Walter White and the Fight for Racial Equality

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WALTER WHITE AND THE FIGHT
FOR RACIAL EQUALITY

by
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Walter White worked for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People for thirty-seven years, 25 of which he served as executive secretary of the Association. Through his work in this office and through his writings he played an important part in preparing the way for the civil rights revolution of the 1960's. This thesis is not a biography but an attempt to deal with certain aspects of White's career as they related to his fight for racial justice and equality.

Walter Francis White was born in Atlanta, Georgia, July 1, 1893. He had blond hair, blue eyes and a very fair complexion. His parents, brother and sisters had white skins also; however, they all considered themselves to be Negroes. Although Mr. White could not have cared less, a Harvard anthropologist traced his family tree and concluded that White was genetically one sixty-fourth Negro. Spiritually, however, he cast his lot without reservation with the Negro race; he was a Negro by personal choice. Walter was raised in a very religious family. The Whites lived on the edge of the colored section of Atlanta, where they were envied and sometimes resented by both Negro and white neighbors.
because their house and yard were much better kept than the surrounding area. Walter's father was a mail carrier, who earned very little money, but, with the aid of his wife, he managed to maintain a clean, neat, happy home, which he owned.¹

When Walter was thirteen years old there was a terrible race riot in Atlanta. It occurred in September, 1906, and had been incited by the inflammatory statements of unscrupulous politicians. During this riot, Walter saw Negroes brutally murdered because of the color of their skin. At night white mobs swarmed into the black residential section. Walter's mother and sisters went to the rear of the house while he and his father stood by the front windows with loaded guns. They heard a member of the mob yell directions to burn the White's house down because it was too nice for a "nigger" to live in. Walter's father told him not to shoot until the first man stepped on the lawn and then not to miss. Just before the mob reached the White's house, some friends in the next building fired rapidly on the mob, which retreated to attack less prepared Negroes. Mr. White later wrote his reaction to the experience:

In that instant there opened up within me a great awareness; I knew then who I was. I was a Negro, a human being with an invisible pigmentation which marked me a person to be hunted, hanged, abused, discriminated against, kept in poverty and ignorance, in order that those whose skin was white would have readily at hand a proof of their superiority, a proof patent and inclusive, accessible to the moron and the idiot as well as to the wise man and the genius. No
matter how low a white man fell, he could always hold fast to the smug conviction that he was superior to two-thirds of the world's population, for those two-thirds were not white... I was gripped by the knowledge of my identity, and in the depths of my soul I was vaguely aware that I was glad of it. I was sick with loathing for the hatred which had flared before me that night and came so close to making me a killer; but I was glad I was not one of those who hated; I was glad I was not one of those made sick and murderous by pride.2

Walter started working at the age of ten to supplement the family income. He once turned down a promotion from his job as a bellboy to the position of key clerk because he would have had to pass for white. He worked at the Standard Life Insurance Company to help pay his tuition at Atlanta University. At the University he was president of his class, on the football team and a member of the debating team. There were several dedicated white professors on the faculty who, as White said, "demonstrated to the students that not all white people were infected with delusions of racial superiority and opposed to progress for the Negro."3

In 1916 White received his degree from Atlanta University and went to work full time for the Standard Life Insurance Company as a cashier. At that time he also became involved in his first battle for racial equality, which attracted the attention of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

To provide more funds for the white high schools, the city of Atlanta planned to abolish the seventh grade of the Negro school. White and several other Negroes established an Atlanta branch of the National Association for the
Advancement of Colored People to oppose the move. James Weldon Johnson, who was at that time a field secretary of the national staff of the NAACP, came to Atlanta to speak. He was deeply impressed with the secretary of the conference, Walter White. Johnson said that White's mental and physical energy were responsible for the extraordinarily large and successful meeting. Johnson remembered White and soon urged that he be offered a position on the national staff. Many of the board members were reluctant to hire an unknown very young man from the deep South, but Johnson pressed the case and explained that White worked for the Atlanta branch of the NAACP with a high enthusiasm that made everything he did a success. The board accepted Johnson's judgment and White was sent an invitation to join the national staff which he accepted at a considerable financial sacrifice. He began his life's work with the NAACP on January 31, 1918. Charles Flint Kellogg, writer of the most authoritative account of the early history of the NAACP, stated that White proved Johnson right as he quickly proved his fitness and adaptability for his work and contributed new vigor to the Association.

For the next twelve years, White's major work with the Association was on-the-spot investigations of lynchings and race riots. His light skin was a valuable asset, as it enabled him to get the true stories of lynchings as told to a fellow white, sometimes by the lynchers themselves. The job was, of necessity, extremely dangerous, and on several
occasions Mr. White had to convince the NAACP board to let him investigate lynchings when they feared for his life. Mary White Ovington, one of the founders of the NAACP and a long time board member, said that it was impossible for a cautious board to restrain his sense of adventure and high courage. White's reports of lynchings brought the light of publicity to the crimes. They had not been widely publicized before, but, as the result of White's investigation, contributions were made to the NAACP by both white and Negro citizens, who were shocked. His investigations also led to many demands by the NAACP for the prosecution and punishment of the members of lynch mobs. These demands were not fulfilled but the publicity and public sympathy which his investigations aroused eventually brought a halt to the horrendous crime. When White began his crusade in 1918, there were eighty lynchings a year, and, at the time of his death, there had been none for five years. Roy Wilkins, his successor as executive secretary of the NAACP, said, "If there's any single monument to Walter, it's the record wiped clean of lynching." Mr. White did not devote all his time to work and tragedies during those years, however. In 1921, he attended the Pan-African Congress held in London, Paris, and Geneva with Dr. W.E.B. Du Bois. Dr. Du Bois was one of the leaders of the Negro protest movement against Booker T. Washington's school of conciliation; the founder of the Niagara Movement;
one of the founders of the NAACP and editor of The Crisis, its official organ. Du Bois was the creator of the idea of the Congress. White said his attendance at the Congress had a profound effect in making him aware of the world implications of the race question, a subject with which his writings in later years were much concerned.

In 1922, White married Leah Gladys Powell, a very beautiful Negro, who had worked on the NAACP staff for two years. They had two children, Jane and Walter Carl Darrow, during the 1920's. White was also a part of the literary and artistic movement known as the Harlem or Negro Renaissance. This movement produced the "New Negro" who was militant and proud of his race. The New Negro demanded that he be acknowledged as he really was and not as a stereotyped figure. He protested and insisted that he receive full citizenship rights. Aside from the literary and artistic outpouring, there were a great many "literary" parties attended by Negro and sympathetic white celebrities. The homes of Gladys and Walter White, and Grace and James Weldon Johnson were frequently the meeting places of these parties.

White's first literary contribution was a novel, The Fire in the Flint (1924), about the lynching of two men who held the attitudes of the New Negro in a rural town in the Deep South. His second novel, Flight (1926), carried the dual themes of "passing for white" and the glorification of the Negro race. In 1927 he was awarded a fellowship by the
John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation for creative writing in prose. With this fellowship he studied in France for a year. The result was an intensive study of lynching, Rope and Faggot: A Biography of Judge Lynch (1929).

When James Weldon Johnson resigned in 1930 to devote himself to writing, White succeeded him as acting secretary of the NAACP. In 1931, he was formally designated executive secretary, a post which he held until his death in 1955.

His first crusade as leader of the NAACP was the defeat of the nomination of Judge John J. Parker of North Carolina for a seat on the United States Supreme Court. Judge Parker was on record as being opposed to the franchisement of Negroes. Parker's defeat meant the emergence of the Negro vote as a force which had to be considered by politicians from that time on. White was predominantly responsible for this victory and it earned him a reputation as one of the most effective lobbyists in Washington.

For many years White worked tirelessly for anti-lynching legislation. In 1937, he was awarded the Spingarn Medal for his fearless investigation and exposure of lynching as well as his remarkable tact, skill, and persuasiveness in lobbying for an anti-lynching bill. The Spingarn Medal is awarded annually to an American Negro for the highest or noblest achievement during the preceding year or years. White also lobbied for anti-poll tax bills, an end to segregation and other civil rights measures. These measures were not enacted
but White's labors paved the way for legislation enacted shortly after his death. Mr. White was more successful in bringing pressure to bear on the executive branch of government, which resulted in partial racial equality through executive orders. White was largely responsible for the creation of the Fair Employment Practices Committee and the President's Committee on Civil Rights.

During World War II, White wanted to examine critically the role and treatment of Negro servicemen abroad. Accordingly, he made extensive tours of European, Mediterranean and Pacific theaters of operation as a correspondent for the New York Post. He conveyed his findings in a book, *A Rising Wind: Report of Negro Troops in the ETO* (1945), and in memorandums to the War Department, which made recommendations as to how racial conditions in the Armed Forces might be improved.

White's autobiography, *A Man Called White* (1948), was not only a story of his life but a history of the NAACP as well. His last book, *How Far the Promised Land?*, was published posthumously in 1955. It was a report of the progress of the Negro in the United States. Mr. White felt the book was necessary because the image of the United States was suffering badly because of her treatment of her Negro population. Communist forces were making great headway with the newly emerging nations, largely through propaganda which exploited lynchings, segregation and discrimination,
conditions which had either been eliminated or were greatly improved.

Throughout his career, Mr. White wrote extensively about race relations, mob violence and related social questions. He was a frequent contributor to such American publications as Harpers, The Nation, The New Republic, American Mercury, Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, Saturday Review of Literature, Saturday Evening Post, Colliers, Readers Digest, The Crisis, and Negro Digest. He wrote a regular column for the Chicago Defender, and with a column in the New York Herald-Tribune and eight other metropolitan dailies, was the first Negro columnist to be syndicated nationally in the white press. He had a weekly radio program which was broadcast over a New York station and carried by several other large cities. It is estimated that he also made over 10,000 speeches and traveled over a million miles in his fight for racial equality.

As the executive head of the NAACP, White served on many important committees. In 1933, he was a member of the American Committee on Economic Policy and a member of the board of visitors of the New York State Training School for Boys. In 1935, he was appointed by President Roosevelt to the Advisory Council for the Government of the Virgin Islands. In 1938, he was a member of the Governor's Committee on the Constitutional Convention of New York. He was a consultant to the United States delegation to the organizing conference
of the United Nations in San Francisco in 1945 and in 1948 he was a consultant to the United States delegation to the United Nations General Assembly in Paris. White was a member of the executive committee of the National Commission for the Prevention and Control of Juvenile Delinquency in 1947. In 1948, he was a member of the executive committee of the National Health Assembly, a member of the Mayor's Advisory Committee on Atomic Education in New York City, and a member of the Committee for the Commemoration of the Golden Anniversary of New York City. In 1950, he participated in the Round the World Town Meeting of the Air, visiting European countries—also Israel, Egypt, India and Japan. He then made a tour of the Caribbean area gathering material for a book.

Mr. White was awarded the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws by Howard University in 1939 and by Atlanta University in 1943. In 1948 he was the first recipient of the Sir James Jeans Award by the New London, Connecticut, Junior College. In 1950, he was awarded the Haitian Order of Honor and Merit. In 1950, he was awarded the Star of Ethiopia.

What kind of a man was Walter White? One of his assets was a tremendous amount of energy and a driving force which made him able and willing to work ardently for sustained periods of time. Another valuable asset was his charming personality. He had engaging manners, a good sense of humor, and his colleagues unfailingly spoke of his deep love of humanity. He feared as much for what segregation and
discrimination did to harm white men as well as Negroes. Henry Lee Moon, the public relations director of the NAACP, said that White's love of people was the passion and motivating force of his life. He greatly enjoyed his work and his enthusiasm and optimism kept him and his associates working incessantly for the advancement of human rights.

This warm, energetic, delightful human being also had another side, however. He was not unduly sentimental. He was primarily an activist and he performed his heavy work load with cool efficiency. He possessed a tremendous amount of organizational ability which he used to build the NAACP into a mass organization and to carry on effective campaigns of protest.

White was socially sophisticated and had much ability in public relations as well as a flair for public speaking and popular writing. He was responsible for the creation of a favorably good public image of the association among both Negroes and whites. He was unalterably opposed to segregation and unwilling to compromise on the issue.

He was accused of being an all-or-nothing man who did more harm than good by people who felt that Negroes could best be helped by gradual reforms. White himself said,

I am an all-or-nothing man. I don't believe that half a loaf is better than none--or half a life. Lincoln said a country cannot exist half slave and half free; neither can an individual. I am sick and tired of the 'yes, but' people. I want to shake some guts into them. It's a mixed up metaphor, but that's just what they need. . . . Right is right and wrong is wrong.
White was a very controversial figure. Unlike Booker T. Washington, he was feared and hated by people who opposed progress for the Negro. Several times he was the topic of debate in Congress. The Journal of Negro History called him the most militant leader of Negroes during his time. He liked people and he wanted to be liked by them, but he went against public opinion, both white and Negro, if he thought he was right.

Walter White had an abiding faith in American Democracy. Much of his writing was devoted to warning Americans that justice must be delivered to Negro citizens or there would be no justice for any American citizens. He also warned that an opposing ideology was fighting for the minds of two-thirds of the world's population and that Americans must fight for freedom for all men everywhere if they wanted democracy to survive. White worked through the channels of democracy and optimistically believed that justice would win in the battle for racial equality.
Material in this chapter is based on extensive reading. Conclusions which have been drawn are probably a result of nearly every book, article and document contained in the bibliography. Some of the most important sources used in this chapter are as follows:


2White, A Man Called White, pp. 11-12.

3Ibid., p. 27.


5Cannon, A Gentle Knight, p. 300.
CHAPTER II

LYCHING IN THE UNITED STATES

In February, 1918, Walter White was hired as assistant secretary of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. James Weldon Johnson recommended him for the position because of the promise he had shown as secretary for the local NAACP branch in Atlanta, Georgia. His fair skin, blond hair and blue eyes enabled him to investigate lynchings without being detected as a Negro. He investigated forty-one lynchings and eight race riots from 1918 to 1929. Mr. White's job as investigator was, necessarily, very dangerous. He was violating a double taboo of the South: Negroes should not pass for white, and Northerners should not interfere in the South's business. The Journal of Negro History said that the sheer heroism of those adventures had few parallels in history and none in that of American history.

To conduct an on-the-spot investigation Mr. White would enter a town, or the nearest town to where a lynching had taken place, assume an identity of an insurance investigator, a prospective land buyer, or a traveling salesman, and manifest a great indifference to the most exciting happening that had taken place in the area for years. Mr. White found that this always worked. The obtuseness of the type of people who took part in
lynchings made it impossible for them to keep quiet about the event. All the lynchings Mr. White investigated took place in rural or semi-rural communities. Professor Earle Fiske Young of the University of California analyzed the correlation of lynchings and the size of counties where they took place. He found that in counties of less than 10,000 the lynching rate was 3.2 per 100. In those of from 10,000 to 20,000 the rate dropped to 2.4 and continued to drop to only 0.05 in counties of 300,000 to 800,000. Most lynchings occurred in small towns and rural regions where the inhabitants knew practically nothing outside their own immediate environment. Few newspapers, books, magazines, theaters or visitors entered the community. However, this static atmosphere produced individuals who seemed to feel that they knew all there was to know. Mr. White found that the more sterile the environment the more the people esteemed their knowledge. When the emotional fixation such as the rural South had on the Negro was added to this ignorance, lynchings were common products of the environment.

The individuals in these communities Mr. White found to be simple-minded, and easily fooled. Of the forty-one lynchings he investigated, his true identity was only suspected three times. The people involved fit the stereotype of the typical Georgia cracker—lanky, slow of movement and speech, long-necked, small eyes set close together and their skin tanned by the hot sun to a reddish-yellow color. They were arrogant
and ignorant. Their character made Mr. White's investigations much easier than one would expect. His assumed lack of interest in a lynching would induce the inhabitants to talk avidly about the subject. Mr. White's investigations revealed not only detailed accounts of how the crimes were committed but also the names of the perpetrators. The leaders of the mobs were frequently prominent citizens and often included the local law-enforcement officers. During a race riot in Tulsa, Oklahoma, which resulted because Negroes refused to sell valuable land on which oil had been discovered, Mr. White managed to be deputized. The posse surrounded and attacked the Negro section with machine guns, dynamite, rifles, revolvers and shotguns. Mr. White was handed a gun and told, "Now you can shoot any nigger with the law behind you."6

The sequence of events protesting the burning of Jim McIlherson, which follows, is typical of the pattern of NAACP protest against government inaction.

Following are the accounts of three typical investigations which Mr. White conducted.

On February 12, 1918, Jim McIlherson was tortured with red-hot irons and burned alive at the stake at Estill Springs, Tennessee. He was accused of killing two white men. On February 13 a telegram was sent to the President of the United States by John Shillady, the Secretary of the NAACP. It said,

Speaking on the behalf of millions of Americans, we respectfully call your attention to the horrible crime at Estill Springs, Tennessee, where a fellow American,
accused of murder, was first tortured by hot irons and slowly burned to death by a mob, the second burning recently of this kind. You have spoken out so nobly against German crimes in Belgium and on the high seas that we beg of you to break your silence and to denounce properly these terrible mob acts which cover us with shame and humiliation at the moment we as a nation would speak and act for justice and righteousness, for decency and humanity abroad.

On February 14, the Association was notified that the matter had been referred to the Attorney General. On February 18, the Association was notified that the Federal Government had absolutely no jurisdiction over the matter since it was not connected with the war effort. On February 19, Mr. Shillady sent another letter to the President as follows:

In view of the statement of the Attorney General and the silence of the Government of Tennessee, we beg the President to make a statement. This would have a stimulating effect on the morale of colored people whose sons are going to war. They are looking apprehensively to Tennessee to see whether in our own nation law or mob violence is to be supreme. The President's moral leadership gives him an opportunity and responsibility to speak out. Soldiers and brothers and sisters would show a new devotion to our country if it was made clear that equal protection is to be afforded to all men whether white or black.

On February 14 and 15 the secretary wired and wrote to Governor Tom C. Rye to appeal to him to take action to bring justice to the perpetrators of the crime. He reminded the Governor that this was the third such instance of lynching in Tennessee within nine months. He said that this placed the United States in an unbelievable position when she sought to protest, however rightfully, against Belgian atrocities committed by Germany. On February 25, the Governor of Tennessee replied that he deplored the murder but he could take no action
without a request by local authorities. Everything was being done that was possible (which was nothing). In February, letters were sent to the senators and representatives from Tennessee and to the Chambers of Commerce in six Tennessee cities. On February 27 the Chamber of Commerce in Chattanooga sent the Association a telegram informing it that the Chamber had passed a resolution condemning violation of laws. Looking back, a humorous note was added when the NAACP, which was struggling along on very limited financial resources, informed the State of Tennessee that it was sure the state desired to put the best police and detective ability that could be secured on the trail of the murderers and should the state be embarrassed by a lack of funds the Association would put at its disposal funds for this service.9

Mr. Shillady urged many prominent and influential white and colored citizens to send telegrams to the President to increase pressure on him. Many responded but the President again ignored the pleas. Finally, on July 26, 1918, President Wilson did make a public statement asking the governors, law officers and all citizens to cooperate to bring an end to lynching.10

Shortly after he began his work with the NAACP, Walter White requested permission to investigate the lynching at Estill Springs. The Association was reluctant to let him go because they feared for his life if his identity became known, but they eventually consented and Mr. White began an important
phase of his work for the NAACP. He rented a room in a boarding house and expressed an interest in purchasing land in the area. When the citizens began to talk of the lynching he replied that he had heard of much more exciting lynchings. They then boasted of their torture and revealed details of the lynching and the identities of the participants. Mr. White had difficulty suppressing his anger and nausea at the crime but he managed to do so. This is what he learned from the inhabitants who included proprietors of stores, a banker, and farmers.11

Estill Springs consisted of houses gathered around a railway station and a main street three blocks long. The people were typical rural Southerners with narrow and provincial minds. There was a strong religious undercurrent in the community. The McIllheron family lived a mile from the railway station and they were not popular with the white community. The family was wealthy "for a Negro," and they resented "slights" and "insults" by white people. They did not willingly allow the members of their family to be imposed upon by the white community. However, there were no serious problems until the lynching.12

Jim McIllheron shared the bad reputation of his family. He was known to be a fighter and he owned an automatic revolver. He had once been arrested by Sheriff John Rose and threatened to "get" the sheriff if he was ever arrested again. It was known that the sheriff was afraid of him. He went North shortly after that but returned because of a rheumatism attack. He was
less acceptable to the white community after his return as he was said to have absorbed dangerous ideas of "independence."
Reverend G. W. Lych, pastor of the colored Methodist church, was also unpopular with the white citizens because he had repeatedly told the colored people to assert their rights. He assured them that they were as good as anybody and they should not submit to the petty tyranny alleged to have been imposed upon them by the white people.  

It was the custom of some white boys to "rock" Negroes in town. This meant throwing rocks at them to make them run. McIllheron had been "rocked" once and he declared if it ever happened again someone would get hurt. On Friday afternoon, February 8, he bought fifteen cents worth of candy in the general store. As he left the store he met three young white men, Pierce Rogers, Frank Tigert and Jesse Tigert. The boys laughed and made remarks to McIllheron. When he turned to ask if they were speaking to him one of the boys went into the store. McIllheron apparently believed that they were preparing to start a fight and pulled out his gun and started shooting. Two of the boys were killed.

