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Making a Movement: The Meaning of Community in the
Congress of Racial Equality, 1958-1968

Kristin Anderson-Bricker, Syracuse University

Until recently, scholarship on the civil rights movement concentrated on national organizations, prominent leaders, events of national significance, federal legislation and judicial victories. In the past decade, many scholars have agreed that this literature fails to reflect the thousands of individuals who peopled the black freedom struggle. Scholars issued a call and repeated it often: historians need to investigate the history of local communities and grassroots organizations. Each investigation into the struggle for black equality from a local perspective contributes another building block to achieving a more complete understanding of the twentieth century fight against racism. Historians have studied local people through grassroots organizations and community-wide battles against racism, but they largely ignore the individuals who fought racial discrimination in their own communities through the local chapters of national civil rights organizations.

Making a Movement: The Meaning of Community in the Congress of Racial Equality, 1958-1968 closely examines the experience of the local people who joined the New Orleans and Washington, D.C. chapters of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) to try to eradicate racism in their own lives. Their efforts not only combatted racial discrimination, but forged these individuals into a community of activists. Community members shared values, principles, motivations, goals, emotions and backgrounds; community united them and enabled the membership to fight racism not as individuals but as a powerful group.

Studying the Congress of Racial Equality through two of its chapters not only documents the lives of these little-known people, but challenges our overall assumptions about CORE and the civil rights movement in general. Contrary to our present assumptions about the struggle for black equality, the story of the New Orleans and Washington CORE chapters illustrates the close interrelationship between local and national civil rights activity, the absence of ideological differences as a significant factor in community conflict and the shift from nonviolent direct action to the organization of ghetto communities as an important factor in the affiliates' demise. Historians need to pursue these new areas of inquiry as they research additional CORE chapters and the affiliates of other national civil rights organizations.

Making a Movement: The Meaning of Community in the
Congress of Racial Equality, 1958-1968

by

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Dissertation

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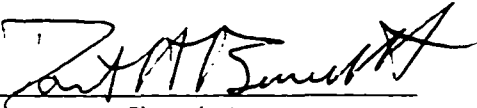
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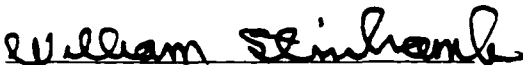
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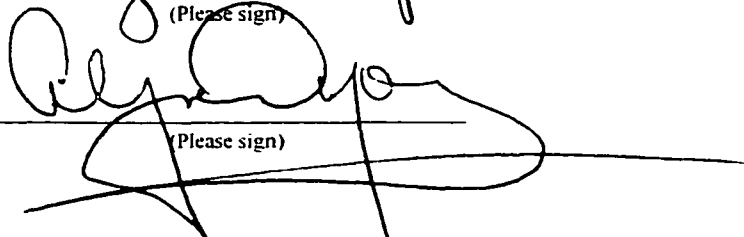
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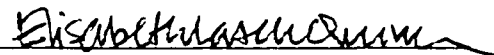

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Introduction

Jerome Smith, an African American longshoreman in New Orleans, joined the New Orleans chapter of the Congress of Racial Equality(CORE) during the summer of 1960. A few months later, he participated in the city's first lunch counter sit-in. Although just twenty-one, Smith had prepared for this challenge to racism his entire life. The words and actions of his mother and his father, a merchant seaman, fostered a sense of pride and resistance in Jerome Smith. His mother read him poetry every evening and told him stories about her heroes, Paul Robeson and Mary McLeod Bethune. During his absences, his father charged his son with the task of protecting their home and ensuring whites treated his mother with civility. Smith also saw his father resist segregation and copied his actions. At age eleven he threw a Jim Crow sign off a streetcar and sat in the section reserved for whites. In high school, while traveling with the band, he used white bathrooms. While a freshman at Southern University in Baton Rouge, he became involved in the students' attack on segregated lunchcounters. When the institution expelled the student leaders, Smith quit school as a protest and decided to dedicate himself to the freedom struggle.¹

While working as a longshoreman in New Orleans to support his young family during the summer of 1960, Smith joined local picket lines and attended one of the first New Orleans CORE meetings. As a member of

¹Kim Lacy Rogers, Righteous Lives: Narratives of the New Orleans Civil Rights Movement (New York: New York University Press, 1993), 111-112; Jerome Smith, Interview by Kim Lacy Rogers, 26 July 1988, tape recording, side one, Kim Lacy Rogers-Glenda B. Stevens Collection, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University, New Orleans, LA.[Hereafter cited Rogers Collection.]; Jerome Smith, "Application Blank for Freedom Ride," 6 April 1961, 1-2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, Microfilm Edition (Sanford, N.C.: Microfilming Corporation of America, 1980), 5:443:01324. [Hereafter cited The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, series:folder:frame.]

CORE, Smith helped plan and carry out the CORE campaign to desegregate the city's lunchcounters. In 1961 he participated in the Freedom Rides. During the course of these activities he went to jail over twelve times and experienced a severe beating in McComb, Mississippi. Beginning in December, 1961 Smith realized his dream to work in the movement full-time when the Congress of Racial Equality hired him as a field secretary. For several years he tried to organize communities across the South for CORE, including towns in North Carolina, Mississippi and Louisiana. Despite these efforts outside of his hometown, he always considered New Orleans his "first commitment" and periodically returned to the city to work with New Orleans CORE.²

In 1988, Jerome Smith reflected on his experience with the Congress of Racial Equality during the 1960s. To him, the greatest aspect of the civil rights movement was the strong community it created. The New Orleans CORE community shaped him as a person and an activist. It provided him with purpose, minimized his fears and gave him the strength to fight. He thought he derived his abilities and power as an individual from the community; he believed only through unity did each person possess the strength to fight racism. As part of this collective, he never felt lonely even when alone. He described his experience with CORE as being part of a "living prayer," with "the magic of every moment being wrapped in love."³

Making a Movement: The Meaning of Community in the Congress of Racial Equality, 1958-1968 closely examines the experience of the local

²Jerome Smith, Interview by Rogers, 26 July 1988, sides one and two; Eleanor Roosevelt et al, "Commission of Inquiry into the Administration of Justice in the Freedom Struggle," hearing transcript, 25-26 May 1962, 141-142, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:474:00441.

³Jerome Smith, Interview by Kim Lacy Rogers, 8 July 1988, tape recording, sides one and two; Jerome Smith, Interview by Rogers, 26 July 1988, sides one and two.

people who joined the New Orleans and Washington, D.C. chapters of the Congress of Racial Equality to try to eradicate racism in their own lives. Their efforts not only combatted racial discrimination, but forged these individuals into a community of activists. As Jerome Smith's memories reveal, community itself was central to their experience in the struggle for black equality. Community members shared values, principles, motivations, goals, emotions and backgrounds; they took action together and disagreed with one another; they accomplished many of their goals and struggled over power. Understanding the New Orleans and Washington CORE chapters as communities between 1958 and 1968 reveals a portrait of the people active in the chapters and the nature of their relationships. As individuals CORE members are elusive, but as members of a community their story emerges.

In 1991, scholar Vincent Harding wrote, "Wherever the movement took root, it was possible to see the growth of community."⁴ He defined community as "a way of human beings relating to each other" and "a way of being which encourages cohesion, mutual responsibility, compassion, integrity and justice."⁵ Harding encouraged people studying the movement for black equality to focus on the many expressions of community which shaped it. Community provided the means to fight racism, but for many it represented a goal in itself. People became community in jail, while singing freedom songs and during a march; pre-existing communities, such as the black church, helped fuel the freedom struggle; at the same time, new communities evolved through grass roots organizations.⁶ Because of the centrality of community to

⁴Vincent Harding, "Community as a Liberating Theme in Civil Rights History," in New Directions in Civil Rights Studies, ed. Armstead Robinson and Patricia Sullivan (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1991), 23.

⁵Harding, 17.

the black freedom struggle, Harding concluded,

Somehow I see no way of being faithful to this movement unless we find the means to capture that central concern: to help others 'really feel and see' the heartfelt community that was being created on such threatening terrain.⁷

Making a Movement investigates two CORE communities by narrating the story of the people who joined the Washington and New Orleans CORE chapters and by presenting these people through their problems and victories. Not only do we learn about these little-known individuals and their activities, but a new view of the civil rights movement emerges out of their experience. Contrary to our present assumptions about the struggle for black equality, the story of the New Orleans and Washington CORE chapters illustrates the close interrelationship between local and national civil rights activity, the absence of ideological differences as a significant factor in community conflict and the shift from nonviolent direct action to the organization of ghetto communities as a factor in the chapters' demise. The context and significance of these findings is revealed through a discussion of the historiography of the civil rights movement.

Until the 1980s, scholars largely overlooked the people who fought racism in their own communities because the historiography emphasized the national civil rights movement. It concentrated on national civil rights organizations, the life cycle of their programs and ideology, leaders and events of national significance, federal legislation and judicial victories. The synthesis and assumptions generated by this scholarship portrayed the struggle for black equality as a political movement to gain legislation and judicial decisions from the federal government. By placing emphasis on the federal government, national

⁶Harding, 18-29.

⁷Harding, 23.

civil rights organizations and a few charismatic leaders, this literature failed to portray the struggle for black equality as a social movement. Because historians neglected to tell the stories of the individuals who actually fought racism and brought about change in their own communities, they presented only a portion of the narrative.⁸

In the past decade, many of the scholars working on the history of the civil rights movement have agreed that the scholarship fails to reflect the thousands of individuals who peopled the black freedom struggle. Scholars issued a call and repeated it often: historians need to investigate the history of local communities and grassroots organizations.⁹ In Reaping the Whirlwind: The Civil Rights Movement in Tuskegee, one of the first books to study the movement from this perspective, Robert Norrell wrote in 1985 that the civil rights movement

had a different experience in each place, and no place was the same after it left. Each community now has a story to tell about the movement, and only when many of those stories are told will the South's great social upheaval be well understood.¹⁰

Historians began to investigate the civil rights movement from a local perspective in the late 1970s and early 1980s.¹¹ William Chafe wrote Civilities and Civil Rights: Greensboro, North Carolina and the Black Struggle for Freedom in 1980 in response to the prevailing trend in civil rights movement historiography which focused on national

⁸Steven F. Lawson, "Freedom Then, Freedom Now: The Historiography of the Civil Rights Movement," American Historical Review, 96:2 (April 1991), 456-457, 462; Clayborne Carson, "Civil Rights Reform and the Black Freedom Struggle," The Civil Rights Movement in America, ed. Charles W. Eagles (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1986), 22-23.

⁹Lawson, 456-457.

¹⁰Robert J. Norrell, Reaping the Whirlwind: The Civil Rights Movement in Tuskegee (New York: Vintage Books, 1985), ix.

¹¹Lawson, 456-457.

leadership, organizations, events and legislation. Since this literature missed the day to day life of the local people most affected by the movement, Chafe believed historians needed to study the black freedom struggle community by community.¹² The call to action, the example set by the work of William Chafe and Robert Norrell and the field of social history has motivated scholars since the mid-1980s to pursue the history of local communities and grassroots organizations.

Historians have continued to criticize the historiography of the civil rights movement for its emphasis on organizations, leaders and events of national significance and reiterated the need for scholars to pursue community studies. In 1985, at a symposium on the civil rights movement at the University of Mississippi, Clayborne Carson argued that the historiography of the black freedom struggle created "the assumption that the black struggle can best be understood as a protest movement, orchestrated by national leaders in order to achieve national civil rights legislation." He criticized scholars for failing "to explain what occurred at the core of the black struggle where deeply committed activists sustained local movements and acquired distinctive tactics, strategies, leadership styles, and ideologies."¹³

At the same conference, David Garrow also questioned the "disproportionate amount of scholarly attention" which historians paid to the national civil rights organizations and their leaders, while they ignored "local level civil rights activities" and "the grass roots organizers who actually mobilized people to participate actively in the movement." Because of this lack of attention to the civil rights movement below the national level, he argued, scholars attributed too

¹²William H. Chafe, Civilities and Civil Rights: Greensboro, North Carolina and the Black Struggle for Freedom (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 1 and 2.

¹³Carson, 23, 28.

much importance to the "policies, statements and actions of civil rights organizations." In Garrow's opinion, historians who more carefully investigated the evidence would discover "that the real accomplishments of the black freedom struggle stemmed not so much from the activities of the administrators and articulators as from the efforts of the grass roots organizers who actually built and directed the movement in the South."¹⁴

By studying the real people at the local level who gave direction to the movement and undertook most of the work to carry it out, David Garrow, Clayborne Carson and other scholars argued that many of our conclusions about the black freedom struggle would change. Despite the tremendous amount of work already completed on the civil rights movement, the participants in the 1988 conference of the Center for the Study of Civil Rights at the University of Virginia concluded that a great deal of the story remained untold. Almost universally, the attendees called for more scholarship to investigate local movements. In order to understand the movement fully and in all of its complexity, they argued, scholars needed to complete numerous studies from a grassroots perspective. Armstead Robinson and Patricia Sullivan summarized the conclusions and recommendations of the conference participants in the introduction to New Directions in Civil Rights Studies, a volume containing essays delivered at the convention. They wrote,

We know a great deal about the judicial and legislative victories of the 1950s and 1960s and about the personalities, organizations and events that captured national attention during the height of the civil rights movement. National subjects and issues tended to dominate civil rights scholarship in the last two decades, resulting in relative inattention to those local movements with

¹⁴David Garrow, "Commentary," The Civil Rights Movement in America, ed. Charles W. Eagles (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1986), 55, 56, 57.

which scholars must grapple in order to properly assess the history and consequences of the movement. Most conference participants agreed that more attention must be concentrated on the origins, process, and outcome of civil rights struggles in local communities before the movement and its consequences can be fully understood.¹⁵

Each investigation into the struggle for black equality from a local perspective contributes another building block to achieving a more complete understanding of the twentieth-century fight against racism. In the last decade, books and articles published about local people, grassroots organizations and community-wide battles against racism have increased our understanding of the civil rights movement. New biographies of southern community organizers include SNCC field worker Robert Parris Moses and Ruleville, Mississippi resident Fannie Lou Hamer.¹⁶ Recent investigations into the contributions of women to the civil rights movement trace the experience of many previously "unknown" grassroots leaders and workers.¹⁷ Other scholars have explored the history of indigenous organizations, including the Highlander Folk School and the Southern Conference Educational Fund.¹⁸ Community studies published in the last decade catalog local efforts to eradicate

¹⁵"Introduction: Reassessing the History of the Civil Rights Movement," New Directions in Civil Rights Studies, ed. Armstead Robinson and Patricia Sullivan (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1991), 2.

