

THE NEGRO LIBERATION MOVEMENT IN AMERICA

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In their protracted struggle for freedom, for equality and for a rightful place in the sun, the coloured peoples of the world have utilized multiple tactics ranging from violent revolution to orderly democratic procedures. Likewise their liberation movements have stemmed from various ideological roots — communism, nationalism, racism and democracy, and sometimes a combination of two or more of these.

Determining the goals and the nature of the struggle have been such factors as the social, political and economic conditions prevailing in the territory, the outlook and quality of the leadership, and the ideological motivation of the movement. Indonesia achieved independence through revolution and the forcible expulsion of the Dutch imperialists. Long years of non-violent passive resistance brought freedom to India. The Sudan was able peaceably to negotiate its independence. The Gold Coast and Nigeria look forward to nationhood by agreement with Great Britain. In Algeria, fighting continues for independence from France. In Kenya, the dispossessed Africans were forced to resort to terrorism in their bitter and presently thwarted struggle to regain their stolen land. The voteless Bantu and other non-Whites of the Union of South Africa desperately seek a way to freedom.

In all of these lands, the situation is distinctly different from that in the United States of America. Also, with the possible exception of the Union, the goal is dissimilar. In America, the Negro is a minority, one-tenth of the total population. Moreover, the basic law of the land recognizes him as a citizen entitled to all the rights and privileges of any other citizen. What the American Negro seeks is the full implementation of his constitutionally guaranteed rights, which in many areas of the country have been denied or curtailed. Separate nationhood has never been the goal of the American Negro.

It is within this context that the struggle for elimination of the colour bar and full freedom for Negro citizens in the United States

must be viewed. The situation is unlike that in any other country plagued with a colour problem. Accordingly, the Negro American's pursuit of liberty requires a different strategy and tactics suited to the peculiarities of the American scene. It would be misleading to draw conclusions from seeming parallels with Asian and African territories. There is in America neither the need for violent revolution nor the disposition among the Negro masses to resort to widespread terrorism. Although non-violent passive resistance has recently been spectacularly successful in Montgomery, Alabama, its feasibility on a broad national scale remains questionable.

To give co-ordinated leadership to the fight for freedom in the United States, the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People was organized as the result of a call issued on 12 February 1909, the centennial of the birth of Abraham Lincoln, the Great Emancipator. The purpose was to establish a "large and powerful body of citizens" to combat the rising tide of racism. Fifty-three Negro and White educators, clergymen, philanthropists, publicists and social workers signed the historic document calling "upon all believers in democracy to join in a national conference for the discussion of present evils, the voicing of protests, and the renewal of the struggle for civil and political liberty".

For nearly half a century the NAACP, as the Association is popularly known, has been the nation's most effective instrument in the efforts to secure for Negro Americans those rights inherent in citizenship in a democracy. Working always within the framework of the American constitutional system, the NAACP has succeeded in levelling one racial barrier after another, in holding at bay the nation's extreme racists, and in extending the frontiers of human freedom throughout the country.

To a large extent the history of the Negro's progress in America since 1910 has been the story of the NAACP struggle. Other forces, of course, contributed measurably to this advance. Economic factors, migrations, the work of White liberals in voluntary organizations, the pronouncements of leaders, domestic politics and international developments, all influenced the course of events. It was, however, the NAACP which set the objectives, charted the course, and directed the organized efforts to accelerate the march of progress.

From the beginning the NAACP realized that its objective was not attainable within the framework of segregation. However, the attack upon Jim Crow, by which is meant the whole body of laws and customs which assign to the Negro a lesser place in American

society, has been intensified only in recent years largely because the earlier years were devoted to defensive tactics to ward off the blows of the aggressive racists.