McIllheron ran home. The white citizens sent to Winchester for blood hounds at a cost of $60, although they knew he had gone home. There followed a period of intense excitement and talk of lynching. The mob worked itself into a state of frenzy; there were shouts of "Lynch the nigger," and a posse was formed. McIllheron went to the home of Reverend
Lych who helped him escape. Reverend Lych was murdered later by the mob for this crime.15

The manhunt continued Friday, Saturday, Sunday, and Monday. Monday night McIlheron was found in a barn. The barn was surrounded and fired upon. McIlheron returned the fire throughout the night but he had an eye shot out and two body wounds. When he ran out of ammunition the crowd took him and tried to lynch him in the nearby town of McMinnville but the citizens would not permit it. The mob included Deputy Sheriff S. J. Byars and policeman J. M. Bain. The mob returned by train with their victim to Estill Springs, where a crowd of from 1,500 to 2,000 people, coming from a radius of fifty miles, had gathered to witness the lynching. There was much talk of torture as boxes, excelsior, iron bars and pokers were obtained for the coming event. When the train arrived, McIlheron was so weak that he had to be carried to his funeral pyre which was erected at the exact spot where the shooting had occurred. However, some women insisted that he not be burned in town. After many objections he was moved to a clump of woods in front of one of the churches. The self-appointed leaders of the mob appealed for a "perfectly orderly lynching." But instant death would not appease the blood thirst of the mob. McIlheron was chained to a hickory tree where inflammable material was saturated with oil and piled at his feet. The crowd was determined "to have some fun with the damned nigger," so the fire was not lighted at once. Another fire was built
and bars of iron were heated to a red-hot pitch. A member of the mob thrust the bar at McIllheron's side, whereupon he grabbed it and as it was jerked from his hands all of the inside of his hands came with it. The stench of burning human flesh spurned the mob on and men, women, and children surged forward to see, and participate in the torture. Iron bars were placed at both sides of his neck, in his thigh, the calf of his leg and then he was castrated. As the Negro became weaker, the mob was worked up to a higher state of frenzy and the leaders had to rack their brains to find new and more terrible tortures to sate the crowd.16

The newspapers reported that McIllheron lost his nerve and cringed before the torture, but eyewitnesses said this was untrue. They said that although he lived for half an hour after the burning started that he never cringed and never once begged for mercy. He cursed the mob to his last breath. At one point he did ask the mob to shoot him but he was answered with a cry of "We ain't half through with you yet, nigger." Finally the pile of flammable material at his feet was lighted and he was mercifully enveloped in flames.17

A white farmer in Georgia was killed by a Negro and newspaper reports said six Negroes had been lynched for complicity in the murder. Mr. White proved through his investigation that at least eleven persons were murdered. James Weldon Johnson stated that Mr. White's investigation of this lynching
episode made a national sensation and it was White's first important job.¹⁸

Hampton Smith was the owner of a large plantation in Brookes County, Georgia, who had a very bad reputation in the community because he mistreated his Negro employees. Actually, he conducted a system of peonage and beat his tenants. His reputation was so poor that he had a very difficult time securing any help at all. Negroes would not voluntarily work for Smith, so he went into the courts and paid the fines of convicted Negroes and took them to his farm to work out their fines. Sidney Johnson had been fined thirty dollars for gaming and Smith employed him in the above manner. Johnson worked off his fine and also put in considerable extra time. When he attempted to secure payment for the additional time, Smith refused and a quarrel resulted. A few days later Johnson did not come to work and Smith went to his cabin to find out why. Johnson said he was ill, whereupon Smith beat him severely. Johnson allegedly threatened Smith at that time. Several nights later Smith was shot through the window of his home and died. His wife was also injured, but she recovered and she was not raped. Johnson admitted that he alone murdered Smith shortly before his death several days later.¹⁹

When news of the murder reached the community, crowds gathered from two counties and posses were formed to search for Johnson. In the excitement there was talk of a conspiracy to kill Smith and it was said that there had been a meeting at the
home of Hayes Turner, another Negro who worked for Smith. Smith had beaten Turner's wife Mary several times and Turner was said to have served time on the chain gang because he threatened Smith on those occasions.  

Friday, May 17, the mob lynched two Negroes, Will Head and Will Thompson. Members of the mob told Mr. White that over seven hundred bullets were fired into the bodies of the two men. Saturday morning Hayes Turner was lynched. He had been captured and placed in the Quitman jail but for some unknown reason he was to be moved to another jail, but was lynched by a mob en route. The spot where he was lynched was visited by numerous sightseers the following Sunday. His body was not cut down from the tree where he was lynched until Monday.  

Saturday another Negro was lynched. His identity was unknown but Mr. White felt that it may have been Eugene Rice, who was missing but was not even remotely connected with Smith's killing. Three more unidentified bodies were taken from the Little River. The bodies then mysteriously disappeared and remained unidentified. 

The blood thirst of the mob was not sated yet, however. Mrs. Mary Turner said that the murder of her husband was unjust and that if she knew the names of the persons who were in the mob that she would swear out warrants for their arrest, so they would be punished in the courts. For this, the mob had to teach her a lesson. She was taken to Folsom's Bridge over the Little River. A nearby tree was selected for her execution.
and her ankles were tied together and she was hung, head downward, from the tree. Gasoline and oil were thrown on her and her clothes were burned off as she writhed in agony and the mob howled in glee. Mrs. Turner was eight months pregnant, and while she was still alive, a knife used in splitting hogs was taken and her abdomen was cut open. The unborn infant fell from her womb to the ground and gave two feeble cries before a member of the mob crushed the baby's head beneath his heel. Hundreds of bullets were then fired into Mrs. Turner's dead body.  

Mr. White found that another Negro, Chime Riley, who had disappeared, was also lynched. The mob had evidently become fearful of too many outrages and had weighted his body and sunk it in the now infamous Little River. Again, this man was in no way connected with Smith's murder. A third Negro had mysteriously disappeared after the interior of his house was demolished and his family driven out. His body was never found but it was believed that he was also lynched. 

Meanwhile, Sidney Johnson was hiding in Valdosta, a nearby town. During this time he was said to have stated several times that he alone murdered Smith. A Negro, John Henry Bryant, told the mob where Johnson was. The house Johnson was in was immediately surrounded by a posse headed by Chief of Police Dampier. Johnson was armed and he returned the fire of the mob until he was killed. The crowd was furious at being cheated out of torturing and killing Johnson itself.
He was castrated and a rope was tied around his neck and attached to an automobile which dragged the body through the main streets of Valdosta in open daylight. The body was dragged to the scene of the crime where it was burned to a crisp.25

After the lynchings, more than five hundred Negroes left Brookes and Lowndes Counties in spite of threats that any Negro leaving the area would be considered implicated in the murder of Smith and would be dealt with accordingly. Mary White Ovington added that white children were held up in their fathers' arms to witness the brutality of Mary Turner's lynching. Edwin Embree related that White heard this statement from an eyewitness to Mary Turner's lynching: "It was the best show, Mister, I ever did see. You ought to have heard the wench howl when we strung her up." When Mr. White asked why such vengeance had resulted from the death of a man who was universally acknowledged to be mean, dishonest, hated by white and black alike, he was told, "We gotta show niggers they can't touch a white man, no matter how low-down he is." As to the innocent Negroes who were engulfed in the unleashed fury of the mob, "they were uppity or talked back or needed a dressin' down anyway." Mr. White remarked that the acres of untilled land flourishing with weeds and many deserted farm houses gave their own mute testimony of the Negroes' attitude toward a community where lynching mobs were allowed to visit vengeance upon any Negroes.26
All of the above facts, including the names of mob leaders and participants were given in person to Governor Hugh M. Dorsey by Mr. White on May 10. On July 10, Mr. White presented Governor Dorsey with a memorandum which contained the same information. Mr. White said that Governor Dorsey was glad to receive the information and denounced mob violence in a message addressed to the Georgia legislature July 3, 1918. However, when John Shillady later sent the same finding to Governor Dorsey, his answer was a letter that stated that no definite results had been obtained in efforts to apprehend the guilty parties. The letter bore a rubber-stamped signature.

The Red Summer of 1919 witnessed bloody race riots in Chicago, Omaha, Nebraska, Texas, Philadelphia, and Washington, D.C. The causes for the racial problems that summer were largely attributed to the end of World War I. Intense excitement had been drummed up for America's participation in the war, which ended too quickly to satiate the blood lust which had been aroused. Many white Americans deeply resented the fact that Negro men had been accepted on equal terms by white French women. And some Southerners were afraid that the drafting of Negroes for the army tended to put them on an equal footing with white men. The shortage of cheap labor in rural regions of the South was also resented by plantation owners. Negroes throughout the country were disheartened and dismayed.
because they had hoped that, since they had helped in the war effort, conditions would be better for them. The reverse was true and at least one Negro soldier was lynched because he wore the uniform of a United States soldier. Being overseas had enlightened many Negroes who were determined not to continue living in a state of virtual slavery in the South.\textsuperscript{28}

The climax of the Red Summer came with the riots in Phillips County, Arkansas, which were the most brutal of all these outbursts of violence. Over two hundred Negroes were killed there in October, 1919. However, out of the Phillips County riots arose a law case which constituted the second important constitutional victory for the NAACP and which affected the legal rights of both Negro and white Americans.\textsuperscript{29}

October 1, 1919, newspapers were headlining the story of a Negro uprising in Phillips County, Arkansas. It was said that Negroes were conspiring to massacre whites, seize their property and take control of the local and state governments. This conspiracy allegedly was organized under the title of The Progressive Farmers and Household Union of America. It was necessary to kill a number of the "black revolutionists" to restore law and order.\textsuperscript{30}

Walter White rushed to the scene to investigate the situation and report the true story. His expose' in The Crisis began with an explanation of the evils of the sharecropping or peonage system as it existed in the South. Negro tenants on Southern plantations were forced to buy all supplies and
household needs at the plantation commissary. Often as long as a year later they were presented with the little money that was left when their supplies were deducted from the reimbursement from the sale of their cotton. More commonly, however, they were presented with a statement of the amount of money they owed because their purchases were higher than the sale of their cotton. The price of cotton had greatly increased at that time, from 11 cents in 1915 to 40 cents in 1919, and the sharecroppers knew that they were being cheated. However, when individual Negroes had the temerity to demand a bill of sale or monthly itemized statements of their purchases they were beaten, driven out of town or even lynched. Therefore 68 Negro sharecroppers in Phillips County decided to organize to end this economic exploitation. They organized The Progressive Farmers and Household Union of America and hired a white lawyer, U. S. Bratton, to try test cases for them in the courts.31

Another organization arose, a union to raise the wages of cotton-pickers, who refused to pick cotton until they received higher wages. Also, at Elaine many Negroes who worked in the saw-mills refused to allow their wives and daughters to pick cotton or to work for a white man at any price. Negroes had also been buying large amounts of guns and ammunition, because of the riots occurring during the Red Summer and because the Ku Klux Klan was very active in that area. They felt that riots were likely to break out there and they were simply preparing to defend their homes and their lives for they knew
they would have no protection under the law. Mr. White states that the assembling of arms was for purely defensive purposes.  

On the Sunday before the riot, a white man, John Clem, became extremely intoxicated and proceeded to bully and terrorize the entire Negro population of Elaine (over four hundred people) by continuous gun play. The Negroes feared this might be a ruse to start a race riot and they stayed off the streets and avoided trouble. They phoned the sheriff at Helena but he did nothing. Tuesday some Negroes were holding a meeting in a church at Hoop Spur to raise money to pay Attorney Bratton. A deputy sheriff, a "special agent," and a Negro trusty came to investigate the meeting. They were refused admittance and thereupon proceeded to fire shots into the building. Their fire was returned and the Special Agent was killed and the deputy sheriff was wounded. It was later stated that the white men were merely driving along the road and had car trouble in front of the church when they were attacked by the Negroes without any provocation.

This incident caused the allegation of "Negro insurrection" and resulted in the gathering of white men, armed to the teeth, from as far away as Marianna and Forrest City, Arkansas, Memphis, Tennessee, and Clarksdale, Mississippi to conduct a big "nigger hunt." The woods were scoured, Negro homes attacked and unsuspecting Negroes were killed on the highways. Governor Brough called for Federal troops which came from Camp Pike, armed with rifles, cannons, gas masks,
hand grenades, bombs, and machine guns. The men were "mobilized to repel the attack of the black army." "Negro insurrectionists" were killed in a radius of fifty to one hundred miles, covering all of Phillips and parts of adjoining counties. Between two and three hundred Negroes were hunted down and shot like animals. Over a thousand Negro men and women were arrested and were placed under heavy guard in a "stockade" with the most disgusting sanitary conditions. They were not allowed to see friends or attorneys, while each individual was investigated by a secret white "committee of seven." No Negro was released unless a white man personally "vouched" for him as being a "good nigger." The white men were employers who refused to "vouch" for Negroes until they had given assurance and "guarantees" as to work and wages. All independent Negroes were held on charges of murder and rioting and refused bond. 34

During this time the son of U. S. Bratton had come to Phillips County merely to collect fees for his father's firm. He was arrested, with the Negroes who happened to be with him, on charges of "murder" and held without bond. Only the utmost precautions, special guards and patrols to protect him prevented him from being taken from the jail and lynched. He was held in jail for thirty-one days and then released without trial. Mr. White also tells the tragic story of four highly respected, prominent Negro brothers, two of whom were doctors. They were totally unaware of any trouble as they were squirrel hunting
when the riot began. They were brutally murdered on their way home. One of the brothers just happened to be visiting from Oklahoma.  

Seventy-nine Negroes were indicted and brought to trial on charges of murder and insurrection. Their trial lasted three-quarters of an hour and the courthouse was filled with and surrounded by an armed mob. The jury was out for five minutes and brought in verdicts condemning twelve of the men to death and sixty-seven to prison terms ranging from twenty years to life. At this point the NAACP entered the case to defend the condemned Negroes. Bratton was intimidated and moved to Detroit, but another courageous white lawyer, Colonel G. W. Murphy, took the case until his death. His able Negro associate, Scipio Africanus Jones, appealed the cases to the United States Supreme Court where Moorfield Storey took over and argued the case. The Supreme Court reversed the decision in the Leo Frank case and held that if a trial is dominated by a mob to the extent that justice is interfered with, then the principle of due process has been violated. The twelve farmers condemned to die were freed and the others were also released from prison.  

All accounts of this case ended on this happy note except that of Mary White Ovington, who sadly asked what happened to the sharecroppers who had formed the Progressive Farmers and Household Union of America? They did not get more money for the cotton that they had planted and cultivated and
picked, their union was destroyed, and they were forced back into the position from which they had tried to arise. The landlords and the sharecropping system which resulted in a state of peonage that virtually enslaved the Negro farmers had triumphed.

Walter White's investigation of the Phillips County riots further revealed his skill and courage. He was very anxious to go to Arkansas but the NAACP board feared that the danger would be too great a risk to his life, should his identity be revealed. Mary White Ovington reported that Mr. White's fearlessness broke down their caution, however, and he was sent to investigate the case. He was granted an audience with Governor Charles H. Brough who gave an extremely biased account of what had happened. Mr. White had represented himself as a reporter for a Northern newspaper and was told by the governor, "I am delighted that a Northern newspaper has sent so able and experienced a reporter to answer the foul lies the Chicago Defender and that infamous National Association for the Advancement of Colored People have been telling about the good white people of Arkansas." Governor Brough then gave Mr. White a letter of identification which greatly aided him in his investigation. Mr. White wanted to conclude his investigation by talking to the prisoners who were in the county jail at Helena. Sheriff Kitchen said he would meet White at the jail. As Mr. White walked to the jail a Negro walked alongside him and whispered that Mr. White should
follow him out of sight into a clump of woods. There the Negro told White that he had heard talk that the white folks were planning to do him harm. Mr. White ran for a train that was just leaving for Memphis. As he paid his fare in cash he explained that he had urgent business in Memphis and had not had time to pay for a ticket. The conductor said, "But you're leaving, mister, just when the fun is going to start. There's a damned yellow nigger down here passing for white and meddling in our affairs and the boys are going to get him." When Mr. White asked what they were going to do with him, the reply was, "When they get done with him he won't pass for white no more!" When Mr. White arrived in Memphis he learned that news had been circulated there that he had been lynched in Arkansas that afternoon.

Charles Flint Kellogg reported that Moorfield Storey, who won the Supreme Court case, gave full credit to Walter White, and that James Weldon Johnson commented on the intelligence and skill with which White had conducted the original investigations and the subsequent work on the cases at the national office. Mr. Kellogg said further, that the reputation White acquired in these years undoubtedly led to his selection as Johnson's successor as secretary of the NAACP.

In 1926 Walter White received a Guggenheim Fellowship Grant for creative writing because of the promise he had shown as a writer in his first two novels, The Fire in the Flint and Flight. Under the terms of the fellowship, Mr. White was
allowed to go to any foreign country and he and his family chose France. The fellowship was granted to write a three-generation novel of Negro life, but his concern with the monumental problem of lynching prompted him to write *Rope and Faggot: A Biography of Judge Lynch* instead. E. J. Kahn stated that it was one of the most authoritative works ever compiled about lynching. Kahn added, "The book had a notably nonbeneficial effect, though, on a number of citizens of the United States, who, after reading it or reading about it, took the attitude that it was White's third work of fiction and recommended that its author be tarred, feathered and strung up on a tree." However, most reviewers, including many from the South, hailed the book as the first attempt to analyze the causative factors of lynchings. The book was included in the required reading or reference lists of many colleges, universities and high schools.

*Rope and Faggot*, published in 1929 by Alfred A. Knopf, is a documented study of the complex influences behind lynching. These influences included such recognized factors as economic, political and social ones as well as the less frequently discussed factors of religion and sex. Mr. White prefaced the book with a statement by William Graham Summer about lynching.

It would be a disgrace to us if amongst us men should burn a rattlesnake or a mad dog. The badness of the victim is not an element in the case at all. Torture and burning are forbidden, not because the victim is not bad enough, but because we are too good. . . . It is evident, however, that public opinion is not educated up to this level.
In the first chapter Mr. White attempted to describe the mind of the lyncher. After relating an incident in which Mr. White encountered three healthy, happy white girls who joyously told him of "the fun we had burning the niggers," he stated that the worst aspect of lynching was the warping of the minds of Southern children. Children who were brought up in communities where they were allowed to participate in lynchings and the morbid scramble for charred bones of the victims, where lynchings were justified and lynchers were exalted as men of bravery and forthrightness could not help but develop warped minds which would later demand more victims. To quote Mr. White:

Generation after generation of Southern whites have been handicapped and stunted in their mental and moral growth by such a situation. They have had it constantly dinned into their ears from pulpit and press, in the home and school and on the street, that Negroes are given to sex crimes, that only lynching can protect white women, that unmentionably horrible deeds can be prevented only through the use of extreme brutality. Added to this is the belief that any white man, no matter how inept, criminal, or depraved, is infinitely superior to the "best Negro who ever lived." It is a well-known fact that any idea, no matter how unsound, if repeated often enough and in a sufficiently assured manner, is eventually adopted by the mob as its own. One can estimate the long and difficult climb the Southern white child, living in an atmosphere where dissenting opinion is ruthlessly suppressed, must make to attain even a reasonably intelligent attitude towards lynching and the Negro.

Mr. White listed four main factors which contributed to the creation of the psychology of the lyncher. The first was that the lynching states suffered from derelict officials. The lyncher had no need to feel the slightest apprehension of
punishment or even investigation. Second, Southern towns were amazingly drab and boring. The ignorant ministry declared as sinful the few pleasures available to the citizens of stagnant small towns. The human love of excitement led to lynching as a form of amusement. The third factor was the human unwillingness to form new ideas. Because the rural South was more backward it was more susceptible to this. The fourth factor was an outgrowth of the third. It was the persisting stereotypes of the Negro as a buffoon, a criminal, or a menial.

Mr. White stated that lynching was much more an expression of Southern fear of Negro progress than of Negro crime. Prosperous Negroes did not fit into the stereotypes and, therefore, generated fear. Physical violence upon the person of the member of the "inferior" race who had proved himself not so inferior was the only balm for the poor white's damaged self-esteem and eradicator of his fear.

The most potent reason for the resort to physical violence in the South was the fact that region had been on the defensive from the very beginning of the Negro problem and it had been defending an indefensible position. The Civil War and the emancipation of slaves increased rather than decreased the need for such defense. Mr. White said that the Ku Klux Klan was a concrete example of the working of the defense mechanism in its resort to physical violence. When peaceful efforts to suppress the Negro were unsuccessful, the lyncher hoped by increased savagery to do so. It was this attitude
which created the South's emotional fixation on the Negro. White said, 

Having created the mental picture of the Negro as inferior, dangerously addicted to sex crimes, and likely to burst into unbelievably horrible activities if pressure upon him is slackened in the least, the South has become the quailed victim of its own selfishly created fear, which is rooted in this defense mechanism. The result clearly has worked for the almost complete closing of many Southern minds to facts or reason. 

In the second chapter Mr. White pointed out that although the number of lynchings was decreasing each year, the savagery and the extent of almost unbelievable torture was increasing. He listed numerous cases of torture before death, including victims who were burned alive, beaten to death, cut to pieces, drowned, and dragged through the streets by an automobile. The states which led in the number of lynchings also led in the brutality by which they were executed. Besides detailing the torture lynching victims underwent, Mr. White revealed the complete immunity the mob members felt from prosecution. One headline reads, "MOB MEMBER LAUGHS AT PROBE." Lynching mobs even broke into insane asylums and hospitals looking for victims. Mr. White felt that "the terrible burnings, mutilations and deeds too horrible for further detailing even in a study of lynching are doing more moral and psychological damage to their perpetrators than a greater number of victims executed by the more humane methods of hanging or shooting." He fully agreed with James Weldon Johnson's observation that "lynching in the United States has
resolved itself into a problem of saving black America's body and white America's soul.⁴⁸

In the chapter entitled "Religion and Judge Lynch" Mr. White brought to light an aspect of lynching which had never been fully dealt with. He made startling accusations and offered proof for them in the text as well as in a lengthy appendix. He said that it was very doubtful if lynching could possibly exist under any other religion than Christianity. He pointed out that Christianity is the only religion to draw the color line. He quoted from Du Bois' The Negro, "Color was never a badge of slavery in the ancient or medieval world, nor has it been in the modern world outside of Christian states."⁴⁹ Mr. White said that the Christian Church not only gave its approval to lynching through acquiescence but that the evangelical Christian denominations actually created a particular brand of fanaticism which found an outlet in lynching. The states with the greatest number of lynchings were also the states with the greatest majority of church members of the evangelical wing of Protestantism. Violently emotional revival services which stirred men and women to a frenzy created dangerous passions which when released, contributed to emotional instability as well as lynching. Because the Church defended slavery, Protestantism in the United States lost touch with the teachings of tolerance and human brotherhood preached by Jesus and became the religion of the Anglo-Saxon or "superior" race. Mr. White declared,
Protestantism in the lynching states has become the stronghold of bigotry, directing its onslaughts against Negroes, Catholics, and Jews. It is no accident that William Joseph Simmons, a Methodist lay preacher, should have been the one to resurrect the infamous Ku Klux Klan. No especial shrewdness was needed by him to realize that Baptist and Methodist preachers were the very best material for Klan organizers.

White saw the Scopes trial as a typical by-product of the ignorance promulgated by the evangelical religions which also contributed to lynchings which he maintained seldom occurred when there was enlightenment.