¹⁶Kay Mills, This Little Light of Mine (New York: Dutton, 1993); Eric Burner, And Gently He Shall Lead Them: Robert Parris Moses and Civil Rights in Mississippi (New York: New York University Press, 1994).

¹⁷See, for example, Vicki L. Crawford et al, ed., Women in the Civil Rights Movement: Trailblazers and Torchbearers, 1941-1965, Black Women in the United States, ed. Darlene Clark Hine, vol. 16 (Brooklyn: Carlson Publishing, 1990).

¹⁸John Glen, Highlander: No Ordinary School, 1932-1962 (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1988); Aimee Isgrig Horton, The Highlander Folk School: A History of Its Major Programs, 1932-1961 (New York: Carlson Publishing, 1989); Irwin Klibaner, Conscience of a Troubled South: The Southern Conference Educational Fund, 1946-1966 (New York: Carlson Publishing, 1989).

racism in Selma, Montgomery and Birmingham, Alabama.¹⁹ Other volumes examine the black freedom struggle in Atlanta, New Orleans and St. Augustine, Florida.²⁰ Meanwhile, three recent books analyze indigenous organizing in Mississippi and Louisiana from a state-wide perspective.²¹

While this recent scholarship begins to document the struggle for black equality from a grassroots perspective, many more explorations of indigenous communities are needed to achieve a balance between studies on the national and local levels. One of the many building blocks in this growing body of historical literature, Making a Movement approaches local civil rights history from still another new direction. Most historians doing civil rights history on the local level currently ignore one important area of research because, in their efforts to revise the older scholarship's emphasis on national organizations, they view national civil rights organizations and local efforts to fight racism as completely separate entities.²²

¹⁹J.L. Chestnut, Jr. and Julia Cass, Black in Selma: The Uncommon Life of J.L. Chestnut, Jr., Politics and Power in a Small American Town (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1990); Aldon Morris, The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement: Black Communities Organizing for Change (New York: The Free Press, 1984); David J. Garrow, ed., The Walking City: The Montgomery Bus Boycott, 1955-1956 (Brooklyn: Carlson Publishing, 1989); David J. Garrow, ed. Birmingham, Alabama, 1956-1963: The Black Struggle for Civil Rights (Brooklyn: Carlson Publishing, 1989).

²⁰David Garrow, ed., Atlanta, Georgia, 1960-1961: Sit-Ins and Student Activism (Brooklyn: Carlson Publishing, 1989); Kim Lacy Rogers, Righteous Lives: Narratives of the New Orleans Civil Rights Movement (New York: New York University Press, 1993); David Colburn, Racial Change and Community Crisis: St. Augustine, Florida, 1877-1980 (New York, 1985).

²¹John Dittmer, Local People: The Struggle for Civil Rights In Mississippi (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994); Charles Payne, I've Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); Adam Fairclough, Race and Democracy: The Civil Rights Struggle in Louisiana, 1915-1972 (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1995).

²²See, for example, Clayborne Carson, "Civil Rights Reform and the Black Freedom Struggle," The Civil Rights Movement in America, ed.

Thousands of local people joined national civil rights organizations such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the National Urban League, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE). The NAACP, SCLC, Urban League and CORE all operated as federations of local chapters, with varying degrees of autonomy. Although affiliate members contributed money and sometimes effort to the programs of the national organization, they mostly worked to bring about change in their own localities. In 1991, August Meier suggested scholars try to understand these individuals by investigating the local components of national civil rights organizations. Meier wrote, "I think it essential to examine a topic that has seldom been treated: the particular nature of the constituencies of the movement organizations."²³

Although current scholarship largely neglects the local members of national civil rights organizations, many people chose to combat the racism in their own communities through the chapters of these associations. Most current studies of the NAACP, Urban League, SCLC and CORE concentrate on the organizational structure of the national body, the activities of the leaders and staff members, the ideological transformation of these individuals, the projects sponsored by the national organization, the legislative and judicial victories they achieved and the problems which plagued their efforts.²⁴ It is Charles W. Eagles (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1986).

²³August Meier, "Epilogue: Toward a Synthesis of Civil Rights History," New Directions in Civil Rights Studies, ed. Armstead Robinson and Patricia Sullivan (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1991), 222.

²⁴See, for example, Joyce B. Ross, J.E. Spingarn and the Rise of the NAACP, 1911-1939 (New York: Atheneum, 1972); Kenneth W. Goings, The NAACP Comes of Age: The Defeat of Judge John J. Parker (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990); Jesse Thomas Moore, Jr., A Search for Equality: The National Urban League, 1910-1961 (University Park: The

limiting to understand these groups solely from a national perspective. These organizations depended on the money and resources of their affiliates and they influenced local civil rights activity through the activities of their membership in the local arena. In order to learn about the local history component of these organizations, it is necessary to study them from a grassroots perspective. One way to do this is by investigating the local chapters themselves.

The Congress of Racial Equality, in particular, depended upon its local affiliates. In CORE, semi-autonomous chapters carried on most of the organizational work while a national board and staff coordinated their activities.²⁵ This federation of CORE affiliates evolved out of a University of Chicago race relations "cell" of the Christian organization, the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR). In 1942 this small group became the Committee of Racial Equality, committed to ending racial segregation through interracial, nonviolent direct action. The next year, CORE became a decentralized, national federation of affiliated local groups. Despite the strengthening of the national organization in the late 1950s and 1960s, the bulk of decision-making and programs remained the responsibility of affiliate leaders and members.²⁶

Although each CORE chapter operated independently from the national organization, CORE Rules for Action united CORE members across Pennsylvania State University Press, 1981); Adam Fairclough, To Redeem the Soul of America: The Southern Christian Leadership Conference and Martin Luther King, Jr. (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1987); Thomas R. Peake, Keeping the Dream Alive: A History of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference From King to the Nineteen-Eighties (New York: Peter Lang, 1987).

²⁵August Meier and Elliot Rudwick, CORE: A Study in the Civil Rights Movement, 1942-1968 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), vii.

²⁶Meier and Rudwick, 4, 8, 9, 15-17; Inge Powell Bell, CORE and the Strategy of Nonviolence (New York: Random House, 1968), 21.

the nation. By accepting this discipline, participants in the Congress of Racial Equality agreed to use nonviolent direct action to attack racial discrimination. This method required that thorough investigation and negotiation preceded action; it mandated action, but only with nonviolent tactics such as boycotts, picketing, strikes and sit-ins. Nonviolence not only shaped the tactics utilized by CORE activists, but their attitudes and objectives as well. CORE Rules for Action stated,

The NONVIOLENT DIRECT ACTION APPROACH to problems of racial discrimination assumes that a lasting resolution of problems can best be obtained through a spirit of good will and understanding. This spirit must be combined with a determination to end discrimination through action programs directed to specific problems. The ultimate goal is an integrated society where each member is judged solely on the basis of his individual worth.

CORE also wanted the spirit of nonviolence to influence the private lives of its members and their relationships with one another. The rules urged members to avoid participating "in any situation involving segregation," to provide one another with "uncompromising support" and to make all decisions democratically.²⁷ These guidelines remained central to CORE until 1966 when the organization embraced the ideals and program of Black Power.²⁸

Although CORE chapters shared a common approach to attacking racism and affiliate members belonged to a national civil rights organization, the majority of individuals who composed CORE were local people trying to eradicate racism in their own communities. Despite the essential role of local people in CORE, very little of the scholarship on the Congress of Racial Equality studies the organization from a grassroots perspective. The primary history of the Congress of Racial

²⁷"Appendix 1: CORE . . . Rules for Action," reprinted in Inge Powell Bell, CORE and the Strategy of Nonviolence (New York: Random House, 1968), 195-196.

²⁸Meier and Rudwick, 414-420.

Equality, CORE: A Study in the Civil Rights Movement by August Meier and Elliot Rudwick, presents an overview of the history of a national civil rights organization. Therefore the authors concentrate on the transformation of the structure and ideology of the national body, the problems encountered in the growth and decline of the national organization, national CORE campaigns, the decisions of national leaders and the experience of staff members.²⁹ The other study of CORE as a national civil rights organization, CORE and the Strategy of Nonviolence by Inge Powell Bell, traces the transformation of the ideology and agenda of the Congress of Racial Equality between 1942 and 1966 from Ghandian nonviolence to black nationalism.³⁰

While these two books on CORE establish the federation as part of the national movement for black equality, three other volumes begin to get at the local experience. These works--a biography, a community study and a dissertation on a national CORE project--examine CORE chapters in their relationship to other topics. A Passion For Equality: George A. Wiley and the Movement, by Nick Kotz and Mary Lynn Kotz, explores the life of George Wiley, the founder of the National Welfare Rights Organization. Before becoming involved in welfare issues, Wiley led the Syracuse chapter of CORE between 1961 and 1964.³¹ In Righteous Lives: Narratives of the New Orleans Civil Rights Movement, Kim Lacy Rogers investigates New Orleans CORE as part of her community study of that city. Her interpretation, based on extensive oral history interviews, focuses on the experience of African American CORE members

²⁹August Meier and Elliot Rudwick, CORE: A Study in the Civil Rights Movement, 1942-1968 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973).

³⁰Inge Powell Bell, CORE and the Strategy of Nonviolence (New York: Random House, 1968).

³¹Nick Kotz and Mary Lynn Kotz, A Passion For Equality: George A. Wiley and the Movement (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1977).

and the relationship of their CORE chapter to the wider New Orleans movement.³² A dissertation by Louis C. Goldberg explores a poverty program sponsored by national CORE in Baltimore, Maryland between 1965 and 1967.³³ By providing insights into the Syracuse, New Orleans and Baltimore chapters of CORE, these works begin to explore the local component of the Congress of Racial Equality. But in order to understand CORE chapters in their full complexity and in relationship to the national CORE movement, the focus must be on the chapters--their organizational development, composition, community, objectives, program and demise.

As a national federation of local communities, the Congress of Racial Equality provides a bridge between the national civil rights movement and local efforts to eradicate racism. Because most community studies emphasize the independence of the local movement from the national struggle for black equality, the current scholarship largely ignores the relationship between local and national civil rights activity. In the past decade historians August Meier and Steven Lawson have reminded scholars to study the interrelationship of the national and local components of the black freedom struggle. Although praising the new orientation of civil rights historiography toward the grassroots movement, August Meier cautioned against too narrow a focus. He argued,

One cannot overemphasize the importance and value of the local community study and of examining the variations among communities, both rural and urban, across the South. At the same time we need to keep enriching our knowledge of what went on in the North and in Washington and to understand the interpenetration of national and local developments and actions.³⁴

³²Kim Lacy Rogers, Righteous Lives: Narratives of the New Orleans Civil Rights Movement (New York: New York University Press, 1993).

³³Louis C. Goldberg, "CORE In Trouble: A Social History of the Organizational Dilemmas of the Congress of Racial Equality Target City Project in Baltimore, 1965-1967" (Ph.D. diss., The Johns Hopkins University, 1970).

Sharing Meier's concerns, Steven Lawson has suggested scholars study the civil rights movement "in an interactive way." He proposed researchers investigate "the ways in which efforts in the national arena intersected with those at the grass roots level"; they might discover how local organizations shaped the national movement and how established civil rights groups influenced local communities.³⁵

By investigating the Washington and New Orleans chapters of the Congress of Racial Equality, Making a Movement explores what type of relationship existed between national CORE and its affiliates. Because the historiography stresses the independence of local civil rights activity from the national movement, I expected to find two completely autonomous CORE chapters which seldom interacted with the national association. Instead, I discovered that a very close relationship existed between the two CORE affiliates and the personnel and resources of national CORE. Between 1958 and 1965, national CORE played an essential role in the origins, development, maintenance and survival of the New Orleans and Washington CORE communities.

Local CORE members did control their membership, objectives, program and projects, but they needed a lot of assistance from the national movement to sustain their community and their activity. Personnel from national CORE helped the Washington group get started in 1958, orchestrated a coup in 1961 and intervened to resolve a power struggle in 1964. As a chapter in the deep South facing severe white resistance and oppression, New Orleans CORE utilized the resources of

³⁴Meier, "Epilogue: Toward a Synthesis of Civil Rights History," 219.

³⁵Steven Lawson, "Commentary," The Civil Rights Movement in America, ed. Charles W. Eagles (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1986), 37 and 34; see, also, Steven F. Lawson, "Freedom Then, Freedom Now: The Historiography of the Civil Rights Movement," American Historical Review, 96:2 (April 1991).

the national movement even more extensively. National CORE field secretaries brought the first group of members together in 1960, provided steady assistance and advice, resolved a dispute in 1962, tried to re-vitalize the group in 1964, directed local programs in the chapter's final years and contributed to the demise of the affiliate.

Despite the vital role played by national CORE in the history of the New Orleans and Washington chapters, these were still grassroots movements peopled by local activists trying to create change in their own lives. These local groups shaped the national movement through the many battles they waged against racial discrimination and the victories they won in the name of CORE. The membership of New Orleans CORE, in particular, influenced the national civil rights movement by providing volunteers to national CORE campaigns and furnishing several of the field secretaries who organized for CORE across the United States. More case studies will be needed to determine how extensively local people influenced the national CORE movement and whether such a close relationship existed between national CORE and other chapters.

The central role of national CORE staff people and resources in the affairs of the New Orleans and Washington CORE chapters does not negate the independence and power of the grassroots struggle for black equality, but it does suggest the civil rights movement is more complicated than many of our current assumptions suggest. In "Freedom Then, Freedom Now: The Historiography of the Civil Rights Movement," Steven Lawson demonstrates that recent studies exploring the civil rights movement through local communities and grassroots organizations have broadened our perspective of the black freedom struggle. In his opinion, this scholarship suggests that many of our definitions and generalizations about the movement are not correct. We have learned new things about the origins of the civil rights movement, questioned the

politics of its participants and recognized the central role of women.³⁶

Rather than beginning the movement in 1954 with the Brown vs. Board of Education decision, for instance, community studies indicate the origins of the movement to be much earlier. Early predecessors of the fight against racism in the 1950s and 1960s include institutions active in the 1930s and 1940s such as churches, colleges, civic groups, NAACP chapters and labor unions.³⁷ This new research also calls into question the division of the movement into moderate and radical wings; people on each side actually shared many concerns including an interest in the international ramifications of racism and an interest in the link between discrimination and poverty.³⁸ These new studies also reveal the tremendous contributions of women to the civil rights movement, their experience and their relationships with men.³⁹ Of the new projects underway in 1991, Steven Lawson wrote, "These promise to add a critical edge and greater complexity to the portraits of protest presented here."⁴⁰

As more researchers complete studies of the black freedom struggle from a grassroots perspective, a fuller and more complex understanding of the movement will continue to evolve. Making a Movement contributes to the accumulating data challenging our conceptions about the civil rights movement. The experience of these two communities of local civil rights activists not only reveals the close relationship which existed between national CORE and its chapters in New Orleans and Washington D.C., but raises questions about the role and influence of ideology in

³⁶ Lawson, "Freedom Then, Freedom Now," 457, 459, 461-471.