The various activities of the Association—public relations, legislative, legal and organizational—are under the direction of Roy Wilkins, the Executive Secretary. As chief administrative



SOUTHERN ROAD TO NOWHERE

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officer, he is charged with the responsibility of co-ordination and directing the NAACP programme in accordance with policies developed at the Association's annual conventions and ratified by the Board of Directors. He maintains contact with co-operating organizations and serves as chairman of the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights composed of 50 national civic, church, trade union, fraternal and professional organizations. The purpose of the Conference is to mobilize widespread support for civil rights legislation. On behalf of the NAACP and the Conference, Mr. Wilkins presented to the Resolutions Committees of both the Democratic and Republican parties civil rights proposals for inclusion in the respective party platforms.

National headquarters are maintained in New York City with local branches throughout the nation. Regional offices have been established on the West Coast and in the South west and the Southeast. Local branches join together to form statewide units in their respective states. Except in a few large cities all of the branch work is carried on by unpaid volunteers. Supervising the organizational activities nationally is Gloster B. Current, Director of Branches.

When the NAACP was organized, Negroes were being lynched at the rate of two a week. The first and pressing task was to devise some means to curb the lynch mobs and to gain for the Negro a measure of security of his person. A two-pronged attack was developed consisting of an educational, or propaganda, programme to expose the horrors of this barbarous crime, and a legislative campaign to secure enactment of a federal anti-lynching law. Due to the filibuster in the Senate no such law has yet been enacted. Meanwhile, however, lynching had become obsolete until 1955, when it claimed three victims in the state of Mississippi. Others joined in this fight, including many White southerners, but it was the NAACP which spearheaded the drive year after year, with the late Walter White, the Association's assistant secretary and later Executive Secretary, carrying the brunt of the attack and risking his life investigating and exposing mob violence.

The anti-lynching campaign illustrates two of the three major channels through which the NAACP seeks its goal, the other being the courts. Through its educational, legislative and legal programmes, all in accord with traditional American procedures, the NAACP seeks not only liberation of the Negro but also the strengthening of democracy at home and the enhancement of American prestige abroad.

The effectiveness of the Association's propaganda programme is

not always measurable in tangibles. However, it is evident that the climate of opinion on the race issue is far healthier to-day in America, including the South, than it was in 1910, or even a quarter of a century ago. Throughout its history the NAACP has sought to educate the American public about the evils of racial prejudice, sharply pointing out the grievous social, economic and political consequences of discrimination and segregation. All media of mass communications have been utilized in this continuing campaign—books, pamphlets, posters, magazines, newspapers, public meetings, films, radio and television. The churches and synagogues, the trade union movement, educational institutions and many voluntary associations have aided in the programme to enlighten the nation. The Association's legislative and legal work also contribute to this process.

Although the NAACP has from the outset maintained a publicity or public relations department, the primary burden of the propaganda programme is that of the organization's chief administrative officer, the Executive Secretary. Notable among those who have performed this function in that office have been the late James Weldon Johnson, Mr. White, and the incumbent, Mr. Wilkins. All have recognized that an enlightened public is essential to the attainment of the Association's objectives. Accordingly, this has been a major field of activity, involving not only the Executive Secretary and the Director of Public Relations but also the entire structure of the organization at the national as well as at state and local levels.

There is still a vast area of racial hate in America that has remained untouched by the NAACP educational programme. Ancient superstitions survive and ignorance of simple scientific truths about race is widespread. Capitalizing upon this ignorance and upon nameless fears, peddlers of race hate have in some areas established a lucrative business for themselves by creating organizations for the purpose of perpetuating the myth of "White supremacy". Closing their eyes to reality, the supporters of these movements refuse to recognize any change in conditions since the end of the nineteenth century.

Unable to reach such elements through an educational programme, the NAACP has sought to surmount this obstacle through political action and the judicial process. The Association is not a partisan organization in that it endorses no political party nor any candidate for public office. However, it is political in that it constantly seeks to enlarge the Negro vote and sponsors a legislative programme designed to remove existing racial limitations. Moreover, it makes

known to its members and friends the records of the major parties and of candidates for national office on civil rights and other issues vital to the progress of the Negro in American life. Largely through the efforts of the NAACP, the number of Negro voters in the South, the only region in which there is active resistance to their participation in the electoral process, has been doubled in the past ten years. The expanded Negro vote in the South has served to strengthen the limited forces of the liberal minority in that region.

