nationally" the CRC could produce petitions and resolutions "urging the Senate to act on the complaint already filed." He intended to print postcards to be signed by black Mississippians and forwarded to important senators. Franz's plan to reach the hearts and minds of black Americans through their own organizations and the black press and to generate a mass lobby effort with supporting publicity aimed at affecting official action would be typical of CRC advocacy organizing over the next ten years, whether the matter at hand was saving one beleaguered defendant or appealing to Congress or the United Nations.¹⁴

The CRC's broadly based National Committee to Oust Bilbo also sent attorney Emmanuel Block and others into Mississippi to collect depositions about Bilbo's depredations,¹⁵ "his corruption, his warm ties with the Ku Klux Klan, and the fiendish tactics he used to prevent blacks from voting," and they "distributed 185,000 petitions in thirty-two states supporting this effort." The dissemination of such accounts and petitions among center-liberals in the United States and Europe—a method that enraged southerners in Congress and embarrassed the U.S. government—also became standard operating procedure for the CRC. Gerald Horne, author of the only comprehensive history of the CRC, says that "this stress on 'mass action'—picketing, demonstrations, petitioning—was self-consciously what distinguished the CRC from its

sometimes allies" like the NAACP or the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). The NAACP joined the fight against Bilbo, for example, by quietly submitting to a Senate investigating committee an exhaustive report detailing violations of voting rights in the June primary campaign. In Mississippi, while the CRC collected depositions and signatures, SNYC aided the campaign to defeat Bilbo by trying to increase the numbers of eligible voters who would normally cast ballots against him; at the least, they would further document discrimination against black voters.¹⁶

Because the northern wing of his own party also detested Bilbo, as did most Republicans, the Mississippian simultaneously became the subject of an internal inquiry into his campaign financing and other matters by Senate colleagues who hoped to censure him or deny him his seat. When a committee of the Senate came to Mississippi to investigate financing irregularities and charges of voter intimidation in the Democratic Party primary just past, CRC and SNYC workers encouraged local participation. Almost two hundred blacks appeared before the committee to give testimony, the majority of them World War II veterans; sixty-eight persons attested to "the pervasive pattern of unlawful behavior and racial terrorism that had characterized the Senate primary." During the primary, one stated, SNYC's James Jackson had been arrested when he brought a group of veterans to the precinct polling place located, beyond all reason, on the front porch of Senator Bilbo's house. Since the U.S. Supreme Court had ended the white primary in 1944, these former soldiers presumed to vote in the Democratic primary, even if they had to go into the lion's den to do it. The Senate committee finally established that Bilbo had violated campaign spending laws and frightened away voters, but in a straight party vote it exonerated him. Eventually the full Senate resolved to deny him his seat, but the motion was tabled on account of the senator's failing health (he was suffering from advanced cancer of the mouth and throat).¹⁷ When Bilbo died in 1947, his colleague James Eastland became Mississippi's senior senator. Bilbo's foes saw little improvement; Eastland would become the Senate champion at red-baiting the emerging civil rights movement.

U.S. senators from Mississippi did not, of course, fight alone in Washington. After Bilbo was denied his seat, Rev. Charles F. Hamilton of Aberdeen, Mississippi, wrote to Laurent Franz to congratulate the CRC on its victory. But, he said, "a contest was also filed last January against [Mississippi congressman John E.] Rankin. His unseating would be much more valuable." Rankin's district, in which Rev. Hamilton re-

sided, presented the perfect example of an electorate shrunken by disenfranchisement of blacks and poor whites: the congressman had been reelected by 10,400 votes in a district with over 200,000 adult inhabitants. Although many southern congressmen sat on the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) over the years, none showed more dedication than Rankin, who recognized early on the opportunities for self-preservation offered by anti-communism. During the war Rankin had called the FEPC "the beginning of a Communist dictatorship the likes of which America never dreamed," and he aggressively opposed the GI Bill because it proposed to help black and white veterans equally. Soon after his reelection and about the time of Bilbo's death, Rankin and other members of HUAC avenged the CRC's attempts to influence Mississippi politics with the scathing "Report on the Civil Rights Congress," which began by asserting that "having adopted a line of militant skulduggery against the United States," the Communist Party had set up the CRC to protect its own as it pursued a "campaign of Communist lawlessness." Accepted as gospel by the FBI, congressional and state anti-Communist committees, and most Americans, the report haunted the CRC for the next ten years.¹⁸

In the year after the 1946 campaign both SNYC and the SCHW faced disastrous red-baiting.¹⁹ Cornered by the fearful spirit of the times and anxious to retain their own viability, former sympathizers, especially the CIO and the NAACP, withdrew financial support or ended cooperation with groups they (or their own enemies in the government) perceived to be part of the old "popular front." In 1948 SNYC held its last "All-Southern Negro Youth Conference," and the SCHW lost its labor support and collapsed. Even before that, SNYC leader Esther Cooper Jackson and her husband, James, fled the South. He became an organizer and educator for the Communist Party in the Ford plant in Detroit. She worked for the Detroit branch of the CRC and for the Progressive Party, under whose banner former vice-president Henry Wallace ran for the presidency in 1948.²⁰

After the demise of SNYC and the SCHW, the CRC and a small but militantly integrationist remnant of the southern conference movement, the similarly named Southern Conference Education Fund (SCEF), were the primary representatives of left-wing, popular front liberalism still operating in the South. SCEF single-mindedly pushed to end Jim Crow and disenfranchisement, retained tax-exempt status as an educational organization for most of its life, and continued to publish the monthly *Southern Patriot* through the peak years of the civil rights movement. Often accused, SCEF remained purposefully non-Communist,

but like its parent, the SCHW, it did not require political tests for its staff or board members. Headquartered in New Orleans, SCEF kept an all-southern board and staff, though it conducted fund-raising drives among friends across the country. The CRC, on the other hand, worked for justice in the South and always tried to engender southern membership, but its leadership and the large majority of its members, as well as its funding support, remained among leftists, including known Communists, in the North and West. Not only "civil rights" defenders, the CRC's adherents championed anti-government litigation in prominent civil liberties cases of the Red Scare era with equal fervor. William Patterson and his CRC staff, like the International Labor Defense lawyers before them, became the prototypical "outside agitators" in the South.

Patterson and those who worked with him in the New York office wanted desperately to develop "inside" agitators, permanent southern branches with local leadership that might sustain regional cases and campaigns. Most of the CRC's civil rights cases originated in southern courts, and short-term local pressure groups that supported particular cases or prisoners were useful, but the task of building permanent local constituencies in the region proved exceptionally difficult. Information from national sources like HUAC and the FBI fed local anti-CRC rhetoric of newspapers, law enforcement agencies, and state and local anti-Communist committees and made organizing very difficult in the South. "Strong" branches, CRC national field organizer Aubrey Grossman claimed, existed "in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Oakland, Seattle, Chicago, Milwaukee, Detroit, Philadelphia and New York, and chapters with 'some promise' in Denver, Cleveland, Pittsburgh, and Honolulu," but he could find none of consequence in the southern or border states.²¹

Although his assessment is close to the truth, Grossman neglected a few southern groups—especially those in Houston, Miami, and New Orleans—that functioned for a time as legitimate CRC branches. Smaller and more ephemeral groups operated briefly in Memphis, Tennessee, Asheville, North Carolina, and Macon, Georgia, and Patterson and his field organizers spent a great deal of time encouraging individual supporters in other southern towns. But Laurent Franz's 1946 assessment that the time was not "ripe, irrespective of our work on cases here, for a CRC organization in Jackson" could still be supported by the situation in Mississippi ten years later. In Alabama and North and South Carolina only promising beginnings arose, then disappointments. Patterson and organizer Milton Wolf believed a viable Georgia group would develop around Macon newspaperman (and state Progressive

Party chairman) Larkin Marshall and one of his contacts in Columbus, but in the end, much correspondence and visiting produced negligible results. Except for the outpost in southern Louisiana, in the Deep South states there were cases and allies but not real chapters. Even the southern branches that seemed to have staying power ceased to operate several years before the national organization died in 1956, victims of harassment by conservative local civic organizations, terrorist groups, grand juries, police "red squads," state committees, HUAC and its corresponding Senate committee, and the FBI. But the histories of the three largest southern CRC branches, at least, warrant some discussion.²²