³⁷ Lawson, "Freedom Then, Freedom Now," 463-466.

³⁸ Lawson, "Freedom Then, Freedom Now," 462-463.

³⁹ Lawson, "Freedom Then, Freedom Now," 467-469.

⁴⁰ Lawson, "Freedom Then, Freedom Now," 471.

the struggle for black equality.

When discussing conflict within the movement and its demise, current scholarship emphasizes ideological factors--most notably the rise of black nationalism--and the subsequent divisions it created between civil rights organizations and activists.⁴¹ The communities of New Orleans and Washington CORE experienced conflict, but ideological differences did not create the dissension. These communities disintegrated because members disagreed over how to make decisions in the organization and who should control the decision-making process. In 1962, the New Orleans CORE community divided between those who had power and those who wanted a greater share of it. Likewise, a power struggle developed in Washington CORE in 1964 between the people in power and their opponents who wanted a greater role in decision-making. In both instances, the community became so divided and contentious that the national organization stepped in to resolve the conflict.

Although these power struggles weakened the New Orleans and Washington CORE chapters, the conflict did not result in the death of the affiliates. Surprisingly, the evidence does not indicate that ideology played a significant role in the CORE chapters' final demise either. Both communities underwent their slow dissolution in 1964 and 1965, well before the ideology of black nationalism dominated the black freedom struggle. Many factors contributed to the decline of these grassroots organizations, but most interesting is how the decision to shift from concrete civil rights actions to the organization of ghetto

⁴¹See, for example, Clayborne Carson, In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981); August Meier and Elliot Rudwick, CORE: A Study in the Civil Rights Movement, 1942-1968 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973); Clayborne Carson, ed. The Eyes on the Prize Civil Rights Reader: Documents, Speeches, and Firsthand Accounts From the Black Freedom Struggle, 1954-1990 (New York: Penguin Books, 1991).

communities contributed to their decline. Each chapter found it difficult to convert its agenda and activities from nonviolent direct action to a program and projects designed to organize and empower the residents of low-income neighborhoods.

The move from direct action tactics to community organization hastened the dissolution of New Orleans and Washington CORE as communities and organizations because it prevented the membership from investing adequate time and energy into sustaining the CORE affiliate itself. When each chapter initiated projects intended to mobilize African Americans living in poverty and to help them solve their immediate problems, CORE members worked as organizers and advisors. Since the membership invested its energy into building and sustaining other communities of people rather than its own, New Orleans CORE and Washington CORE slowly disappeared as independent entities. It is difficult to understand fully the experiences of the members of New Orleans and Washington CORE during their community organization phase because the historical record is scanty. Therefore, the effect of community organization on the structure of CORE chapters and the identity of activists needs to be explored further.

Studying the Congress of Racial Equality through two of its chapters challenges our overall assumptions about CORE and the civil rights movement in general. A more complicated portrait of the struggle for black equality than is available through the existing scholarly literature emerges through the history of the New Orleans and Washington CORE chapters. Their story reveals three important findings: ideology played no significant role in the conflicts of the affiliates; community organization contributed to the chapters' demise; and the national organization interacted extensively with these local communities. Divided into two case studies, Making a Movement explores these themes

through an exploration of the people of the Washington and New Orleans CORE chapters and the communities they built. In the process, it not only provides a fresh analysis, but reconstructs the stories of often little-known individuals and localities.

The first half of this study tells--for the first time--the story of Washington CORE. Chapter one traces the role of national CORE in the origins of the Washington chapter and the community which evolved between 1958 and 1961. Dissatisfied by the group's inaction, CORE personnel orchestrated a coup. Chapter two investigates the nature and the meaning of the community that developed after the coup. Exploring what these CORE activists did to fight employment and housing discrimination reveals the values, goals, tactics, emotions and ideas they shared. Despite these similarities, the membership of Washington CORE divided into two factions during the winter of 1964. The group that wanted a more democratic organization and a role in decision-making challenged the chairman of Washington CORE and his supporters. Chapter three presents this power struggle and the role of national CORE in the resolution of the crisis. Chapter four recounts the slow demise of Washington CORE, highlighting community organization as the primary factor.

The second half of the narrative takes us deeper into the South to New Orleans, Louisiana. Chapters five through seven closely explore the experiences of the integrated membership of New Orleans CORE. Chapter five describes the origins of the chapter in 1960 and the memberships' two year battle to desegregate the city's lunchcounters in the face of massive white resistance. This chapter also establishes the nature and meaning of the community which developed during this campaign and the assistance provided to the local group by national CORE. Chapter six explores the contributions of New Orleans CORE members to the national

civil rights movement during the summer and fall of 1961. The experience of these activists in the freedom rides fractured the CORE community into two groups--the group in power united by their experience in the freedom rides and the rest of the membership who wanted a more democratic CORE chapter. When the power struggle immobilized the CORE affiliate, national CORE personnel stepped in to resolve the conflict. The final chapter investigates the slow demise of New Orleans CORE between 1963 and 1966. Despite the significant efforts of national CORE field secretaries to sustain the New Orleans CORE chapter, the nature of the New Orleans CORE community, inactivity and the shift to community organization engendered its death.

By extensively exploring the people and activities of these two CORE chapters, each case study highlights the nature and meaning of the CORE community; explores the relationship of the national organization to the local civil rights movement; investigates the factors causing conflict between chapters members; and traces the community's demise. In I've Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle, Charles Payne declares that literature on the civil rights movement must "make it clear that ordinary, flawed, everyday sorts of human beings frequently manage to make extraordinary contributions to social change."⁴² Making a Movement: The Meaning of Community in the Congress of Racial Equality, 1958-1968 explores the experience of two of these groups of ordinary people who worked through CORE to eradicate racism in their neighborhoods and discovers the communities they built in the process. This study is one of the many building blocks providing new evidence about the civil rights movement

⁴²Charles Payne, I've Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 440.

and helping us to understand the struggle for black equality more fully
and in all of its complexities.

Chapter 1

“‘There’s A Meeting Here Tonight’: The Role of National CORE in the
Origins and Transformation of the Washington, D.C.
CORE Community, 1958-1961”

There’s A Meeting Here Tonight

Meeting tonight, meeting tonight
Meeting on the old campground.
Meeting tonight, meeting tonight,
Meeting on the old campground.

Sing just like this on the old campground,
Sing just like this on the old campground,
Sing just like this on the old campground,
Sing just like this on the old campground.

This is the way we pray on the old campground,
This is the way we pray on the old campground,
This is the way we pray on the old campground,
This is the way we pray on the old campground.

Shouting tonight, shouting tonight,
Shouting on the old campground.
Shouting tonight, shouting tonight,
Shouting on the old campground.

Meeting tonight, meeting tonight,
Meeting on the old campground.
Meeting tonight, meeting tonight,
Meeting on the old campground.

The Montgomery Gospel Trio, The Nashville Quartet and Guy Carawan, We
Shall Overcome: Songs of the “Freedom Riders” and the “Sit-Ins”.
New York: Folkways Records, 1961. Reissued in 1991 by Smithsonian
Folkways Records of Washington, D.C. as Folkways Cassette Series #05591.

During the late 1940s and early 1950s, the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) operated in the District of Columbia as the Washington Interracial Workshop. This group concentrated on the integration of public parks and the desegregation of the YMCA restaurant. After the dissolution of this organization in 1955, CORE remained inactive in the nation's capital until 1958 when national CORE personnel decided to reorganize the Washington affiliate.¹ By organizing local citizens into a CORE chapter, the national organization of the Congress of Racial Equality significantly shaped civil rights activity in the local arena. Using CORE contact lists and doing the groundwork necessary to bring interested individuals together into one group, national CORE staff members founded Washington CORE. Their effort resulted in a small, autonomous organization which tackled segregation at the local YMCA, participated in support activity for the southern sit-in movement and assisted Baltimore CORE. A small, interracial community emerged, peopled by adults committed to the use of nonviolent direct action tactics to end racism. Despite their desire to take action against racial discrimination, the membership moved slowly and rarely initiated direct action campaigns. Distressed at the inaction of the chapter representing CORE in the nation's capital, the staff of the national office orchestrated a coup in 1961 and once again fundamentally influenced the civil rights movement in Washington, D.C.

National CORE Executive Secretary James Robinson began his campaign to rebuild the Washington, D.C. CORE chapter in January 1958. After learning of the recent move of an ex-Baltimore CORE member, Mary

¹August Meier and Elliot Rudwick, CORE: A Study in the Civil Rights Movement, 1942-1968 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 50-54.

Schlossberg, to Washington, D.C. and her continuing interest in CORE, Robinson asked her to help organize a new group in D.C. He also contacted Albert Mindlin, a leader involved with the Washington CORE chapter of the early 1950s, the Washington Interracial Workshop, and requested his assistance as well. Schlossberg agreed to act as a coordinator of the effort and Mindlin provided the national organization with the names of potential members, although he declined to become actively involved in the new organization.²

Robinson believed the time right to revive CORE in Washington, D.C. To Schlossberg he suggested, "The old Interracial Workshop has been dead several years - long enough so that it might be possible to start a new group with a new outlook."³ To Mindlin he wrote, "I am wondering whether this might be the opportunity we have been waiting for to start a Washington CORE."⁴ He and the small staff of national CORE wanted to revive the District CORE branch because of the particular problems of Washington, D.C. and its visibility as the nation's capital.

Robinson identified the large numbers of African Americans living in the District of Columbia and the resulting tensions with white residents as necessitating a CORE chapter in the city. Robinson remarked to Mary Schlossberg, "The huge proportion of the Negro population must creat[e] special problems in Washington."⁵ He

²Mary Schlossberg, "Local Action Interest Sheet," December 1957, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, Microfilm Edition (Sanford, N.C.: Microfilming Corporation of America, 1980), 5:24:00201; James R. Robinson to Mary Schlossberg, 2 January 1958, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00206; James Robinson to James McCain, 29 April 1959[1958], 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:258:00040. [Hereafter cited The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, series:folder:frame.]

³James R. Robinson to Mary Schlossberg, 2 January 1958, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00206.

⁴James R. Robinson to Al Mindlin, 14 February 1958, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00207.

⁵James R. Robinson to Mary Schlossberg, 2 January 1958, The

continued in a later letter,

CORE-type action in Washington is apparently badly needed. In our fund-raising activities, we use various liberal lists. Even from these lists, we occasionally get a reply from Washington which says in no uncertain terms that Negroes are ruining the City. Groups like CORE with its Ghandian method would certainly have some tendency to alleviate tensions.⁶

Robinson argued that D.C. needed a local chapter not only to ameliorate racial tensions in the District, but because of the special significance of Washington as the national capital. In a letter to spark the interest of Washington area financial contributors Ada and William Wardlaw in an active local group, Robinson argued these points jointly. He contended,

Because it is the nation's capital, Washington is a pivotal city in race relations. Yet, because of the high proportion of Negroes in the population, constant work of various types will be necessary to keep integration advancing and to promote friendliness between members of various races. We think that CORE's method is one of the types of action needed, and I hope that a group may be successfully formed.⁷

He indicated the wider significance of good race relations in Washington, D.C. to contributors Lula and Bertha Allen. He pointed out, "Because Washington is the Nation's Capital, any advances made there in race relations have wide significance."⁸

Washington, D.C. not only deserved a strong CORE chapter as the nation's capital, but because national CORE staffers did not want the Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00206.

⁶James R. Robinson to Mr. and Mrs. Stephen Schlossberg, 14 February 1958, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00207.

⁷James Robinson to William and Ada Wardlaw, 20 May 1958, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00216.

⁸James Robinson to Lula Allen and Bertha Allen, 8 May 1958, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00210.

organization to weaken in the North. In 1958 James Robinson identified Washington, D.C. as part of the North in terms of race relations.

Robinson shared his concerns to Mary Schlossberg, "I am worried that so much attention is being paid to the South that race relations may weaken in the large Northern centers (which now would include Washington)."⁹

Concerning the availability of field workers to help organize Washington, he saw the new national field secretary hired in July 1958 as necessary to provide "new groups outside the South adequate staff time."¹⁰

To organize citizens of the Washington area into a local CORE community, Robinson and his small staff used their contact list to gather information on conditions in D.C. and to find potential action-oriented members. The national contact list initially included financial contributors to national CORE, people previously active in other CORE groups but now living in the Washington area and individuals once active in the Washington Interracial Workshop.¹¹ James Robinson added to this list community members supplied by his contacts in the city, most notably Al Mindlin and Thurman Cherry.¹² Robinson announced

⁹James R. Robinson to Mary Schlossberg, 2 January 1958, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00206.

¹⁰James Robinson to Irene Osborne, 29 July 1958, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00227.

¹¹See for example: James Robinson to Al Mindlin, 14 February 1958, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00207; James Robinson to Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Blackwood, 20 May 1958, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00216; Al Mindlin to Jim [James Robinson], 12 May 1958, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00220.

¹²See, for example, contacts provided by Mindlin: Al Mindlin to Jim [James Robinson], 12 May 1958, 1-5, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00220-00223; and Al Mindlin to Jimmy [James Robinson], 27 July 1958, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00229. See, for example, contacts provided by Cherry: James Robinson to Reverend H. Browne, 19 May 1958, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00213; and James Robinson to J. Nelson Logan, 19 May 1958, The Papers of the Congress of

to the 50 to 60 people on his contact list the current effort to develop an interracial CORE group in Washington, D.C. He asked for their participation, requested information on areas of discrimination in D.C. and the activities of other groups, and solicited the names of potential new members.¹³

Once the national office compiled a list of promising contacts and found the time, Robinson sent staff members to the city to organize individuals into a CORE chapter. Robinson intended to send a field secretary to Washington during late June or July but delayed until September as a result of the national convention and because communities in other areas needed the attention of the national office.¹⁴ Although Mary Schlossberg agreed to convene the first meetings of the local CORE branch and a small number of persons responded to the national office mailing with interest, the people who reconstituted Washington CORE required the national office to bring them together.¹⁵ In fact, in July, James Robinson hoped Mary Schlossberg had not grown tired of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00215.

¹³James R. Robinson to Mr. and Mrs. Stephen Schlossberg, 19 May 1958, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00212; Jim Robinson to Albert Mindlin, 20 May 1958, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00220; Jim Robinson to Irene Osborne, 20 May 1958, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00224; William and Ada Wardlaw, "Local Action Interest Sheet," [June 1958], The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00204; and James Robinson to Frederick J. Libby, 19 May 1958, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00213.