Mr. White stated that sex was the most potent of all emotional determinants of lynchings, a fact which blocked a solution to the problem because it was the least openly and honestly discussed. In the chapter entitled "Sex and Lynching," he lists five reasons why the lynching states were so preoccupied by sex. The first reason was because of the lack of entertainment in small rural areas. Sex, lynching, and church attendance were the only diversions available as a means of escape from the grim and sordid reality of work. The second reason was mentioned earlier also. As a result of claiming that lynching was the only means to protect Southern women from sex crimes by Negroes, the South had become the terrified victim of the fears of its own conjuring. There was, of course, ample proof that only a small percentage of Negroes who were lynched were even accused of rape. It is Mr. White's contention that the lyncher not only had to live in fear of his own creation but the lie actually caused more crimes of this nature.
than there would have been in a more sane and normal environment. Because of the power of suggestion, mentally deficient Negroes may have tried what would not have occurred to them otherwise. The third cause of sex-obsession in the South was the Southern white woman's proneness to hysteria where Negroes are concerned. Fourth reason was the primitiveness and the intenseness of the evangelical religions in the lynching states, which actually induced sexual emotions. There was also a direct correlation between the extent of Fundamentalism, the ignorance of the clergy and the opposition to scientific advancement. Dr. A. A. Brill, a psychiatrist, linked propensity to mob violence to abnormal sex instincts.

The torture which is an accompaniment of modern lynching shows that it is an act of perversion only found in those suffering from extreme forms of sexual perversion. Such bestiality can be recognized only as a form of perversion. Lynching is a distinct menace to the community. It allows primitive brutality to assert itself and thus destroys the strongest fabric of civilization. Anyone taking part in or witnessing a lynching cannot remain a civilized person.

The fifth reason for preoccupation with sex in the lynching states, Mr. White declared, was the traditional attitude toward colored women. For two and a half centuries of slavery, slave women had no control over or defense of their bodies. He said that it is axiomatic that society cannot maintain for any great length of time dual standards of personal conduct which are diametrically opposed to each other. The derogatory attitude toward colored women cannot help but carry over into the attitudes toward white women. The sixth reason for the
Southern sensitiveness about sex was the false statement that there is an ineradicable repulsion between the races which will keep the two races eternally separated. The most frightening part of the fact to Southerners is that this is just not true—not only are white men attracted to Negro women, as they have proved many times over, but white women are also attracted to colored men. If there were a natural repulsion, it obviously would not have been necessary for twenty-nine states to enact anti-intermarriage laws. Mr. White twice cites the statement of the Rev. C. A. Owens, an eminent white Baptist minister, who gave his reasons for supporting the Ku Klux Klan as follows:

> With the present movement northward of Negroes and in the absence of a race prejudice that has protected the Southerners, there is the greatest possible danger of the mingling of the races, so that in the future it may come to pass that you will send your daughter to the North for culture and she will come back with a little Negro.

Mr. White remarked that it was fortunate for Mr. Owens that he was neither a Northerner nor a Negro because he would probably be threatened with lynching for this "slur upon the fair name of Southern womanhood" if he were. The great percentage of white Southern population with colored blood was then speculated upon. Mr. White felt that the repeal of the laws forbidding intermarriage would have done more to protect womanhood than ten thousand burnings. First, of course, it would have protected Negro women from rape and seduction. Many lynchings occurred when Negroes tried to protect their women from the advances of white men. Second, these laws
contributed to the moral degradation of white men who could commit sex crimes against another race with legal immunity. 53

In the chapter "Economic Foundations of Lynch-Law," Mr. White asserted that lynching and all the underlying reasons for it all had one central objective—the economic ascendancy over Negro labor. The sentence, "Lynching has always been the means for protection, not of white women, but of profits," 54 was underlined. The rest of the chapter was devoted to proving that statement. Mr. White went back to the days of slavery and reviews the economic principles on which it was based. Throughout the book, but especially in this chapter he quoted Charles and Mary Beard's book, *The Rise of American Civilization*.

From 1830 until the Civil War most lynchings were committed against white men who were abolitionist who made known their anti-slavery sentiments. Few Negroes were lynched as they were valuable as personal property. The number of lynchings grew as the false boom of prosperity which the invention of the cotton gin brought about grew. It is interesting to note that there were no charges of rape against Negroes from 1619 to 1930. Since the South was trying to defend a system that was morally indefensible and economically unsound it had to resort to brute force as a last refuge for an indefensible position. Immediately after the Civil War lynching was revolutionized because the Negro no longer had a cash value. From the Reconstruction era to the 1950's the great majority of lynching victims were Negroes.
When the Negro did start to make some progress there was a marked increase in lynchings. The South tried to reenslave the Negro and thereby destroyed one of its greatest economic assets. Du Bois was cited for his statement that "the white South feared more than Negro dishonesty, ignorance and incompetency, Negro honesty, knowledge, and efficiency." There was another upsurge in lynchings during the 1890's when economic exploitation based upon skin color spread from the United States throughout the world. There was also the appearance of Southern political demagogues such as Cole Blease, Hoke Smith and "Pitchfork" Ben Tillman, who gained political success by standing on platforms of race hatred and vilification of the Negro. The short-lived success of the Populist Party had created fertile ground for these politicians who cashed in on the white South's fear of the Negro's economic progress and who thereby created the atmosphere for unprecedented mob violence. Although poor whites suffered as much from the sharecropping system as Negroes, their fears were manipulated to create a large part of the mob violence. World imperialism, which centered in Africa and led to the disparagement of those with dark skin and the mythical theory of Aryan or white "superiority," gave encouragement and condonement to what the white South was doing to its dark-skinned brothers.

After World War I various factors, especially the enlightenment of Negro soldiers and the mass migration of
Negroes to the North led to another wave of lynchings and mob violence. When the South realized that it was losing its source of economic exploitation it reverted to form and tried to stay the migration by brute force. It was Mr. White's opinion that lynching would never be eliminated in America until there was a general recognition of the real underlying economic factors of lynching and the falsity of the extraneous and vicious reasons given for lynching.

In the chapter on science, Nordicism and lynching, Mr. White effectively invalidated the scientific theories of racial (white) superiority and (black) inferiority. He exposed the damage that was done by the "scientific jargon" which was prevalent and condoned the South's treatment of Negroes. Mr. White presented many scientific theories and the names of the scientists who formed them. He disproved theories such as the relative ability of various races which are based on brain weights and conformations. Mr. White himself could point out obvious contradictions in studies such as Robert Bean's, which said that the mulatto was the most dangerous of all characters to human society but also said that the natural hereditary deficiency of the Negro could be altered only by crossing with other races. In the field of psychology and intelligence tests, Mr. White could only compare studies and bring to light the newly developing theories of environmental factors as being crucial in the testing of intelligence. There were glaring discrepancies in this field
also. One study concluded, for example, that mill whites were inferior because of poorer social and economic advantages but that Negroes' lower rating was due to racial inferiority.

The chapter, "The Price of Lynching," repeated much of what had previously been discussed in the chapters on the mind of the lyncher, religion, sex, and economic factors in lynching. White added that a major factor in the South's backwardness was due to the amount of effort it had put forth to keep the Negro down. He again quoted James Weldon Johnson, "If the Negro is so distinctly inferior, it is a strange thing to me that it takes such tremendous effort on the part of the white man to make him realize it, and to keep him in the same place into which inferior men naturally fall." Another observation was the disesteem in which the United States was held because of lynching, which was worldwide but especially scorned in colored countries. There were also some very pertinent comments about the position white women were thrust into because lynching was supposedly to defend their honor. Some of his delightful remarks would be much appreciated by such an up-to-date movement as Women's Liberation.

Although Mr. White never underestimated the tremendous harm that the lynch law wreaked on America, he did indicate some optimism for the future. He mentioned the more enlightened attitude of the white press toward lynching. The Negro
press was also emerging as a powerful force at that time. He also discussed the accomplishments of organizations such as the NAACP and the Commission on Interracial Cooperation which were working for the abolishment of lynching as well as better conditions in general for Negroes. He felt that there were some indications that the South was becoming more enlightened to the causes of her problems. Also promising was the fact that Negroes were becoming more militant and were resisting oppression. White mobs would be more hesitant to attack Negroes if there was the chance that several whites would be killed also in the ensuing melee.

Mr. White made it clear, by listing state anti-lynching laws and their indifferent success, that a Federal anti-lynching law was necessary to stop this crime. He then traced the efforts that had been made to pass such a bill since 1902. He discussed the problems encountered in trying to pass the Dyer Bill. There was the contention that such a law was unconstitutional. Mr. White presents a rather lengthy analysis of Supreme Court cases to demonstrate that a Federal anti-lynching law would be constitutional. He relied heavily on a brief presented by Herbert K. Stockton to the Senate Judiciary Committee. The largest obstacle, however, was the type of individuals the white South chose to represent them in the Senate. The filibusters in that House of Congress were what really kept the Government's hands tied in the situation.
Rope and Faggot was a very good study of the causes of lynching. The facts, figures and conclusions were based on reliable studies. There is an extensive appendix with informative tables and a text which draws reliable conclusions from the tables. There is a bibliography. Mr. White always cites his sources, but he seldom gives footnotes which contain the publisher, date of publication and pages referred to. It could not, therefore, be considered a thoroughly historical document. The majority of footnotes are contained in the chapters on science and economics.

Mr. White was qualified to write a book on lynchings because of his investigations and his other work with the NAACP. His personal investigations of lynchings added a touch of reality and horror to what could have been an uninteresting, dry compilation of facts. He did admirably well in the one chapter which was out of his field, the chapter on science. At the time he wrote the book, the fields of psychology and sociology were not as well developed as they are now and there were few reliable studies in science on inferiority or superiority of races. We know today that his analysis of conflicting studies was correct.

The book received very good reviews. R. A. Gibson said that Mr. White knew more about lynchings than any man in America, because his personal investigation of lynchings had acquainted him with the participants in the affairs. He said that the book was an invaluable contribution to logical
understanding of race problems in the United States.\textsuperscript{57}

V. F. Calvertson for the \textit{New York World} said that the book was sound in its analysis and scientific in its conclusions.\textsuperscript{58} Horace Gregory\textsuperscript{59} and Ben Wasson agreed that the study was a scientific treatment of the subject, which presented a realistic picture of lynchings.\textsuperscript{60} Clarence Darrow and M. J. Herskovits also gave the book excellent reviews.\textsuperscript{61}

It became obvious to anyone studying the situation that Federal legislation was necessary to protect Negroes from lynching. In his book, \textit{Rope and Faggot}, White effectively demonstrated that state anti-lynching laws were poorly constructed and very ineffective. The NAACP since its inception had conducted a campaign against lynching to arouse the conscience of the nation against the shame of America. It had investigated and published the findings of lynchings, sponsored mass meetings and conferences, and tried to bring about the prosecution of perpetrators of the crimes.\textsuperscript{62}

Professor David O. Walter traced the efforts to enact federal legislation against lynching. The earliest of these attempts were made in behalf of the protection of aliens in this country from mob violence in 1891. The first suggestion for a Federal law to protect Negroes specifically against lynching was presented to Congress in 1892. From that time until 1918 similar bills were introduced in either
the Senate or the House on the average of every two years, only to be quickly defeated. In 1918 Representative Leonidas C. Dyer of Missouri introduced a bill to protect citizens of the United States against lynching in default of protection by the states. Similar bills were later introduced by Representatives Moore, Gahn, Dallinger, and Ansorge. All of these bills were similar in form to one proposed by Representative Moody in 1901. Later proposals have also followed closely the provisions of the Dyer bill (H.R. 13).

The first extended and wholehearted campaign by the NAACP to secure the enactment of a Federal law against lynching was started in the latter part of 1919 when James Weldon Johnson visited Washington to see if Senator Capper would introduce such a bill in the Senate. He was referred to Senator Curtis and then to Representative Dyer. In April, 1921 Mr. Dyer introduced H.R. 13, a bill "to assure to persons within the jurisdiction of every state the equal protection of the laws, and to punish the crime of lynching." Mr. Johnson saw and talked with every man in Congress who he thought was interested in the bill or could be won over to it. For two years Mr. Johnson was in Washington while Congress was in session lobbying for the bill. Mr. Johnson skillfully led the fight for the passage of this bill. He set the pace of persistence and the techniques which Walter White would later use in his fight for the passage of the Costigan-Wagner Bill.
Mr. Johnson kept every Congressman fully informed on the extent and truth about lynching in the United States. Every time a new lynching occurred Johnson sent notices into Congress. He met many influential people in Washington. He convinced many influential people from all over the United States, such as governors, mayors, jurists, lawyers, bishops and ministers, college presidents and professors, editors and journalists, and the leaders of NAACP branches to put pressure on Congress through letters, petitions, telephone calls and telegrams. Mr. White frequently joined Mr. Johnson in appearing before Senate and House committees. Mr. White did indeed have an able mentor in Mr. Johnson. 65

The Dyer Bill was passed by the House by a vote of 230 to 119 in 1922. In the Senate the opposition to the bill was vehement. Its opponents declared it to be unconstitutional invasion of the reserved powers of the states. Southern Democrats killed the bill in the Senate, using filibustering methods which were openly avowed by Senator Underwood to prevent vote of the bill. However, Mr. Johnson made it clear that Republican Congressmen did not fight for the bill as they had promised. Its defeat was a factor in destroying the unswerving loyalty among Negroes to the Republican Party. The death of the Dyer Anti-Lynching Bill was a bitter defeat but advantages came from the fight for it. It made the floors of Congress a forum in which the facts were discussed and, as a result, the number of lynchings was drastically reduced. After the failure
of the Dyer Bill unsuccessful measures were introduced in Congress, again on the average of every two years, until 1933 when nine bills were introduced and Walter White began his fight for an anti-lynching law. 66

Mary White Ovington said that the six-year fight (1934-1940) for Federal anti-lynching legislation which was led by Walter White brought the greatest victory the Association had known—it united the Negroes of the United States. In 1933 the Association's legal committee, in consultation with a number of eminent constitutional lawyers drew up an anti-lynching bill which was introduced in the Senate in 1934 by Senator Edward Costigan of Colorado and Senator Robert Wagner of New York. S1978 and later bills had three basic provisions. First, "to assure to persons within the jurisdiction of every state the equal protection of the laws and to punish the crime of lynching." If the state had taken no action in thirty days, a lynching case should be tried in a Federal Court. Second, if the Federal Court found that state and local officials had been derelict in their duties by failing to protect their prisoners or in arresting and prosecuting violators of the law, they would be punished by fine or imprisonment. Law enforcement officials who aided the mob in lynching would be imprisoned from five years to life. Third, a fine of not less than $2,000 or more than $10,000 would be levied against the county where the lynching occurred, to be paid to the heirs of the victim. 67
The bill was referred to the Senate Judiciary Committee where it was given a hearing in February. Fifty persons testified about the evils of lynching and the need for Federal legislation. Half of them were white Southerners, among them Attorney General Preston Lane of Maryland, who testified to his inability to secure action against persons who investigators declared were members of a lynching mob.

On February 20, 1934, Walter White appeared before a Senate Judiciary Subcommittee. He testified that from 1882 to 1934, 5,053 lynchings had occurred. Of this number, 3,513 were Negroes of which 77 were Negro women. He said that the misconception that there was some connection between lynching and sex offenses by Negroes against white women must be cleared up. Of the 2,522 Negroes lynched from 1889 to 1918, only 477 were even charged with rape by the mobs themselves. So less than one-fifth of colored men who were lynched were even accused of the "usual crime"; and it should be remembered that a mob's accusation is by no means equivalent to conviction. A second misconception that the mob victims were usually guilty was disproved by a study made under the auspices of the Southern Commission for the Study of Lynching. This impartial and Southern authority showed that 13 of the 21 persons lynched in 1930 were innocent victims of mob rage. Mr. White added that he had found in his personal investigations of 41 lynchings and eight race riots that in the majority of cases the victims were either wholly innocent of any crime whatsoever or
were guilty of lesser crimes than those for which they were lynched. 68

White then testified that states were either unwilling or unable to control lynching. He said that some Northern states had taken commendable action but that the states where lynchings were most frequent would neither pass adequate laws against lynching nor exert genuine effort to enforce them so the Costigan-Wagner Federal Bill was necessary. He stated that there was considerably more Southern support for such legislation than there had been in 1922, especially among the Southern press. He then requested that many editorials and articles of recent date from all over the United States which expressed favorable attitudes to the bill be made part of the record. Mr. White stated that he felt the "States Rights" argument was unsound and gave the reasons for his position. He then presented a brief explanation of why many lawyers felt that the legislation was constitutional and pointed out that in any case only the Supreme Court of the United States could make the decision. He then stated that twelve million Negroes would be looking anxiously to Congress for speedy and favorable action on this bill. He said certain radical movements (Communists) were trying to convince the American Negro that his hope of justice under the present form of government was useless and that he must help to overthrow this government to receive justice. Their propaganda had not succeeded so far, but he reminded the committee that these twelve million Negroes were closely watching their actions.
There was some further discussion of the constitutionality and it was pointed out that the next two witnesses, Arthur B. Spingarn and Herbert K. Stockton, were prepared to discuss this matter at length. Mr. White concluded by requesting that letters from twelve governors of states expressing their opinion of the legislation be made a part of the record. It was obvious that these were in response to a request for their opinion made by Mr. White. 69

On March 28, 1934, the Judiciary Committee recommended the Costigan-Wagner bill with minor amendments. Walter White started lobbying actively for the bill, following techniques he had learned from James Weldon Johnson. Information on the progress of the bill was widely publicized, prominent figures endorsed it, Congressmen were kept informed on current lynchings in the United States, and White personally talked to scores of Congressmen. A petition presented to President Roosevelt in December, 1934, was signed by a similar list of prominent people, as that of the earlier mentioned petition to the Senate urging the enactment of the Dyer Anti-Lynching Bill. Walter White, Lewis Gannett of the New York Herald Tribune, Helen Woodward, and Benjamin Stolberg organized the Writers' League Against Lynching. This league grew to include over two hundred leading writers, editors and publishers. The League brought Mr. White into the first of a series of clashes with journalist Westbrook Pegler. Although the NAACP made a strenuous effort to bring pressure to bear and to force
favorable action by the Senate, filibustering techniques prevented the bill from being considered in 1934.\textsuperscript{70}

The January issue of The Crisis, which was devoted to information about the anti-lynching bill, asked that readers send letters to Washington and money to the Association to continue the fight. It also printed replies from Senators and Representatives who were asked to state their positions on the anti-lynching bill. At another Senate Judiciary Subcommittee meeting on February 14, 1935, Mr. White predicted that there would be no cessation of lynchings until Federal legislation was enacted. He said there were three sources of opposition to the Costigan-Wagner Bill. First the lynchers themselves who did not want this American "folkway" to be interfered with. They wanted to be able to lynch with impunity and without fear of punishment. He stressed that in most of the states where lynchings took place, the Negro citizens were disfranchised in flagrant violation of the Federal Constitution and therefore the law enforcement officials of those states felt that they had no responsibility to Negro citizens who could not vote, and preferred to yield to the pressure of the mobs themselves. Second, there were those who felt the measure was unconstitutional. He felt that while a few of them were sincere, most of them were merely masking less worthy motives. Third, some claimed that it would be used against labor in industrial disputes, but Mr. White stated that if they would take the time and trouble
to read the bill they would see that it could not be used in this manner. He said that a review of the record of lynchings since the 73rd Congress adjourned without taking action on the Costigan-Wagner Bill was proof that lynching would not stop until Congress enacted anti-lynching legislation. The record showed that while the bill was pending there were no lynchings; however, after no action was taken, there were sixteen lynchings. He concluded with the request that petitions and resolutions from state legislatures, politicians, professional people, Southern white college students from thirty-one colleges and Catholics, Protestants, and Jews be entered in the record.

The Costigan-Wagner Bill was taken up by the Senate on April 16, 1935. The first to debate it was Senator "Cotton Ed" Smith of South Carolina, who immediately launched a venomous attack on the bill and said that Negroes must be lynched to protect the fair womanhood of the South from beasts. He resorted to this old, false argument in spite of the testimony Mr. White had given in the subcommittee hearings and the fact that the NAACP had placed literature on this very subject on the desks of every Senator. The bill's opponents were determined not to let it come to a vote and attempted to dislodge it from the Senate calendar by motion to adjourn, but this tactic failed until May 1.

During this time, Mr. White had tried unsuccessfully to talk to President Roosevelt to urge him to take a definite
stand on the bill. He later learned that Marvin McIntyre, Roosevelt's secretary, had intercepted his letters and telegrams. He turned to Mrs. Roosevelt, who arranged a meeting with the President in April and briefed him on what the President's objections to the bill would be. Mr. White was therefore ready with factual answers to all the President's questions but it did not help because Mr. Roosevelt was frankly unwilling to challenge the Southern leadership of his party. He said that he regretted that he did not have better politicians from the South to work with, but if he came out for the anti-lynching bill he could not get his New Deal legislation passed. In May, Mr. White resigned from the Virgin Islands Advisory Council to which he had been named by President Roosevelt in protest against the President's silence during the anti-lynching filibuster. 73

The NAACP and Mr. White continued the fight against lynching. In 1936 the Association gave strong support to a resolution introduced by Senator Van Nuys of Indiana to investigate current lynchings. This came to nothing because the committee which was formed was headed by Senator Byrnes of South Carolina and was never called together.