In Washington, the Association maintains an office, headed by Clarence Mitchell, the NAACP legislative representative. This office is the headquarters of the civil rights lobby in the nation's capital. Other organizations, such as the trade unions, maintaining representatives in Washington, usually consult and co-operate with the NAACP on all civil rights issues before the Congress. The primary objective of the Association's legislative programme is enactment of laws designed to assure equal rights to all citizens by banning racial discrimination and segregation in such areas as employment, housing, education, transportation, health services and recreation. Other important goals are the protection of the right to vote and of security of person. Also the Association actively supports certain welfare and labour legislation.

Rightfully regarded as the civil rights watchdog on the Potomac, the NAACP Washington Bureau is constantly on the alert to head off any proposed legislation inimical to the rights of racial minorities. Thus, when southern members of Congress introduced measures to perpetuate Jim Crow in the armed forces, the Association was able to rally enough support among other congressmen to defeat the proposals. Activity on the part of the NAACP has also been instrumental in forestalling a congressional attempt to curb the voting power of organized labour, the Negro and other minorities in the large northern urban centres.

The Association's legislative programme has been handicapped by the filibuster. Under pretext of upholding the right to "unlimited debate" a handful of racist Senators are able to defeat the will of the majority and veto any legislation by the simple device of endless talking. Repeatedly, civil rights bills have been passed by the lower house of Congress only to be turned back on the Senate floor. Not in eighty years has the Congress passed any significant civil rights measure. The present rule requires the vote of sixty-four of the ninety-six Senators in order to close debate on any measure opposed by a determined minority.

In addition to its legislative activity, the NAACP Washington Bureau maintains contact with the various departments of the Executive Branch of the Government. Complaints of discrimination and other civil rights issues involving Government agencies are taken up by the bureau representative.

The most spectacularly successful activity of the NAACP has been its legal work now under the direction of Thurgood Marshall. Of forty-six cases carried to the United States Supreme Court by NAACP attorneys, forty-two have resulted in favorable decisions. These court rulings, involving constitutional principles, provide unmistakable guideposts to the progress of the Negro in the United States. They have sustained the right of Negroes to jury duty and the right of an accused to a fair trial in an atmosphere not dominated by mob psychology. They have banned various devices to restrict Negro voting and have curtailed residential segregation enforced by legislative action or private agreement. They have outlawed Jim Crow in interstate travel. And finally, they have affirmed that segregation in public education is unconstitutional.

The present frontal attack upon Jim Crow education did not just happen. It was carefully planned back in the 1930's when the late Charles H. Houston was the Association's chief counsel. The objective was and remains the elimination of the economically extravagant separate school system with its inferior education for Negro youth. It marked the beginning of the shift of emphasis in the NAACP legal programme from the defence of victims of injustice to an offensive designed to undermine the legal props to the Jim Crow structure. The public school system was recognized as the keystone to that structure.

The plan called for the initial test at the professional school level. The first case was the abortive attempt to secure the admission of a Negro applicant to the School of Pharmacy of the University of North Carolina in 1933. The case was lost on a technicality.

Two years later the first victory came when a Maryland court ruled that the University of Maryland must admit a Negro student to its law school. A succession of cases followed culminating in the 1950 decision of the United States Supreme Court ordering the University of Texas to admit a Negro student to its law school despite the existence of a hurriedly created tax-supported Negro law school.

Meanwhile, the Association continued its campaign against discrimination in education on two other fronts—legal action to secure for Negro teachers salaries equal to those paid to White

teachers of the same qualifications, and preparation for court action to determine the constitutionality of racially separate elementary and secondary public schools. Although there is still a salary differential in some southern states there are now, as the result of NAACP suits, many areas in the South where Negro and White teachers are paid the same scale.