¹⁴James R. Robinson to Mr. and Mrs. Stephen Schlossberg, 19 May 1958, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00212; James R. Robinson to Mrs. Stephen Schlossberg, 23 June 1958, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00226; James Robinson to Thurman S. Cherry, 13 September 1958, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00231.

¹⁵Evidence to indicate only a few responded to the national CORE mailing: James Robinson to Mrs. Stephen Schlossberg, 28 July 1958, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00230; James Robinson to Mrs. Stephen Schlossberg, 20 August 1958, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00230.

waiting. He did not want her to think that national CORE had forgotten about Washington.¹⁶

Field Secretaries Jim McCain and Gordon Carey finally brought the small group of individuals who would become Washington CORE together on September 25.¹⁷ Although only nine people attended the first meeting and "there was much hesitancy," the small committee decided to meet again on October 13 under the guidance of Gordon Carey.¹⁸ The field secretaries personally contacted interested persons, got them to go to the meetings and shaped the discussion. According to Mary Schlossberg, "Gordon and Jim, in addition to being great guys personally, were extremely helpful. They got most of the people to the meeting and contributed immensely to the content of the meeting.[sic]"¹⁹ In correspondence to the national office Schlossberg recognized the central role played by the national office staff in the creation of Washington CORE. She penned, "The organizers did an excellent job getting us started. . . . Thank you so much for Carey and McCain, two really wonderful people. They gave us the impetus we needed to get going and did a fine job of recruiting members."²⁰

Since the national office staff brought together a group of strangers, few of these people knew one another prior to their involvement in CORE. Even though Irene Osborne and Mary Schlossberg

¹⁶James R. Robinson to Mrs. Stephen Schlossberg, 28 July 1958, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00230.

¹⁷James R. Robinson to Mary Schlossberg, 20 September 1958, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00233.

¹⁸Mary Schlossberg to Jimmy[James Robinson], [between 25 September and October 13 1958], The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00240.

¹⁹Mary Schlossberg to Jimmy[James Robinson], [between 25 September and October 13 1958], The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00240.

²⁰Mary Schlossberg to Jimmy[James Robinson], 17 November 1958, 1 and 2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00246.

lived "only a few doors from each other," their introduction came from James McCain and Gordon Carey.²¹

The newly formed Washington CORE chapter included few people involved previously in the Washington Interracial Workshop. As they sought out members James Robinson warned Mary Schlossberg to stay clear of people who do not work well with others. He advised, "As CORE very definitely concentrates on group action, only persons who work well in groups are good members."²² Since interpersonal conflict and dissension caused the death of the last chapter of CORE in Washington, national CORE staffers wanted to avoid many of the persons who used to belong to the Washington Interracial Workshop. Robinson wrote to the ex-chair of that organization, Al Mindlin, "As it was fairly obvious that the old Workshop group disintegrated in part from personality clashes, it might be well not to seek out persons who used to belong to that group, with one or two exceptions, possibly."²³ Mindlin agreed and provided Robinson with a carefully selected list of twelve past Workshop members, noting "no interpersonal problems that I was aware of."²⁴ Of the ten people to revive Washington CORE, Irene Osborne represented the only person with ties to the defunct association.²⁵

When the new organization applied for affiliation with the national confederation in November 1958, ten active members comprised

²¹Mary Schlossberg to Jimmy[James Robinson], [between 25 September and October 13 1958], 2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00241.

²²James R. Robinson to Mary Schlossberg, 20 September 1958, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00233.

²³James R. Robinson to Al Mindlin, 14 February 1958, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00207.

²⁴Al Mindlin to Jimmy [Robinson], 27 July 1958, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00229.

²⁵[Al Mindlin], "Corelator List," [2 February 1962], The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 3:89:00039.

the first CORE community.²⁶ Mary Schlossberg, elected temporary chair, described the association as "a well balanced one with a maximum of sincerity and genuine interest and a minimum of neuroses."²⁷ Gordon Carey agreed. Although small, the Washington CORE group possessed the potential to become one of the strongest locals because it contained some capable members. He wrote to Caroline Bennett, the chairperson elected to replace Schlossberg in March 1959, "I believe that the CORE group is doing well . . . You have a good number of strong members now and with some increase in membership it should help to take the strain off your present members and at the same time permit an increase in activity."²⁸

Although Washington CORE retained many of its original members and gained a few between 1958 and 1960, the community remained small. During 1959 the organization counted 17 people as active members, but six of these individuals left the District of Columbia during the following year. Those who left during 1960 included four office holders. Founding members Mary Schlossberg and Thomas Timberg served as the first chair and vice-chair of the group, while Vice-Chair Dale Drews and Secretary-Treasurer Amy Cohen left Washington before their terms expired.²⁹ The addition of a few more members, such as Lois Goodman,

²⁶ "Application For Affiliation," [November 1958], 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00247.

²⁷ Mary Schlossberg to Jimmy [James Robinson], 17 November 1958, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00246.

²⁸ [Gordon Carey] to Paul and Caroline [Bennett], 22 April 1959, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00255; Gordon Carey to Helen Brown, 26 January 1959, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:48:00062; Thomas Timberg, [March 1959], 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00251.

²⁹ "Active Membership of Washington CORE," [November 1958], The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00205; "Washington CORE, Mailing List," August 1959, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00257; Charlie [Mason] to Marv [Rich], 22 October 1960, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00294; Amy Cohen to James Robinson, 13 July 1960, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967,

Theresa Alt and Hal Witt, kept the group numbering in the teens in 1960, but the association never grew large enough to be very active.³⁰

Although students, such as Amy Cohen and Lois Goodman, belonged to the small Washington CORE community which developed between 1958 and 1960, adults predominated.³¹ Hal Witt and Charles Mason, both white, practiced law.³² A college student of non-traditional age, Mary Schlossberg completed her second and third years of medical school while involved with CORE in Washington.³³ Her husband, Stephen Schlossberg, worked for the International Ladies Garment Workers Union in Baltimore, while in the District of Columbia he directed the Housing Committee of the D.C. chapter of Americans for Democratic Action. Although involved initially in the revitalization of Washington CORE, Stephen Schlossberg ended his participation when the couple divorced during the fall of

5:24:00286; "Application For Affiliation," [17 November 1958], 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00247; Paul Bennett to James R. Robinson, 25 October 1959, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00259; "Active Membership of Washington CORE," 1959, folder 2, Mary Coleman, "Papers, 1952-1960," Archives Division, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin. [Hereafter cited by document author, title or description, date, page number, folder, Coleman Papers.]

³⁰Genevieve Hughes, "Field Work Report, Washington, D.C.," 17 February-23 March 1961, 8 and 10, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:255:01142 and 01143.

³¹Amy Cohen to James Robinson, 10 February 1960, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00272; Amy J. Cohen to James Robinson, 13 July 1960, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00286; Genevieve Hughes, "Field Work Report, Washington, D.C.," 17 February-23 March 1961, 8, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:255:01142.

³²Julius Hobson to Washington Post Editor, 1 April 1963, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00349; Genevieve Hughes, "Field Work Report, Washington, D.C.," 17 February-23 March 1961, 8, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:255:01142; Charlie [Mason] to Marv [Rich], 22 October 1960, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00294.

³³James Robinson to James McCain, 29 April 1959[1958], The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:258:00040; Mary Schlossberg, "Local Action Interest Sheet," December 1957, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00201.

1958.³⁴

Other married couples worked together in the group. During 1959 and 1960, Caroline and Paul Bennett provided the association with leadership. In 1959 Carrie Bennett served as the chairperson; her husband held the post between October 1959 and March 1961. Paul Bennett worked as a physicist for the federal government while his wife stayed at home with their child, Psihah.³⁵ Another couple active in CORE, Paul and Sarita Berry, parented two children under three, Michael and Xanthe.³⁶ At least ten of the eighteen members active in 1958 and 1959 were married.³⁷

Despite the small number of individuals composing the CORE community at this time, the interracial body contained both women and men. Initially women dominated this community. Women made up eight of the ten founding members. Although more men joined the group in 1959 and 1960, women continued to hold a majority. Ten of the seventeen active members of 1959 were women.³⁸ Both black and white women and

³⁴James R. Robinson to Mary Schlossberg, 2 January 1958, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00206; James R. Robinson to Gordon R. Carey, 20 September 1958, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00233; Jim Robinson to Annabel [Seidman], 2 January 1958, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00206.

³⁵Irene Osborne to Gordon [Carey], 12 April 1959, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00255; Marvin Rich to Carrie Bennett, 11 July 1960, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00278; Paul Bennett to James R. Robinson, 25 October 1959, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00259; W.F. Curtis to Paul Bennett, memorandum, 1 March 1963, 2, 1:1:3, Hobson Collection.

³⁶Charlie [Mason] to Marv [Rich], 22 October 1960, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00294.

³⁷"Active Membership of Washington CORE," [November 1958], The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00205; "Active Membership of Washington CORE," 1959, folder 2, Coleman Papers; "Washington CORE, Mailing List," August 1959, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00257.

³⁸"Active Membership of Washington CORE," [November 1958], The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00205;

men peopled the association. Paul Bennett and Ruby Thornton were African American, while teenagers Lois Goodman and Theresa Alt were white. Genevieve Hughes, national CORE staff person, characterized Thornton and Goodman as patient, responsible and reliable, but unable to devote unlimited time to CORE. She also described Thornton as "a stable person who is very easy to work with."³⁹ Charles Mason, a white lawyer in his 50s, identified Paul and Sarita Berry, an interracial couple, as "wonderful people."⁴⁰

These individuals who composed the CORE community which developed between 1958 and 1960 believed in using nonviolent direct action to end racism, but few came to CORE with a philosophical understanding of nonviolence nor viewed nonviolence as a way of life. Regarding the level of understanding of nonviolent direct action among the founding members of Washington CORE, Mary Schlossberg wrote, "We have discussed it each meeting but some substance of understanding will come with our first action." On the affiliation application she also indicated that the group had "not specifically" discussed the CORE Rules For Action nor had all members even seen them.⁴¹ Shortly after affiliation with national CORE, the group held their first workshop to strengthen their

"Active Membership of Washington CORE," 1959, folder 2, Coleman Papers; "Washington CORE, Mailing List," August 1959, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00257.

³⁹Genevieve Hughes, "Field Work Report, Washington, D.C.," 17 February-23 March 1961, 7-10, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:255:01142-01143.

⁴⁰Genevieve Hughes, "Field Work Report, Washington, D.C.," 17 February-23 March 1961, 8, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:255:01142; Charlie [Mason] to Marv [Rich], 22 October 1960, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00294; Charlie [Mason] to Marv [Rich], 26 October 1960, 1-2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00290-00291; Charlie [Mason] to Marv [Rich], 16 August 1960, 1-2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00281-00282.

⁴¹"Application for Affiliation," 17 November 1958, 1 and 2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00247-00248.

understanding of CORE principles and method. They learned about the philosophy of nonviolence and the use of civil disobedience from national CORE representative James Farmer and discussed how to apply the CORE method to problems in Washington. Amy Cohen called the workshop "highly successful."⁴²

The arrest of Washington CORE member Dale Drews by police at Gwynn Oak Amusement Park in Maryland indicates that members learned about nonviolence from one another, internalized the philosophy and acted according to its guidelines. Baltimore CORE member Ivor Kraft described Drews' 1959 arrest:

I watched Dale as he was yanked away from the others by a team of burly police assisted by individuals from the mob. The expression of total serenity -- almost saintliness I would say -- in Dale's entire demeanor as he was lifted bodily and carried to the patrol wagon was something I will not easily forget. Gandhi himself couldn't have reacted more in keeping with the CORE discipline.⁴³

Although the individuals comprising Washington CORE adhered to the basic discipline and values that defined all CORE members, they wanted to build a tolerant community. In other words, Washington CORE members wanted to welcome all people and disagreed with national CORE regarding membership restrictions. During 1959 the D.C. branch challenged a section of the CORE Organizational Manual on membership selection and the necessity of screening potential members. According to Gordon Carey "the group as a whole seemed rather upset about the paragraph." Arguing for the body, Thomas Timberg contended that overly restrictive membership requirements would destroy CORE especially since all members

⁴²Amy Cohen to James Robinson, 21 December 1959, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00263; "One-Day Workshop on the Philosophy and Method of CORE Action," 13 June 1959, folder 2, Coleman Papers.

⁴³Ivor Kraft, [statement], [27 September 1959], 2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:48:00089.

could be considered non-conformists.⁴⁴

James Robinson agreed that non-conformists, at least regarding race relations, peopled CORE. He even admitted that some individuals might be non-conformists in other areas as well. "But," he argued, "to be effective as a disciplined CORE group, these people recognize the importance of appearing to be conformists except on race relations when acting as CORE members." In Robinson's opinion, the experience of now defunct CORE chapters proved loose membership policies more damaging than rigid membership qualifications. Activists who lacked sincerity and responsibility, "intractable 'characters,'" and people with personal agendas caused other, sometimes more effective, participants to leave. Robinson suggested the dissenters rewrite the section on screening membership, provided the substance of the guidelines remained the same.⁴⁵

Although Robinson assumed this debate over membership restrictions to be largely theoretical, at least some in Washington CORE wanted to practice tolerance in the formation of their CORE community.⁴⁶ For example, the first chapter chairperson, Mary Schlossberg, abhorred anti-communism. While working to revive Washington CORE in 1958 Robinson remarked of Schlossberg, "She is particularly weak on Membership Regulations, feeling that any attempt to guard against Communists joining is 'McCarthyism.' Nevertheless, she could be helpful. Just keep her off any Membership Committee."⁴⁷ Another early

⁴⁴James R. Robinson to Mrs. Paul Bennett, 22 May 1959, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00256; James R. Robinson to Thomas Timberg, 7 April 1959, 1 and 2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00254.

⁴⁵James R. Robinson to Thomas Timberg, 7 April 1959, 1 and 2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00254.

⁴⁶James R. Robinson to Mrs. Paul Bennett, 22 May 1959, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00256.

⁴⁷Jim Robinson to Annabel [Seidman], 2 January 1958, The Papers

Washington CORE leader, Paul Bennett, considered membership standards unnecessary despite the position of the national office that "a bad apple can spoil the whole lot."⁴⁸ The CORE group which evolved under Schlossberg and Bennett between 1958 and 1961 placed no guidelines or restrictions on membership.⁴⁹

Although the local branch developed no specific policies governing membership, national CORE staffers sought out people committed to action when they organized the Washington D.C. Committee on Racial Equality. Executive Secretary Robinson wanted to avoid people who supported interracial efforts to fight racial discrimination through conferences and legal challenges, but frowned on the use of direct action. "There are apparently many people, especially whites, who are interested in interracial activity, but only along very restricted lines. We should be careful to get only or predominantly actionists at the first meeting. . . . CORE must not lose its distinctive function as a spearhead type of group," he argued.⁵⁰ Robinson and other members of the national office assumed this position because of their recent failure to organize a CORE branch in Northern Virginia. By failing to screen those individuals invited to the initial meetings to create a CORE chapter in that area, the group which gathered did not reflect CORE because it did not include "radical actionists" and those "who believe in uncompromising action."⁵¹ Concerning the experience Robinson wrote, "Virginia was not of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00206.