The Houston branch began in the summer of 1946, when Sylvia Bernard (now Sylvia Bernard Hall Thompson), a young woman from an upper-middle-class San Antonio home and recent graduate of a course of study at the Communist-sponsored Jefferson School of Social Science in New York, responded to a call to help with the establishment of the Texas Civil Rights Congress. Southern organizer Laurent Franz, on leave from the anti-Bilbo campaign, joined Bernard in Houston and persuaded the local NAACP to share space in its Houston office. This unusual arrangement, especially if measured by the developing tension between the two corresponding national organizations, depended on the largess of Houston NAACP head Lulu White, a strong and charismatic leader who encouraged cooperation among all organizations working for civil rights and civil liberties. The NAACP branch also agreed to become one of the sponsors of the first Texas CRC conference in July 1946. This conference began on a Sunday morning, when most Texas preachers would be busy at church, so when the committee decided the meeting should be opened with a prayer they dispatched Bernard, granddaughter of a prominent Texas rabbi, to find a minister. Her family credentials impressed the clergyman she found, who agreed to come but asked: "Listen, will there be any Communists there?" Bernard, a party member, replied that there might be, since civil rights "was their meat, too." The rabbi told her the story of being "the only non-Communist" in "a mass action group" in his college days, and he voiced concern over the present state of the Red Scare in Texas, but in the end he gave the opening prayer.²³

At its first conference, the Texas CRC formed a state board whose membership list reads like a popular front organization of the 1930s, with members from the NAACP, the United Negro and Allied Veterans, the National Lawyers Guild, the University of Texas faculty, and several labor unions. Thompson commented on the stirring keynote address by liberal attorney Ben Ramey, who, in his "white suit and white Panama

hat, exuded a kind of country gentleman aura." The conference passed a resolution supporting another speaker, Herman Sweat, a recent black applicant for admission to the University of Texas Law School; Ben Ramey would become a member of the NAACP legal team representing Sweat. Soon after the conference, Ramey joined the successful firm of Houston labor lawyers Mandell and Wright; Arthur Mandell joined the CRC in 1946 and attended its national conventions in Detroit that year and in Chicago the following year. He and other CRC lawyers authored a supporting amicus brief when the NAACP appealed Sweat's successful, precedent-setting case to the U.S. Supreme Court in 1950.²⁴

Just weeks after the Texas conference, during the 1946 primary, the CRC chairman reported to the national office that the branch had sent members to speak at "practically every political meeting . . . on the general subject of voting as a basic civil right," had sent representatives to several trade union meetings, and had sponsored, in conjunction with the NAACP, "a mass meeting protesting the Georgia murders and calling for immediate federal action to stop the wave of mob violence around the South." By the end of its first year, the Texas CRC had established branches in Austin, Dallas, El Paso, and Waco.²⁵

But success in Texas was short-lived. All of the chapters faced harassment from the FBI and local police within a very short time, becoming concrete examples of the deadly combination of "black" and "red" alliances in the postwar South. Defense of a Communist who refused to testify in an immigration case led the FBI to the Dallas branch, a chapter that "carried a high profile for a while." Evidence of trouble brewing in Houston can be found in Lulu White's change of heart under pressure in late 1947: J. Edgar Hoover spoke to Thurgood Marshall, who informed local leader White about the dangers of sharing office space with the suspect CRC. After the Texas CRC arranged for the defense of two Maritime Union workers arrested for selling the *Daily Worker*, an FBI agent reported that the CRC was "strictly . . . a front for the Communist Party." Chapter leader and civil liberties lawyer Morris Bogdanow defended a German couple in a highly publicized 1949 deportation case, during which leaders of the Texas Communist Party resorted to the Fifth Amendment. As the complicated trial progressed, Houston's newspapers, according to historian Don E. Carleton, "impressed on their readers a vision of a city crawling with subversives." In early 1950 the Houston CRC branch still published its monthly newsletter, but that spring Bogdanow wrote to William Patterson that "CRC mail is snatched and any meetings held will be raided by police . . . there are several unidentified spies within the organization who undoubtedly

helped disrupt." He asked that mail from the New York office be discontinued until notice from Houston. Despite the growing anti-red hysteria in Houston, Bogdanow defended Communist Party members arrested (and beaten in custody) for distributing the Stockholm Peace Petition on June 26—the day after the Korean War began.²⁶ Houston police then arrested Bogdanow at a watermelon party at the Negro Elk's Lodge. They charged him with "violating Texas segregation laws by 'mingling with Negroes'" and wrote on the police docket that "this white man . . . has been with several persons . . . known to belong to or have something to do with the Communist party." Carleton says that "the summer of 1950 . . . marked the end of Houston's pathetically small Communist party." At the end of the year, when members of the CRC gathered for a meeting in Austin, an FBI informant reported "thirty-eight people present, half Black and half white, about four Chicanos—and the subject of the meeting was Jim Crow."²⁷

In New Orleans, members of an active CRC branch held meetings, disseminated information, and supported causes at least from 1948 through 1951. During that time Oakley Johnson, a white professor of English at predominantly black Dillard College and a Communist since 1919, held forth as the group's primary leader. The Louisiana CRC worked on voter registration during the 1948 presidential campaign, publicized and protested cases of police brutality, took up the cause of several black men on Louisiana's death row, and participated fully in the national CRC campaign to defend Mississippian Willie McGee, who died in the electric chair in 1951. The group formed as an outgrowth of the "Committee for Justice in the Brooks Case," which Johnson called a "police lynching" in Gretna, a small town across the Mississippi River from New Orleans. Roy Cyril Brooks attempted to help a woman who had deposited her last nickel in the bus coin machine when she realized she was on the wrong bus; he offered to ride on her nickel and give her his. The driver refused to allow this exchange. He called a nearby policeman, who took Brooks at gunpoint to the courthouse grounds about a block away, where he shot him in the back and killed him. A newspaper photographer saw the shooting and cleverly hid one exposed plate before the police smashed his camera. Pictures of Brooks's body, sent to liberal friends of the CRC in Congress, forced the attorney general's hand, and the FBI entered the case. As a result, though he was never suspended from his job, Gretna authorities charged the policeman, Alvin Bladsacker, with manslaughter. Two years later, despite mass protests by the committee, a jury acquitted him.²⁸

Four members of the original "Brooks committee" became founders

of the Louisiana CRC, among them Johnson's two co-chairmen, A. A. O'Brien of the Food, Tobacco and Agricultural Workers (Brook's union) and Louis Brown, secretary of the Gretna (Jefferson Parish) NAACP, and two other local labor union leaders, Theodore Means of the Furriers Union and Andrew Nelson of the Longshoremen and Warehousemen's Union. By 1950 Louis Brown's name appeared on letterhead as "president" and Oakley Johnson's as "executive secretary." But as anti-communism gripped New Orleans and the nation, problems surfaced. Both unions and the NAACP began purging Communists, and members who also belonged to the Louisiana CRC were suspect. After the furor over the Brooks case died down, several of the early board members, including Brown, resigned and tried to energize the Gretna NAACP chapter as an alternative. Among the unionists, longshoremen remained the most loyal to the organization.²⁹

The Louisiana CRC also occasionally accommodated a changing group of Communist Party workers who came to New Orleans (like James Jackson, Jack O'Dell, or Sylvia Bernard and her first husband, Sam Hall), students, local office workers, and even a few employees of the school system. At least two members of the Tulane University faculty—Robert Hodes of the medical school and Mitchell Franklin of the law school—probably associated with the group through their friendship with Johnson and others in his circle. For a time a lively group of Louisiana CRC leaders and their friends met for informal occasions in the homes of Oakley and Mary Lea Johnson or Robert and Jane Hodes, joined there by undercover FBI agents (two of them medical students) who secretly recorded their conversations. Most participants were probably non-Communist liberals, though at one time or another almost all Louisiana CRC members known to local, state, or federal law enforcement officers were called Communists in hearing rooms or in the press. Gerald Horne counts about one hundred Louisiana CRC members in 1949, "although Johnson complained that they had 'few active members,'" a problem that "increased the work load on Johnson, who was equal to the task." In 1951 Johnson wrote to Aubrey Grossman asking for two hundred CRC membership cards. "Quite a number of the rank and filers here are demanding membership cards . . . also, in line with Pat's [William Patterson's] recent suggestions for re-organizing and reviving our LCRC [Louisiana CRC], we think it would be good to build a nucleus of organized CRC members for the new organizer to start with."³⁰