THE HIGH ROAD AND THE LOW ROAD

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Easily the most significant and far-reaching victory won by the Association lawyers was the decision banning segregation in public schools handed down by the United States Supreme Court on 17 May 1954. For the first time the Court ruled explicitly that segregation in public education is in violation of the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution. Unanimously the nine Justices of the Court concluded "that in the field of public education the doctrine of 'separate but equal' has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal". This decision clearly presaged the early doom of the Court's 1896 ruling which held that segregation was constitutional as long as "equal" facilities were provided for both races.

The 1954 decision was hailed, not only in the United States but also by democratic forces throughout the world, as the beginning of the end of compulsory racial segregation in the United States and as a towering beacon illuminating the highway to full freedom. Among elements which fear freedom for others, especially for Coloured peoples, there was anguish and dismay. There was, moreover, the resurgence of regional fanaticism determined to resist the federal authority by every means possible, illegal and extra-legal as well as legal.

Also, the decision focused national and international attention upon the NAACP as never before. Although the Association was by no means unknown before 1954, its pivotal rôle in the struggle to erase the Colour line was not fully realized until the court handed down its historic ruling in cases argued by Mr. Marshall and his NAACP associates. Persons who had formerly merely recognized the five letters as the initials of a Negro protest organization wanted to know more about it. What is its purpose? How is it financed? Who are its officers and members? What is its political orientation?

The Association's rôle in the public school segregation cases eloquently bespeaks its purpose, namely, the eradication from American life of all legal distinctions among citizens based upon such irrelevant considerations as race, colour, religion or national origin. The NAACP seeks for Negro Americans no preferential treatment. It asks for them only those citizenship rights and privileges enjoyed without question by White Americans. It maintains that these rights are unattainable under any system of compulsory segregation.

Originally conceived by White liberals, spiritual heirs to the inspiring Abolition tradition of the nineteenth century, the NAACP has been consistently bi-racial in its membership, officers and

staff. In 1955, the Association had a membership of 310,000 of whom an estimated 8 to 12 per cent were White persons. Its forty-eight-member Board of Directors is about three fourths Negro. President of the organization since 1939 is Arthur B. Spingarn, a distinguished New York lawyer who is White. Dr. Channing H. Tobias, the elder statesman of the Negro race in America, is chairman of the Board of Directors. Among other internationally known board members are Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt, Dr. Ralph J. Bunche, United States Senator Herbert Lehman, labour leader Walter Reuther and Federal Judge William H. Hastie.

Numerically the membership represents a small minority of the nation's 16,000,000 Negro Americans. However, its influence and leadership extends far beyond the membership. The NAACP is recognized as the authentic spokesman for Negro aspirations. Certainly there is nowhere in the nation any considerable body of Negro citizens nor, indeed, very, very few individual coloured persons who disagree with the basic programme and objectives of the NAACP. Individuals may occasionally differ with the Association on tactics in particular instances, but practically never with the NAACP goal. No recognized Negro leadership calls for continued acceptance of segregation.

Throughout its history, the Association has enlisted the support of practically all of the outstanding Negro leaders in the United States. They have served as officers of the national organization or as leaders of its local branches now numbering 1,300 in forty-three states, the District of Columbia and the Territory of Alaska. Voluntarily they have contributed their services to the Association's national legal and health committees, to fund-raising projects or to other activities. Among the early Negro leaders who helped establish the NAACP were Dr. W. E. B. DuBois, the first editor of *The Crisis*, the NAACP monthly magazine, Bishop Alexander Walters and the Rev. Francis J. Grimke. Dr. DuBois, now an octogenarian scholar, is no longer connected with the NAACP.