An NAACP-sponsored anti-lynching bill was next introduced in the House by Representative Joseph A. Gavagan of New York in 1937. It was promptly referred to the Judiciary Committee where the chairman, Representative Hatton W. Summers of Texas, stubbornly and without apology, refused even to permit hearings
on the measure or to take the bill out of committee. Congressman Gavagan proceeded to place a discharge petition on the speaker's desk. When over half of the signatures necessary had been quickly obtained, Congressman Summers became alarmed and introduced about the weakest of the sixty other anti-lynching bills that had been buried in committee. This was a bill which had been introduced by Arthur W. Mitchell from Chicago, who was the only Negro Congressman at the time. The provisions of the Mitchell Bill were so innocuous that it would probably not have helped at all to stop lynchings or punish lynchers; but Congressman Summers later told Mr. White that he did not think the NAACP would have the nerve to oppose passage of a bill introduced by the only Negro member of Congress. However, the NAACP quickly marshaled its forces and the Mitchell Bill was defeated by a vote of 257 to 123. Within a week, the House passed the Gavagan Bill by a vote of 277 to 120. The NAACP Annual Report commended Congressman Gavagan for his brilliant parliamentary strategy. It said he yielded no points and permitted no amendments. The passage of the bill was also aided by the reading in Congress of a press dispatch about the brutal Duck Hill, Mississippi, blowtorch lynchings. 74

However, this bill and later ones were consistently defeated by Senate filibusters. Southern Congressmen deeply resented the persistent lobbying efforts of Walter White and openly attacked him on the floor of the Senate. November 17,
1937, Senator Connally of Texas ridiculed Mr. White, the NAACP, and Negroes in general, amid bursts of laughter, as follows:

I understand they had this colored man in the meeting [the Senate Judiciary Committee] and I have no objection to his being a colored man. I am not prejudiced against colored men. I protect them in my state. . . . I cannot say what I heard but they met with this colored man. . . . a fellow named White. He runs the Association for the Advancement of Colored People. I do not know what happened, cannot say what happened because I was not there. Frankly I was not called in on this bill. They did not ask me whether I wanted it to come up or not.75

Senator James Byrnes of South Carolina was more emotional and less humorous on January 11, 1938. He pointed straight at Walter White who was seated quietly in the gallery, and shouted:

The South may just as well know. . . . that it has been deserted by Democrats of the North. . . . one Negro, whose name has heretofore been mentioned in the debate--Walter White, secretary of the Association for the Advancement of Colored People--has ordered this bill to pass. If a majority can bring about a vote, the bill will pass. . . . If Walter White should consent to have this bill laid aside its advocates would desert it as quickly as football players unscramble when the whistle of the referee is heard. . . . This man from day to day sits in the gallery and has worked for this bill for years. . . . What legislation will he next demand of the Congress of the United States? Will he demand that Congress enact legislation to punish officials of a state which fails to protect Negroes in the right to stop at hotels where white persons are entertained? . . . Will he demand the enactment of laws providing for the supervision of elections within the states? I do not know but I know he will make other demands and that those who are willing to vote for this bill because he demands it will acquiesce in subsequent demands.76

Senator Byrnes was right, of course. Walter White, not the NAACP, nor the Negroes of America would have stopped
demanding justice merely because they were successful in obtaining justice in one small area in a land that was filled with numerous injustices toward members of their race.

Senator Byrnes and his colleagues did succeed in slowing down the Negroes' progress in the fight for equality by filibustering to death numerous measures to protect Americans against lynching. However, it does make one realize how far the Negro in America has progressed in thirty-three years when one sees how horrified and frightened Senator Byrnes was at the possibility that Walter White would demand that legislation be passed which would allow Negroes to be entertained in the same hotels which entertained whites and which would allow Negroes to enjoy their constitutional right to vote in the South.

A six-week filibuster was successful in 1938, when an emergency relief appropriation bill to feed the unemployed was used to displace the anti-lynching bill in the Senate. After an unsuccessful attempt to compel a vote on the bill by securing cloture, even Senators Wagner and Van Nuys (who had joined as co-sponsor when Mr. Costigan left the Senate) conceded the necessity of "getting on" with the New Deal legislation.77

Walter White and the Association continued to fight unsuccessfully for anti-lynching legislation until 1940. In 1944, the Association stated that a presidential candidate who wished to seek the votes of Negroes must be committed to the
passage of anti-lynching legislation among other things. Walter White's contribution was immeasurable. He worked courageously and continuously to rid America of lynching. In 1937, he was awarded the Spingarn Medal for the work he had done in investigating lynchings, lobbying for Federal anti-lynching legislation and for the books and articles he had written about it. The Crisis said "He was the most effective leader of the crusade to rid the nation of this bestial crime." It has been stated that Mr. White's lobbying tactics were very unusual because he was always straight-forward and honest and he refused to play the angles. Another high-salaried lobbyist told White, "I have been watching you for a long time working around here trying to get your anti-lynching bill passed. You haven't a ghost of a chance as long as you operate as you do. I don't favor the bill, but I can't help but admire the way you are working on a shoestring, appealing to the 'better nature' of politicians." He then invited Mr. White to his office where he brought out files about United States Senators. Mr. White said their contents were filthy and were used for blackmailing purposes. He asked to see files on several Senators whom he knew to be honest. They too were full with trumped-up charges by neurotic women, which he said even an amateur psychiatrist would have recognized as either fantastic or purchased. He said that after examining the files he felt a strong urge to wash his hands with carbolic acid soap to cleanse them of the
filth he had touched. Mr. White never used these files or any other back-door tactics. He also refused to compromise or make deals in any way. President Roosevelt once told White that he thought he could get the anti-lynching bill passed if White would agree to delete the demand that counties, in which an unpunished lynching had taken place, pay a fine. Mr. White's answer was that he would not accept any anti-lynching bill that did not come up to his specifications. He wrote a letter to his wife which included the statement, "Democracy must be tough-fibered to survive practice of it by democrats."\(^1\)

Although the desired legislation was never passed, many beneficial results did come from the attempts to achieve it. The nation was awakened to and informed about the truth and the extent and the outrageous hideousness of the Shame of America. It served as a basis for six years of continuous and successful propaganda. Hundreds of organizations and newspapers endorsed the need for legislation. The number of lynchings did decrease drastically and never again returned to the height of previous years. A national acceptance of Negro rights began to develop, and the Negroes of America were united as never before.\(^2\)
FOOTNOTES

1 Johnson, Along This Way, pp. 316-17; Ovington, The Walls Came Tumbling Down, p. 148.


4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid. pp. 82-83.


8 Ibid.

9 Ibid.


11 White, A Man Called White, pp. 40-41.


13 Ibid., p. 17.

14 Ibid., p. 18.

15 Ibid., pp. 19-20.

16 Ibid., p. 20.

17 Ibid., p. 20.

18 Johnson, Along This Way, pp. 333-34.


37 Ovington, The Walls Came Tumbling Down, p. 163.

38 White, A Man Called White, pp. 50-51.

39 Kellogg, NAACP: A History, p. 244.

40 White, A Man Called White, p. 92.

41 Ibid., p. 94.

42 Kahn, "Profiles," The New Yorker, p. 42.

43 White, A Man Called White, p. 98.

44 White, Rope and Faggot, p. vii.


46 Ibid., p. 16.

47 Ibid., p. 38.

48 Ibid., p. 33.

49 Ibid., p. 40.

50 Ibid., p. 46.

51 Ibid., p. 53.

52 Ibid., p. 61.

53 Ibid., p. 68.

54 Ibid., p. 82.

55 Ibid., p. 97.

56 Ibid., p. 155.


64. Ibid.; Johnson, Along This Way, pp. 362-368; Ovington, The Walls Came Tumbling Down, pp. 236-238.


68. U. S. Congress, Senate, Committee on the Judiciary, Punishment for the Crime of Lynching, before a subcommittee of the Committee of the Judiciary, Senate, on S.1987, 73d Cong., 2nd sess. (February 20, 21, 1934), pp. 10-11.

69. Ibid., pp. 11-17.


75 U. S. Congress, Senate, Congressional Record, 75th Cong., 2nd Sess. (November 17, 1937), p. 68.


80 White, A Man Called White, p. 121.

81 Ibid., pp. 210-222; Kahn, "Profiles," The New Yorker, p. 34.

Walter White wrote two novels: *The Fire in the Flint*, published in 1924, and *Flight*, published in 1926. He wrote the former in twelve days during a vacation at "Riverbrook," the home of Mary White Ovington. He wrote the book in response to a suggestion by H. L. Mencken. White had criticized T. S. Stribling for not portraying educated Negroes accurately in the novel *Birthright*. Mencken asked White, "Why don't you do the right kind of novel? You could do it and it would create a sensation." Mr. White did write a novel, *The Fire in the Flint*, and it did create a sensation. The book was quite controversial and thereby became a best seller. Many book reviews for Southern newspapers denounced it. Laurence Stallings, the literary editor of the *New York World*, gave the book a favorable review in which he consistently referred to the author as Mr. White. Because of this, his column was cancelled by the *Macon Daily Telegraph*, a newspaper published in his home town. The newspaper had received many denunciatory letters, and to make its position clear, it published several editorials denouncing Stallings and White. Mr. White considered it a great honor that his work was one of those burned in Germany when Hitler came to power.
The Fire in the Flint is about a young Negro doctor, Kenneth Harper, who returns to his hometown, Central City, after receiving an excellent medical education. He had graduated from the best medical school in America, had been an intern for a year in Bellevue in New York, and had been a surgeon in Europe during World War I and had studied in the best medical school in Europe. Kenneth was determined to raise the deplorable health conditions among his people and he dreamed of building the best hospital for Negroes in the South. He honestly felt that he could best achieve his objectives by being a "good nigger" as his father had successfully done while providing a comfortable living and education for his family. This entailed deferring and bowing to white people and avoiding involvement in the race question.

Kenneth Harper soon learned, however, that he could not avoid facing racial problems and also maintain his moral integrity. His brother, Bob, was very embittered at the treatment Negroes received at the hands of ignorant white people. His fiance, Jane, pointed out to him that he was becoming a moral coward by trying to stay on the good side of everyone. His sister Mamie, who was a teacher, discussed the problems of trying to create a favorable learning environment for children in the overcrowded, squalid conditions of the one-room school provided for Negro children, whose families could afford to have them attend school. Kenneth
was aroused by the filthy language Negro girls were forced to endure when they had to shop in the general store. He was infuriated when a Negro woman was raped by a prominent white citizen and her husband was murdered for trying to interfere. When he reported the death to the County Commissioner of Health, and then had the temerity to state who the murderer was, he was informed that the law about reporting deaths was for white folks. The commissioner "had no time to be writin' up niggers deaths." He was told the murderer was the Sheriff's brother and furthermore, "Lemme tell you somepin'--you'd better remember s'long's you stay round these parts. When you hear anythin' 'bout a white man havin' trouble with a nigger you'd better keep your mouth shut. They's lots of niggers been lynched for less'n you said this morning." When the wife of the murdered man was later brutally beaten and tarred for talking too much, Dr. Harper did not report it.

The turning point came when Kenneth was invited to a meeting of leading Negro citizens who were trying to find some way to relieve the oppression of Negro sharecroppers. For weeks solution after solution was discarded as unfeasible because the sharecropping system contained its own checks to keep Negro tenants virtually enslaved. Jane suggested a cooperative and Kenneth worked out the details. He devoted himself to organizing Negro sharecroppers all over the county into cooperatives. It seemed as though the new
organization would work. Kenneth had legal papers drawn up
and had even elicited a promise of financial backing by four
liberal white men in Atlanta.

The Ku Klux Klan was informed of these activities by
Dr. Williams, Central City's only other Negro doctor, who was
jealous of Kenneth for usurping his position as the leading
Negro citizen, and even becoming a demi-god to the Negro
population. While Kenneth was in Atlanta, his sister Mamie
was viciously raped by white boys who hung around the general
store and decided to do something more exciting than hurl
filthy insults at Negro girls. Kenneth's brother, Bob, had
taken a decided change for the better. Instead of being dour,
pessimistic and embittered, he, too, had found a purpose to
his life. He had decided to study law at Cambridge and come
back to Central City to prosecute test cases for the coopera-
tive. He was packing when Mamie crawled home, bruised and
beaten from her ordeal. Bob had always been hot-headed and
the old hatreds and resentments of white people immediately
boiled to the surface. He grabbed a gun and ammunition and
ran to the general store, where a crowd of white boys was
laughing and thoroughly enjoying the account of the two boys
who had raped Mamie. Bob killed the two boys and ran into
the country, hoping to escape to Atlanta and then to the North.
After a terrifying chase, Bob fell asleep from exhaustion
and awoke to the howling of bloodhounds. He was trapped in
a barn where he killed as many of the mob as he could before
his ammunition ran out. He saved one bullet for himself, thereby denying the mob the thrilling satisfaction of torturing him as long as possible before lynching him.

Kenneth returned to Central City knowing nothing of what had happened. When his mother told him, he was determined to kill every filthy white monster who had killed his brother. His mother physically restrained him as long as possible, then convinced him to stay home with the argument that she and Mamie would have no one to protect them if he left.

Kenneth spent an agonizing night reliving every negative emotion felt by the Negro in America (hatred, defeat, oppression, futility, resentment). Less than seventy-two hours after the double catastrophe which had descended upon him and his family, he was called to save the life of a white girl, the daughter of the proprietor of the general store. Kenneth went with the intention of saving the girl, but, as he was operating, he devised the perfect revenge. He would let the white girl die. She would be a sacrificial offering representative of the entire white race. Then he would torture the parents by telling them they had killed their daughter themselves because they did not follow his instructions. Bob would be proud of him. Kenneth was in a state of shock. When he realized what he was doing, his better self took control and he worked four hours saving the girl's life. When the girl
was safe, Kenneth walked out of the door into the arms of a lynching mob. He was unable to get to his gun to kill even one white man or to take his own life. The book ends with a newspaper clipping:

ANOTHER NEGRO LYNCHED IN GEORGIA

CENTRAL CITY, Ga., Sept. 15.—"Doc" Harper, a negro was lynched here to-night, charged with attempted criminal assault on a white woman, the wife of a prominent citizen. The husband was away from the city on business at the time, his wife and young daughter, who is seriously ill, being alone in the house. Harper evidently became frightened before accomplishing his purpose and was caught as he ran from the house. He is said to have confessed before being put to death by a mob which numbered five thousand. He was burned at the stake.

This is the second lynching in Central City this week. On Thursday morning, Bob Harper, a brother of the Negro lynched to-day, was killed by a posse after he had run amuck and killed two young white men. No reason could be found for their murder at the hands of the Negro as they had always borne excellent reputations in the community. It is thought the Negro had become temporarily insane.

In a telegram to the Governor to-day, Sheriff Parker reported that all was quiet in the city and he anticipated no further trouble.

The novel ends where twelve years of Walter White's life work began. When the NAACP received a newspaper clipping or was otherwise notified of a lynching, Walter White went to investigate it. Laurence Stallings said that "Central City was the most accurate portrayal of a small town in his native Georgia that he had ever read, and that the characters and plot were the truest of any novel written about the South to date."9 H. L. Mencken said, "There is not one episode in The Fire in the Flint which has not been duplicated in real life over and over again."10
The Fire in the Flint is much more fact than fiction. It is a compilation of facts gathered by Walter White during his investigations of lynchings. Central City is the typical small Southern town where lynchings occurred. Mr. White wrote an article about lynchings in The American Mercury in 1929. It said, "Most lynchings take place in small towns and rural regions where the natives know practically nothing of what is going on outside their own immediate neighborhood." This is also a description of Central City. He said, "Add to the isolation the emotional fixation such as the rural South has on the Negro and you get the atmosphere from which springs the Ku Klux Klan and lynchings." This is Central City.

Walter White described the inhabitants of Estill Springs, where a lynching took place May, 1918. "Estill Springs' static condition tends to make the minds of the inhabitants narrow and provincial. People were leisurely of manner and slow of speech and comprehension." This is Central City.

Mr. White's description of Jim McIllheron, a victim of a lynching mob, could have been a description of Bob Harper.

The McIllheron family bears the reputation of being wealthy, "for a Negro." Jim was not popular with the white community. He was not a "good nigger"—which means a colored man who is humble and submissive in the presence of white "superiority." He resented the slights and insults and did not willingly allow the members of his family to be imposed upon by the white community.

Mr. White's account of Kenneth's cooperative could have been an account of the Progressive Farmers Household Union and
cooperative formed in Phillips County, Arkansas which led to riots and mass murders.15

The Fire in the Flint has the true flavor of race relations in the South as they existed at the time. Mr. White's description of poor Negroes and poor whites was accurate. His description of prosperous whites was also accurate, as was his description of prosperous and intelligent Negroes. The latter is what the critics of his book objected to. They didn't like the portrayal of some Negroes as educated and normal human beings who talked correct English instead of dialect.16

Mr. White also depicts an educated and intelligent Negro minister who spoke in dialect for two reasons. He had to get down to the level of uneducated Negroes in order to communicate with them, and help them. The other reason was because white people were suspicious of any Negro who, by their standards, had too much education. The minister had decided, like Kenneth, that he could not help his people if he got lynched. Mr. White's account of the sharecropping system could not have been more accurately written by an historian. His account is even better, however, because the reader can vividly understand the deep feelings of futility, defeat and frustration the sharecroppers experienced. The reader also gets a vivid picture of the Ku Klux Klan as it really was. Its members consisted of the prosperous and influential as well as the "poor whites" who made up the bulk of the group and were easily swayed and manipulated by the former. All the members were bound by the
basic characteristics of ignorance, insecurity and fear. The Exalted Cyclops was the Sheriff of Central City. Mr. White's investigations proved that sheriffs, frequently, were the leaders of the Klan. Many new members flocked to the Klan so their illegal or immoral behavior would not be attacked by that organization. The Negroes of Central City were no longer deathly afraid of the Klan. Instead, there was a determination to protect themselves, if necessary, and they purchased guns and ammunition on a large scale. The Fire in the Flint accurately demonstrates the changing attitude of educated Negroes in the South after World War I. They were developing a pride in their race along with a disdain of the white race. They were no longer willing to submit to the theory of the "superiority" of the white race. Submissiveness was being replaced by a determination to fight for their rights, for it was obvious this was the only way they would acquire them.

Mr. White also presented an authentic picture of how years of prejudice, tyranny, and oppression of the Negro had affected the white people of the South. Decent white people who despised the cruelty and injustice of race relations were forced to become moral cowards rather than speak out against the evil which surrounded them daily. They knew, correctly, that their business would be ruined and their family would be regarded as outcasts of society at the least. At the most they might be lynched themselves for presenting their views publicly.
Mr. White shows how a white doctor feels utter humiliation when, to save the life of a dear friend's daughter, he must admit that a "nigger" is better qualified to perform a delicate operation. As for the girl's father, White says,

On the one hand was the life of his daughter—on the other his inherent, acquired, environmental prejudice. None but those who know intimately the depth and passion of that prejudice as it flourishes in the South can know what torture—what a hell—what agony Ewing was going through. Prejudice under almost any circumstances is hard enough to bear; in Ewing's case his very soul was tormented at such an unheard-of thing as a Negro operating on his daughter.17

Mr. Ewing decided to let his daughter die rather than have a nigger see her naked. His wife overruled the decision and Mr. Ewing later received threatening notes from the Ku Klux Klan for speaking well of Dr. Harper.

Mr. White's portrayal of the events leading up to the lynching was, of course, drawn from similar lynchings throughout the South. It was not uncommon for a Negro, who was jealous of a more prosperous Negro or who wished to strengthen his image of being a "good nigger," to impart information which led to a lynching, as Dr. Williams did in the novel. It was typical of plantation owners or other whites who would be financially hurt by cooperatives, formed by Negroes, to alleviate economic exploitation, to declare that Negroes were organizing to murder all whites in order to gain the support of poor whites who were being oppressed by the same system. In the novel the Klan leaders mentioned nothing to the Klansmen about the economic nature of the organization the
Hegroes were forming. They merely told of the guns the Negroes were buying as proof that there was a plot to murder white women and children in their beds. The NAACP report, Thirty Years of Lynching in United States, 1889-1918, proved that the allegation that most lynchings took place because Negroes sexually attacked white women was untrue. The following discussion shows how the Klan leaders can execute the necessary lynching of Dr. Harper without arousing the Negro population who think so highly of him and also without the interference of the Governor of Georgia, who was under pressure to do something about the numerous lynchings in his state.

Sheriff Parker suddenly sat up eagerly. "I got it" he exclaimed. "We'll fix it so's we can say that Harper insulted a white woman!" His companions looked slightly disappointed and doubtful. "How're you goin' t' do that?" asked Lane. "This nigger as fur's I can see, since he been back's been stayin' out where he b'longs in the nigger section. It ain't necessary for him to bother with white women in Central City for us to put that on 'im," Parker declared defensively. "Nearly all white folks ev'n up No'th b'lieves that ev'ry time a nigger's lynched down this a way, its 'cause he's raped a white woman." His manner became triumphant. Here's how we'll fix it."19

Aside from the critical reviews in Southern publications, The Fire in the Flint received mixed reviews from unbiased critics. For instance, Herschel Brickell said in the New York Evening Post, "It would not be hard to point out flaws in the book if one chose to judge it purely as literature.... There are the marks of the amateur plainly upon it in many places, and yet the story is so filled with human emotions that
it is intensely interesting." The Independent review stated that it was negligible as literature and unreal as a picture, which the Survey review agreed with. However, all these reviews concluded that the book did have value as a realistic, passionate cry of the oppressed. It is this author's opinion that this book does deserve a place in literature because Mr. White was able to write with such persuasiveness and power to make a reader, whose background is totally alien to the setting of the book, identify so completely with the characters that reading the book becomes an intensely emotional experience. Mr. White's associates, James Weldon Johnson, Mary White Ovington and even W.E.B. Du Bois were enthusiastic about the novel.

Walter White's second novel, Flight, was not as melodramatic, controversial or successful as The Fire in the Flint. Flight is about a Negro girl, Mimi Daquin, who has ivory skin and golden hair, and a delicate and fragile beauty. She was born in New Orleans to a well-to-do Negro family. Racial problems were far less oppressive for educated, established Negro families in New Orleans, who usually had a large mixture of white heredity. Unfortunately, Mimi's mother died when she was nine and her father, Jean, could not recover from his loss. He spent a good deal of time drinking and his small sick-and-accident insurance business was losing money. He later met and married an efficient, domineering and ambitious woman from Chicago.
Mary Daquin prodded Jean to move to Atlanta where he would work for a prosperous insurance company in which her father had an interest. Jean Daquin could never accustom himself to the hustle and bustle of the large city, where Negroes were treated so contemptuously by the whites with whom they came into contact. Mimi Daquin loved and idolized her father, who was so proud of his Creole ancestry and content with his dreams and traditions.

The Daquin family managed to adjust to the Negro high-society life of Atlanta under Mary Daquin's efficient management. They could no longer attend the Catholic church because of the prejudice of both whites and Negroes, which was a loss to Jean and Mimi, but Jean took little cognizance of his surroundings as he spent much of his time in his dream world. Mimi was at first disgusted with the pettiness, snobbery and hypocrisy of the prosperous Atlanta Negroes but she learned to accept them as a way of life. Mimi had thought little of her race in Creole New Orleans but she acquired race-consciousness in the Atlanta race riot in 1906. From that time on she began to regard all issues from the perspective of the race question.