Johnson's time in New Orleans was coming to a close, as foes closed in on all sides. Since he had taken refuge in the First and Fifth Amend-

ments before a federal grand jury in 1949, he had become, in the words of Adam Fairclough, "an embarrassment to Albert Dent, Dillard's president, and a serious annoyance to the university's board of trustees, which was headed by staunch anti-communist Edgar B. Stern." At the same time, the Louisiana NAACP (especially its New Orleans leadership) treated Johnson and the Louisiana CRC "as enemies, not allies," refusing to allow Johnson to speak at branch meetings and ostracizing Louisiana CRC members and other leftists. He wrote to William Patterson in May 1951 that as he had expected, his contract at Dillard had not been renewed for 1951-52. When he asked the university president "the reason for the failure to reappoint me, he said there was *no specific reason* for the University merely wished to make a change [Johnson's emphasis]." Johnson asked if "pressure had been brought because I belonged to a supposed 'subversive' organization, the CRC, [and the president] said no pressure had been brought." But, the dismissed professor added, "this does not tally with what was told my department head."³¹

Less than two years later Johnson's friend Robert Hodes faced dismissal from Tulane University, ostensibly because he could not get along with other researchers in his department. At a hearing before Tulane's board of trustees, Hodes's attorney concluded that "the real reason for Dr. Hodes's termination was the displeasure of the Medical School administration with the nature of his political beliefs." When questioned about this possibility, one department member replied, "I think it is an important factor," and said Hodes had lacked good judgment about when (and to whom) he expressed his opinions; another thought the problem was simply "the department's attitude toward political thinking." Both Johnson and Hodes were active in integrationist causes, spoke out against the Korean War, and belonged to the CRC. The Louisiana CRC had recently spearheaded the defense of Roosevelt Ward, a young black man suspected of being a Communist and accused of evading service in Korea. This high-profile case reached the U.S. Supreme Court just a few weeks after Hodes's hearing. Florida attorney John Moreno Coe and Alvin Jones, a black lawyer and voting rights activist from New Orleans, litigated the Ward case for the CRC. Much to the chagrin of the draft board chairman (reportedly a local Ku Klux Klan leader), when Coe finally argued the case before the U.S. Supreme Court he convinced the justices to overturn the local board's ruling.³²

In the early 1950s the *New Orleans States* and *Times Picayune* published articles blasting liberals, leftists, and draft dodgers, and the "Americanism Committee" of the New Orleans Young Men's Business Club conducted an anti-Communist campaign on radio and television

and in the public schools. In that climate neither group of university administrators could ignore the radicalism of these professors. Unfortunately for Johnson, he found new employment at a small black college in Houston at exactly the moment the CRC in Texas faced its own troubles with red-baiting. His reputation as leader of the Louisiana CRC followed him, so he "was sacked in 1952, [again] because of FBI meddling." After Oakley Johnson left New Orleans, Lee Brown of the International Longshoremen and Warehousemen's Union tried to hold the Louisiana CRC together, but the chapter "basically disintegrated" by the end of 1951.³³

Members of the CRC chapter formed in Miami in 1948 faced a local situation surprisingly similar to that of their colleagues in New Orleans. The common view of Miami as a fairly liberal and cosmopolitan city—in Raymond A. Mohl's words, a city "South of the South"—does not hold up for the period before 1960, if then. South Florida underwent tremendous demographic change in the first twenty years after World War II; reaction to these changes came in waves of racism and anti-Semitism that would have made John Rankin proud. The Klan posted signs welcoming visitors to the city just after the war, and a surge of violence that began in 1946 with cross and house burnings to keep blacks out of white neighborhoods peaked in 1951 with dynamite bombings of a black housing complex, churches, and synagogues and continued into the late 1950s. The Miami CRC chapter operated in what Mohl calls a "schizophrenic" atmosphere: in spite of its "tourist industry and transplanted northerners," Miami "exhibited many of the elements of the 'Deep South' on issues of race relations, labor organizing, and federal power."³⁴

The national CRC office sometimes seemed to have difficulty understanding the environment in which its southernmost branch functioned. CRC field organizer Milton Wolff reprimanded the new Miami chapter in 1949, calling it "all fouled up" and "based on the white middle-classes in Miami; and what the hell, they are the accomplices, willingly or otherwise, of the oppressors of the Negro people here." Many CRC members in Miami were white, mostly Jewish New Yorkers who came South during the war years and brought Lower East Side radicalism with them, and they both felt the stings of local anti-Semitism and adamantly opposed "the oppressors of the Negro people" in their adopted city. Bobby Graff, a Communist and social justice activist who had migrated to Miami from Detroit with her husband, Emmanuel, led the CRC in 1949. Some labor unionists and a few black radicals had also joined the group, including active CIO organizers. If the branch wanted

ammunition to answer Wolff's implied accusation that it shied away from public confrontation on the race issue, it might have pointed to such impediments to liberal social action as an active local grand jury, a visit of HUAC to Miami in 1948, and, as a result of those hearings, empanelment of a federal grand jury in 1949 to consider possible indictments of Dade County "subversives." It might also have noted the brutalities of the Miami Police Department, which, "through intimidation and terror, played a powerful role in maintaining white supremacy and the color line well past mid-century."³⁵

Like the New Orleans chapter, the branch in Miami grew out of a particular case, though in Miami civil liberties violations, not racial violence, inspired establishment of the organization. Perhaps this provoked Wolff's concern, though the case certainly qualifies as one that would interest the defenders of the "Communist Eleven" at Foley Square; and in the Florida case, the defenders succeeded. A former garment worker named Leah Adler Benemovsky wrote notes to various people inviting them to attend a meeting with visiting Communist dignitaries in early 1948. In the aftermath of the meeting, and just before HUAC came to Miami for the first time, she was caught in a "dragnet" sponsored by a local grand jury. When questioned about party membership or participants in the meeting, Benemovsky took refuge in the Fifth Amendment. Denying her right to refuse to testify, a Dade County judge found her guilty of contempt and sentenced her to jail for ninety days without bail. Sylvia Bernard Hall and her first husband, Sam Hall, then working for the Communist Party in Alabama, traveled to Miami to help, and Sam, accompanied by the party's district organizer from Louisiana, Irving Goff, visited Benemovsky in jail. Sylvia described her incarcerated comrade as a shy person, the daughter of immigrants, "a dedicated party worker of the 'old school.'"³⁶

Two years before the Roosevelt Ward (draft evasion) case with the Louisiana CRC, Pensacolian John Moreno Coe agreed to serve as Benemovsky's lawyer. Coe took the case to the Florida Supreme Court twice in the months just before the 1948 presidential election—a busy time for him, since he also headed Henry Wallace's Progressive Party in Florida. When the high court heard substantive arguments they threw out the lower court's ruling; the majority opinion classified Benemovsky as a "political" Communist, not a "criminal" one. She had a right, in other words, to refuse to answer the county solicitor who attempted to link her with "criminal communism."³⁷ This interesting decision came only a few months before CRC lawyers lost the case of the eleven Communist Party leaders in New York, and it encouraged Miami's Left-liberal

community, many of them already active in the Progressive Party, some of them Communists, to establish a chapter of the CRC.