⁴⁸Genevieve Hughes to Julius Hobson, 23 March 1961, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00314.

⁴⁹Genevieve Hughes, "Field Work Report, Washington, D.C.," 17 February-23 March 1961, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:255:01139.

⁵⁰James R. Robinson to Mr. and Mrs. Stephen Schlossberg, 19 May 1958, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00212; James R. Robinson to Mary Schlossberg, 20 September 1958, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00233; and Jim Robinson to Irene Osborne, 20 May 1958, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00224.

productive for CORE: it seems to be full of white people who are vaguely liberal but not interested in anything crusading."⁵² He thought it essential "to avoid conservative race relationists" in Washington, D.C.⁵³

Despite the efforts of the national office to foster a chapter oriented toward nonviolent direct action, Washington CORE members chose their first project with difficulty and national CORE found the membership reluctant to take action. As a first project both Gordon Carey and Jim Robinson suggested a campaign to end employment discrimination in area food stores. By targeting supermarkets in interracial or black areas, picket lines would keep customers out and result in a quick victory. This victory, and visible activity in African American communities, would result in membership growth.⁵⁴ During the late fall, the ten members of CORE divided into investigating committees to study possible projects. Following the advice of the national office, one committee surveyed chain food stores to determine the extent of black employment in area supermarkets. Other members investigated discrimination against non-white hospital patients and segregation at the YMCA.⁵⁵

⁵¹James R. Robinson to James T. McCain, 2 June 1958, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:258:00047; Jim Robinson to Irene Osborne, 20 May 1958, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00224.

⁵²Jim Robinson to Mr. and Mrs. William W. Perry, 19 May 1958, Jim Robinson to Irene Osborne, 20 May 1958, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00212.

⁵³James R. Robinson to Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Blackwood, 20 May 1958, Jim Robinson to Irene Osborne, 20 May 1958, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00216.

⁵⁴Jim Robinson to Mary Schlossberg, 1 October 1958, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00240; Gordon R. Carey to Mary Schlossberg, 16 October 1958, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00242.

⁵⁵"Application For Affiliation," [November 1958], 1 and 2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00247-00248;

By March 1959 Washington CORE decided to focus on discrimination at the Central Branch of the YMCA, but continued to observe and investigate area food stores and hospitals.⁵⁶ Through the YMCA project the group sought full membership for African Americans at the Central Branch of the Young Men's Christian Association and the elimination of segregation in all YMCA activities. Although the Central Branch of the YMCA allowed blacks to take classes, use the restaurant and utilize overnight accommodations, it barred them from membership and refused to let them use the athletic facilities. The YMCA also operated a private school for boys and a camp, both closed to blacks. When the management refused membership to an interracial team from CORE, they declared their YMCA was segregated and told the CORE activists to join the Twelfth Street YMCA which welcomed black members.⁵⁷

The committee pursued negotiations with the YMCA for the remainder of 1959. They made little progress in their conversations with a succession of YMCA officials. Each administrator conveyed the CORE negotiators to another committee and defended the branch's "gradualist policy of integration."⁵⁸ After the president of the Central Branch's Board of Management rejected further negotiations with CORE and reaffirmed the gradual pace of the "Y" toward integration, Washington

"Food Store Employment Survey," [1959], The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00250; Amy Cohen to James R. Robinson, 21 December 1959, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00263.

⁵⁶Thomas Timberg to [James] Peck, [March 1959], 1-2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00251.

⁵⁷"Summary of YMCA Discriminatory Practices," December 1959, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00263; "Negotiate with YMCA," CORE-lator 76 (Spring 1959): 3 in The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 6:1:00109.

⁵⁸Quoted in "Negotiate with YMCA," CORE-lator 76 (Spring 1959): 3 in The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 6:1:00109; "Summary of YMCA Discriminatory Practices," December 1959, 1-2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00263-00264.

CORE worked with the Citizen's Committee for the Advancement of Christianity in the Y.M.C.A. to mobilize the community into action. Although the members prepared a fact sheet to initiate a letter writing campaign, they progressed slowly to nonviolent direct action.⁵⁹

As early as January 1959 national staff member Gordon Carey reminded Washington CORE treasurer, Ruby Thornton, of the need for CORE chapters to take action. He wrote, "It is very important that a CORE group get into action on some project quite soon after it is organized. Because CORE emphasizes action it will be difficult to maintain interest in the organization unless the progress can be seen."⁶⁰ Between November, 1959 and February, 1960 national officials worked to persuade the membership of Washington CORE to take action on the YMCA project. Staff members tried to convince the local membership that the lack of fruitful negotiations required the use of direct action. Marvin Rich explained that demonstrations would not necessitate the end to negotiations, but rather would produce more productive meetings with the management. Similarly, Gordon Carey coaxed, "Direct action is not a cessation of negotiations, but a further step in bargaining."⁶¹

A few months later, frustrated at the lack of action in Washington, both Gordon Carey and Jim Robinson again pushed the D.C. branch to act on the YMCA case as soon as possible. Not only did they describe a course of action to pursue, but made it clear that the entire staff believed the group must move beyond investigation and negotiation immediately. Gordon Carey concluded, "Whatever you decide to do, the

⁵⁹Thomas Timberg to Jim Peck, 28 September 1959, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00257.

⁶⁰Gordon Carey to Ruby M. Thornton, 27 January 1959, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00252.

⁶¹Marv [Rich] to Charles N. Mason, Jr., 2 November 1959, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00260; Gordon R. Carey to Paul Bennett, 2 November 1959, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00259.

unanimous opinion of the staff is that an action program is essential at this point."⁶² Simultaneous to the YMCA direct action campaign, Jim Robinson proposed Washington CORE, "have at least a small committee investigating possibilities for your next action project -- so there is not such a long hiatus without direct action again!"⁶³

The group finally determined to begin direct action against the discriminatory tactics of the Central Branch YMCA with a picket line on February 20, 1960.⁶⁴ As a result of their public demonstrations, the group achieved victory within two months. The chair, Paul Bennett, received a membership application from a sympathetic official and obtained membership. Not only did the central branch allow Bennett to use the athletic facilities, the YMCA Committee on Management decided to end its policy of segregation. Washington CORE declared victory when other African American CORE activists became members through regular channels. The chapter pledged to integrate the YMCA fully by recruiting African Americans to join the Central Branch and use its facilities.⁶⁵

Despite the consistent pushing by national CORE, Washington CORE pursued little direct action beyond support work for the southern student sit-in movement, assistance to Baltimore CORE projects and activities undertaken by CORE members as individuals. Throughout 1960, beginning in February, Washington CORE maintained a picket line every Saturday at one of the local Woolworth stores. Although CORE member Hal

⁶²Gordon R. Carey to Paul Bennett, 26 January 1960, 2 and 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00271.

⁶³James R. Robinson to Paul Bennett and Amy Cohen, 26 January 1960, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00270.

⁶⁴Amy J. Cohen to James Robinson, 10 February 1960, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00272.

⁶⁵Amy J. Cohen to Gordon R. Carey, 27 April 1960, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00277; Amy J. Cohen to James Robinson, 2 May 1960, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00276.

Witt often directed the line, Andy Bennett and the Committee for Equality of the International Union of Electrical Workers (IUE) organized the attack on Washington area drug stores.⁶⁶ Washington CORE also negotiated with the national headquarters of the Peoples Drug Store chain on behalf of the Petersburg, Virginia Improvement Association (PIA). Although the PIA achieved the desegregation of all other dime store lunch counters in Petersburg, Peoples refused to integrate. At the request of National CORE, a committee from Washington CORE negotiated with Peoples Drug Store executives and convinced them to end segregation at their lunchcounters in Petersburg and Charlottesville, Virginia.⁶⁷

In addition to the YMCA project and work in support of the southern sit-in movement, members of Washington CORE provided Baltimore CORE with assistance in its efforts to integrate two Maryland amusement parks. On September 6, 1959 Washington CORE activists joined individuals from Baltimore at Gwynn Oak amusement park to protest the inability of African Americans to use the park. For the sixth consecutive year, Baltimore CORE chose the park's annual "All Nation's Day," celebrating "group harmony and understanding," as the backdrop of the demonstration. The action began with a large, integrated picket line which included children and adults. Following leafleting and the

⁶⁶"Report of Washington CORE Activities for Council Meeting," 11-12 February 1961, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00306; "In Brief," CORE-lator 81 (April 1960): 2 in The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 6:1:00119; Amy J. Cohen to James R. Robinson, 2 May 1960, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00276; Gordon R. Carey to Mr. and Mrs. Paul Bennett, 9 September 1960, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00285.

⁶⁷Gordon Carey to Mr. and Mrs. Paul Bennett, 21 September 1960, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00287; "Report of Washington CORE Activities for Council Meeting," 11-12 February 1961, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00306.

efforts of a collection of mothers and their children to gain entrance to the park, five black and white CORE members entered the recreational facility to mingle with patrons and to demonstrate that integration could work at Gwynn Oak. The park remained calm until the manager, with the assistance of local police officers, demanded the group leave. At their refusal the officers began to remove brusquely the demonstrators, creating a violent and riotous atmosphere. Ivor Kraft, of Baltimore CORE, described the "sunny carnival setting of the amusement park" becoming dominated by "an ugliness and almost lynch [like] atmosphere." People shouted for the police to throw the "nigger-lovers" out and deport them back to Russia. Some in the crowd attacked the small band, kicking them and ripping their clothing. Although the police neglected to charge anyone who attacked, they arrested the five CORE demonstrators, including Dale Drews of the Washington chapter, and accused them of disorderly conduct.⁶⁸ Undaunted, Washington CORE members returned to Maryland throughout 1960 to picket with Baltimore CORE at the Glen Echo amusement park which also denied blacks entrance.⁶⁹

Although Washington CORE as a group generated and sponsored few action projects in its name, individual CORE members did not avoid direct action nor fear jail. Besides the arrest of Dale Drew at Gwynn Oaks amusement park, police detained CORE picket captain Hal Witt at a Woolworth drug store for disorderly conduct and preventing people from entering a retail establishment. Despite eight witnesses testifying against the police claims that Witt shouted "boisterously" and prevented people from entering the store, the judge convicted him of disorderly

⁶⁸Ivor Kraft, [statement],[27 September 1959], 1 and 2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:48:00089.

⁶⁹"Report of Washington CORE Activities for Council Meeting," 11-12 February 1961, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00306.

conduct.⁷⁰

Two other CORE members, Paul and Sarita Berry, unexpectedly undertook a sit-in. While shopping at a cooperative in suburban Washington, the interracial couple decided to eat dinner and go bowling at an adjacent bowling alley. As they finished their meal, the manager asked Sarita Berry to leave; at her refusal police arrested her. The police did not arrest Paul Berry until he went to the police station and identified himself as her husband. Although the detention did not occur as a result of a CORE project or test, the Community Relations Director of national CORE, Marvin Rich, advised Washington CORE to take action as a body to protest the trespassing charge levied against the Berrys and to end discrimination at the bowling alley. He argued, "It seems to me essential that CORE in Washington do something in the name of CORE if it is to grow as a potent community force."⁷¹

As a result of Washington CORE's slow pace and reluctance to engage in direct action, national CORE determined to reorganize the Washington, D.C. chapter. The national office wanted a strong group in the nation's capital and to the national staff this meant an organization of actionists--people more willing to use direct action. To achieve this goal, national CORE field secretary Genevieve Hughes orchestrated a coup, replacing chair Paul Bennett with Julius Hobson. Although a confederation of autonomous chapters, the national organization and staff of the Congress of Racial Equality significantly influenced local CORE movements.

⁷⁰Amy Cohen to Gordon Carey, 28 April 1960, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00275; Amy J. Cohen to James R. Robinson, 2 May 1960, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00276.

⁷¹Marvin Rich to Charles Mason, 29 October 1960, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00292; Charlie [Mason] to Marv [Rich], 22 October 1960, 1-2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00294-295.

During the fall of 1960 Gordon Carey, field director of national CORE, scouted potential members to invigorate Washington CORE and made plans to strengthen the chapter. To Lawrence Henry, a leader of the 1960 sit-ins in Northern Virginia, Carey wrote, "We have a Washington Committee on Racial Equality. However it has not been particularly active during the past year . . . I wondered if you might be interested in being a member of Washington CORE?"⁷² William Hughes, an active member of Boston CORE recently relocated to Chevy Chase, Maryland, received the following request from Gordon Carey: "I was wondering if you would not want to become active in Washington, D.C. CORE now that you have left Boston. . . . Very soon we are going to be doing some work toward the strengthening of Washington CORE. I am sure that you could be helpful to them and that they would in turn welcome your active participation."⁷³

Gordon Carey discussed "the need for strengthening Washington CORE" with chapter leader Paul Bennett in October 1960. To re-invigorate the chapter they decided to repeat the process the national office undertook in 1958 to revive the chapter. A national CORE staff person would send local action interest sheets to all of the new financial contributors in the Washington area, hold a meeting for interested persons and send a field secretary to the area to work with them.⁷⁴ Field secretary Genevieve Hughes first began to investigate Washington CORE during November 1960 and returned the next February to reorganize the chapter. Of the task before her, Hughes commented, "I don't have too much hope for reviving Wash. CORE. They hardly have the

⁷²Gordon R. Carey to Lawrence Henry, 8 September 1960, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00285.

⁷³Gordon Carey to William Hughes, 25 October 1960, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00288.

⁷⁴Gordon R. Carey to Ruby M. Thornton, 1 November 1960, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00296.

personnel with the time to carry-out the preliminary steps for a project. A very sleepy group (Literally - at the last meeting a girl fell asleep.)[sic]"⁷⁵

When Genevieve Hughes returned to the capital in February and March of 1961 her opinion of the existing Washington CORE group grew even more critical. The national office wanted Hughes to build chapter membership and to create an action-oriented program.⁷⁶ Gordon Carey instructed her, "It is very important from a national standpoint that we have a strong, solid CORE group in Washington itself. A truly dynamic action group in Washington can do a great deal to spread a favorable image of CORE."⁷⁷ "My hope," she wrote, "was to form a large, active, and very strong group which would put CORE on the map in Washington D.C. and be capable on occasion of bringing specific problems into national focus."⁷⁸ As Hughes worked to transform the group she identified poor leadership, conservative members and competition from other groups as the cause of Washington CORE's inaction.