The Association has also enjoyed the friendship and counsel of outstanding White citizens. Its three presidents have all been White persons—Moorfield Storey, J. E. Spingarn and his brother, Arthur B. Spingarn, the incumbent. Leading clergymen, senators, Cabinet members, jurists and educators have served as members of the national Board of Directors or officers of local NAACP branches. Both President Eisenhower and former President Truman have addressed NAACP national meetings as has, also, Vice-President Nixon.

For the year 1955 the Association had a total income of \$672,422. Expenditures amounted to \$522,666. The bulk of this income was derived from the basic annual membership fee of \$2.00. Other membership fees range from \$3.50 up to \$500 for life memberships. Additional sources of income include small contributions of \$100 or less and special fund-raising activities. Rarely does the Association receive a contribution amounting to as much as \$1,000.

Politically, the NAACP is rooted in the American democratic tradition. It has firmly and consistently turned back efforts of the Communist Party to infiltrate the organization. It has never hesitated to criticize Soviet policy whenever that policy endangered the security of the United States or impaired the Negro struggle for freedom. It has denounced the totalitarianism of the left as well as of the right. It has refused to collaborate with the Communist Party, U.S.A.

The successes achieved by the NAACP have spurred new efforts on the part of organized bigotry to destroy the organization. The southern states of Alabama, Texas and Louisiana have already initiated efforts to ban the Association permanently. Mississippi, Georgia and South Carolina have passed legislation denying teaching positions and other public employment to NAACP members or to anyone who advocates desegregation of the schools and other civil rights for Negroes. Virginia also has passed legislation to hamper the NAACP programme. Private individuals and hate organizations have exerted economic pressures—denial of jobs and credit—in a ruthless campaign to stop the forward surge of Negro Americans. Terror has been revived as an instrument of repression.

In the face of all this hostility, the prestige and strength of the NAACP has continued to grow. Its membership and income have shown a steady and substantial increase. The determination of Negroes to achieve desegregation is evidenced by the courage with which they have faced economic hazards and physical risks. Their morale is high. They are concerned, but not terrified, by the frenzied hate of the bigots and their acts of violence.

At the Forty-seventh Annual Convention of the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People in San Francisco in June 1956 the delegates reaffirmed their "determination to gain for the 16,000,000 Negroes all the rights and privileges constitutionally guaranteed to them as an integral part of our democratic society". Three years previously they had set 1963, the centennial of the Emancipation Proclamation, as the target date for the elimi-

nation of all vestiges of second-class citizenship under which Negro Americans suffer.

The increased tension of the last three years has brought no diminution in their will to achieve the goal of a single standard of citizenship for all Americans.

THE BAAS COMES HOME

OLIVER WALKER

EVEN the speckled guineafowl strutting near the wagon-track seemed to know that Cornelius de la Roux was coming home. From the height of his horse as he rode a little ahead of the wagon laden with seed, implements and food collected at the depot attached to the Middelburg concentration camp, he watched them ducking their beaks as if curtsying to the long-lost owner of Rhinoster-spruit Farm. But he knew them too well to imagine that if he lifted the rifle pouched beside his saddle they would remain within range.

He wished to kill nothing on this day of days, certainly nothing that could remind him of his farm and home after two years' bitter exile in Ceylon where the British had shipped him and two hundred more Boers after the surrender at Eland's Kop. The great empty cavern of his heart had been lit by the fires of a consuming hatred during those dreary days when the only news trickling through had been news of defeats and deaths that had carried off his wife and two fighting sons and numerous relatives.

The God of his forebears had turned His countenance away from the Boers in those black days. Messages had come at last speaking of a peace signed at Vereeniging. Cornelius was one of those who had refused to believe this was anything but another trick of the "Khaki" British until men of his own district had come over the ocean to tell him that the war was finished, that their beloved leader "Oom Paul" was dead, and that the British were indeed masters over all South Africa.

Some of the Dutch Volk said that the British had been magnanimous at the treaty and after. Cornelius was not one of these. Like others he had been given supplies free to rehabilitate his farm. That did not mean he should feel gratitude. He had been given money and a chequebook with the right to draw upon the bank