Leaders of the Miami CRC quickly began a correspondence with the national office about local problems. In one letter the chapter secretary asked for advice about three matters: a case in which police broke both arms of black defendant Charles Hunter during "questioning"; an interracial square dance held by "Young Progressives and the Paul Robeson Club" that was broken up by police, who "roared up in squad cars . . . and after separating them into white and Negro . . . threatened to arrest them on grounds of inciting a riot"; and the need for "a prominent speaker who could appear in Miami." In respect to the last, the chapter thought that "the Dean of Canterbury or Paul Robeson would be tremendous." The reply from the CRC's Len Goldsmith insisted that the Miami group follow up on the Hunter case, which could "well become the center of a great deal of CRC activity" because "it has all the elements of drama and human interest that make possible a broad campaign and [could] reach sections of the community that are rarely involved in ordinary CRC cases." The second matter Goldsmith considered "equally important." He agreed with the chapter's plan to hold an interracial New Year's Eve Party and suggested that every minister in town be invited, along with photographers and some attorneys ready to challenge police interference as "a violation of the First Amendment of the Constitution, the right to peaceably assemble." On the question of speakers he demurred—the Canterbury Dean, a supporter, had returned to England, and the CRC could not commit for Robeson; but they would cooperate as much as they could.³⁸

The two cases that Goldsmith emphasized, and several other incidents of police brutality and harassment like them, did become important projects of the Miami CRC in its first year. Publicizing the outrageous brutality of Lake County sheriff Willis McCall in the infamous Groveland rape case in central Florida, and raising funds for the defendants in that case, involved members of the Miami CRC from 1948 until 1951. They also participated in the organization of a Right-to-Work Committee that pushed for an end to segregation in local unions and, in early 1949, as the federal grand jury began its work, did what it could to protect their members, prepare themselves for interrogation, and deal with defections. "Fight energetically any ideas that the organization is infiltrated with enemies, that it will not be able to grow, that there are not adequate forces to handle it there, that the American people are not ready to fight back, that their defeat is inevitable," instructed William Patterson.³⁹

But CRC members faced mounting odds in Miami. The *Miami Daily News* published a long series of inflammatory articles that listed members of the Progressive Party and the CRC and suggested that members of both groups were Communists. When the CRC held an anti-Klan rally, the newspaper responded with a column calling the CRC a secret Communist organization. The rally had been held, the CRC answered in an open letter to the newspaper, "to rally the community for an all-out effort against the Klan," which was terrorizing blacks and progressive whites in Miami. The newspaper succeeded only in making "Klan threats and intimidations" worse. FBI agents followed Bobby Graff and other CRC leaders and tapped their telephones, and newspapermen hounded them. One gossip column noted Graff's "good connections in the Communist Party" based on a visit to Miami by Mrs. Gus Hall, "wife of one of the eleven top commies now on trial in New York," who was presently "sunning herself in Mrs. Graff's unproletarian home in the southeast section." In May 1950, Graff wrote to Patterson about the "serious problems facing the progressive forces here . . . our numbers are decreasing and very few replacements" and admitted that the CRC chapter was "practically non-existent."⁴⁰

The story of the rise and fall of chapters in Houston, New Orleans, and Miami, while replete with evidence about lonely leftist activists, southern resistance, and local anti-communism, tells only one small part of the history of the CRC in the South. The organization became even more widely known because of a few highly publicized cases that exposed southern justice to the world. One important example is the case of Rosa Lee Ingram, a Georgia tenant farmer sentenced to life in prison in 1947, along with two of her sons, for killing a white man who sexually harassed her. The attacker threatened Ingram with his rifle, and in the ensuing struggle one of her sons picked up the gun and hit the assailant with it, killing him. This case engendered letters and petitions to Governor Herman Talmadge and Presidents Harry S. Truman and Dwight D. Eisenhower from all over the world, and brought five delegations of protesting women to Georgia. (Mrs. Talmadge, it is said, invited the white women in but would not allow black women to enter the governor's mansion.) Esther Cooper Jackson, still a staff member of the Detroit CRC, gathered three thousand signatures on petitions by going door-to-door, appealing to church groups, and canvassing union members "at the Ford plant." Every May from 1947 until 1955 the CRC publicized a special "Mother's Day Appeal" for the Ingram case. The NAACP carried most of the legal burden in the case, but the CRC's huge international campaign may have been even more important in finally

securing the Ingrams' release in 1955. Nevertheless, the relationship between the NAACP and the CRC was never smooth; the NAACP often disavowed CRC activities, both to shield itself from "guilt by association" and because its lawyers found the CRC's extralegal efforts distasteful.⁴¹

Another significant southern CRC case shared (again, with difficulty) by the CRC and the NAACP began, and ended, while the Ingrams sat in jail. The "Martinsville Seven" faced execution in 1951, convicted of gang-raping a white woman in 1949. As it publicized the appeal of this case, and in other such rape cases, the CRC's leaders first aimed to expose the disparity in sentences for rape between blacks and whites in the South. Second, they wanted to showcase that disparity as "legal lynching," that is, not simply as evidence of southern injustice but as part of an overall strategy for maintaining white supremacy and discouraging black advancement in the United States. NAACP lawyers shared the CRC's first goal but not the second, believing such an approach to be self-defeating and understanding that, in cold war terms, its advocates would be considered disloyal. In appealing the case, NAACP lawyers pointed to the effect of racial injustice on U.S. efforts to win the hearts and minds of the world in the cold war struggle, a view that influenced many liberal integrationists in the 1950s. The CRC organized an enormous mass-action protest movement to overturn the sentences of the Martinsville Seven, and later to have their sentences commuted, all to no avail. Eric Rise, student of the cause célèbre, says that neither the CRC nor the NAACP strategy worked because "Communism and civil rights were too closely linked in the minds of most southerners to permit any capitulation to either the NAACP or the CRC." Even the NAACP's more mainstream arguments did not work, because "the emphasis on inequitable treatment of black defendants paralleled radical attacks on the American legal system." The NAACP's consternation about CRC organizing tactics may have been justified in this case; Rise concludes that the desire of Virginia's governor not to "appear to be bowing to the radical influence" at least in part prompted his refusal to grant clemency to any of the Martinsville Seven.⁴²

After the Benemovsky victory in Florida, lawyer John Moreno Coe took part in several important southern CRC matters, including the most celebrated CRC rape case, that of Mississippian Willie McGee. This case had all the elements of southern drama: allegations of rape of a southern white woman by a young black man, a hostile local populace, and, like the Ingram and Martinsville cases, interference in southern

justice by "outside agitators." The national NAACP did not participate in McGee's defense, and his early defense lawyers were reluctant advocates at best. Local attorneys appointed by the court (in the beginning) or hired by the CRC after Laurent Franz and others investigated the case "were almost disbarred . . . virtually ruined economically," and one, frightened by a personal threat, "left the courtroom before summing up and before the case went to the jury." Perhaps even more than the other cases, the McGee case attracted national and international press and contributions from all parts of the United States and Europe. There were rallies and marches in Chicago, Detroit, Louisville, New Orleans, and New York, petitions to Congress and the president, and contributions from labor unions, church groups, and local chapters of the NAACP and the ACLU. When a "white women's delegation" traveled to Mississippi in 1951 under CRC sponsorship to protest McGee's inability to get a fair trial, it was jailed briefly for disturbing the peace.⁴³

The state charged McGee in 1945 with rape of a white Laurel, Mississippi, housewife with whom, according to local rumors and his own wife's testimony during the appeals, he had had a long-term sexual relationship. When his mother asked him why he confessed to the crime, he answered, "I signed to be living when you got here." Black eyewitnesses placed him in another part of town at the time the woman's husband alleged the rape took place; unfortunately, no white eyewitnesses came forward. The McGee case reached the U.S. Supreme Court four times, twice being remanded to Hinds County for retrial. After the third high court hearing, a CRC press release charged state and federal courts with "collusion" in the case, a "conspiracy" to keep McGee on death row that could "go on indefinitely."⁴⁴

John Coe and fellow CRC attorney Bella Abzug of New York worked on the final appeal of the McGee case in January 1951. They based the new appeal to the federal district court on several grounds: denial of equal protection of the law, that is, of federally guaranteed civil rights, because Mississippi executed only black men for rape; perjured trial testimony; and a confession they believed to be forced by physical violence, but null in any case because McGee faced certain lynching had he told the truth. After a denial from the district court, they presented a petition, unsuccessfully, to the U.S. Supreme Court, and then to Governor Fielding Wright, who denied clemency. The state of Mississippi placed its traveling electric chair in the yard of the Laurel courthouse, where the case began, and executed McGee in a public ceremony on May 8, 1951. People cheered when he died, a fact the CRC noted in its several postmortem announcements. The day after the execution, John

Coe, a southern lawyer often called "radical" or "Communist" by his neighbors in the conservative Florida Panhandle, wrote to Abzug in words that his friend William Patterson would have approved. He had "thought of poor Willie," he said, "a poor human being sacrificed on the altar of brutality and intransigence of the 'master race.'"⁴⁵