"The chief reason for the decline of CORE in Washington as I analyzed it," Hughes reported, "was lack of strong leadership in association with poorly conducted meetings."⁷⁹ She found the chairman, Paul Bennett, a poor leader because he lacked the ability to organize and carry out an action program. Since he failed to recognize the need

⁷⁵Genevieve [Hughes] to Gordon [Carey], [November 1960], 1-2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:254:01098-01099.

⁷⁶Gordon Carey to Friend of CORE, 23 January 1961, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00302.

⁷⁷Gordon R. Carey to Genevieve Hughes, 2 March 1961, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:254:00898.

⁷⁸Genevieve Hughes, "Field Work Report, Washington, D.C.," 17 February-23 March 1961, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:255:01139.

⁷⁹Genevieve Hughes, "Field Work Report, Washington, D.C.," 17 February-23 March 1961, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:255:01139.

to build a strong CORE in the District of Columbia, he did not support the more aggressive activities necessary to achieve it. Hughes also complained of his inability to chair a meeting. An African American in his 50s, Bennett loved to talk. According to Hughes, he "rather freely pontificates on CORE matters." He and his lieutenant, Charles Mason, dominated the meetings. Hughes described Mason, a white man in his 50s, as a "long time booster of CORE" and an "absolutely compulsive speaker." Although Hughes suggested these men lacked initiative, she characterized them as very dedicated and willing to work earnestly for CORE on more routine matters. In her mind, Charles Mason regarded CORE "his second church."⁸⁰

As the leaders of Washington CORE, their lack of leadership skills, inability to run a meeting and excessive talk shaped the nature of the CORE community Genevieve Hughes sought to transform. She wrote of Charles Mason, "Together with Paul Bennet I hold him responsible for driving out nearly all the old CORE members from CORE."⁸¹ Generously claiming a membership of 30 at the time of reorganization, very few involved themselves in CORE actively. The chapter failed to differentiate between active members and those people simply on the mailing list. In actuality, Hughes found very few persons involved in the meetings or projects. Only four people attended the first Washington CORE meeting Hughes observed. Similarly, the group could muster only one or two members to join with other groups on the Fourteenth Street Woolworth's picket line, held continuously every

⁸⁰Genevieve Hughes, "Field Work Report, Washington, D.C.," 17 February-23 March 1961, 8, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:255:01142; Genevieve [Hughes] to Gordon [Carey], [between 2 March and 8 March 1961], 6, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:254:01103.

⁸¹Genevieve Hughes, "Field Work Report, Washington, D.C.," 17 February-23 March 1961, 8, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:255:01142.

Saturday since February 1960. Although a few additional members from the old CORE group expressed an interest in continuing in CORE, only four persons from the original CORE community participated in the reorganization of the group. In addition to Mason and Bennett, only white high school senior Lois Goodman and Ruby Thornton, an African American woman in her 30s, attended most of the meetings hosted by Genevieve Hughes.⁸²

Between 1958 and 1961 Washington CORE earned the reputation of being conservative. The Nonviolent Action Group (NAG), a very active metropolitan area student group using nonviolent direct action, criticized CORE for acting too slowly.⁸³ In fact NAG member George Hackley called the local CORE association "sick."⁸⁴ To Hughes, the small community she came to reshape held "humble ambitions" and possessed no experience initiating and carrying out action projects.⁸⁵ She wanted to change its character with the infusion of new people but experienced difficulty because of the resistance of Paul Bennett and Charles Mason and their efforts to sustain the status quo. She reported to Gordon Carey, "It is damn hard to make a dynamic group with Paul Bennett and Charles Mason holding forth." Despite their opposition,

⁸²Genevieve Hughes, "Field Work Report, Washington, D.C.," 17 February-23 March 1961, 1-2 and 7-10, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:255:01139, 01142-01143; G[enevieve] Hughes, "Active Members Attending Meetings, Washington CORE," March 1961, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00309; [Genevieve Hughes], "Persons Who Should Be Asked to Meetings," March 1961, 1-2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00308.

⁸³Genevieve Hughes, "Field Report," 4-17 November 1960, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:255:01129.

⁸⁴Genevieve [Hughes] to Gordon [Carey], [between 2 March and 8 March 1961], 2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:254:01101.

⁸⁵Quoted in Genevieve Hughes, "Field Work Report, Washington, D.C.," 17 February-23 March 1961, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:255:01139.

Hughes transformed the nature of the association because of the addition of people new to CORE.⁸⁶ In her estimation the chapter became "200% better than it was."⁸⁷

Competition from the Nonviolent Action Group not only contributed to the decline of Washington CORE during 1960, but also hampered the reconstruction of the Congress. The vibrant student group, with "a spectacular record for integration activities in the Washington area," made it difficult for Washington CORE to attract young people and to shed its adult image and composition. According to Genevieve Hughes, "NAG is real competition to us." Led by Lawrence Henry, the young people embarked on action swiftly and obtained maximum publicity.⁸⁸ Radical activists, NAG members devoted considerable time to integration activities. For example, Gwen Green and others in NAG left summer vacations open to be available for jail.⁸⁹ Joan Trumpower, an ex-Duke University student, left her husband over the segregation issue, boasted of "associating nearly exclusively" with blacks and her intense involvement in integration activities resulted in many arrests.⁹⁰ Genevieve Hughes identified African American NAG member George Hackley as an "actionist down to his toes" and Paul Dietrich as a "strong actionist."⁹¹

⁸⁶Genevieve [Hughes] to Gordon [Carey], [between 2 March and 8 March 1961], 3, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:254:01101; Genevieve Hughes, "Field Work Report, Washington, D.C.," 17 February-23 March 1961, 6, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:255:01141.

⁸⁷Genevieve [Hughes] to Gordon [Carey], 18 March 1961, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00312.

⁸⁸Genevieve Hughes, "Field Report," 4-17 November 1960, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:255:01129; Genevieve [Hughes] to Gordon [Carey], [26 February 1961], 3, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 2:5:00463.

⁸⁹Genevieve [Hughes] to Gordon [Carey], [26 February 1961], 3, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 2:5:00463.

⁹⁰Genevieve Hughes, "Field Report," 4-17 November 1960, 3, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:255:01130.

In order to create a more youthful and dynamic branch of CORE in Washington, Genevieve Hughes tried to capture NAG members and convince the body to unite with Washington CORE. She sought to persuade the national office to hold the 1961 summer action institute in Northern Virginia in an attempt to entice NAG into the CORE federation. "I would consider it worthwhile if we accomplished nothing more than capturing NAG," Hughes argued.⁹² Hughes hoped to attract NAG members George Hackley and Paul Dietrich to Washington CORE and use them to bring other NAG activists into her group. Paul Dietrich agreed to help reorganize Washington CORE "if it becomes active." At first Hughes had trouble drafting George Hackley. After attending a meeting he seemed "better impressed by Wash. CORE . . . but I'm not sure we have snagged him. It is still largely an older group - not too high powered." As a result of their dissatisfaction with Lawrence Henry, Hackley and Dietrich eventually enlisted in CORE, but they failed to bring the rest of NAG with them.⁹³ Even the new and improved Washington CORE contained the wrong type of people and atmosphere to lure NAG personnel. In her final statement on her efforts to reshape Washington CORE, Genevieve Hughes reported, "The chief weaknesses of the group are that it lacks enough persons of college age and is perhaps a little slow-moving to make a strong appeal to them." She continued later, "I hoped he [George

⁹¹Genevieve Hughes, "Field Work Report, Washington, D.C.," 17 February-23 March 1961, 9 and 10, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:255:01143.

⁹²Genevieve [Hughes] to Gordon Carey, 27 February 1961, 2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 2:5:00461; Genevieve [Hughes] to Gordon [Carey], [26 February 1961], 6, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 2:5:00465.

⁹³Genevieve [Hughes] to Gordon [Carey], [26 February 1961], 3, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 2:5:00463; Genevieve [Hughes] to Gordon [Carey], [between 2 March and 8 March 1961], 2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:254:01101; Genevieve [Hughes] to Gordon Carey, 9 March 1961, 2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:254:00901.

Hackley} would bring NAG members in which he may do yet but [the] group is presently too mature and too slow-moving to attract more dynamic members of NAG."⁹⁴

Although Genevieve Hughes failed to transform an adult CORE organization into a student group, she significantly altered the CORE community by successfully orchestrating a coup. Prior to her arrival, Gordon Carey facilitated her task by convincing chairperson Paul Bennett of the need for new leadership. Despite acquiescing to Carey's request, he did not always cooperate with Hughes. Bennett continued to dominate meetings with his ideas, filibustered and tried to direct the group toward his agenda.⁹⁵ The meddling of Genevieve Hughes in Washington CORE affairs irritated Bennett as well. She reported to Carey, "He and I are a bit at odds - not too openly as he is hard to quarrel with. His idea of CORE & mine are exactly opposite and he really opposes what I am trying to do, and inevitably feels it is an indirect criticism of him."⁹⁶

Soon after arriving in D.C. Hughes began to search for someone new to provide leadership and direction to Washington CORE. At first she focused her attention on Reverend Walter Fauntroy, pastor of New Bethel Baptist Church, as a possible replacement for Bennett. She discovered he lacked the time to direct CORE and possessed ideas at odds with the CORE approach. For example, he thought CORE should act as a lobbying

⁹⁴Genevieve Hughes, "Field Work Report, Washington, D.C.," 17 February-23 March 1961, 6 and 9, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:255:01141 and 01143.

⁹⁵Genevieve Hughes, "Field Work Report, Washington, D.C.," 17 February-23 March 1961, 1-3 and 6, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:255:01139-01140 and 01141; Genevieve [Hughes] to Gordon Carey, 9 March 1961, 3, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:254:00901.

⁹⁶Genevieve [Hughes] to Gordon [Carey], [between 2 March and 8 March 1961], 6-7, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:254:01103.

agency for national civil rights legislation.⁹⁷

By the first week of March, 1961, Hughes still lacked confidence in the available choices for chairman. She toyed with the idea of grooming the head of the newly created employment committee, Willis Martin, for the post. A middle-aged African American man, Martin possessed the right personality, but Hughes perceived him to be conservative, slow to action and a bit indecisive. In her opinion, "He tends to shift with the wind and does not like to be in an unpopular position." But she hoped "to indoctrinate him a bit."⁹⁸ She also considered Reverend Perry Smith, a young African American minister at North Brentwood Baptist Church, as a potential chair. His intelligence, personableness and interest in CORE made him an excellent candidate, but his church responsibilities kept him too busy.⁹⁹ Finally, Hughes considered NAG members George Hackley or Paul Dietrich for the position. Although the NAG members they might bring with them would transform Washington CORE, Hughes opined, "Hackley & Dietrich may not be chairman types, may not take the job, may be too young to lead this older group."¹⁰⁰

Willis Martin provided Genevieve Hughes with a solution to her

⁹⁷Genevieve [Hughes] to National Office, [late February 1961], 1-2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:254:01112-01113.

⁹⁸Genevieve Hughes, "Field Work Report, Washington, D.C.," 17 February-23 March 1961, 7, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:255:01142; Genevieve [Hughes] to Gordon [Carey], [between 2 March and 8 March 1961], 4-5, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:254:01102.

⁹⁹Genevieve Hughes, "Field Work Report, Washington, D.C.," 17 February-23 March 1961, 9, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:255:01143; Genevieve [Hughes] to Gordon [Carey], [between 2 March and 8 March 1961], 5, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:254:01102.

¹⁰⁰Genevieve [Hughes] to Gordon [Carey], [between 2 March and 8 March 1961], 5-6, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:254:01102-01103.

problem. He interested Julius Hobson, an African American man in his forties, in Washington CORE. Martin contacted Hobson to help Washington CORE come to some decisions regarding their new employment project aimed at Woodward & Lothrop, a department store nicknamed "Woodies." As head of the employment program of the Washington area NAACP, Hobson previously organized a campaign against Woodies. On March 14 Martin introduced Hobson to Hughes and the overwhelmingly new membership of Washington CORE to tell of his past experiences with the department store. One week later, at the next meeting on March 21, the group elected him chairman.¹⁰¹

From Martin, Genevieve Hughes learned that "Hobson was ambitious and toughminded and was prepared to lead our group if he were acceptable to it." A recent altercation with the NAACP had caused Hobson to break his ties with the NAACP and therefore made him available to lead CORE. He became disaffected with the NAACP because they accepted a token victory in one of his employment campaigns and celebrated it as a great victory.¹⁰² A few days after meeting Hobson, Genevieve Hughes wrote to field director Carey, "This fellow Hobson is showing real leadership and if all goes well and he is elected chairman I have no fears about this group." She identified her last hurdle in reorganizing CORE "getting the right people elected."

A small committee appointed by Hughes to determine election procedures decided to have nominations come from the floor on the night of the election.¹⁰³ Although this made ensuring Hobson's selection more

¹⁰¹Genevieve Hughes, "Field Work Report, Washington, D.C.," 17 February-23 March 1961, 5-6 and 9, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:255:01141 and 01143.

¹⁰²Genevieve Hughes, "Field Work Report, Washington, D.C.," 17 February-23 March 1961, 5 and 9, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:255:01141 and 01143; Genevieve [Hughes] to Gordon [Carey], 18 March 1961, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00312.

difficult, Hughes felt confident of his election. The night preceding the March 21 election Hughes informed Carey, "If all goes well Hobson will be elected (and I think this is in the bag) and there will only be loose ends to tie up. I hope I am not premature in stating that this group is well on the way to success."¹⁰⁴ That night the membership of the revived and revamped Washington CORE selected Julius Hobson chairman by acclamation. To explain the victory of a man involved with the organization for only one week prior to his election, Hughes commented, "He had taken a leadership role since his first association with the group and was the obvious choice."¹⁰⁵

She also thought his character and talents made him appropriate for the post. "Hobson has excellent organizing talents, hes is ambitious, intelligent, diplomatic, judious, in many ways ideal,[sic]" Hughes proposed.¹⁰⁶ In addition, his commitment to the direct action approach, thorough planning, and his shrewd, action-minded attack on racism made him a logical leader for Washington CORE. In her estimation, Hobson's leadership, along with a new membership composed of "persons of superior capacity . . . willing to give considerable time and energy to CORE," signaled the revival of Washington CORE. Of this new, revived organization she had created, Hughes wrote, "Washington CORE presently consists of a predominantly Negro, largely adult

¹⁰³Genevieve [Hughes] to Gordon [Carey], 18 March 1961, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00312; Genevieve [Hughes] to Gordon [Carey], [between 2 March and 8 March 1961], 6, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:254:01103.