When Mimi was twenty, she fell in love with the son of a prominent Negro family. Then her father died, which was a terrible loss to her, but she was soon overjoyed that she was pregnant. However, her joy was not shared by the child's father, who suggested she have an abortion. Her love for him instantly turned to hate and, although later he and his family
and her stepmother begged her to marry him, she refused. She moved to Philadelphia to have the baby by herself and save her stepmother embarrassment. There had always been an estrangement between the two women and Mimi vowed that she would never ask her or the boy or his parents for help.

In Philadelphia she boarded with a kindly old couple and let them believe that she was a widow. She had a baby boy whom she named Jean after her father. She adored and cherished the child and lived only for him. Mimi ran out of money, however, and had to work as a seamstress. She could not find enough money and she starved herself to feed the baby. The final straw came when she returned from an unsuccessful day of looking for work to find her son seriously ill. The child had to have a major operation to save his life.

Mimi had no one to turn to for financial help except her father's sister who lived in New York. Aunt Sophie suggested that Mimi put Jean in an orphanage to make sure he received the care he would need. Mimi struggled with herself but saw that this was the only thing to do. She put him in a Catholic orphanage for white children rather than a Negro orphanage.

In New York, Mimi lived with her Aunt Sophie, worked as a seamstress and went to design school at night. She worked for the day when she could have Jean with her again. However, a woman visiting from Atlanta recognized Mimi at a dance and the story of Mimi's past spread all over Harlem. Mimi could not
stand the averted eyes and dropped friendships. She decided to pass for white. Her own people had driven her away, but as white she could make more money and have Jean with her sooner. She got a job as seamstress in the most exclusive dress shop in New York. She rose up the ladder of success rapidly and was soon the assistant to the proprietor, Madame Francine. As Mimi assumed more duties and made frequent trips to Paris she became a central figure in the world of high fashion. Now, although she had the necessary money, she could not bring Jean to live with her without giving embarrassing explanations. She also felt she could not give a boy of twelve the proper guidance and the care he would require since she worked long hours, including evenings, and spent three months each year in Paris. Madame Francine retired and Mimi was head of the fashion world as well as her own shop. During one of her trips to Paris she met an American man who fell in love with her and pursued her persistently. She refused to see him, however, because of her background and because she did not want to be hurt by a man again. The man persisted and eventually Mimi found that she had fallen in love with him. She tried to tell him that she was a Negro and had a child but he wouldn't let her confess anything. They were married and Mimi retired. They were very happy for a year, but then the idleness of the affluent life, and her husband's prejudice began to affect Mimi. She began reading and contemplating philosophy. During an evening at a Negro cabaret in Harlem she rediscovered her
race-consciousness. She began spending her free time in Harlem. Then she attended a concert by a Negro performer at Carnegie Hall.

To her sitting there in the semi-darkness came a vision of her own people which made her blood run fast. Whatever other faults they might possess, her own people had not been deadened and dehumanized by bitter hatred of their fellowmen. The venom born of oppression practiced upon others weaker than themselves had not entered their souls. These songs were of peace and hope and faith, and in them she felt and knew the peace which so long she had been seeking and which so long had eluded her grasp.

After she returned home from the concert Mimi left her husband without even writing a note of explanation, because she knew he could not understand. This is the last paragraph of the book:

Free! Free! Free! she whispered exultantly as with firm tread she went down the steps. "Petit Jean--my own people--and happiness!" was the song in her heart as she happily strode through the dawn, the rays of the morning sun dancing lightly upon the more brilliant gold of her hair.

The last paragraph of *Flight* compared to the last paragraph of *The Fire in the Flint* illustrates the difference in the two novels. *Flight* does not contain the power, the impact or the realism of *The Fire in the Flint*. Walter White intimately knew the subject of his first book. The only intimate knowledge of the subject matter in *Flight* Mr. White had was the fact that the heroine and the author both had white skins. The description of the Atlanta riot of 1906 is very similar to White's description of his own experience in the same riot as told in his autobiography.
similarity ends. Except for the deception involved in investigating race riots and lynchings, Walter White did not try to pass for white, or, as far as can be ascertained, even considered passing for white as a way of life. Mr. White could not have had much contact with the world of high fashion at the time he wrote this book. Whereas, the characters in The Fire in the Flint were totally realistic and were based upon actual people in the South, this author finds Mimi Daquin a highly unbelievable character. There are frequent moving passages about Mimi's love for her child but she consistently rationalizes being separated from him, while giving priority to other values. Nor is the story realistic. The picture of a starving girl who achieves the distinction of being one of the central figures in the world of high fashion in a matter of eight years is just not credible.

In Comparison with James Weldon Johnson's novel, The Autobiography of an Ex-colored Man, which employed a similar theme, Flight was not as interesting or realistic. Johnson's novel was about a Negro boy who passed for white when he reached adulthood. He, thereafter, achieved a fantastic amount of success; but Johnson made this phenomenal rise to fame seem more believable. Johnson's hero did not return to the Negro community at the end of the book, because he was the father of two white children. Actually Johnson's hero displayed more "maternal instinct" than did White's heroine.
Generally Flight received more favorable reviews than Mr. White's first novel. Carl Van Vechten said,

An excellent novel which should be read with increasing wonder by those who are unfamiliar with the less sordid circles of Negro life, and which others may read simply as a story without thought of propaganda. Indeed, with this second book, Mr. White takes on quite a new stature. There is little doubt that he will be heard from further.  

The New York Times felt that it was less important and persuasive than The Fire in the Flint. It said Mr. White made his thesis convincing but not his particular example, and that he demonstrated a factual truth but not an artistic one.  

The Survey review felt that Flight was more sophisticated, better designed and more artful in craftsmanship.  

It is the author's opinion that the critics are probably correct that Flight is a better, more artistic work of fiction. The Fire in the Flint was far more fact than fiction. Mr. White was at his best as a propagandist, exposing the evils of race relations in the United States. He was more of a journalist than a novelist or an historian, as will be shown later. It is probably best that Walter White returned to his principal vocation, that of working to improve conditions for Negroes in the United States. Regardless of some unfavorable criticism, Walter White was considered to have promise as a creative writer. He received a Guggenheim Fellowship Grant for creative writing in 1926. It is important to note, however, that Mr. White used the grant to spend a year in
France writing the most authoritative book on lynching ever published—a work which was distinctly not fiction.
FOOTNOTES

10 Ving, The Walls Came Tumbling Down, p. 186.

2 White, A Man Called White, p. 65.


4 Ibid.

5 White, A Man Called White, p. 68.

6 Ibid.


8 Ibid., p. 300.

9 White, A Man Called White, p. 68.

10 Ibid., p. 67.


12 Ibid.

13 Walter White, "The Burning of Jim McIlherron, The Crisis, April, 1918, p. 16.

14 Ibid., p. 17

15 White, A Man Called White, p. 67.


17 White, Fire in the Flint, p. 212.


25. Ibid., p. 300.


29. White, A Man Called White, p. 92.

CHAPTER IV

WALTER WHITE'S INFLUENCE AS EXECUTIVE SECRETARY
OF THE NAACP

As executive secretary of the NAACP for 25 years, White played a leading part in building the Association into the largest, militant and most successful civil rights organization. As secretary, he engaged in multifarious activities. One example was the lobbying for anti-lynching legislation already discussed in Chapter II. As head of the largest mass organization representing Negroes, he was also able to exert influence on political decisions. On several occasions he had personal conferences with Presidents. Although he could not, and in most instances did not desire to represent or guarantee a solid voting bloc of ten per cent of America's population, many politicians had a deep, if sometimes grudging, respect for his authority.

The first effective display of the Negroes' political power, conceived and directed by White, occurred in 1930. He was acting secretary of the NAACP when he exhibited his skill in forcing politicians and political parties to take the Negroes' demands and desires into consideration. Both political parties had ignored the Negroes in the 1928 election, President Hoover continued displaying indifference to the
needs and interests of Negroes and Mr. White called him "the man in the Lily-White House." President Hoover nominated John J. Parker of North Carolina for a seat on the United States Supreme Court. The NAACP quickly investigated Parker, who was then a judge of the United States Circuit Court, to see what his attitude was towards the Negro and civil rights. The investigation revealed that Judge Parker had advocated continuation of the disfranchisement of Negroes when he was a candidate for the governor of North Carolina in 1920. The NAACP sent a telegram to Parker requesting that he confirm or deny a newspaper clipping which had quoted his views in 1920 and that he explain his position at the present time on such matters. The telegram was personally signed for by Judge Parker but he did not reply. The NAACP requested that President Hoover withdraw the nomination, which he angrily refused to do. White appeared before the subcommittee of the Senate Judiciary Committee and presented a memorandum and testimony which opposed Parker's confirmation. At the hearing, White faced the open hostility of Senators Borah and Overman. He had the impression that his testimony would have little impact on the Committee's report. Therefore, every branch of the NAACP was requested to send protests from themselves and other organizations to their senators urging that Parker not be confirmed. Mass meetings were held and newspapers were notified of the facts. Photostatic copies of the article in the Greensboro Daily News, which reported
Parker's previously mentioned views, were placed on the desk of every Senator, President Hoover, and every newspaper correspondent in Washington. The American Federation of Labor was also against Parker's nomination but they refused to be identified in any way with the Negro opposition.\(^2\)

On April 24, the subcommittee of the judiciary reported ten to six against the nomination. However, President Hoover continued to try to force the nomination. The association continued their fight against it and Senators were bombarded with telegrams and letters from Negroes making their opposition to Parker clear. The Association asked Democratic Senators if they wished to reward North Carolina for going Republican in the 1928 election with some success. However, it was an uphill battle. There were frequent and vehement charges that if Parker's nomination was defeated no Southerner could ever sit on the Supreme Court bench or occupy other Federal offices unless he was approved by the NAACP and Walter White. On May 7, the nomination came to a vote in the Senate. After a lively and sometimes vicious debate, Parker's confirmation was defeated by a vote of 41 to 39. Newspapers vigorously attacked the decision. The Macon Telegraph said, "In the future the man who is appointed to the Supreme Court must pass in review before Walter White."\(^4\)

The defeat of the Parker nomination had immense political significance. It marked the political emergence of the previously ignored Negro vote. It was a victory won by
the Negroes against the power of the Hoover administration and its lily-white policy. To reinforce the impact of this new political strength, the NAACP decided it must strive to prevent the reelection of those senators who had voted for Parker's confirmation against the expressed wishes of their Negro constituents. Until that time, the Association had neither endorsed nor opposed political candidates. Now they decided to campaign against the previously mentioned senators only through the NAACP branches and not through any political organization. The Crisis, the official publication of the NAACP, listed the voting records of senators up for reelection in 1930, 1932, and 1934. The first concentrated effort of the NAACP to prove that Negro voters intended to, and could, protect their interests through political power was the campaign to defeat Senators McCulloch of Ohio, Baird of New Jersey, and Allen of Kansas. Their defeat was attributed largely to the implacable and effective opposition of Negro voters because they had supported Parker. In later years Senators Shortridge of California, Patterson of Maryland, Watson of Indiana, Fess of Ohio, Reed of Pennsylvania, Hartfield of West Virginia, Wolcott of Connecticut, and Herbert of Rhode Island were similarly defeated in their bid for reelection. Furthermore, Mr. White maintained that President Hoover had permanently alienated Negroes, and the Negro vote was a very considerable factor in the overwhelming rejection of Hoover in the 1932 presidential election.
Mary White Ovington credited White with conducting the battle with driving force and an abiding belief in victory. She said his ability brought him many influential allies who were initially rather amused or indifferent to his efforts. Heywood Brown, a syndicated columnist, remarked that President Hoover had exerted tremendous pressure for Parker's confirmation and it was exciting to know that the lily-white President had been checkmated largely through the efforts of a short and slight Negro, Walter White. Mr. Brown expressed the opinion that White might become one of the most powerful forces in American politics. The Washington Post commented that he would probably become the American Negro who hereafter must be reckoned with most by politicians operating in the national sphere. In a feature article about White, E. J. Kahn stated that White was considered one of the ablest lobbyists in the Capital. Mr. Kahn said that a great many congressmen believed that White, more than any other individual, could sway the Negro vote. Mr. White, himself, did not make this claim but he was a pioneer and a determining factor in making the Negro vote an equitable force in the politics of pressure.

Mr. White encountered much criticism from Negroes because he supported Senator Hugo Black of Alabama when President Roosevelt nominated Black to fill a vacancy on the United States Supreme Court. White's support of Black disproved the dire predictions made at the time of the Parker
controversy that no Southerner would attain that position if
Parker were defeated. Black had opposed anti-lynching
legislation and had participated in filibusters which killed
the bills. White was a friend of Black and felt that Black's
opposition to the measures was based on his sincere belief that
they were unconstitutional. White had discussed civil rights
with the Senator and he was convinced that Black would support
Negroes' constitutional rights as a member of the Supreme Court.
Because White refused to conduct a campaign against Black's
confirmation as he had against Judge Parker, he was accused of
selling out his race. Shortly after Black's confirmation,
Ray Springle, of the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, wrote an expose
which revealed that Black had at one time been a member of
the Ku Klux Klan. This created a national sensation and
White was deluged with requests for comment. He maintained
that his firsthand acquaintance with Black's views on racial,
economic and political questions convinced him that Black
would prove to be a most valuable asset to the Supreme Court.
Many Negroes said that Black should be removed from the
Supreme Court and that Walter White should also be removed
from his position as executive secretary of the NAACP. It is
a tribute to White's influence, and a partial answer to the
speculation of just how much influence he really had, that he
remained firmly entrenched in his position. It is also a
tribute to his foresight that Black did indeed prove to be a
valuable friend to colored people in their fight for justice
as Mr. White had predicted.7
Why was it so important who sat on the Supreme Court? In 1931 Mr. White wrote an article entitled "The Negro and the Supreme Court" for Harpers. He stated that the Negro's best chance of obtaining justice lay with the United States Supreme Court. Again, he was correct. From Reconstruction until the Civil Rights Act of 1957, the greatest strides toward justice and equality for Negro citizens were the result of Supreme Court decisions.

From 1915, when it declared the "grandfather clause" unconstitutional in the case of Guinn v. United States, the NAACP was active in nearly every Supreme Court case which concerned the constitutional rights of Negroes.

White was awarded two honorary LL.D. degrees but he was not a lawyer, and he was not deeply involved in the legal work of the NAACP. However, he frequently appeared in court when an important decision was presented. He sometimes did the investigative work on which the case was based, as in the Sweet case in 1925.

In 1925, a Negro physician, Dr. Osian H. Sweet, purchased a house in a middle-class white residential section of Detroit. He was threatened with violence if he tried to occupy his new home. He was not intimidated and moved in, accompanied by his wife and child, two brothers, a chauffeur and handyman, and two friends. A mob gathered and threw stones at the house. Dr. Sweet asked for police protection but none was provided. The next night the mob was larger
and a concentrated attack was made on the house. Two Negroes who happened to be passing by were beaten unmercifully, and police watched as the mob worked itself into a frenzy and began firing on the house. The Sweets returned the fire. A member of the mob was shot and the police finally took action by entering the house and arresting its occupants. All eleven were arraigned and charged with murder. Walter White went immediately to Detroit to allay passions and arrange for their legal defense. The NAACP wanted lawyers who were known to take only cases when they were certain that the case of the defendant was just. The association had been refused by several lawyers when it was decided to appeal to Clarence Darrow. Arthur Spingarn and Charles Studin went with White to speak to Mr. Darrow. Mr. Darrow mistook the two white men for Negroes and was amazed when he was informed that the small fair-skinned man with blond hair and blue eyes was the Negro. Mary White Ovington stated that Mr. Darrow, who had just returned from the Tennessee Scopes Case, refused to accept the case until he met Mr. White and was extremely impressed with his mission in life. Although Darrow conducted the defense with extraordinary skill, the first trial was declared a mistrial because the jury was unable to agree on a verdict. White quoted the juror who held up the jury as saying, "I don't give a God damn what the facts are. A nigger has killed a white man and I'll be burned in hell before I will ever vote to acquit a nigger who has killed a white man!" At the second
trial, Henry Sweet was acquitted and the other cases were dismissed. But the victory cost the Association $59,746.67 and cost Mrs. Gladys and Henry Sweet their lives as they died from tuberculosis which resulted from the heavy colds they had contracted in the drafty Wayne County Jail.\(^9\)

Although Mr. White was not actively involved in the Supreme Court cases which resulted in favorable decisions in the areas of disfranchisement, segregation in education, transportation and housing, he detailed the campaigns which the NAACP conducted for such rulings in his autobiography, *A Man Called White*. Clement E. Vose, the author of *Caucasians Only: The Supreme Court, the NAACP, and the Restrictive Covenants Cases*, said that White's autobiography was a remarkable account of the history of the NAACP. Vose used *A Man Called White* rather extensively as a source for his book. Mr. Vose credited White with helping to direct the overall strategy of the legal department and recommending promising lawyers such as Charles H. Houston, Nathan Margold, and Thurgood Marshall. The Supreme Court decision, *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka (1954)*, which outlawed segregation in public schools, was seen by many as the culmination of White's lifetime work of seeking justice and equality for Negroes. As the executive secretary of the NAACP he was instrumental in extending the scope and influence of the organization which made this decision possible. It was also a personal victory for White because he discovered and brought Thurgood Marshall into the Association.\(^{10}\)
Walter White sought equality for Negroes in all areas, not just in matters concerning the constitutional rights of Negroes which could be attacked in courts. This included social equality. In 1939, the president of the Daughters of the American Revolution bluntly maintained that neither Marion Anderson nor any other Negro artist would be permitted to appear in Constitution Hall. White staged a substitute concert for Miss Anderson in front of the Lincoln Memorial that could not have been presented more dramatically even by her manager, Sol Hurok. This focused attention on the bigotry of the DAR. Miss Anderson's performance was so beautiful and poignant that it brought tears to the eyes of the seventy-five thousand white and colored Americans who attended the open-air concert. White had reluctantly decided not to have the NAACP officially sponsor the concert because, although it would have been very beneficial publicity for the Association, he felt there was a broader issue involved. He did not want to create the impression that propaganda was the objective instead of the emphasizing of a principle. He arranged to have the concert sponsored by the most distinguished and nonpartisan auspices possible. The sponsoring committee included Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt, who had resigned from the DAR to protest the incident, as well as members of the cabinet and the Supreme Court, senators, congressmen, editors, diplomats and writers and artists of world reputation.
One of White's best friends was Wendell Willkie. White had refused bold attempts by one of America's greatest industrial food companies to enlist his outright support of Willkie in the 1940 presidential campaign because the NAACP was a nonpartisan and nonpolitical organization. After the election, White met Willkie and they found a common interest in the motion picture industry. They both objected to the Hollywood practice of depicting Negroes only in stereotyped, degrading roles in movies. Mr. Willkie agreed to use his influence to help White try to change the situation. Willkie had been made counsel to the motion picture industry by a Senate investigating committee and he introduced White to Walter Wanger and Daryl Zanuck of Twentieth Century-Fox. White and Willkie both made several speeches to members of the industry, urging them to depict the Negro in films as a normal human being. White convinced several producers of the rightness of his cause but, unfortunately, they reacted by eliminating all Negro roles from their pictures because they did not feel they could risk offending boards of censorship in Southern states. In 1942, Willkie spoke at the NAACP Convention in Los Angeles. Again, he and White spoke to producers about the situation. They sought to establish a Hollywood Bureau of the NAACP to advise producers, but Willkie's death ended that hope.12

Because of Mr. White's prestige and the respect he commanded from Negroes, he was able to help quell manifestations
of racial unrest on several occasions. The Ford strike of 1941 was an indication of the growing importance of the Negro worker in industry. Unions had almost invariably excluded Negroes from membership and thereby created the antagonism Negroes felt toward unions. As part of the CIO attempt to organize Ford workers in Detroit in 1941, the UAW-CIO went out on strike. In spite of the fact that the CIO recognized no color line, the UAW-CIO had made no real attempt to organize Negro workers because of the large percentage of white workers who had come to Detroit from the South and brought their prejudices with them. The Ford Company had been the first large American industry to provide opportunity for Negroes above the rank of porter or common laborer. When the Ford strike broke in 1941, Negroes remained loyal to the Ford Company and refused to go out on strike, and many were brought in as strikebreakers. The strike was threatened with failure because of the Negro workers, and a riot seemed likely. UAW-CIO president, R. J. Thomas, and other union officials asked Mr. White's advice on what to do about the situation. The officials pledged to White that, under a UAW-CIO contract, Negro Ford workers would receive the same pay as whites and would enjoy greater security and receive promotions on the basis of seniority if they joined the union. White spoke to the Negro leaders in Detroit who were against the union and told them of the pledges. It was important to get news of the pledges to the workers in the plant to prevent
riot ing. White and other Negro leaders hired sound trucks and circled the plant reading the union's statement. White also walked the picket line explaining the situation. After several hours, most of the Negro workers left the plant. The decision was a wise one. An NLRB election resulted in the UAW-CIO representation of workers and thereafter the union kept its pledges and vigorously and continuously fought racial discrimination.13

In June, 1943, Walter White was again called to Detroit. Detroit was seething with race hatred. The Ku Klux Klan, the National Workers League, Gerald L. K. Smith, Father Coughlin, the Southern Voters League and the Black Legion were exploiting anti-Negro prejudices. Early in June, twenty-five thousand employees of the Packard plant staged a wildcat strike against the firm opposition of the UAW-CIO in protest against the promotion of three Negroes. A riot was to be expected in this atmosphere. It occurred as a result of a minor argument which took place after an automobile accident. A rumor immediately spread that Negroes were rioting and that a white woman had been raped by a Negro. Mr. White found, upon his arrival in Detroit, that Mayor Jeffries, Police Commissioner Witherspoon and the police officers were doing nothing to stop the rioting. On the contrary, policemen were aiding white mobs in beating and killing Negroes. White managed to get an interview with Governor Harry S. Kelly and to ask him to request federal troops.
When no action was taken, White telephoned the War Department. Finally White was able to persuade the Governor to call for Federal troops. Then White and Thurgood Marshall investigated the riot and tried to stimulate city and state officials to action and to calm the fears of the Negro community. Sporadic incidents of police brutality continued. Accompanied by a group of local citizens, White presented the report on the evidence he and Marshall had gathered to Mayor Jeffries. But he and the evidence were ignored.