Coe had litigated two very different CRC cases immediately before he entered the McGee case, each involving white clients and almost identical local ordinances that made it illegal for Communists to reside within the city limits of Jacksonville, Florida, and Birmingham, Alabama. On August 29, 1950, a front-page story in the *Jacksonville Times-Union* announced, "First Arrest Made Under Red Statute—Alexander W. Trainor, 54, Detained by Police." Trainor, the only Communist registered in Duval County, said he had changed parties since he first registered in 1947 and merely forgot to change his registration. Coe won the case in circuit court, citing the Florida Supreme Court decision in *Benemovsky v. Sullivan* as well as the First and Fourteenth Amendments as grounds for asserting the unconstitutionality of the ordinance. While complimenting Coe's "able argument," a local reporter noted how the CRC lawyer "adroitly avoided the real point at issue here," the essence of the foreign-controlled, malevolent Communist Party.⁴⁶

Two weeks later Coe argued successfully against Birmingham in federal district court. "What we have is a wave of hysteria," he told the court, "rushing headlong into Fascism because we are afraid of Communism." Called the "Bull Connor" ordinance, the Birmingham law in question had been created by then-city commissioner (future police chief) Eugene T. Connor. Connor hated Communists, a truth well known since his early occupation as a "union-buster" for Birmingham's steel companies, and Alabama native Sam Hall, the defendant in this case, had been called "The City's Top Commie" in a local newspaper. Long watched by the brutal "Red Squad" of the Birmingham Police Department, Hall publicly acknowledged his employment as a full-time Communist Party worker and even ran newspaper advertisements defending the party's right to exist.⁴⁷

Hall wrote articles for Communist-supported weeklies and headed the small Communist Party in Alabama in the late 1940s. Police maintained constant surveillance of Hall's house and followed both Hall and his wife, Sylvia, on everyday errands. According to Sylvia, Sam kept a loaded rifle by the bed and firecrackers on the window sills to serve as a warning in case of attack by the Klan or its allies. Their last travail in the steel city began the day after the Korean War started in 1950.

Police arrested Sam Hall as the couple sought to obtain signatures for the same Stockholm Peace Petition that had put Texas Communists at risk. Whatever means of support Hall might have, read the vagrancy indictment, was "disreputable." The Halls found a Birmingham lawyer to arrange Sam's bond and left for New York to attend meetings there. While driving through Georgia they heard on the car radio about the anti-Communist ordinance's passage and assumed that they would be arrested and jailed if they returned to Birmingham.⁴⁸

In New York, Hall consulted William Patterson of the CRC, who contacted John Moreno Coe. The couple returned to Birmingham only after the constitutionality of the ordinance had been successfully challenged in federal court. Coe won that case and beat the "disreputable" vagrancy charge, and then the couple returned just long enough to pick up their belongings and entrust the sale of their house to friends. They went first to New Orleans, where Sam Hall finally met his lawyer at the home of Oakley Johnson, during Coe's litigation of Roosevelt Ward's draft evasion case. After New Orleans, like many others in their situation in the early 1950s, the Halls hid "underground" for the next three years, until Sam died of brain cancer in New York in 1954.⁴⁹

Some CRC cases, like those of Trainor and Hall, received little publicity outside the local press, but the CRC's national and international mass-action crusades, especially the many involving race and rape, had propaganda value for their wider cause. Most such cases came from southern courts, but some important race discrimination cases, like that of the Trenton Six in New Jersey (which the CRC labeled "A Northern Scottsboro") and the Gilbert court-martial, originated in courts outside the South. Cases like these helped to validate CRC leaders' claim that the racial injustice perpetuated by courts and lynch mobs was a national issue and a federal responsibility.

Commenting on "To Secure These Rights," the 1947 report about southern inequality and lynching that became the basis of President Truman's civil rights proposals to Congress, an official CRC document proclaimed pessimistically: "The genocidal policies of the Government of the United States against the Negro people of the United States, against its own citizens, are so evident that the Government itself is forced to acknowledge them." This statement comes from a remarkable book presented as a petition to the United Nations in 1951: *We Cry Genocide: The Historic Petition to the United Nations for Relief from a Crime of the United States Government against the Negro People*. Part 2 of the petition cites the legal basis for the study: "Shocked by the Nazis' barbaric murders of Poles, Russians, Czechs and other nationals on the

sole basis of 'race' under Hitler's law—just as Negroes are murdered on the basis of 'race' in the United States under Mississippi, Virginian, and Georgia law—the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted the Genocide Convention on December 9, 1948."⁵⁰

Written by William Patterson with considerable help from other contributors, including Oakley Johnson and Florida writer and activist Stetson Kennedy, *We Cry Genocide* applies the principles of the United Nations Genocide Convention to race relations in the United States. It is a 238-page indictment of American justice, especially southern justice. "We shall prove," it says, that "the object of this genocide . . . is the perpetuation of political and economic power . . . [and] its end is to increase the profits and unchallenged control by a reactionary clique." Laid out like a legal brief, after introductory statements in each section it is a laborious compendium of evidence—encyclopedic, almost mind-numbing lists and descriptions of thousands of legal and illegal lynchings of the postwar years. On its cover are statements from the address of Justice Robert Jackson at the opening of the Nuremberg Trials, accusing not "little people" but "men who possess themselves of great power" of "planned and intended conduct that involved moral as well as legal wrong" in Nazi Germany. The intent is a clear indictment of American racism as perpetuated or allowed to prosper by American elites. The language is radical, strident, and as much anti-capitalist as anti-racist. In less metaphorical terms, the message remains "just like Hitler's friend, Tojo, Bilbo, too, has got to go," with Bilbo as the standard for American leadership in general.⁵¹

Patterson led one group to Paris and presented the CRC's petition to the United Nations there; Paul Robeson led another CRC delegation to the UN's New York headquarters. In Paris, Patterson asked the UN to apply the Genocide Convention to the United States, likening contemporary African Americans to German Jews under Hitler. He castigated the American Bar Association and the American Legion, both of which had lobbied against U.S. ratification of the Genocide Convention. Upon Patterson's return, the U.S. government relieved him of his passport, and a direct, systematic effort to build the government's case against the CRC ensued. By 1956, beset by a Subversive Activities Control Board ruling that it hand over records, and with Patterson under indictment for contempt because he refused to comply, the CRC closed its doors. In its last year, it protested the lynching of Emmett Till and the subsequent verdict of acquittal in Mississippi courts. In one release the organization called for a new mass-action campaign against lynching and the poll tax and "the impeachment of Senator James O. Eastland,

who calls for violation of the desegregation order of the Supreme Court, which is a violation of his oath of office."⁵²

William Patterson never left the Communist Party; he became the editor of the *Daily Worker* in 1958, wrote an autobiography, *The Man Who Cried Genocide*, in 1971, and was a prolific political writer until his death in 1980. The Communist Party in the United States had all but died long before then, in the wake of Stalinism, the cold war, American anti-communism, and de-Stalinization during the Khrushchev years. Its membership shrank from a postwar high of about eighty thousand (out of a total population of about 150 million) around the time the CRC was established, to about twelve thousand when the CRC collapsed in 1956, to about three thousand after Khrushchev denounced Stalin and invaded Hungary in 1958. The years of the CRC were the years of the party's decline, and attacks on one fueled attacks on the other. Even if the CRC had not introduced *We Cry Genocide*, and Patterson not been prosecuted, it is difficult to see how the radical legal aid organization could have survived much past 1956. Cold war pressure overpowered the party and organizations connected to it, no matter how uncertain the connection. By the time Patterson died, the American party was so small as to be ineffectual, a gathering of ancient partisans, most of whom had simply looked on as the civil rights movement—and the New Left—passed them by.⁵³

Still, the CRC that Patterson headed from 1946 to 1956 bequeathed a legacy of protest under fire to the southerners of the civil rights generation. The case can be made that leftist reformers, especially Communist Party members, provided the seedbed, if not the ideology, for the activism that became the postwar civil rights movement. By the late 1950s, Esther Cooper Jackson and most of her friends had joined the reformist southern movement led by Martin Luther King Jr. and others; she edited *Freedomways*, a periodical devoted to telling the story of the civil rights struggle, from 1961 until 1986. Her coeditor, Jack O'Dell, had been an organizer for the National Maritime Union active in CRC activities in New Orleans in the time of Oakley Johnson; and he worked for King's Southern Christian Leadership Conference in the early 1960s, until pressure from the FBI and the Kennedy administration forced his release. Angela Davis, Black Panther supporter and the most famous Communist of the 1970s, was the daughter of SNYC activists from Birmingham. Many of the sons and daughters of her leftist allies of the late 1930s and 1940s, Jackson says, labored in the voting rights and public accommodations drives of the civil rights movement. Robert Hodess's son moved back to New Orleans to provide legal

assistance to civil rights workers. In the introduction to the collection *Freedomways Reader*, Julian Bond wrote that, while race remained the central issue, the older activists who were the periodical's editors taught activists of the 1960s that "race was immensely complicated by greed, that prejudice and poverty were necessarily linked, and that it would take organized mass action to carry the day for freedom."⁵⁴