¹⁰⁴Genevieve [Hughes] to Gordon Carey, [20 March 1961], The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00196.

¹⁰⁵Genevieve Hughes, "Field Work Report, Washington, D.C.," 17 February-23 March 1961, 6, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:255:01141; G. Hughes, "Active Members Attending Meetings, Washington CORE," March 1961, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00309.

¹⁰⁶Genevieve [Hughes] to Gordon Carey, [20 March 1961], The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00196.

membership which is experienced in action, is action-minded, and which tends to be rather uncompromising. It is an unafraid and determined group able to take responsibility and carry out action."¹⁰⁷

Affirming Hughes' work, Field Director Gordon Carey wrote to the new chairman shortly after his election, "We are looking forward to Washington CORE becoming a most powerful civil rights organization."¹⁰⁸ Over the next few years Washington CORE did become very active in the District of Columbia, concentrating on racial discrimination in employment and housing. National CORE enabled the membership of Washington CORE to achieve these successes by founding the affiliate and transforming it. By reorganizing Washington CORE and bringing new members into the group, national CORE field secretary Genevieve Hughes significantly reshaped the Washington CORE community. The group which evolved over the next two years independently fought racism in the District of Columbia by determining their own agenda, implementing action projects and building a new community.

¹⁰⁷Genevieve Hughes, "Field Work Report, Washington, D.C.," 17 February-23 March 1961, 6 and 9, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:255:01141 and 01143.

¹⁰⁸Gordon Carey to Julius Hobson, 5 April 1961, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00320.

Chapter 2
“Get Your Rights, Jack”: The Meaning and Nature of the Washington, D.C.
CORE Community, 1961-1964”

Get Your Rights, Jack
(Based Upon “Hit The Road, Jack” (P. Mayfield) Tangerine Music, BMI)

Get your rights, Jack and don't be a
Tom no more, no more, no more, no more
Get your rights, Jack and don't be a
Tom no more.
(2X)

Oh CORE, oh CORE, don't you treat me this way,
I'll take my Freedom Ride someday.
Oh, no you won't cause it's understood
You're an Uncle Tom and you're just no good.
Well, I guess if you say so, I have to get my ticket and go.
That's right!

(Chorus)

Oh Ross, oh Ross don't you treat me this way,
Cause I'll get my civil rights some day.
Oh, no you won't cause its understood
You're scared as Black and you're just no good.
Well, I guess if you say so, I have to take it to the court.
That's right!

(Chorus)

Take your rights, Jack and don't he a
Tom no more, no more, no more, no more
Take your rights, Jack and don't be a
Tom no more.

(Chorus 2x)

Congress of Racial Equality, Sit-In Songs: Songs of the Freedom Riders,
New York: Audio Fidelity Records, 1962.

A new and very active CORE community developed in Washington, D.C. as a result of the coup orchestrated by national CORE field secretary Genevieve Hughes in 1961. Between 1961 and 1963, the membership of Washington CORE primarily targeted employment discrimination. The nature and meaning of the CORE community--its goals, philosophies, motivations, emotions and tactics--becomes apparent through this campaign. The members of Washington CORE wanted to create an interracial American society with equality of opportunity as the guiding principle. They fought job discrimination to achieve basic equality for African Americans and to attack poverty which they viewed as a consequence of racism. As people with new interests joined CORE, the emphasis of chapter activity shifted from employment to housing discrimination. Although members diversified their attack on racism during the fall of 1963, they remained united as a community. CORE activists shared militancy, commitment, moral indignation and deeply held beliefs. Action-oriented and critical of people who moved too slowly against racial discrimination, they intended to use nonviolent direct action and the power of the federal government to eradicate racism in the District of Columbia.

In 1961, the newly reorganized Washington CORE chapter targeted employment discrimination in order to gain strength and to expand the organization. Both Genevieve Hughes and Julius Hobson directed the group toward an equal opportunity employment campaign. Hughes immediately identified employment as "their best field for action."¹ She organized an employment committee of new members when she returned to Washington in February 1961. After investigation, the group decided

¹Genevieve [Hughes] to Gordon [Carey], [November 1960], 3, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:254:01098.

to persuade the Woodward & Lothrop Company to hire African American sales personnel. At the close of their first meeting with Weston P. Figgins, Vice President in Charge of Personnel, the CORE negotiators believed the department store had agreed to its demands since Figgins promised three or four black salespeople would be hired within six weeks. Although the company's offer satisfied the CORE employment committee, Genevieve Hughes pressed the body to question the management's sincerity or at least meet to adopt another project. She worried that without an action project the nascent organization would lose momentum and disintegrate. When Julius Hobson revealed the unfulfilled promises made by Woodward and Lothrop to the NAACP, he convinced the group to re-examine the company's policy. During a second set of negotiations Woodies agreed to hire six African American sales personnel for their downtown and Pentagon stores within two days.² Hughes viewed the victory as bad news since the group could not undertake a direct action project and therefore earn attention and membership from the campaign. Still, she felt hopeful: "They will have to begin all over on a project but the experience has helped them and I feel sure they can do it now. They have excellent resources and contacts and both the ability and will to carry a project out. . . . This group just might turn out to be terrific."³

Julius Hobson, in particular, possessed both experience in combatting employment discrimination and a passion to eradicate it. During the 1950s he directed the employment projects of the NAACP, worked with the Urban League and coordinated the Equal Employment Opportunity Committee, a federated group which organized a one-day

²Genevieve Hughes, "Field Work Report, Washington, D.C.," 17 February-23 March 1961, 3-5, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:255:01140-01141.

³Genevieve [Hughes] to Gordon Carey, [20 March 1961], The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00196.

boycott in a 1958 department store campaign.⁴ Between 1961 and 1963 he dominated the policy and decision-making in Washington CORE and focused the energies of the membership on eradicating employment discrimination.

Julius Hobson began life in Birmingham, Alabama on May 29, 1919. An African American businessman, his father owned a drug store and a dry cleaning plant. Hobson's mother taught in a large elementary school, eventually becoming principal of the institution. After completing secondary school at Industrial High School in Birmingham, Julius Hobson began college at Tuskegee Institute in Tuskegee, Alabama.⁵ World War II interrupted Hobson's education. Inducted into the army in 1942, he served in the segregated 92nd Division, or Black Buffalo unit, until 1945. Hobson learned to fly and operated as an artillery spotter in the European theater. He flew numerous missions in North Africa and Italy, some earning him commendations.⁶

⁴Genevieve [Hughes] to Gordon [Carey], 18 March 1961, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00312; Genevieve Hughes, "Field Work Report, Washington, D.C.," 17 February-23 March 1961, 9, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:255:01143; James Robinson to Julius Hobson, 20 May 1958, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00224.

⁵Other sources record his birth date as 1922 but all of the civil service application forms filed by Julius Hobson record his birth date as 1919. [Civil Service Application Form], 24 March 1959, 1, 14:1:2, The Julius W. Hobson Collection, Washington D.C. Community Archives, Washingtoniana Division, Martin Luther King Memorial Library, Washington, D.C. [Hereafter cited by document author, title or description, date, page number, series:box:folder, Hobson Collection.]; [untitled document regarding the naming of a District middle school in honor of Julius Hobson], [post August 1981], 2, 19:1:4, Hobson Collection; Julius Hobson, Interview by Katherine M. Shannon, 3 July 1967, transcript, 1, Ralph J. Bunche Oral History Collection, Manuscript Division, Moorland Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C. [Hereafter cited Bunche Collection.]

⁶[untitled document regarding the naming of a District middle school in honor of Julius Hobson], [post August 1981], 2, 19:1:4, Hobson Collection; Julius Hobson, Interview by Katherine M. Shannon, 3 July 1967, transcript, 1, Bunche Collection; [Civil Service Application Form], 24 March 1959, 1, 14:1:2, Hobson Collection.

Upon his return to the United States, Hobson enrolled at Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan and finished a bachelor of science degree in electrical engineering. Soon after graduation his interests turned to economics so he began to work on a masters degree at Howard University in Washington, D.C. His study emphasized economic theory, particularly socialism. Starting as a stacks attendant at the Library of Congress while he attended American University in pursuit of a doctorate in economics, Hobson soon became a social science analyst for the Library's Congressional Reference Service. During his nine years at the Library of Congress he answered the questions of elected officials and their constituents and prepared reports for members of Congress, specializing in economics.⁷ In 1959 Julius Hobson transferred to the Social Security Administration where he worked as part of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare. In the early 1960s he conducted research and analyzed statistical data as an economist in the Division of Program Research.⁸

While president of Washington CORE Julius Hobson not only worked full time but cared for a family. He and Carol Jay Andrews of Texas

⁷Louis Aronica to Washington Chapter Americans for Democratic Action members, 19 June 1964, 3-4, 3:14, Anna Holden, "Papers, 1946-1977," Archives Division, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin. [Hereafter cited by document author, title or description, date, page number, box:folder, Holden Papers.]; [untitled document regarding the naming of a District middle school in honor of Julius Hobson], [post August 1981], 2, 19:1:4, Hobson Collection; [Civil Service Application Form], 18 March 1949, 1-3, 14:1:2, Hobson Collection; [Civil Service Application Form], 24 March 1959, 2, 14:1:2, Hobson Collection.

⁸Julius Hobson, "The Variable Annuity in Retirement Income," Research and Statistics Note No. 31, 28 December 1962, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, Microfilm Edition (Sanford, N.C.: Microfilming Corporation of America, 1982), F:2:169:0453. [Hereafter cited The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, subgroup:series:folder:frame.]; [Civil Service Form], 4 October 1962, 14:1:2, Hobson Collection; Louis Aronica to Washington Chapter Americans for Democratic Action members, 19 June 1964, 4, 3:14, Holden Papers.

married in 1947 and by the early 1960s had two young children, Julius Jr. and Jean. Both attended D.C. public schools, one junior high and the other elementary.⁹ Hobson's activism in Washington, D.C. began during the early 1950s to better his children's education. Outraged that segregated education required him to bus his son to an overcrowded black school, Hobson tried to enroll him at the white, neighborhood school. Ignored by school administrators, he undertook his first sit-in when he presented his child for enrollment. Unsuccessful, Hobson got involved with the PTA, becoming president of the Stowe Elementary School PTA in 1953.¹⁰ Describing how he became increasingly more active against racial discrimination in Washington D.C., Hobson recalled, "I just got involved in the PTA and went from the PTA to the civic associations, and the NAACP . . ."¹¹

Focusing on education and employment issues, Hobson served as president of the Woodbridge Civic Association in 1956-57 and vice-president of the city-wide Federation of Civic Associations, 1956 to 1959. During this period he chaired the association's Committee on Employment and joined the Washington Chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. In 1958 he became a member of

⁹[Civil Service Security Form], 23 March 1959, 14:1:2, Hobson Collection; "Biography of Julius W. Hobson," [May 1964], 20:1:1, Hobson Collection; [untitled document regarding the naming of a District middle school in honor of Julius Hobson], [post August 1981], 3, 19:1:4, Hobson Collection.

¹⁰Julius Hobson, Interview by Katherine M. Shannon, 3 July 1967, transcript, 4-5, Bunche Collection; "Achievements of Washington CORE Under the Direction of Julius W. Hobson," [28 April 1964], 2, 3:13, Holden Papers; Leroy Graham, "Julius W. Hobson, Washington Civil Rights and Civic Leader," 2, Index of the Washington D.C. Community Archives, D.C. Public Library, Martin Luther King Memorial Library, Washingtoniana Division, Washington D.C.

¹¹[untitled document regarding the naming of a District middle school in honor of Julius Hobson], [post August 1981], 3, 19:1:4, Hobson Collection.

the NAACP Executive Committee by chairing the group's Committee on Employment and Education. In this capacity he fought employment discrimination at the District police department and conducted a one day absentee strike from the Hecht Department Store.¹² He also authored a chapter for the book, Civil Rights in the Nation's Capital: A Report on a Decade of Progress, on the employment of African Americans in the District of Columbia by the government and private employers.¹³

An accomplished leader by the time Genevieve Hughes and the membership of the restructured Washington CORE chapter drafted Julius Hobson in March of 1961, he already had focused his energy and efforts on eradicating employment discrimination in the capital. Of his transfer from leadership in the NAACP and civic associations to the Congress of Racial Equality, Hobson remembered, "These organizations became too tame for me . . . Fortunately, the activist movement came along, starting in 1960, and I took the chairmanship of a chapter of CORE. It was there that I became a really involved activist in terms of direct action."¹⁴ Hobson identified his leadership of Washington CORE and his campaign to eliminate racist hiring practices in downtown Washington "my proudest accomplishment in this city."¹⁵ In 1967 Hobson further reflected on his efforts,

¹²"Achievements of Washington CORE Under the Direction of Julius W. Hobson," [28 April 1964], 2, 3:13, Holden Papers; Leroy Graham, "Julius W. Hobson, Washington Civil Rights and Civic Leader," 2, Index of the Washington D.C. Community Archives; Julius Hobson, Interview by Katherine M. Shannon, 3 July 1967, transcript, 5, Bunche Collection.

¹³Julius Hobson, "The Employment and Utilization of Negro Manpower in the District of Columbia's Government and Private Enterprise," 19-33, in Civil Rights in the Nation's Capital: A Report on a Decade of Progress (Annandale, VA: Turnpike Press, 1959).

¹⁴Julius Hobson, Interview by Katherine M. Shannon, 3 July 1967, transcript, 5, Bunche Collection.

¹⁵[untitled document regarding the naming of a District middle school in honor of Julius Hobson], [post August 1981], 3, 19:1:4, Hobson Collection.

All in all, the employment campaign, which to me is one of the most important campaigns I've engaged in, must have gotten, some five or six thousand people jobs. It broke the back of segregated employment. When we started out a Negro clerk downtown was as rare as a white crow. When we finished you could knock on any door and find them.¹⁶

The members of Washington CORE revealed their devotion to equal employment and pride in their achievements at the 1962 national convention. The Washington COREspondent reported in July 1962, "Our delegates' report before the convention showed WASHINGTON CORE to be far and away the top chapter on the job discrimination front." The editorial staff argued further, "CORE's outstanding performance during the past year in combatting job discrimination" led to Julius Hobson's election as Southeast Regional Representative to the National Action Council of National CORE. The article concluded, "For both the accomplishment and its proper recognition, WASHINGTON CORE is justifiably proud."¹⁷ Until mid-1962 the organization maintained only one standing committee to investigate and plan action projects. This employment committee predominated until the fall of 1963 when an expanded membership infused the housing committee with energy.¹⁸

National CORE officials also understood the stress of Hobson's CORE on employment issues. Victor R. Daley, President of Lansburgh's Department Store of Washington D.C., vouched for the Washington CORE jobs program when he donated 500 dollars to national CORE. Daley testified, "We have had the opportunity to observe at close range the effective work that Mr. Julius Hobson and his associates in CORE have

¹⁶Julius Hobson, Interview by Katherine M. Shannon, 3 July 1967, transcript, 6, Bunche Collection.