In contrast, White's assistance was requested by Mayor LaGuardia when there was a riot in Harlem the next month. Like many other riots it was started by a false rumor which fed on the very real underlying feelings of discontent. In Harlem Negroes were frustrated and furious because of letters they received from family and friends in the 369th Infantry telling of insults, beatings, abuse and humiliations suffered by men who had fought in the Pacific. They also read countless stories in newspapers of lynchings and mistreatment of Negro soldiers. Discrimination in employment in war industries that were crying for workers faced Negroes who were contemptuously told that they were not wanted. When it was rumored that a black soldier was murdered without provocation in Harlem the frustrated Negroes reacted violently, and the rioting started. Investigation later disclosed that a Negro soldier was wounded in the shoulder when he mistakenly tried to interfere in the arrest
of a colored woman by a white policeman who was acting in the line of duty. It was difficult to get the truth through the pent-up frustrations and passions which had been released, but Walter White and Mayor LaGuardia tried.15

Soon after the riot started, Mayor LaGuardia phoned White and asked that he meet him as soon as possible at the West 123rd Street station. With Roy Wilkins, an assistant secretary and editor of The Crisis, he took a cab to the station. It was fortunate that Mr. Wilkins was with White as white people in automobiles were being attacked by Negroes. Mayor LaGuardia ordered all available police officers into the Harlem area and asked military police to remove all soldiers and sailors from Harlem. At White's suggestion, the MP's were sent out in racially mixed pairs. White and LaGuardia rode in a police car in the midst of the riot and periodically got out and tried to calm the mob. This was extremely dangerous and White suggested that the Mayor get well-known Negro citizens to ride in sound trucks in the area and appeal to the people to stop rioting and go home, explaining that the rumor was false. This was done and by daylight all was calm. White and LaGuardia made a radio broadcast to explain to New York what had happened. They emphasized that it was not a race riot as such, with the races fighting each other, but that it was caused by resentment of the mistreatment of Negro soldiers, overcrowding, exorbitant rents, poverty and job proscription. They said that the only
thing that could prevent a repetition was the correction of these evils.16

White stressed the differences in the way the riots were handled in Detroit and Harlem. He said that New York's Mayor LaGuardia and Police Commissioner Lewis J. Valentine presented sharp contrasts to Detroit's weak mayor and bigoted police force, led by Police Commissioner Witherspoon. The City-Wide Citizens Committee on Harlem, headed by White and Algernon Black, was formed shortly after the riot. It achieved some beneficial results but White found little was accomplished in eliminating the basic causes of the riot. He pointed out that after a riot in 1935, a bi-racial commission held hearings and submitted a report which included recommendations that might have prevented the 1943 riot.17

Following World War II, at the call of the NAACP, White helped form the National Emergency Committee Against Mob Violence in 1946. A comprehensive program was formulated to create an active body of public opinion to counteract the activities of the hate organizations which were stirring up violence. It was decided that a small but representative delegation should confer with President Truman about what could be done to halt mob violence. September 19, 1946, Mr. White was the spokesman of the delegation which included James Carey, Secretary of the CIO, Boris Shiskin of the AFL, Dr. Herman Heissig of the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, Dr. Channing H. Tobias, Director of the
Phelps-Stokes Fund, and Leslie Perry of the NAACP Washington office. These men represented forty-seven national organizations. Mr. White presented evidence of rising violence and the existence of over sixty hate organizations in the United States. The President was shocked and all present agreed something had to be done.18

David K. Miles, Assistant to the President, suggested that a committee be appointed to investigate the entire subject of violation of civil liberties and to recommend a program of corrective action. White objected that if such a commission were to be established by an act of Congress it would be delayed and probably killed by a Senate filibuster. President Truman agreed to create the Committee by Executive Order, and finance it out of the President's contingency funds. Therefore, by an executive order on December 5, 1946, President Truman created The President's Committee on Civil Rights. In discussing the composition of the committee, White said that it should be broadly representative of every important segment of American thinking. He felt that even a reliable and conclusive report would have little impact on public opinion if the committee were made up mostly of interested persons. He urged that representatives of business and finance should be included. At White's suggestion Charles E. Wilson of General Motors was named as chairman of the President's Committee on Civil Rights. The other fourteen members represented the various interests of all Americans.19
The Committee presented its report in 1947 under the title To Secure These Rights. Included in the report were facts on lynching, police brutality, administration of justice, involuntary servitude, wartime evacuation of Japanese, denial of citizenship rights, including the right to vote and the poll tax, discrimination in the armed services, civil service, employment, education, housing, health services, public services and accommodations, and segregation as a national policy. The report stated that the country had made great progress in implementing civil rights but that further federal legislation was needed to close the gap between the American equalitarian ideal and its actual practice. It made explicit recommendations of things that needed to be done by the Congress, administrative bureaus of the federal and state governments, by state legislatures and by private organizations and individuals. The report warned that if these rights were not secured to all Americans there would be no rights for any Americans. It said, "the time for action is now." In February, 1948, President Truman presented a special message to Congress calling for the enactment of comprehensive civil rights legislation based upon the Commission report. Truman was unsuccessful in persuading Congress to act but most of the recommendations of the Commission were ultimately written into law in the 1960's. 20

Although White was responsible to the NAACP Board of
Directors, and the board had the ultimate responsibility for determining policy, White nevertheless played an important part in determining policy and strategy. His relations with the board appear to have been harmonious. The only unpleasantness in his relations was with W. E. Du Bois. His difficulties with Du Bois began as early as 1929 when White was named acting secretary because James Weldon Johnson was on leave of absence.

Du Bois maintained that Walter White had entirely too much influence within the NAACP and that under White's leadership all vestiges of democracy had disappeared and the organization was a rigid dictatorship. These accusations were false. It should be remembered that Dr. Du Bois was ninety-two years old when he wrote his last autobiography and some of the data which he presented as factual material was inaccurate. Also, it should be remembered that Dr. Du Bois had similar conflict with others; he was extremely arrogant and difficult to work with; whereas, Mr. White encountered no similar conflicts with other people.21

Du Bois expressed approval of White's early work with the Association as an investigator of lynchings. He said White was an outstanding success and described him as an indefatigable worker who never seemed to tire. The trouble began when White became acting secretary of the NAACP in 1929. The crisis was a financial loss. It had to be subsidized by the Association. White felt that the Association's limited
resources would be better spent on anti-lynching campaigns, legislative lobbying, and the trial of court cases. As the magazine's losses increased, a personal feud developed between White and Du Bois. The situation was so difficult that the board passed a motion presented by Joel Spingarn, president of the board, stating that the secretary was the executive officer and that all officers and salaried employees "shall be subject to his authority." This made matters only worse, and the order was rescinded after Du Bois vehemently protested and threatened to resign.22

Du Bois stated that White was often absolutely unscrupulous in attaining his goals. This is completely opposed to everything else written about White. The unanimous opinion was that he was straight-forward, honest, and possessed a great amount of personal integrity. It was frequently said that he had a high regard for individuals, no matter what their station in life. Du Bois said that White maneuvered James Weldon Johnson into resigning as executive secretary after his leave of absence by refusing to cooperate with him. There is no evidence to support this. Johnson mentioned nothing about it in his autobiography. There was no known conflict between Johnson and White. In fact, White sought and followed Johnson's advice after he succeeded Johnson as secretary.23

As The Crisis continued to lose money, the Association assumed its financial obligations and Walter White was one of
the directors of the Crisis Publishing Company which was formed. When Du Bois launched a vigorous campaign for voluntary segregation of Negroes for economic reasons in the pages of The Crisis he ran head on into a battle with the NAACP board. The depression had especially hurt the Negro population and Du Bois felt that Negroes should economically exploit the fact of racial segregation by buying from Negroes only. In March of 1934, the officers of the Association made their position clear in The Crisis. Joel Spingarn said that the Association had always been squarely opposed to segregation. White said that Du Bois's editorials were being used to delay Negro admission to governmental relief programs. Du Bois retaliated by attacking Spingarn and White in an editorial. He said that White was more a white man than a Negro and he was, therefore, not qualified to really understand the Negro problem. When, on May 21, 1934, the board made it a matter of record The Crisis was the organ of the Association and that no salaried NAACP officer was permitted to criticize the policy, work or officers of the Association in the pages of The Crisis, Du Bois said it was because he criticized White for his unsound explanation of the historic stand of the NAACP on segregation, although the board had also placed itself on record as opposed to all forms of segregation. Du Bois replied that he would not comply with the resolution and be limited in his expression. He argued that The Crisis was not an official organ of the
Association if that meant merely reflecting its official position. He resigned and said that censorship and not segregation was the issue in dispute.  

In 1944, Walter White magnanimously initiated a move among the Association's directors to bring Du Bois back to the Association. This showed White's generous nature, considering Du Bois' previous rude behavior. Du Bois had numerous complaints about White, including the inconvenience of not having enough office space. Du Bois charged that White was the real power of the organization and that the board of directors was merely a window dressing. He stated that the board merely approved reports of the Committee on Administration, which, he said, was under White's thumb and did exactly as the secretary ordered. Henry Lee Moon, Public Relations Director of the NAACP, who was a member of the Committee of Administration at the time, said that this charge was not true. Mr. Moon said that White was very influential because he was greatly loved and respected. He continued that White's opinions were important because his word commanded a great deal of respect, not because he was a tyrant.

Du Bois also maintained that when the NAACP was asked to send a consultant to the United States delegation of the United Nations organization conference in San Francisco, the board of directors selected him. He said that White, without consulting the board, did some quick political maneuvering and, when authorization came from Washington, White was named as
consultant and Du Bois as assistant. Mr. Moon said that this occurred shortly before he joined the staff, but he did not believe this to be true. Mr. Moon said that as nominal head of the NAACP, White was probably the natural choice of the board. Mr. Moon continued that he did know that Dr. Du Bois was very upset about the appointment and firmly believed that he should have been the head delegate since he was the expert in international affairs. Du Bois was further irritated when White decided to attend the Human Rights Commission of the UN in Paris in 1947. He stated that he regarded White's trip as interfering in a matter which was strictly in his domain. In September, 1948, Dr. Du Bois sent a memorandum to the board attacking Walter White's appointment as a consultant to the American delegation to the United Nations General Assembly in Paris as a political act. He stated that the NAACP was abandoning attempts to help the Negroes of the world and that White's acceptance of the position would bind the Association to the "war-mongering colonial imperialism of the present (Truman) Administration." Within hours the press secured a copy of this memorandum. Du Bois was promptly dismissed by the board, with a pension.26

Walter White mentioned nothing of the feud with Du Bois in his autobiography or any other public printed material. It appears to this writer that Du Bois' accusations must be discounted as fact and chalked up to his personal animosity toward White. This conclusion is based on the fact
that no supporting evidence of Du Bois' charges can be found and on Henry Lee Moon's personal testimony that the most damaging of Du Bois' accusations were not true and he did not believe the others to be true either.
FOOTNOTES


2. Ibid., pp. 105-107; U. S. Congress, Senate, Committee on the Judiciary, Hearings on the Confirmation of Honorable John J. Parker to be an Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the U. S., before a subcommittee of the Committee on the Judiciary, 71st Cong., 2d sess., April 5, 1930, p. 74; NAACP, Annual Report for 1930 (New York: 1931), pp. 7-16.


9. White, A Man Called White, pp. 73-76; Johnson, Along This Way, p. 383; Ovington, The Walls Came Tumbling Down, pp. 199, 203-204.


CHAPTER V

WALTER WHITE'S EFFORTS ON BEHALF OF THE NEGRO IN WORLD WAR II

As it became apparent that the United States would become involved in World War II, defense plants stepped up production, and a Selective Service Act was passed. It was also apparent that Negroes were being discriminated against both in industry and in the armed services. Walter White requested a meeting with President Roosevelt to discuss this discrimination. On September 27, 1940, the President received a delegation consisting of Mr. White, A. Philip Randolph, President of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, and T. Arnold Hill of the National Urban League. At Mr. Hill's suggestion, they drew up a written memorandum to leave with the President so there could be no misunderstanding of their position. They asked that there be immediate and total abolition of racial discrimination and segregation in the armed services. The President promised to talk with his Cabinet and other government officials about the problem and notify them of any progress in this area.¹

The delegation heard nothing from the President, but on October 9, the White House press secretary, Stephen Early, a Virginia-born Southerner, issued a statement that the
traditional policy of segregation would be continued and all present and future Negro units in the Army would have white officers. He then implied that policy had been discussed with and had the approval of White, Randolph, and Hill. This brought forth a storm of protest from Negroes throughout the country. The NAACP held many mass meetings protesting against the policy of segregation and the implication that it was endorsed by Negro leaders and the Association. White, Randolph and Hill released the text of the memorandum they had left with the President and issued statements denying the implication. One statement read:

We are inexpressibly shocked that a President of the United States at a time of national peril should surrender so completely to enemies of democracy who would destroy national unity by advocating segregation. Official approval by the Commander-in-chief of the Army and Navy of such discrimination and segregation is a stab in the back of democracy.\(^2\)

A presidential election campaign was in progress and Northern Democratic leaders were furious at Early for his blunders. Mr. White was besieged by letters from alarmed friends of the President, who wanted to know what could be done to repair the damage Early had done in jeopardizing the Negro vote. He replied that the only thing that could help would be that immediate steps be taken to end discrimination in the armed services and industry.\(^3\)

Largely as a result of NAACP protests and Mr. White's statements, Washington announced three token appointments. Judge William H. Hastie of Howard University Law School was
appointed to the post of Civilian Aide to the Secretary of War; Colonel Benjamin O. Davis, Sr., was promoted to Brigadier General, the first Negro to hold this rank; and Colonel Campbell C. Johnson was appointed Special Aide to the Director of Selective Service. This method of appeasement did not satisfy Mr. White or American Negroes, who continued to protest against segregation and discrimination in the armed forces and defense industries.\(^4\)

On December 14, 1940, the *Saturday Evening Post* published an article written by Walter White entitled, "It's Our Country, Too." In this article Mr. White voiced the Negroes' demand to take part in the defense of their country even though the Army, Navy, and defense plants wanted no help from Negroes. Mr. White described the Negroes' bravery and loyalty throughout the history of the United States. He said that in spite of this record the United States was hesitant to make use of the great reservoir of Negro manpower. No Negro had been accepted by the Army or Navy Air Corps. Despite the Army's high-pressure drive for enlistments, it was virtually impossible for Negroes to volunteer in any branch of the service. If they were accepted, it was for service in Negro regiments only. No Negro had ever served as an officer or an enlisted man in the Marine Corps. There were only five officers in the regular army and only one Negro graduate of West Point. The few Negro regiments that existed were used *only* as service units and given menial tasks,
even if they were specifically designated as cavalry, field artillery, etc. regiments. Several specific examples were given in the article.5

The article then described similar discrimination in the defense industries, the main problem being that of few employment opportunities for Negroes. In the rare instances when Negroes were hired by defense industries, it was only as unskilled labor, despite the fact that there were thousands of trained and skilled Negro workers. There were several cases of Negroes being fired and replaced by white workers when jobs were upgraded or there was a general pay raise. Mr. White had investigated employment conditions in aircraft factories in several states. One large factory in New England refused to hire any Negroes (even honor graduates from trade schools), although it hired a white man who was a leading figure in the local Nazi Bund and outspoken in his antiAmerican, proHitler views. Mr. White did indicate however, that much of the blame for discrimination lay with the unions. There were several examples where defense plants were willing to hire skilled Negroes, provided they were members of a union, but the unions refused to accept Negro applicants. Federal and state employment agencies, who provided many of the workers to the defense industries, discriminated against Negroes also. They maintained separate offices for Negroes, and skilled Negro workers were required to register as common laborers. Mr. White saw some hope for
the future, but he made it clear that any improvement in conditions would come from the Negroes' demand to share in the defense of their country.6

The NAACP offered the services of its legal committee to any American citizen who was refused the privilege to enlist in the Army or Navy on the basis of race or color and thereafter sought a court case to challenge his rejection. The NAACP sent copies of defense contracts to each of its twelve hundred branches, so that qualified Negro workers could apply for jobs which the contracts opened. The Association also asked all branches to report all refusals to qualified Negroes. These reports were brought to the attention of Washington officials. The NAACP also tried to get a Senate investigating committee to look into the situation and recommend remedial measures to end discrimination. Senator Harry S. Truman, who was chairman of an investigating committee on defense contracts, said his committee could not adequately cover racial discrimination in this area because of lack of time. Four influential Senators, Charles L. McNary, Robert F. Wagner, Prentiss M. Brown, and Arthur Capper, introduced a resolution (S.R.75) to create such a committee, but foes of the program prevented it.

In spite of these and other measures, segregation and discrimination continued in the armed forces and discrimination in employment in the defense industries continued. It became apparent that direct action was needed to effect any change.
A. Philip Randolph suggested the idea of a March on Washington to protest these conditions. Negroes and whites throughout the country were enthusiastic about the idea, but Randolph insisted that the March on Washington Movement must be all-Negro. White and Randolph communicated almost daily about the march and Negroes began to organize marchers and arrange transportation to Washington. President Roosevelt sent Mrs. Roosevelt to ask Randolph and White not to stage the march at a meeting arranged and attended by Mayor Fiorello H. La Guardia of New York. They refused and Mr. White told Mrs. Roosevelt that they had made numerous requests to see the President, which had not been granted. On May 19, 1941 Walter White met with Secretary of the Interior, Harold L. Ickes. They discussed these problems and Mr. Ickes expressed the opinion that he thought that Negroes would not fare much worse under Hitler than under the United States.\(^8\)

On June, 18, 1941, A. Philip Randolph and Water White were called to a conference at the White House where President Roosevelt asked Mr. Randolph to call off the March on Washington. Present at the meeting were Robert P. Patterson, Assistant Secretary of War, standing in for Henry L. Stimson; Frank Knox, Secretary of the Navy; William S. Knudsen, president of General Motors; Sidney Hillman, of the Office of Production Management; Aubrey Williams of the National Youth Administration; and Anna Rosenberg of the Social Security Board. Mr. Randolph and Mr. White refused to call off the
March. Mr. White explained at length their opposition to segregation in the armed forces and said that both the Army and Navy had inefficient and prejudiced Southern officers in the higher ranks and that this was impeding any efforts at integration. President Roosevelt asked Mr. Patterson and Mr. Knox if this were true and they told him that it was. President Roosevelt offered the suggestion that Negro bands be put on some battleships. Mr. Knox agreed to look into it but more than a year later he admitted that he had taken no action whatsoever. 9

President Roosevelt used all his charm and skill to dissuade the Negro leaders from staging the march. He asked Mr. White how many people would really march since the NAACP was the only sponsoring organization which had a mass membership. When White's reply was no less than one hundred thousand, the President yielded and asked what they wanted him to do. Mr. Randolph told him that they wanted him to issue an executive order which would bring about the quickest possible abolition of discrimination in war industries and the armed services. At this point Mr. Knudsen voiced a strong objection. Mr. White informed Mr. Knudsen that General Motors had one of the worst records of discrimination of any large industry, and that he would send him a report on his company. President Roosevelt requested that he be sent a copy of the report also. The President asked Mr. White and Mr. Randolph to go into the Cabinet Room and draft the kind of order they
wanted him to issue. Present also were two of Mr. Randolph's coworkers, Frank S. Crosswaite and Layle Lane, Aubrey Williams, and Mayor LaGuardia. 10

Mr. White left for Texas and Mr. Randolph called him there to tell him that their draft of the executive order had been shortened and emasculated. They agreed that they should repudiate it and stage the march. Negotiations continued through Mrs. Roosevelt and Mayor LaGuardia. 11

On June 25, the President issued Executive Order No. 8802. It specifically banned discrimination on account of race, creed, or national origin in industries holding government contracts for war work and in training for jobs in war industries. However, it did nothing about segregation and discrimination in the armed forces. The Order also set up a Committee on Fair Employment Practices for the purpose of investigating and taking corrective action to remedy complaints of discrimination. This committee was to be responsible only to the President. The FEPC did make a great deal of progress in changing the pattern of employment of minorities; however, the budget was never sufficient and on February 8, 1946, its enemies in the United States Senate succeeded in cutting off the appropriation for its work. 12

During this period, as always, the Communists tried to capitalize on the discrimination of Negroes in propaganda to persuade Negroes to join the Communist Party. Before the war, Wilson Record, writer of the most authoritative study of the
relations of the NAACP and the Communists, said the NAACP was neither interventionist nor isolationist—it was merely pro-Negro. The Communists in the United States followed the Moscow line and tried to discredit the NAACP and accused it of being prowar and interventionist. The Party was particularly critical of Walter White, Roy Wilkins, Joel Spingarn and A. Philip Randolph. When the March on Washington Movement was formed, the Communists did not want to appear to accept defense but they wanted President Roosevelt to be discredited, so they endorsed the march. Randolph had learned much about Communist methods as president of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and the National Negro Congress and he took precautions to exclude them from the march. They could neither destroy nor capture the March on Washington Movement. The NAACP maintained that the Communist party was not genuinely interested in either the Negro or peace.13

Meanwhile, segregation and discrimination continued in the armed forces. Negro soldiers were subject not only to segregation and discrimination but also to ridicule, humiliation, resentment, and even murder in Southern training camps and cities in the United States. Negro soldiers were subjected to brutal and unreasonable treatment. Private Ned Turman was killed on a Jim Crow bus going to Fort Bragg, North Carolina. Raymond Carr was killed by Louisiana State Police. March, 1943 Sgt. Thomas Foster was killed by civilian police in
Little Rock, Arkansas. On July, 1942, Private Charles Reco was killed by civilian police in Beaumont, Texas. Many other similar incidents occurred. In a report, Judge William H. Hastie and Thurgood Marshall said that civilian violence against Negro soldiers was a recurrent phenomenon and it continued unabated.14

In September, 1942, an article by Walter White, entitled "What the Negro Thinks of the Army," appeared in The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science. Mr. White said that many Negroes felt that they could be no worse off under Hitler. He maintained that the Negro's opinion of the Army was part and parcel of his awareness of the enormous difference between the preaching and the practice of democratic American whites in other branches of the armed services and in other phases of life. The Negro was very interested in and aware of the racial implications of the war in the Pacific. He reiterated the stories of attacks on Negro soldiers. He said that the FECP was heartening to Negroes but the basic criticism of the entire war program, including the Army, was that the concept of the Negro as a second class citizen in the minds of Government and white people generally had not been changed.15

In another article in Survey Graphic, Mr. White contended that the Negro soldier was subjected to the same sort of treatment that he was supposed to become indignant about when it was meted out by the Nazis or Japanese to
minorities in Europe or Asia. And yet he was expected to
give his all to beat the Axis and help preserve democracy.
He again mentioned that the officers in the Army and Navy
were mostly Southerners who had risen to the top ranks by
way of seniority as in Congress. Again it was stated that
colored regiments were reduced from combat to service units.
White said that the Negro's status in the armed forces had
sunk to a new low. The Navy was even worse than the Army
and would remain so as long as Secretary Knox was in power.
Mr. White asserted that there was a "New Negro" who was more
organized, more educated, and disillusioned by World War I,
when Negroes returned to find the Ku Klux Klan instead of
democracy for Negroes. In the previous article, Mr. White
had said that the major part of the work to effect a change
must be done by the Negro himself. 16 October, 1940, William
Hastie proposed the creation of a voluntary integrated unit
and the idea was bluntly dismissed by General George C.