The notion that these early radical organizers were the forerunners of the more successful civil rights activists of the 1950s and 1960s is very appealing. Civil rights historians looking for continuity sometimes refer to the band of young progressives who created the Southern Negro Youth Congress as the "first SNCC" (Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee, 1960–70). Although it is doubtful that many SNCC members of the 1960s knew about their supposed predecessors (and founding leadership by Communist Party members was missing in SNCC's case), the linkages of purpose and methodology are easy to discern. Based among young college-educated southerners, both organizations had ties to supportive groups in the North, declined to require political tests for membership, and worked for political and economic justice at the grassroots. And other links come naturally to mind. Depositions taken by the CRC in the "Oust Bilbo" campaign cannot fail to remind us of the depositions taken during the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Challenge, both sets aimed at reforming the Mississippi Democratic Party. CRC lawyers of the earlier period are not unlike the heroic civil rights lawyers who faced recalcitrant southern judges to protect Freedom Riders, sit-in participants, and other protestors. Both the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party and the Voter Education Project of the 1960s involved "local people" who were part of the generation nurtured by voting rights and equal justice crusaders of SNYC and the CRC.

But the view that radical crusaders in the civil rights arena accomplished little except to "stiffen white resistance," on the one hand, or muddy the water for liberal civil rights activists, on the other, has long been widely accepted.⁵⁵ The CRC did not restrict its agenda to civil rights, or its civil rights protests to the courts, and in the process it added to the leverage of its opponents. Communism remained a national issue until well past 1954, when *Brown v. Board of Education* shook the foundations of southern law and custom, or 1956, when the CRC issued its last manifesto. Even after fervent anti-communism quieted in the rest of the country, well past the mid-1960s, white southerners listened to FBI reports about Martin Luther King Jr. and imagined links between agitation for civil rights and the goals of the Soviet

Union. And while conservatives equated civil rights with communism, many single-minded liberal civil rights advocates worried about the diverse purposes of Communists and their allies. Unlike their sometime allies on the far Left, by the mid-1950s most center liberals (black and white) saw the end of segregation and disfranchisement as the primary goals of the civil rights movement, and they seemed to be making some progress. Communism and loyalty issues endangered that progress and brought their primary goals into question.

Responding to such perceptions, the civil rights establishment circled its wagons and shunned the CRC. The NAACP's Walter White helped with the State Department's attempts to counter reaction to *We Cry Genocide*. UN delegate Ralph Bunche, a longtime acquaintance, snubbed William Patterson in Paris. Eleanor Roosevelt wondered in print "if [Patterson] has decided to transfer his citizenship to the Soviets." By 1951, Dr. Benjamin E. Mays of Morehouse College, a respected progressive and an original co-chairman of the CRC, had quit his participation. Even Aubrey Williams, chairman of the militantly integrationist SCEF for many years, struck out against the CRC. In response to a mailing about the McGee case, he wrote, "Don't send me any more of your materials—you people do far more harm than good. The best thing you can do for Willie McGee is to go out of existence." After Senator James Eastland brought the Senate's anti-Communist committee to New Orleans for hearings aimed at SCEF in 1954, Benjamin Mays quit that suspected board as well. SCEF may be a case in point. Although the group remained decidedly non-Communist and politically unaffiliated throughout its history, it never disavowed the former Communists or other leftists among its supporters; and the New Orleans NAACP refused to cooperate with SCEF or even to grant its executive director a membership card. Even the appearance of impropriety mattered a great deal, because in the delicate political climate of the 1950s it endangered accomplishment of the liberal agenda. Alliances with Communists were patently impossible.⁵⁶

The "anti-Communist" roots of what would come to be called southern "massive resistance" reach far back into the region's history; after World War II, invigorated by the urgency of postwar activism, this distinctive kind of southern anti-radicalism gradually became a coherent political force. As historian Adam Fairclough notes in his book about civil rights in Louisiana, the impetus for this was national as well as regional, encouraged by the anti-Communist agenda of the Truman and Eisenhower administrations. "By fostering a conservative political climate that stigmatized criticism of the established order as 'un-

American," he writes, "the Cold War enabled southern segregationists to link integration with subversion." Sometimes it seemed that the mass-action campaigns of the left wing encouraged and enabled southern segregationists. Identifying Communists among the agitators for civil rights afforded a certain respectability to the movement to preserve the racial status quo and served to quiet its liberal or moderate opponents. Southern leaders perfected the use of anti-communism as a tool of "massive resistance" during and after the war, and it flourished between 1946 and 1956, the years of the CRC. In a land stagnated by fear of outsiders and steeped in the hypocrisy of the "Lost Cause," all progressives fended off accusations of radicalism, alienism, and anti-Americanism. CRC activists were particularly exposed, easy targets. The ideal weapon of reaction, certainly more acceptable nationwide than white supremacy, anti-communism remained a great benefit for the makers of "massive resistance" throughout the 1950s and 1960s. Southern segregationists gladly joined right-wing collaborators across the country in a public, spirited hunt for Soviet sympathizers, and their anti-radicalism included and intimidated southern liberals as well as left-wing radicals. It is no wonder that liberal activists distanced themselves from the Left. The NAACP barely lived through the Red Scare, almost by joining it; the vulnerable CRC could not. In the end the weapons of the Right were simply more powerful than the defenses of the Left. Center liberalism may have survived through adaptation, but by the mid-1950s the old left-wing progressivism of the 1930s and 1940s lay dying at the feet of anti-communism and "massive resistance."⁵⁷

40. A. P. Tureaud to E. A. Johnson, July 15, 1950, folder 8, box 10, Tureaud Papers; Daniel E. Byrd to Thurgood Marshall, September 12, 1951, folder 1, box 1, Byrd Papers.

41. Louise Metoyer Bouisse, interview by Kate Ellis, June 20, 1994, Behind the Veil Oral History Project; J. B. Henderson, interview by Michelle Wallace, July 20, 1994, tape 1, *ibid.*; Edran Auguster, interview by Michelle Wallace, June 19, 1994, tape 1, *ibid.*

42. Bruce Nelson, *Workers on the Waterfront: Seamen, Longshoremen, and Unionism in the 1930s* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 81-82; Nelson, *Divided We Stand*; A. L. Glenn Sr., *History of the National Alliance of Postal Employees, 1913-1955* (Washington, D.C.: National Alliance of Postal Employees, n.d.); Cornelius Hendricks, "The National Alliance of Postal and Federal Employees," *Crisis*, April 1977, 148-49.

43. Constance Baker Motley, interview by Jack Bass, June 21, 1979, pp. 71-72, Jack Bass Collection, Law Library, Tulane University; Constance Baker Motley, *Equal Justice under Law: An Autobiography* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1998), 107.

44. Daniel E. Byrd to Thurgood Marshall, April 9, 1953, folder 3, box 1, Byrd Papers; E. A. Johnson, "Report on Atlanta Meeting," in minutes of Executive Board and Regional Board, folder 15, box 12, Tureaud Papers; "Suggested Program for Southern Branches, 1954-1955," folder 7, box 4, Byrd Papers; Joseph T. Taylor, "Desegregation in Louisiana: One Year Later," *Journal of Negro Education* 24 (Summer 1955): 264-67; *Louisiana Weekly*, June 5, 1954; *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, May 18, 1954 (quoted), in Taylor, "Desegregation in Louisiana," 267.

CHAPTER 6

1. James and Esther Cooper Jackson interview, tape recording, January 5, 2001, Brooklyn, New York.

2. Formed in 1938 by southern New Dealers and other liberals in the wake of the Roosevelt administration's "Report on the Economic Condition of the South," SCHW organized state committees and a regional staff to work toward liberalizing and modernizing the South along the lines outlined in the report. SCHW's support for federal intervention to end racial discrimination certainly contributed to its collapse after only ten years, but the organization's internal divisions, including a split among its supporters into "center" and "popular front" factions, also became crucial elements in its early death. Active participation of several important SCHW board members in Henry Wallace's 1948 presidential campaign increased southern segregationists' accusations that SCHW was controlled by Communists and stopped vital foundation grants and union donations.

3. David Gaute, *The Great Fear: The Anti-Communist Purge under Truman and Eisenhower* (New York: Secker and Warburg, 1978), 178-79, quote on 178.

4. William Patterson, ed., *We Cry Genocide: The Historic Petition to the United Nations for Relief from a Crime of the United States Government against the Negro People* (New York: Civil Rights Congress, 1951), 178.

5. Ralph Powe, longtime CRC legal director, does not fit this description. A

Tuskegee and Howard Law School graduate, Powe was the son of black sharecroppers from Cheraw, South Carolina. Another exception is the English writer Jessica Mitford, who for many years served as a CRC leader in the San Francisco area.

6. Gerald Horne, *Communist Front? The Civil Rights Congress, 1946-1956* (Rutherford, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1988), 32-35.

7. The Smith Act of 1940, the first peacetime sedition act since 1798, made it a crime to join, endorse, organize, publish, or use the mails to distribute material supporting "any society, group or assembly of persons who teach, advocate or encourage . . . overthrow of the government of the United States." It provided for ten-year sentences and fines up to \$10,000 for those so convicted. Earlier espionage acts condemned verbal attacks on the American form of government, but the Smith Act bans only advocacy of acts of violence or force to overthrow the government. *Digest of the Public Record of Communism in the United States* (1955; reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1977), 188-205.

8. Horne, *Communist Front*, quotes on 16 and 22; "Press Release From: Civil Rights Congress," November 11, 1950, and September 6, 1951, reel 7, box 7, part 1, Civil Rights Congress Papers, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library [hereafter cited as CRC Papers]; W. L. Patterson to J. M. Coe, August 2, 1951, box 37, folder 35, John Moreno Coe Papers, Special Collections Department, Robert H. Woodruff Library, Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia.

9. Numan V. Bartley, *The New South, 1945-1960* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1995), 71.

10. "For Immediate Release—Report on the first Texas CRC Conference," July 9, 1946, 3, reel 31, box 86, part 2, CRC Papers; Jackson interview.

11. Chester M. Morgan, *Redneck Liberal: Theodore G. Bilbo and the New Deal* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1985), 250-51.

12. *Ibid.*; Robin D. G. Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe: Alabama Communists during the Great Depression* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 221.

13. Patricia Sullivan, *Days of Hope: Race and Democracy in the New Deal Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 194.

14. Laurent Franz to Milt (Milton Kaufmann), September 23, 1946, reel 5, Oakley Johnson Papers, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library.

15. The committee included such notables as Adam Clayton Powell, Oscar Hammerstein II, Gene Kelly, Leonard Bernstein, Fannie Hurst, Elaine Locke, David O. Selznick, and Albert Einstein and was chaired by Quentin Reynolds and Vincent Sheehan. See Horne, *Communist Front*, 56.

16. Sullivan, *Days of Hope*, 56, 22, quote on 22; Jackson interview; Denton L. Watson, *Lion in the Lobby: Clarence Mitchell, Jr.'s Struggle for Passage of Civil Rights Laws* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2002), 189.

17. Sullivan, *Days of Hope*, quote on 218; *Smith v. Allwright*, 321 U.S. 649 (1944); A. Wigfall Green, *The Mann: Bilbo* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1963), 206-19; Jackson interview.

18. Charles G. Hamilton to Director, CRC, December 19, 1947, reel 28, box 83, CRC Papers; Griffin Fariello, *Red Scare: Memories of the American Inquisition*:

An Oral History (New York: Norton, 1995), 470-71; Caste, *The Great Fear*, 90; Report no. 1115, 80th Cong., 1st sess., House of Representatives, "Report on Civil Rights Congress as a Communist Front Organization," November 17, 1947; John Egerton, *Speak Now against the Day: The Generation before the Civil Rights Movement in the South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 221.

19. The SCHW became the subject of a scathing HUAC report published in June 1947. Although the committee refused to give SCHW board members a chance to speak at its hearings, their investigators concluded that SCHW's supposed interest in southern social and economic problems "deviously camouflaged" a "Communist-front organization."

20. Jackson interview; Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe*, 224-28.

21. Horne, *Communist Front*, 45.

22. Ibid., 182-206; Laurent Franz to Milt (Milton Kaufmann), September 23, 1946, reel 5, Johnson Papers; see also the series of letters between William Patterson and Larkin Marshall, 1949-1951, reel 24, box 80, part 2, CRC Papers.

23. Sylvia H. Thompson interview, tape recording, January 6, 2001, New York. As to the incongruity of an organization supposedly allied with "godless Communism" calling on God in its meetings, Thompson says that was just the way things were done in the South in 1946.

24. Ibid.; Don E. Carleton, *Red Scare! Right Wing Hysteria, Fifties Fanaticism, and Their Legacy in Texas* (Austin: Texas Monthly Press, 1985), 44; Sweatt v. Painter, 339 U.S. 629 (1950).

25. "For Immediate Release," J. T. Kelly to Milton Kaufman, August 12, 1946, reel 31, box 86, part 2, CRC Papers; Bartley, *The New South*, 76. The "Georgia murders" involved a lynching near Monroe in Walton County, where two black women and two black men, one a recent veteran in uniform, were killed by a mob of white men. These brutal lynchings represented only the tip of an iceberg of southern mob violence in the year after the war; lynch mobs murdered veterans and other blacks who took part in civil rights activities from northern Louisiana to eastern North Carolina. The new militant attitudes of returning black servicemen, and especially the voting drives of the NAACP and other civil rights organizations, caused an "anti-black rampage" across the South in 1945 and 1946.

26. The petition, concerned primarily with international control of atomic weapons, was originally adopted by a World Peace Congress at Stockholm in March 1950. HUAC denounced it as a defense of Communist aggression in Korea, and named the Peace Information Center and its successor, the American Peace Crusade, as the petition's American sponsors. House Report 378, "Report on the Communist 'Peace' Offensive: A Campaign to Disarm and Defeat the United States," 82nd Cong., 1st sess., April 25, 1951.

27. "For Immediate Release," Carleton, *Red Scare*, 56-63, quotes on 57, 59, and 61; Horne, *Communist Front*, 138-39, 314-15, quotes on 314-15.

28. Oakley C. Johnson, "The New Orleans Story," reel 1, Johnson Papers; see especially 207-9.

29. Ibid.

30. Ibid., 207-8, and see also multiple examples of Johnson's LCRC corre-

spondence on reel 4; Thompson interview; Horne, *Communist Front*, 197-202, quote on 202; Oakley C. Johnson to Aubrey Grossman, April 8, 1951, reel 26, box 81, part 2, CRC Papers; Sarah H. Brown, *Standing against Dragons: Three Southern Lawyers in an Era of Fear* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1998), 108-10.

31. Adam Fairclough, *Race and Democracy: The Civil Rights Struggle in Louisiana, 1915-1972* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1995), 143; Johnson, "The New Orleans Story," reel 1, 212-19; Johnson to William Patterson, May 2, 1951, reel 4, Johnson Papers.

32. Benjamin E. Smith, "Before a Committee of the Board of Administrators of Tulane University, February-April, 1953, In the Matter of Dr. Robert Hodes and Tulane University: Brief for Dr. Hodes," 33-34, 36, box 92, National Lawyers Guild Papers, Martin Luther King Center for Non-Violent Social Change, Atlanta, Georgia; *Ward v. United States*, 344 U.S. 924 (1953); see also Ellen Schrecker, *No Ivory Tower: McCarthyism and the Universities* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 141-44; and Brown, *Standing against Dragons*, 105-13. It is interesting to note that Hodes's and Roosevelt Ward's lawyers (Smith and Coe) were officers of both SCEF and the National Lawyers Guild (another popular front association with roots in the 1930s).

33. Horne, *Communist Front*, 202; Fairclough, *Race and Democracy*, 143.

34. Raymond A. Mohl, "South of the South? Jews, Blacks, and the Civil Rights Movement in Miami, 1945-1960," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 18, no. 2 (1999): 5-13, quote on 5.