December 22, 1941, Walter White, on behalf of the
NAACP, again proposed that a volunteer Army division be
created which would be open to all Americans irrespective
of race, creed, color or national origin. This idea,
originally made by Claude A. Barnett, director of the Associated
Negro Press, was endorsed by many influential Negroes, and
William Hastie worked to implement it. Mr. White found in
his travels that there were many young white men, especially
college students, who were enthusiastic about the idea and would be eager to join such a volunteer unit. However, the War Department did nothing. Although Mr. White bombarded the War Department with letters requesting that action be taken, Lieutenant Colonel J. W. V. Boyer said that even talking about an integrated unit was a waste of time:

With respect to Mr. White, the letters addressed to him may have been curt. His letters to the War Department have been increasingly insolent on the subjects which are of no concern to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. I can see no useful purpose in any officer dissipating his time to discuss with Mr. White or anyone else the creation of a volunteer division composed of whites and Negroes. There may be some super-tolerant people that would join a Negro outfit but their numbers would be few.

First emphasis was placed on winning the war and democratic ideals and social experiments would have to wait until later.

January 16, 1941, the Army announced that it would set up an air base at Tuskegee Institute, Alabama, for the training of Negroes in a pursuit squadron. Walter White and the NAACP were violently opposed to segregated training for Negroes. He voiced their opposition to President Patterson of Tuskegee Institute, and William Hastie. At first Judge Hastie supported the plan as immediately beneficial to Negroes. However, as time went on, the Air Force was not meeting its commitments. It seemed as though this might set a precedent for an extension of the separate Tuskegee pattern to other Air Forces and even to other Army training activities. On January 30, 1943, William Hastie resigned as Civilian Aide to the Secretary of War in protest against the continued policy
of discrimination in the Army Air Forces. This move had a beneficial effect. It forced the military to do more for Negro flyers and provided the Advisory Committee on Negro Troop Policies (which acted as a clearing house for staff ideas and as a channel for civilian ideas on the employment of Negro troops) with an incentive to act on Judge Hastie's recommendations on the improvement of race relations within the Army. 19

Things were certainly bad enough at home when rumors came from overseas that there were clashes between white and Negro American soldiers and that Negro soldiers were being mistreated and misused. Walter White was eager to go investigate the situation. He did not want to go as an official observer because this would mean some restriction of movement and publication, so he was accredited as a war correspondent for the New York Post, and in 1944, made an extensive tour of the European and Mediterranean Theaters of Operation.

Mr. White's movements were closely watched. Elaborate efforts were made to keep him away from areas where racial clashes had occurred and to keep him from talking with soldiers in these areas. Major General John C. H. Lee, however, ordered that Mr. White be given access to whatever areas, individuals or documents he wished to see. Because of this order he was able to refuse escorts and thereby get at the truth. When he returned he submitted a memorandum to the War Department with fourteen recommendations for the improvement of race
relations and the mistreatment of the Negro soldier in the Army. He also wrote a book detailing his observations and experiences on his tour of the European Theater of Operation.

He later returned to make a similar, 46,000 mile tour of the Pacific Theater of operations. He again made several recommendations to the War Department based on his observations.20

Between Mr. White's investigations of the treatment of Negro troops participating in World War II, he returned to the United States to take an active part in voicing the Negroes' demands that the political parties take his recommendations into consideration in the upcoming election. The Negro held the potential balance of power in at least seventeen states, with two hundred and eighty-one votes in the electoral college. An open letter to the Democratic and Republican parties was drafted by representatives of twenty-five of the largest organizations of Negroes in the country. It stated what the Negroes wanted in the political platforms. Mr. White also appeared before the platform committee of both political parties to state the position of the organizations that had written the letter. Mr. White wrote an article, "The Negro Waits to See," which appeared in The Nation, October 21, 1944, in which he stated that Negroes did not wish to be a racial bloc but that they had been forced to think and vote racially because of the discrimination they had been subjected to. He stated what Negroes wanted: full political equality, full
civil equality, full equality of educational opportunity, and full equality of employment opportunity. It is interesting to note that, back in 1944, Mr. White stated that the Negro did not want separate but equal accommodations; that separate accommodations were by that very fact unequal. He stated that some progress had been made since 1940 but stressed that that fact was due almost entirely to pressure by Negroes themselves. He gave for examples the creation of the FEPC and the Supreme Court decision in Smith vs. Allwright. He said that Negroes were embittered by the continued humiliation, physical violence and death of Negro soldiers. The way the Negroes voted would depend on the sincerity of the political platforms, and the way the present administration handled itself.21

A Rising Wind: Report of Negro Troops in the ETO, was published in 1945. Mr. White's report was expedited by Lieutenant General Lees' order to commanding officers, mentioned earlier, allowing Mr. White to see whatever he wished. When Negro troops arrived in England, they were at first shunned by the British. They soon found out that white American troops had told the British townspeople that Negroes had tails, that they were illiterate, that they carried razors which they would use on the slightest provocation, that their color was due to disease, and that they would rape white women. The British at first believed some of these fantastic stories since they saw Negroes doing only manual labor and there were
no Negro combat troops. Furthermore, following is part of an official order issued by an American Colonel of Southern birth who was later promoted to the rank of general:

That colored soldiers are akin to well-meaning but irresponsible children. As such they have to be given the best possible discipline. Generally they cannot be trusted to tell the truth, to execute complicated orders, or to act on their own initiative except in certain individual cases.

That among the peculiar characteristics of the colored race . . . influences such as excitement, fear, religion, dope, liquor, or the accomplishment of something without their usual sphere, they individually or collectively can change form with amazing rapidity from a timid or bashful individual to brazen boldness or madness or become hysterical. . . . The colored individual likes to "doll up," strut, brag and show off. He likes to be distinctive and stand out from the others. Everything possible should be used to encourage this. For example, know their names and occasionally call a man "Corporal John" in place of "Corporal Smith."

Mr. White said he was confused with the frequency, despondency and bitterness of the use of the phrase "the enemy." He soon learned that Negro soldiers were referring not to the Nazis but to their white fellow Americans. Americans who were fighting a war to defeat a master-race theory had transplanted to other parts of the world the racial pattern and prejudice of the South. White soldiers made contemptuous references to British people who ignored the color line and invited Negroes to their homes. Most of the racial clashes occurred because white soldiers resented British people, especially women, associating in public with American Negroes. An order was issued to all commanding officers of British units, especially women's, that "suggested" members of the British military units
should refrain from associating in public with Negroes because some American white soldiers resented it. Mr. White repeatedly heard the question, "What are we fighting this war for anyway?"23

However, the false stories of Negroes and the attempts to impose American prejudices on the British people boomeranged. Many English people had gained their only knowledge of Negroes through American motion pictures which invariably portrayed them as improvident, simple-minded, boisterous, credulous buffoons or menials, scared of ghosts, inordinately fond of razors, watermelons and their white masters. They were pleasantly surprised when they found many American Negro soldiers to be well-educated, intelligent, tactful, and pleasant to be around. Many close friendships were formed between British people and Negro soldiers. The British deeply resented the attempt to transplant American prejudices and injustices to British soil. The British Home Office issued a directive to all constables and peace officers bluntly reminding them that there was no color bar in the United Kingdom and none would be permitted unless it was established by the United States Army. Constables were told that under no circumstances were they to participate directly or indirectly in the barring of American Negro troops from any place of public accommodation.24

There were court-martials and death sentences imposed upon Negroes charged with rape. An American Army officer who had an opportunity to know the facts asserted that there was
not one instance of rape by a Negro soldier. This administration of justice by American court-martial to Negroes was shocking to the British people. A letter to a newspaper from an Englishwoman said, "We are asking ourselves why we stood up to the nights of terror in 1940 and 1941 if it was not for the freedom and justice and rights of all men?" And an editorial said:

We print it [the trial] in full even at this critical stage of the war because one of the purposes for which our men are fighting is the defense or restoration of the dignity and equality of all individuals, whatever their color or creed, even amidst the tumult and chaos of our day. . . . The whole question of imposing death penalties on American soldiers in this country for crimes which are not punished by death sentences under British law is being raised in Parliament.25

Mr. White had been asked to make recommendations which would help relieve the racial tensions and conflicts and raise Negro morale. He met with General Eisenhower to discuss these matters. The first point Mr. White made was that it was very hard for Negroes to identify with the war when there were no Negro combat troops and they were merely digging ditches while being subjected to the same racial theories against which they were supposed to be fighting Hitler. General Eisenhower agreed that there should be more Negro combat troops. Mr. White also suggested that there should be more effective checking of derogatory stories and false impressions created among the British by American soldiers. He said there should be abolition of paternalism as well as more obvious acts of prejudice toward Negro soldiers by some officers. Negro and
white MP's should be assigned in pairs, and refresher courses in the use of firearms should be given to service and supply troops. He concluded with the audacious suggestion that there be complete abolition of segregation and discrimination in the Army and such allied services as the Red Cross. 26

Mr. White had found that there existed a higher incidence of race prejudice among officers than among enlisted men. General Eisenhower agreed that when the commanding officer of a unit was able, courageous and obedient to the commands of his superior, whether he agreed or not, there was no friction. However, when officers were weak or prejudiced to the extent that they tried to evade or negate orders that all soldiers must be treated alike, there occurred riots, fights, and other racial disorders. Some specific steps were agreed upon. One was the issuance of an order forbidding any future establishment of "off limits" on the basis of race. Mr. White also discussed racial problems at length with John G. Winant, war ambassador to England, and Herbert Agar. 27

In Africa, Mr. White was amazed and shocked at the differentiation on the basis of color which had arisen since the arrival of the Americans and British. However, at Oran, a Negro unit had discharged a difficult and responsible assignment with pride which was not found when Negro troops were given only menial tasks in labor groups. Mr. White wondered how America could be so blind as to crush or, by indifference permit, the eagerness of its Negro citizens
to participate fully and to contribute generously in America to be crushed. 28

Mr. White was very strongly impressed by Felix Eboue, Governor of Chad. General Mangin said "Who holds Africa holds the fate of the world," and "who holds Chad holds Africa." It was Felix Eboue, a black man, who made the decision which kept Central Africa out of Hitler's control. It is estimated that Eboue's decision shortened the war by several months or even years. However, when Roosevelt, Churchill, and De Gaulle met in Casablanca in January, 1943, Felix Eboue, the man who was most responsible for their being able to meet in Africa, was conspicuously absent. Eboue was extremely loyal to France and, when questioned by Mr. White, replied that he was sure that France would keep her promises of full citizenship and equality of economic opportunity to her colonials. Eboue was later made Governor of all French Equatorial Africa and Chad was awarded the Order of the Empire. 29

In Italy Mr. White found that the morale of Negro soldiers was higher than in any other theater of operation he had visited. There were Negro combat troops as well as service battalions in that theater. The 99th Pursuit Squadron was receiving recognition for its feats and Negroes were working together with whites. Seventy per cent of the quartermaster and port battalion troops operating in Gela were Negroes. There was very heavy loss of life. The valor
of the Negro troops, however, did not receive the publicity that white troops received. When a Negro sergeant was awarded the Silver Star, the news was published only in Negro newspapers. There were many other examples of this sort, but Negroes in Italy were heartened by the fact that some members of their race were allowed to participate in the war in other than menial tasks.30

There were attempts to spread anti-Negro propaganda in Italy but it did not succeed as it had in other places. This was largely because of the presence of Negro combat troops. Although they were few in number, it enhanced the reputation of Negro soldiers considerably. Some Army officials were more conscientious in stopping the anti-Negro Propaganda in Italy, and Italians were less susceptible to it because they had more opportunity to come into close contact with Negroes. Negro soldiers in Italy were very generous and often gave food to starving Italians.31

Mr. White gave many examples of the effect segregation and discrimination had on both Negro and white soldiers. The Jim Crow policy in the Army not only continued existing Jim Crow policies but it created prejudice where none existed before. The War and Navy Departments were accused of playing an opportunistic game and yielding almost invariably to the lowest common denominator of racial bigotry. When white and Negro soldiers worked together in the latter stages of the war, the result was most beneficial. There were many instances
of white soldiers coming to the rescue of Negroes who were being abused in the United States. They resented discrimination being practiced at home while they were fighting against Hitler's race theories overseas. They felt that all Americans should work together in the war effort and fight discrimination everywhere.  

Mr. White said that World War II magnified the Negro's awareness of the disparity between what Americans professed and how they practiced democracy. He said the majority of Negro veterans would return to America disillusioned and cynical, knowing that betterment of conditions must come largely through their own efforts. But he would return determined to use those efforts to the utmost. He had heard Winston Churchill's "blood, sweat, and tears" oratory while India remained enslaved and maligned by British propaganda. He heard of the bitter fight of Southern congressmen, aided by Republicans, to destroy or emasculate the FEPC. He remembered that some Negro soldiers returned from World War I to Southern states where they were lynched for the "crime" of returning home in the uniform in which they had fought in France. He saw the efforts of many white Americans to spread the poison of race hatred to other countries.

Mr. White also pointed out that World War II had made the American Negro feel a sense of kinship with other colored and oppressed peoples. He sensed that the struggle of the Negro in the United States was part of the struggle against
imperialism and exploitation by colored people all over the world. Furthermore, White predicted that the misbehavior of a minority of white Americans and the negligence of the American government in punishing such misbehavior would cost America and other white nations dearly in the eyes of the three-fourths of the world's population that is colored. 34

Mr. White made a study of Japanese propaganda in the Orient and he said it was almost invariably identical to German propaganda in Latin America and Africa. Every lynching, every race riot, every killing of a Negro soldier in a Southern training camp, every anti-Negro diatribe in Congress, every refusal to abolish racial segregation in the armed forces of the United States, every example of the exclusion of colored labor in defense industries and trade unions was played up. They said, "This is the way the United States treats its own colored people and this is the way the colored people of the world will be treated if the allied nations win the war! Be smart and cast your lot with another colored people, the Japanese, who will never mistreat fellow colored people!" Japanese propaganda said that the colored people of the world could never hope for justice and equality from white people because of their unalterable race prejudice. Mr. White declared that the United States, Britain and other white nations could no longer afford, in enlightened self-interest if nothing else, the theories of racial superiority. Americans must see the connection between the colored
Americans and the colored people overseas. The Allied nations must immediately choose to revolutionize their racial concepts and practices and to abolish imperialism and grant full equality to all of its people or else prepare for World War III. With great foresight, while World War II was still being fought, Walter White warned:

One of the chief deterrents will be Russia. Distrustful of Anglo-American control of Europe, many and perhaps all of the Balkan states may, through choice or necessity, ally themselves with Russia. If Anglo-Saxon practices in China and India are not drastically and immediately revised, it is probable, and perhaps certain, that the people of India, China, Burma, Malaya and other parts of the Pacific may also move into the Russian orbit as the lesser of two dangers.

He concluded with the paragraph:

A wind is rising—a wind of determination by the have-nots of the world to share the benefits of freedom and prosperity which the haves of the earth have tried to keep exclusively for themselves. That wind blows all over the world. Whether that wind develops into a hurricane is a decision which we must make now and in the days when we form the peace.

A Rising Wind is an excellent report, not only of the treatment of Negro Troops in the ETO, but also of the monumental racial implications inherent in World War II. The book contains no footnotes or bibliography and is, therefore, more of a journalistic effort than a historical document, but it has been used as a source for several more authoritative texts on the Negro in World War II. Mr. White retained the skill he demonstrated in The Fire in the Flint of conveying the frustrations and disillusionments inherent in being black in the United States. Many personal conversations and letters of
white and Negro soldiers were included in the book. The question, "What are we fighting this war for anyway?" appeared in the book many times. It was asked by American soldiers, white and black, and the reader is able to experience, vicariously, the tremendous conflicting emotions of the boys who asked it, because of the skill of the author in presenting the material.

A Rising Wind received excellent reviews. As in the reviews of Rope and Faggot, reviewers praised it for different reasons. Michael DeCapite said that Mr. White's restraint was admirable and that the book could have been written with a great deal of indignation. Marcus Duffield agreed that the presentation was remarkably unimpassioned; however, the review in the New Yorker spoke of Mr. White's earnestness and passion in writing the book. All reviewers expressed the opinion that the book was a very disturbing one because it presented racial bigotry as it really existed in the United States and especially the armed forces. 38

Mr. White's tour and investigation of the Pacific Theater of Operations again elicited several recommendations to the War Department based on his observations. Once more, he found the same patterns of segregation, discrimination, and mistreatment of Negro servicemen. Here again, Mr. White frequently encountered the observation by Negro soldiers that the fight for democracy would not end, but rather begin when they returned home to the United States. He found that
bigoted white Americans had succeeded in transplanting racial prejudice in the Hawaiian Islands where none had existed before. In Leyte, Mr. White became deeply involved with the 93rd Division and made a thorough investigation of the unjustified stories that the Negroes had demonstrated cowardice in battle. Mr. White's investigation revealed that the 93rd Division had not been in the original invasion at Bougainville (the case in question) and when it was sent in a year later after the island had been declared secure the Division had been officially cited by General Dunckel of the 37th Division for the excellence and accuracy of their firing. The only cowardice which was displayed was that of a white officer who had disobeyed orders and disorganized the men under him. The 93rd Division, like other Negro troops, had been used as a promotion mill and a dumping ground for white officers who had failed in other divisions. Mr. White recommended that the 93rd Division be relieved of fatigue and service duties, of incompetent officers, and be used in combat as the only means of answering the false reports about it. Copies of his investigation and recommendations were submitted to the President, Under Secretary Patterson and Assistant Secretary McCloy. Mr. White reported his findings in person in an interview with General MacArthur. He thereafter maintained frequent communication with General MacArthur. However, the only positive action taken on his report was the movement
of the 93rd Division to Morotai and the discontinuance of questionnaires.

The NAACP was very active in the interest of Negro servicemen throughout the war. It vigorously protested the conversion of Negro combat troops into service units. It consistently urged and worked for integration in the armed forces. It demanded removal of commanding officers who refused to follow the War Department orders. Investigations were conducted, and the heroic deeds of Negro servicemen and cases of blatant discrimination were publicized. The legal department appealed numerous court-martial cases. Mr. White, himself, defended forty-four Negro sailors in Guam.

Because the need for combat troops was so critical, more Negro troops were used in combat during and after the Battle of the Bulge. It was hoped that the platoons themselves would be integrated but a compromise was effected and all-Negro platoons were included in white regiments. An Army poll showed that, after having served in the same units with colored combat soldiers, the attitudes of whites toward Negroes improved and seventy-seven per cent of the officers favored integration as compared with thirty-three per cent before. However, after the emergency was over, after V-E Day, most of the Negro platoons were taken out of the combat divisions and assigned again to the menial tasks of service units. Even though they had fought bravely and well, they were not to be permitted to return to America as part of victorious combat
divisions or to wear the insignia of those combat divisions.\textsuperscript{42}

It was a great disappointment to Negroes when General Eisenhower testified before the Senate Armed Services Committee in 1948 that he felt that racial segregation in the Army should continue at the platoon level. In April, 1948, a distinguished group of Negro leaders were told by Secretary of War, Kenneth C. Royall, that the Army would continue segregation. However, presidential election was approaching and the tide of Negro dissatisfaction was running high. On July 26, 1948, Executive Order 9981 was issued. It required equal opportunity in the armed forces regardless of race; but it did not specify when this would occur. This abrupt about-face was a major political victory for Negroes.\textsuperscript{43}

Full integration was not achieved in the armed services until 1954. Furthermore, over fourteen years after Walter White and the NAACP had urged, suggested, and demanded integration of the armed forces, it was achieved not because of any ideals of equality but because of the pragmatic demands of the professional soldier.\textsuperscript{44}

Although full integration was finally achieved, there is a sad commentary on democracy in the United States in the fact that Negro veterans of World War II (as in World War I) were abused, humiliated, denied employment, mistreated and subjected to violence. The fears and predictions of the Negro servicemen Walter White interviewed during the war came to pass. Machine guns, grenades, tear gas, armored trucks, and
other riot-quelling equipment were purchased by many Southern cities and a few Northern cities, "to take care of any 'bad niggers' who come home with any fancy ideas about occupying a different status from that they knew before they left." 45

One such city was Columbia, Tennessee. A "riot" started because a Negro veteran argued about the cost of having a radio repaired. To avert trouble, the veteran's mother paid the high repair bill only to discover that the radio would not work. When she insisted that the repairs for which she had paid be made, she and her son were arrested. Then state highway patrolmen riddled Negro homes and business establishments to quell an "armed insurrection" by Negroes, and one hundred and six Negroes were arrested. Two of them were killed in the jail for "attempting to escape" from a heavily-guarded room of the jail. Twenty-five of the Negroes were granted a change of venue and were tried in Lawrenceburg, a town which had a sign posted outside its city limits which read, "NIGGER, READ AND RUN. DON'T LET THE SUN GO DOWN ON YOU HERE. IF YOU CAN'T READ, RUN ANYWAY." Each day the twenty-five defendants and the trial lawyers had to travel one hundred miles to the trial, because, obviously, Negroes were not allowed to remain overnight in that town. 46

July 26, 1946, a Negro veteran, honorably discharged from the United States Army, and three other Negroes, two of them women, were lynched in Walton County, Georgia. The lynching evolved from a fight one of the Negro victims had
with a white man when he tried to defend his wife from the white man's attentions. August, 1946, in Minden, Louisiana, honorably discharged ex-Corporal John Jones and his cousin were tortured with blowtorches and brutally lynched after being released from jail because the charges against Jones had been proven groundless. He was arrested for "loitering" in the backyard of a white woman. Another veteran, Issac Woodard, was returning home to see his wife and family after spending over two years in the South Pacific. He was arrested in South Carolina because he had not returned to the bus he was riding quickly enough after going to the restroom. In jail he was brutally beaten and consequently blinded by Police Chief Linwood Shull, who was acquitted. These were the conditions to which Johnny Black came marching home.
FOOTNOTES

1 White, A Man Called White, pp. 186-187.

2 Ibid., p. 187.


4 White, A Man Called White, p. 188; NAACP, Annual Report for 1940, p. 5.

5 Walter White, "It's Our Country, Too," The Saturday Evening Post, December 14, 1940, pp. 27, 61, 63.

6 Ibid., pp. 63, 66, 68.

7 White, How Far the Promised Land?, p. 108; White, A Man Called White, pp. 188-189; NAACP, Annual Report for 1940, pp. 5-8; NAACP, Annual Report for 1941, pp. 3-4.


9 White, A Man Called White, pp. 190-191; Flynn, Negroes, pp. 244-245; NAACP, Annual Report for 1941, p. 3.

10 White, A Man Called White, pp. 191-192.

11 Ibid., pp. 192-193; NAACP, Annual Report for 1940, p. 4.

12 Ibid., pp. 192-194; White, Promised Land, p. 109; NAACP, Annual Report for 1941, p. 4. Harold Ickes stated in his Diary that President Roosevelt was in the worst mood he had ever seen him in the day he issued the Executive Order because of a gossip column in The Washington Bee. This author wonders if President Roosevelt's bad mood was due to the fact that he was forced to do something against his wishes.


23. Ibid., pp. 18, 30-33.

24. Ibid., pp. 55, 27.

25. Ibid., p. 23.

27 Ibid., pp. 65-67.
28 Ibid., pp. 71-76.
29 Ibid., pp. 100-112.
30 Ibid., pp. 86-89.
31 Ibid., pp. 86-89.
32 Ibid., pp. 124-130.
33 Ibid., pp. 142-143.
34 Ibid., pp. 144-147.
35 Ibid.
36 Ibid., pp. 154-155.
37 Ibid., p. 155.
40 Ibid., pp. 286-288; Lee, U. S. Army, pp. 529-531.
41 NAACP Annual Report for 1947, Appendix, pp. 62-64, 73-75.
42 Stillman, Integration, p. 29; White, A Man Called White, pp. 250-252.
43 Stillman, Integration, pp. 40-43; White, A Man Called White, p. 251.
44 Stillman, Integration, pp. 55-56.
45 White, A Man Called White, pp. 308-309.
46 Ibid., pp. 309-314.
47 Ibid., pp. 322-328.
CHAPTER VI

HOW FAR THE PROMISED LAND?

Walter White took a world-wide view of race relations and democracy, especially after World War II. He recognized the tremendous significance of how the United States treated her Negro citizens in the world-wide ideological struggle for men's minds. White, as the leader of a minority protest organization, was necessarily a critic of American democracy in practice. However, during the last decade of his life, much of his writing was devoted to relating the progress which the Negro in America had achieved through democratic processes. He did this because he knew that Communist propaganda exploited every incident of violence and oppression of American Negroes. Communist propaganda also misrepresented race relations in the United States to such an extent that Mr. White found that some people in African and Asian countries believed that lynchings were still an everyday occurrence in the 1950's. The result was the steadily lowered prestige of the United States among the two-thirds of the world's colored population and also among many white people.¹

In December, 1948, White wrote an article for The Antioch Review entitled "Civil Liberties in a Favorable
In this article he stated that Soviet Russia and her allies constantly charged America with hypocrisy because she supported human rights resolutions at the United Nations General Assembly in Paris while she allowed disfranchisement, segregation, and economic and political discrimination against racial minorities to continue unchecked at home. White maintained that public opinion was generally favorable to correcting these evils. He pointed to the creation of the President's Committee on Civil Rights and the fact that over a million Americans had purchased the report of that committee. He added that many large organizations had endorsed the report and it was discussed favorably in the press. Although Mr. White foresaw trouble in the Senate, he expressed the hope that measures enacting the recommendations of the Committee would be passed in Congress. 2

In 1950, White wrote an article for the Pittsburgh Courier detailing the American Negroes' progress since the turn of the century. He concluded the article with the statement that during the next fifty years America must extend the battle for full civil rights, not only for American minorities but also for all oppressed peoples of the world, if democracy were to survive. 3

The Saturday Review of Literature printed "Time for a Progress Report," by Walter White, September 22, 1951. Mr. White reported that cruelty and hatred of Negro Americans by white Americans had manufactured screaming headlines in
newspapers around the globe. He stated that, while enemies of democracy were effectively spreading stories of what was wrong in America, the story of the progress of American Negroes was not being told. He then explained the real progress which had been made in fifteen different areas of racial relations in the United States.  

July 18, 1953, the _Saturday Evening Post_ carried an article by White, which told of the progress Detroit had made in fighting race hatred. He gave a complete account of Detroit's racial disturbances, and the steps which had been taken to remedy these situations since 1925. White said that the account was presented in the hope that other American cities facing similar problems could learn from Detroit's experiences.  

The _Saturday Evening Post_ published another article by White on April 3, 1954. "How the Washington Color Line Looks to Me," told of incidents in the nation's capital which had been gleefully reported to the world by Moscow. White maintained, however, that the material for these reports was decreasing because segregation and discrimination in Washington D. C. were being fought at high levels and revolutionary gains were being made with a minimal amount of friction. The State Department and other government agencies no longer had to be concerned about what might happen to important colored visitors from countries whose friendship and essential materials were necessary to the United States in the Cold War.
Negro citizens living in Washington D. C. still faced residential segregation, however, and White felt that this problem would be much more difficult to overcome. 6

On May 28, 1954, U. S. News & World Report printed an interview with Walter White, entitled "What Negroes Want Now." The article was meant to determine what Negroes and the NAACP would fight for after the Supreme Court decision outlawing segregation in public schools. Mr. White answered that the first task would be to see to it that the decision was fully implemented. He again brought up the effect of Communist propaganda on American prestige in Asia and Africa. He said that the Supreme Court decision would have very beneficial effects as it would help to show that the Communist charge that democracy was decadent was false. White believed that under democracy minorities could advance in their fight against injustice. Tangible proof of that fact, such as the Supreme Court decision, would impress the people who were most susceptible to Communist propaganda. 7

White realized, however, that there was an almost total absence of information in Asian and African countries about the hard-won progress that had been made in the fight for racial equality in the United States. He learned this when he represented the NAACP on the World Town Hall Seminar which accompanied the Round the World Town Meeting to twelve capital cities of the world in 1949. The purpose of the tour was to explain how democracy worked in the United States. White found
that the Communists had forged a universal and effective weapon against the United States from material provided by two and a half centuries of human slavery and three-fourths of a century of second-class citizenship for Negro citizens. Communists were very adept at taking a photograph or a documented account of a real instance of violence or discrimination against American Negroes and making misleading and often untrue general statements about America based on them. This anti-American propaganda made it seem that discrimination was universal in all aspects of American life. It did not, of course, reveal the equally dramatic, and equally true story of advances in the fight against discrimination. Nor did American propaganda publicize this story. The consequence was that the members of the tour were faced with statements and asked questions, such as these: "We just can't believe you when you talk about democracy and don't practice it. How can we, when you mistreat and abuse your own people just because they have a different color of skin?"³

Mr. White gave the following answer:

No honest American denies the existence of racial and religious bigotry in the United States. . . . Thoughtful Americans are not only heartily ashamed by the continuation of prejudice in their country, but many are effectively doing something about it. A few are doing much, more are doing a little, some are doing nothing or are actively working to perpetuate prejudice. In a democratic society where there is freedom of the right to protest against even the government itself, some progress toward abolition of the color line in jobs, voting, the armed services, and education is being made. Not enough, of course. But with all its shortcomings, a democracy does permit dissent, which is not possible in dictatorship of either left or right. Where all power is vested in a
dictator or a small clique, however benevolent its announced objectives, protestants usually wind up in prison or facing a firing squad. 7

White wrote his last book, How Far the Promised Land?, in an attempt to inform people outside of the United States of the over-all progress of Negroes in America which was possible because of the democratic form of government. He also wanted to alert Americans to the decline in prestige that was affecting the United States all over the world, and to convince them that it was necessary to accelerate the process of elimination of prejudice and racial barriers. Unless this happened, it would be impossible to convince the rest of the world that American democracy could be trusted and emulated. White felt that progress against racial injustice was impeded more by inertia than by a calculated determination to oppress the Negro. He further believed that inertia was engendered by the assumption that the problem was so complex and difficult that it was hopeless to even try to solve it. White hoped that his account of the progress of the Negro in various areas of American life would give hope to the fainthearted, even though there was a long way to go before full equality would become a reality. 10

The first chapter, entitled "Decision Monday," detailed the legal battles the NAACP had fought through the courts to attain educational equality for Negroes. Mr. White stated that a study made for the NAACP by Judge Nathan Margold in 1930 resulted in the NAACP's decision to shift from the defensive
to the offensive in its attack on education and other injustices. As the result of several Supreme Court decisions (Missouri ex rel. Gaines vs. Canada (1938), Sipuel vs. Board of Regents (1948), Sweatt vs. Painter (1950)), segregation in graduate and professional schools became a virtual impossibility. Until the Sipuel case the NAACP lawyers had argued the cases on the basis that Negroes were not provided with "separate but equal" facilities. In Miss Sipuel's case, and thereafter, the lawyers presented expert testimony of social scientists to augment their argument that separate facilities were inherently unequal. Although the Supreme Court was influenced by this evidence it did not abandon the separate but equal principle until its famous decision in Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka in 1954. White provided a state-by-state survey of conditions as they existed at the opening of the 1954-55 school year. He felt that the Brown decision and the indication that border states and many people and organizations in Southern states expressed a willingness to comply with it represented a basic and bloodless revolution of public thinking.

White next discussed the success of the Negro in regaining the right to vote, which he felt was the Negroes' most potent weapon and defense. He told of the battle the NAACP had waged in the courts from the time of its first victory when the Supreme Court ruled in 1915, that the Oklahoma grandfather clause was unconstitutional. There was a back and
forth struggle about the right of the Negro to vote in Democratic primaries in the South until the Supreme Court ruled in Smith vs. Allwright (1944), that Negroes must be allowed to vote in primary as well as general elections. When Alabama attempted to circumvent the ruling with the Boswell Amendment, which required voters to show their ability to understand and explain any article of the Constitution of the United States to the satisfaction of the registrar, public opinion was sharply divided and there was a surprisingly large volume of disapproval. Mr. White felt that the old order was changing and gave his reasons for believing that public opinion was changing in the South. He said that although full franchise had not yet been achieved, the progress that had been achieved, in comparison to the 1930's, was phenomenal, considering the accumulated barriers the Negro had to overcome. Mr. White similarly described the progress the Negro had achieved in breaking down segregation and discrimination in the armed services, employment, housing, public health services, public accommodations, labor unions, and churches. He said that the public image of the Negro had considerably improved since the 1930's because of a more favorable coverage in the press and on radio and television. He related that the motion picture industry lagged far behind other communications media, however, because of its fear that Southern audiences would not accept Negroes in any roles other than as menials or comedians. White pointed out that one
indication of how much progress had been made in a decade was the fact that it was not necessary to include a chapter on lynching in the book.¹³

White explained why the Negro, although the most disadvantaged group in American society, had consistently rejected Communism. He said that the American Negro had learned from experience to distrust and loath dictatorship of all kinds. Negroes had realized that the Communists did not really care about individuals, but that they would use Negroes as martyrs for propaganda purposes, as in the Scottsboro case. The American Negro did not want a new society, he wanted a better American society. White believed that the steadily accelerated progress that the Negro had made in overcoming his status as a second-class citizen proved that a democratic government could change and solve social problems. Therefore, democracy and not Communism offered the opportunity for the Negro to win his right to first-class citizenship. Although Mr. White made it clear that there was still a long way to go, he felt that the American Negro had made so much progress since slavery that he was justified in his faith in ultimate victory in the fight for full equality.¹⁴

The book ended on a note of optimism. Today one can still ask the question, "How far the promised land?" However, viewing the tremendous progress that the American Negro has made in the sixteen years since Walter White wrote his last
book, one must admit that his faith in democracy has been vindicated.

On November 20, 1955, Roy Wilkins, Mr. White's successor as executive secretary of the NAACP said:

Walter White's book is as good a guide to progress in race relations since 1940, as can be secured, for not only was Walter a close observer of the passing scene, but he helped make the passing scene. He prodded and stimulated and inspired many of the gains he records in this book. His very presence, for example, overseas during the war in both the Atlantic and Pacific theaters—his contact with commanding officers—and his firsthand observations of the use of troops—had a very great effect on the eventual elimination of segregation from the armed services. His pounding away at the right to vote and the importance of the vote to Negro Americans—his emphasis on the citizenship rights Negroes should enjoy—helped speed the rise of the Negro in politics. This holds true of his preachments on the evils of communism—his demands that America live up to the ideals of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution—and his reiteration of the belief that most Americans, including southern/whites, are decent law-abiding and want to do justice on the race question.15

Dr. Ralph J. Bunche, Undersecretary of the United Nations said:

Walter White and the National Association For the Advancement of Colored People, with which he was identified throughout his career, share such a large measure of responsibility for the remarkable progress of the Negro since World War I. . . .

To Walter White, the progress of the Negro in America toward the Promised Land of equal citizenship marks the growth of American democracy toward maturity for all Americans. Moreover, the advance of the Negro American has furthered the cause of freedom for all peoples throughout the world.16

Harold L. Oram said in a book review for The New Republic:

Walter White summed up the results of his life's work just before he died. How Far The Promised Land is a
measure not only of America's progress in race relations but also of the stature of the man himself. In a literal sense almost every step in the betterment of America's race relations in the past two decades bore the imprint of Walter White's mind, his energy, his organizational ability, his courage, and—if it is not too much to say—his genius.17

Under White's leadership the NAACP did achieve extraordinary advances in the economic and social conditions among Negroes, as well as the considerable reduction of segregation and discrimination. These advances may not seem so extraordinary in the light of the civil rights "revolution" in the 1960's but it is this author's contention that the changes that White and the NAACP brought about in their time were just as significant as the changes effected by the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). Systematically insuring the Negro's legal rights through Supreme Court decisions was as great and hard-fought a victory as that achieved through the Freedom Rides. Had the NAACP staged a sit-in in the South instead of trying to insure the Negro's constitutional rights to equal public accommodations through court decisions in the 1920's or the 1930's, it is probable that "massive resistance" would have been labeled as "insurrection" and met with massive lynchings and murders.

The "revolution in expectations" after 1954, which brought the charges that the NAACP was too conservative and that direct action and not legalism brought results, was made
possible by the work of the NAACP and Walter White. It is the opinion of sociologists that prejudice is an acquired attitude. Some methods of reducing prejudice toward Negroes are the reduction of economic deprivation and the upward mobility of Negroes in economic and social areas. Personal contact with Negroes (for example, in the armed forces and integrated housing) reduces prejudice among whites. Open lines of communication are necessary to reduce prejudice. These are things which the NAACP and Walter White fought for and partially succeeded in achieving. Sociologists also say that prejudicial attitudes cannot be legislated away and that the passage of unenforceable legislation will not change attitudes. (Enforceable legislation will help to reduce prejudice through personal contact and the resulting rising status of Negroes.) It was the work of the NAACP and Walter White which produced the conditions which made enforceable legislation possible in the 1960's by changing the public opinion of white and black America. 18

Under Walter White's leadership the NAACP grew to be the largest, most militant and most successful civil rights organization. White's work was a major factor in the success of the NAACP. Directly or indirectly his work contributed to almost every step in the betterment of race relations and improved conditions for the Negro in the United States during his career. It seems to this writer that it must be an oversight on the part of historians in the field of Negro American
history that White is not recognized as one of the foremost leaders of Negroes in the United States. During his lifetime he was frequently referred to as the nearest approach to a national leader of Negroes since Booker T. Washington. He was recognized as the foremost spokesman for the Negro race, as the head of the NAACP. Admittedly, he did not command the universal respect and recognition of Negroes as did Frederick Douglass, Booker T. Washington, or Martin Luther King. When historians feel the need to fill the gap between Washington and King, they usually refer to W. E. B. Du Bois, who had very little contact with the mass of Negroes. Perhaps it is because Du Bois' extraordinary skill as a propagandist had more impact on following generations of Negroes than White's writings did. However, it is the opinion of this writer that White's combined activities of propagandist, journalist, speaker, organizational leader, lobbyist, and lecturer produced more practical results in the advancement of American Negroes than Du Bois' propaganda. Whereas Du Bois gave up hope that American democracy would ever permit full equality for the Negro, White's optimism and faith in democracy kept him and other Negroes working strenuously to reach "the promised land."
FOOTNOTES


10. Ibid., pp. 21-28.

11. Ibid., pp. 29-64.

12. Ibid., pp. 65-86.

13. Ibid., 203-211, 228-232.


16. Ibid., p. 12.


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Published Reports


Following are some passages which show the power of the novel, *The Fire in the Flint*, by Walter White.

What was the use of trying to avoid trouble in the South, he thought? Hell! Hadn't he tried? Hadn't he given up everything that might antagonize the whites? Hadn't he tried in every way he could to secure and retain their friendship? By God, he'd show them now! The white-livered curs! The damned filthy beasts! Damn trying to be a good Negro! He'd fight them to the death! He'd pay them back in kind for what they had brought on him and his!

He sprang to his feet. A fierce, unrelenting, un-governable hatred blazed in his eyes. He had passed through the most bitter five minutes of his life. Denuded of all the superficial trappings of civilization, he stood there—the primal man—the wild beast, cornered, wounded, determined to fight—fight—fight! The fire that lay concealed in the flint until struck, now leaped up in a devastating flame at the blows it had received! All the art of the casuist with which he had carefully built his faith and a code of conduct was cast aside and forgotten! He would demand and take the last ounce of flesh—he would exact the last drop of blood from his enemies with all the cruelty he could invent!

His mother, whom he had forgotten in the intensity of his hatred, became alarmed at the light in his eyes. She shook off the hand with which she would have restrained him.

"Oh, Ken!" she cried anxiously. What're you going to do?"

"I'm going to kill every damned 'Cracker' I find!" She fell to her knees in an agony of supplication and clung to him, the while he tried to loose her arms from around his knees. He shook as with a chill—his face had become vengeful, ghastly. Filled with a Berserker rage, he was eager to tear with his hands a white man—any white man—limb from limb.
"Superior race"! "Preservers of civilization"!
"Superior," indeed! They called Africans inferior!
They, with smirking hypocrisy, reviled the Turks! They
went to war against the "Huns" because of Belgium!
None of these had ever done a thing so bestial as these
"preservers of civilization" in Georgia! Civilization!
Hell! The damned hypocrites! The liars! The fiends!
"White civilization"! Faugh! Black and brown and yellow
hands had built it! The white fed like carrion on the
rotting flesh of the darker peoples! And called their
tool their own! And burned those on whose bodies their
vile civilization was built!

Bob had been right! Bob had been a man! He'd
fought and died like a man! He, Kenneth, with all his
professed and vaunted wisdom, was the coward! He
cursed himself! Building a fool's paradise! A house
of cards! To hell with everything!

"Mrs. Ewing, if by raising one finger I could save
the whole white race from destruction, and by not raising
it could send them all straight down to hell, I'd die
before I raised it! You've murdered my brother, my
sister's body, my mother's mind, and my very soul! No,
I know that," he said to her interjected remark, which
he repeated. "I know you didn't do it with your own hands!
But you belong to the race that did! And the race that's
going to pay for every murder it's committed!"

He paused for breath and then continued his vitriolic
distribute against the white race. It was relieving his
brain, he found, to be able thus to vent his spleen on
a white person.

He questioned Mrs. Ewing as to her daughter's diet.
The cause of her relapse became clear to him when she told
him with a naive innocence that since Mary had begged so
hard that day for something to eat, she had, with Dr.
Bennett's consent, given her a glass of milk and a small
piece of fried chicken. Kenneth set to work. He knew it
was useless to berate the mother for disregarding his
express orders that Mary should be given no solid food
for at least ten days. He knew that Dr. Bennett's word
counted more than his. This in spite of the fact that
Dr. Bennett had done nothing but the ordinary measuring-
cut of pills and panaceas which he had been taught almost
half a century ago in a third or fourth-rate Southern
medical school. Dr. Bennett knew medicine no later than
that of the early eighties. But Dr. Bennett was a white
man--he a Negro!

As he laboured, he suffered again the agony of those
hours he had spent on the floor in his reception room earlier that night. It brought to life again his bitterness. His skin was black! Therefore, though he had studied in the best medical school in America, though he had been an intern for one whole year in the city hospital at New York, though he had had army experience, though he had spent some time in study in the best university in France, and, save in pre-war Germany, the best medical school in Europe, his word and his medical knowledge and skill were inferior to that of an ignorant, lazy country doctor in Georgia! When, oh, when, he taught, will Americans get sense enough to know that the colour of a man's skin has nothing whatever to do with that man's ability or brain?

The words he'd use sprang to his mind. "You murdered Mary yourselves!" he'd say. "Didn't I tell you not to give her any food for ten days?" he'd demand. And then they'd shiveringly admit that he had told them those very words. "But, no," he'd go on, "You wouldn't listen to a 'damned nigger's' word!" Old Bennett, who doesn't know as much about medicine as a horse-doctor--probably less--he's got a white skin! And mine's black! Therefore--" his sarcasm would be great right there as he bowed in mock humility-"therefore you listened to him instead of me! And, doing so"--here another low bow--"you killed your own daughter!"

Here his voice would rise in violent denunciation: "You're murderers! Yes, that's what you are! You're murderers! You've murdered your own daughter! And I'm glad of it! I wish every one of you and your dirty breed lay in the coffin with her! You, who think you're God's own pet little race! You, who think that all the wisdom in the world is wrapped in your dirty little carcasses! And all the virtue! And all the brains! Everything! Everything! EVERYTHING!"

Oh, yes, he'd finish with infinite scorn: "And you've got nothing! Nothing! NOTHING! Nothing but lies and deceit and conceit and filthy, empty pride!"

"Mrs. Ewing, I've tried--God knows I have--to keep away from trouble with these white people in Central City. If they bother me, I'm going to fight--you hear me--I'm going to fight--and fight like hell! They'll get me in the end--I know that--but before I go I'm going to take a few along with me!"