35. Milton Wolff to William L. Patterson, February 9, 1949, reel 24, box 80, part 2, CRC Papers; Mohl, "South of the South," 5-13, quote on 5.

36. *State of Florida ex. rel Benemovsky v. Sullivan*, Sheriff, 37 So. 2nd 798, 907 (1948); Sylvia Thompson, telephone interview by author, tape recording, December 18, 1991, New York.

37. Brown, *Standing against Dragons*, 69-71; *Benemovsky v. Sullivan*.

38. Bella Fisher to Len (Goldsmith), December 16, 1948, and Goldsmith to Fisher, December 20, 1948, reel 24, box 80, part 2, CRC Papers.

39. Matilda (Bobby) Graff to Leon Josephson, March 24, 1949, and William Patterson to Graff, March 28, 1949, *ibid.*; Mohl, "South of the South," 14.

40. Statement released to the *Miami Daily News* by the Executive Board of the Greater Miami Chapter of the Civil Rights Congress, March 26, 1949, "Miami's Own Whirligig," n.d. (1949), and Bobby Graff to William Patterson, May 4, 1950, all in reel 24, box 80, part 2, CRC Papers. See also Brown, *Standing against Dragons*, 132; and Mohl, "South of the South," 14.

41. Horne, *Communist Front*, 203-12; For publicity pieces and correspondence regarding the Ingram case, see reel 7, box 7, part 1, CRC Papers, and reel 5, Johnson Papers. For the CRC and the NAACP, see William Lawrence to Marve Bovington, May 28, 1948, "Pat" to Joseph Cadden, April 5, 1948, Walter White to the Civil Rights Congress, April 22, 1948, and William Patterson to Mr. R. Hanson, November 18, 1949, reel 5, Johnson Papers. The release of the Ingram, like the commutation of the death sentence in the Gilbert case, was a rare occurrence: almost all of the CRC's southern cases ended with the death or continued incarceration of their clients.

42. Eric Rise, *The Martinsville Seven: Race, Rape, and Capital Punishment* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1995), 153, 99–116, quotes on 116 and 153.
43. Horne, *Communist Front*, 78–93, quote on 80; "For General Release Monday, January 31, 1949, From: Kevin Mullen, Civil Rights Congress," box 12, reel 12, part 1, CRC Papers.
44. Horne, *Communist Front*, 78–97, quote on 79; McGee v. Jones, box 36, folder 24, Coe Papers; "For General Release Monday, January 31, 1949, From: Kevin Mullen, Civil Rights Congress," box 12, reel 12, part 1, CRC Papers.
45. McGee v. State, 47 So. 2d 155, 339 U.S. 958 (1950); J. M. Coe to Bella Abzug, May 9, 1951, 44, box 36, folder 24, Coe Papers.
46. Communists were given forty-eight hours to leave town or suffer both a \$100 fine and 180 days in jail. *Digest of the Public Record of Communism*, 458–61; Cauter, *The Great Fear*, 568–69; *Trainor v. Cannon*, box 35, folder 27, and *Hall v. City of Birmingham*, box 35, folder 26, Coe Papers; *Florida Times-Union*, October 10, 1950, 17.
47. Editorials, *Birmingham News*, October 5, 16, 1950, box 35, folder 26, Coe Papers. Active in the Methodist Church as a young man, Sam Hall had joined the staff of the *Amnistion Star* in the 1930s. Discouraged over the Depression and opposed to racial segregation, he joined the Communist Party a few years later. After he served in the navy during the war, the party trained him as an organizer and sent him to North Carolina, where he met and married another Communist worker fresh from organizing the CRC in Houston, Sylvia Bernard. The party assigned the newlyweds to Birmingham just after James and Esther Cooper Jackson left, though several of the Jacksons's friends remained to welcome them.
48. Thompson interviews, 1991, 2001. Sylvia Bernard Hall remarried and is today known as Sylvia Bernard Thompson.
49. Thompson interviews, 1991, 2001; J. M. Coe to Myrnelle Cook, March 20, 1954, box 3, folder 22, Coe Papers. Hall was probably the party's district organizer in New Orleans when he met Coe. See "Scope of Soviet Activity in the United States," part 12, Senate Committee on the Judiciary, Subcommittee to Investigate the Administration of the Internal Security Act and other Internal Security Laws, Hearings April 5–6, 1956 (New Orleans), 84th Cong., 2nd sess., 710.
50. Patterson, *We Cry Genocide*, 171, 31, 5.
51. *Ibid.*, 5.
52. Maurice Jackson, "Patterson, William L.," in *Encyclopedia of the American Left*, ed. Mari Jo Buhle, Paul Buhle, and Dan Georgakas (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 565; Horne, *Communist Front*, 172–74; "The Emmett Till Murder and Its Racist Roots" and "The Murder of Emmett Louis Till and the Verdict of Acquittal," reel 12, box 12, part 1, CRC Papers.
53. Harvey Klehr, John Earl Haynes, and Fridrikh Igorevich Firsov, *The Secret World of American Communism (Annals of Communism)* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 13–14; Charles H. Martin, "Communism," in *The Encyclopedia of Southern Culture*, ed. Charles Reagan Wilson and William Ferris (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 1393.

54. Jackson interview; for Jack O'Dell see Fariello, *Red Scare*, 413–18, 500–506; Esther Cooper Jackson, ed., *Freedomways Reader: Prophets in Their Own Country* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 2000), xviii.
 55. Charles Eagles, *Jonathan Daniels: the Evolution of a Southern Liberal* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1982), 127; for a rebuttal to Eagles's argument see Horne, *Communist Front*, 24.
 56. Horne, *Communist Front*, 172–74, quote on 172; Aubrey William note on CRC pamphlet called "Mississippi, USA: An Innocent Negro Faces Death," reel 5, Johnson Papers; J. A. Dombrowski to Benjamin Mays, March 5, 1954, box 16, folder 9, James A. Dombrowski Papers, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison.
 57. Fairclough, *Race and Democracy*, 137.
- ## CHAPTER 7
1. *Ebony*, November 1985, 60–76.
 2. E. D. Nixon to John H. Johnson, November 13, 1985, E. D. Nixon Collection, Alabama State University Special Collections, Montgomery. There is no scholarly biography of E. D. Nixon. Lewis V. Baldwin and Aprille V. Woodson's *Freedom Is Never Free: A Biographical Portrait of Edgar Daniel Nixon, Sr.* (Atlanta: United Parcel Service Foundation, 1992) is an uneven and frequently inaccurate short profile. On Nixon's (controversial) role in the Montgomery Bus Boycott, see John White, "Nixon Was the One: Edgar Daniel Nixon, the MIA, and the Montgomery Bus Boycott," in *The Making of Martin Luther King and the Civil Rights Movement*, ed. Brian Ward and Anthony J. Badger (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 45–63.
 3. Robin D. G. Kelley, "'We Are Not What We Seem': Rethinking Black Working-Class Opposition in the Jim Crow South," *Journal of American History* 80 (June 1993): 79, 102.
 4. Jack Santino, *Miles of Smiles, Years of Struggle: Stories of Black Pullman Porters* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 52.
 5. Bernard Mergen, "The Pullman Porter: From 'George' to Brotherhood," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 73 (1974): 224–25. Mergen adds that the Pullman porter "had a special status in the black community because he knew what was happening all over the country" (228).
 6. Eliot Wigginton, *Refuse to Stand Silently By: An Oral History of Grass Roots Social Activism in America, 1921–1964* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 22.
 7. Earl and Miriam Selby, *Odyssey: Journey through Black America* (New York: Putnam, 1971), 48–49.
 8. These early biographical details have been taken from several autobiographical fragments in the E. D. Nixon Collection. See also "When Montgomery Was Not Like St. Louis" in Wigginton, *Refuse to Stand Silently By*, 22–24; and Steven M. Millner, "The Montgomery Bus Boycott: A Case Study in the Emergence and Career of a Social Movement," in *The Walking City: The Montgomery Bus Boycott, 1955–1956*, ed. David J. Garrow (Brooklyn: Carlson, 1989), 416–17.
 9. Studs Terkel, *Hard Times: An Oral History of the Great Depression* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1970), 144.