¹⁷"Washington CORE Chairman Wears Two Hats," The Washington COREspondent, 1:3 (July 1962):1, 1:2:5, Hobson Collection.

¹⁸"Program," 11 June 1961, 4, 1:2:5, Hobson Collection.

performed in opening job opportunities for minority group workers. It was this highly creditable performance on his part which inspired this financial support for your organization."¹⁹ Over a year later Community Relations Director Marvin Rich confirmed this jobs orientation. In response to a concerned citizen's ideas concerning welfare reform in the Washington area, Rich expressed doubt that the local branch of CORE would pursue it. He argued, "As you know, the Washington D.C. CORE group is almost exclusively concerned with employment."²⁰

Warren Morse, the 1961 employment committee chairman, fearlessly chastised national CORE staff persons over their misplaced priorities when he argued for the ascendancy of ending job discrimination. Morse criticized them for endorsing "a formless project" in Baltimore aimed at restaurant desegregation; an endorsement which evoked "piteous sobs which shook my emaciated frame when I realized that the NAG kids, on whom we were counting for our lines, will be gallivanting off to tilt at windmills." He argued,

the Baltimore venture is, at present, a never-ending one. The target is not the State, or the police; it consists of individual restaurants, and so far there is not evidence that any one of them will be hit consistently enough to force it to integrate. Meantime, in Baltimore there are dozens of large stores which will grow fat from the dollars of Negroes whom they do not hire, and at whose doors there will be no CORE pickets. You've got the troops over there for an attack on one of the central bastions of discrimination, jim crow hiring.

Morse accused the national office of not providing leadership to the Baltimore movement. If the national officers convinced the picketers of Baltimore to target job discrimination, they would win quick victories,

¹⁹Victor R. Daley to James Farmer, 21 September 1961, 1:1:1, Hobson Collection.

²⁰Marvin Rich to Harris Chaiklin, 21 January 1963, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:48:00165.

create jobs and attain a position of power from which to bargain for a public accommodations law.²¹ To those in New York City he concluded,

why not~~x~~ run your buses down here to DC next Saturday, instead of to Baltimore as announced, and help us picket Dept. stores? We are out for blood. . . . we will eventually get around to the utilities, and to the government of DC, if we can regain and retain our momentum. Help us in this, where there is no question at all of target or goal.[sic]²²

Warren Morse's commentary exemplifies the vigor with which Washington CORE members attacked employment discrimination between 1961 and 1963 and their single-minded commitment to eradicate racism in employment.

Three goals defined the aims of the Washington CORE employment program during this period. CORE members wanted private and public businesses to initiate fair employment policies, to advertise as equal opportunity employers and to utilize job placement agencies to fill vacancies with qualified or trainable African American candidates.²³ During 1961 CORE members wanted to help businesses initiate merit-hiring policies and "give all citizens the opportunity to work in any and all jobs for which they are qualified."²⁴ As CORE members pursued their employment campaign during 1962 and 1963 they further refined their

²¹Warren Morse to Dearly beloved National Officers of CORE, 27 November 1961, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00340.

²²Warren Morse to Dearly beloved National Officers of CORE, 27 November 1961, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00340.

²³See, for example, [notes of a meeting between CORE and Drug Fair], 19 July 1962, 1:1:7, Hobson Collection; Harry I. Rosenthal to Julius Hobson, 26 April 1962, 1:1:2, Hobson Collection.

²⁴Julius Hobson to Robert Levi, 25 April 1961, 1:1:1, Hobson Collection; Julius Hobson and Ethelbert Haskins to Members of the Washington Congress of Racial Equality et al, Memorandum, 19 April 1961, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00324; Julius Hobson to Roy Parkinson, 1 August 1961, 1:1:1, Hobson Collection.

statement of goals and reiterated them often. The Washington chapter of CORE repeatedly defined its struggle as "a campaign to create an economic atmosphere in the District of Columbia in which all job seekers and employees will feel free to apply for any and all jobs for which they can qualify or be trained." To accomplish this goal CORE activists tried to persuade public and private businesses to employ and to promote individuals at all job levels regardless of race, creed or color.²⁵

The agreement reached between President Julius Hobson and Vice President Rinsky Atkinson of Washington CORE and Louis Munaker, District Manager of the National Shirt Shops in the Washington Area, typifies settlements CORE reached with area businesses and illustrates the objectives of the CORE employment project. The manager agreed to hire two African American sales personnel immediately and to create an environment where qualified or trainable blacks felt comfortable applying to positions as they became available. The company promised to advertise in the African American weekly newspaper, as well as the daily papers, and to announce "all jobs at the National Shirt Shops are open to all applicants without regard to race[,] creed or color." Finally, Munaker assented to utilize the United States Employment Service to assist him in recruiting qualified African American personnel. In return, Washington CORE suspended its picket line at the National Shirt Shops.²⁶

During their three-year employment campaign Washington CORE "changed the complexion of the shopping district in downtown Washington with the employment of Negroes in over 200 firms."²⁷ In addition to

²⁵Julius Hobson to Paul Rilling, Memorandum, 9 April 1963, 1, 1:1:3, Hobson Collection; Julius Hobson to Aaron Goldman, 3 January 1963, 1, 1:1:3, Hobson Collection; "Christmas Selective Buying List," 1962, 1:2:5, Hobson Collection.

²⁶Press Release, 15 September 1962, 1:2:5, Hobson Collection.

²⁷"Testimonial for Julius W. Hobson," program, 2 May 1964, 3, 21:2:1, Hobson Collection.

the National Shirt Shops, CORE members targeted businesses such as Wilkins Coffee Company, Raleigh Haberdasher, Bond Clothing Company, D.C. Transit Company, Rich's Shoes, William Allen Originals, Potomac Electric and Power Company, Macke Vending Company, Royal Motors and Safeway Supermarket. Members of the group proudly proclaimed, "Under Mr. Hobson's direction, CORE succeeded in obtaining over 3,000 jobs for members of minority races." A successful agreement with Western Electric accounted for two thousand of these jobs; the positions spread over 44 states. Jobs in the District defined the remaining 1000. Although most agreements resulted in a small number of jobs for African Americans at each employer, the organization persuaded the D.C. government to hire 200 African American young people in summer jobs.²⁸ As the primary ambition of the Washington CORE chapter for three years, this employment campaign reveals the values, principles, commitment, and strategies of the Washington CORE community under the leadership of Julius Hobson.

The Washington CORE community wanted to create an interracial American society with equality of opportunity as the guiding principle. While testifying on behalf of a minimum wage bill for the District of Columbia Julius Hobson stated, "The Congress of Racial Equality, or CORE as it is known, is an organization dedicated to the attainment of full equality for all Americans regardless of race."²⁹ As noted earlier, during their employment campaign CORE activists tried to create an atmosphere of fairness and equal opportunity in the Washington economy. The group's response to a proposal put forth by the Hahn Shoe Stores

²⁸"Achievements of Washington CORE Under the Direction of JULIUS W. HOBSON," [28 April 1964], 1, 3:13, Holden Papers; "WASHINGTON CORE'S JOBO-METER TOPS 2800," The Washington COREspondent, 2:1 (June 1963): 1, 1:2:5, Hobson Collection.

²⁹"Statement by JULIUS W. HOBSON," 4 October 1963, 1, 1:2:6, Hobson Collection.

discloses their disapproval of anyone receiving unequal treatment. Store officials explained that they lacked black employees because they adhered to local community practice and because the store's union resisted the hiring of non-whites. Claiming a policy based on equal opportunity, company management transferred a black employee from the warehouse to a sales position and planned "to discriminate in favor of Negro personnel as against equally qualified white personnel" in their credit and advertising departments.³⁰ In reply to this proposal Julius Hobson clarified his organization's position:

From what you say in your letter, it appears that we did not make clear our position on discriminatory hiring practices. May we point out that we are dedicated to the idea of creating a community in which equal opportunities to earn a living prevail for all. We believe that this is possible in a community like Washington, and that these conditions can prevail without discrimination against one citizen in favor of the other. CORE could no more go along with your proposal to discriminate against whites than it can with your practice of discriminating against non-whites.

Hobson concluded, "One Negro in one job, or five in five jobs is not the ultimate goal of CORE. . . . Our ultimate goal, as stated before, is full equality and opportunities for all."³¹

Members of Washington CORE fought for fair hiring practices to obtain equality, but they also struggled against job discrimination because of the larger ramifications of unemployment. They believed that unemployment, resulting from racism, engendered poverty and its consequences. "The economic plight of the non-white population of the District of Columbia is due primarily to the denial of job opportunities

³⁰Quoted in Julius Hobson to Gilbert Hahn, Jr., 18 July 1961, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00335.

³¹Julius Hobson to Gilbert Hahn, Jr., 18 July 1961, 1 and 2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00335.

to Negroes [sic] by private employers," community members argued. They continued, "The children of oppressed people are denied future opportunities to good, health, education, and happiness and in the long run the result is genocide practiced against that part of the community that is refused the right to earn a fair living.[sic]"³² As evidence they cited the deteriorating economic situation of black families during the 1950s and the rising discrepancies between black and white income and unemployment rates. In 1958 the "vast majority" of non-white families in the District earned under \$5000 while over 75% of the white households made more than \$5000; in 1961 CORE reported that the unemployment rate among African Americans had reached twice that of whites.³³

Society needed to attack employment discrimination because the ill effects of poverty extended beyond the poor to harm the community at large. Julius Hobson used the issue of low wages to link the economic health of African Americans to the rest of the populace. He argued, "justice for the Negro is in the direct interest of the entire population. A city in which substandard wages prevail is a sick city, and employers who pay these wages are, in effect, subsidized by the taxpayers. Poverty benefits no one."³⁴ If individual employers utilized all available workers regardless of skin color, they would strengthen the economic, political, and social environment of Washington, D.C.³⁵ "CORE believes," Julius Hobson wrote, ". . . that

³²Julius Hobson, Richard L. Anderson, Warren Morse, and Reginald Webb, "Introduction, [Selective Buying Guide,]" [November? 1961], 3 and 4, 1:2:6, Hobson Collection.

³³Julius Hobson, Richard L. Anderson, Warren Morse, and Reginald Webb, [Selective Buying Guide], [November? 1961], 5-6, 1:2:6, Hobson Collection.

³⁴Press Release, [3 October 1963], 1-2, 1:2:5, Hobson Collection.

³⁵Julius Hobson to John C. Pyles, 19 July 1961, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00334; Julius Hobson to John MacMannes, 24 April 1962, 1:1:2, Hobson Collection.

the economic health of the Washington community depends upon the intelligent and unbiased utilization of all manpower resources regardless of racial, religious, or national origin, or color."³⁶

Because they believed employment discrimination caused many African Americans to live in poverty, Washington CORE members sometimes targeted unfair welfare policies. Since many of the people on welfare relief rolls in the District of Columbia were African Americans, the chapter protested Senator Robert C. Byrd's attacks on welfare clients and workers in 1962. His investigators identified 57% of a random sample of welfare recipients actually ineligible to receive assistance. Although social workers challenged the findings of the investigators because of inaccurate research and the intimidation of recipients, many individuals lost their public assistance. National Director of CORE, James Farmer, issued a statement in support of Washington CORE's position. He urged concerned citizens to question Byrd's conclusions about the D.C. welfare system. Farmer asserted,

America and the District of Columbia must someday face the basic issue underlying relief rolls. The issue is unemployment and underemployment, particularly of non-white minorities. The relationship between unemployment and non-whites on the relief roll is crystal clear and deserves much more consideration in this discussion than it has received. Negroes are about 69% of the people on relief rolls in Washington, and are there because of job discrimination . . . The solution is merit employment, and this is Washington CORE's objective.³⁷

Farmer also commented on the devastating personal impact of ending welfare assistance: "If we deny people jobs on one hand and cut them off

³⁶Julius Hobson to Robert Levi, 25 April 1961, 1:1:1, Hobson Collection.

³⁷James Farmer, "Statement on District Welfare Story," 17 August 1962, 4 and 1-3, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 1:89:00078-00079.

relief on questionable evidence on the other, then we destroy those people just as surely as if we had used the bombs, bullets and iron pipes of the deep South."³⁸ A year later Washington CORE members witnessed and protested a tragedy born out of employment discrimination and racist welfare policies. Sonny Cooper, an African American man with eleven children, abandoned his family and committed suicide in November of 1963 because of chronic unemployment. He wanted his family to qualify for public assistance but government policy made welfare unavailable to households with an able-bodied man present. After Cooper left home he told friends, "Welfare's got my children. I have no reason to live." Washington CORE co-sponsored a memorial service for him, protesting the "man in the house" rule which drove Sonny Cooper to drown himself in the Anacostia River.³⁹

Group members' position on a minimum wage bill introduced into the Senate that same year further attests to their belief in the correlation between job discrimination and poverty. On behalf of Washington CORE, chairman Julius Hobson testified before the Senate in support of legislation to establish a minimum wage for District of Columbia workers. Although Hobson viewed the proposed wage of \$1.25 an hour for a forty hour week inadequate, at least it established the precedent for a minimum wage. Providing a gross yearly salary of \$2600, this wage kept African Americans in poverty. He admonished the committee, "Let us be honest about this. In this city, wages of \$1.25 or less are, for all practical purposes, wages for Negroes and Negroes alone." "When a man is forced to work for this income, or less," he argued, "the costs to

³⁸James Farmer, "Statement on District Welfare Story," 17 August 1962, 4, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 1:89:00079.

³⁹"Washington CORE," [meeting minutes], 12 November 1963, 3, 1:1:7, Hobson Collection; [Open letter from Anna Holden], Christmas 1963, 2:4, Holden Papers; "WHO KILLED SONNY COOPER???" leaflet, [November 1963], 1:2:5, Hobson Collection.

society are terrible. His wife is forced to work in order to meet the barest minimal needs."⁴⁰ In a press release, Hobson contended that equality mattered little to those living in poverty: "No issue goes more directly to the heart of the civil rights struggle than the issue of substandard wages. Civil rights are meaningless to a people crushed in poverty by exploitative wages."⁴¹

To gain equality for African Americans and to end poverty, the people who comprised the Washington CORE community intensely believed in using action to eradicate employment discrimination. Because of their commitment to action, they criticized African Americans who moved slowly and avoided direct action. The Washington CORE newsletter, The Washington COREspondent, regularly articulated their activist philosophy and their disgust with apathetic African Americans.

In May of 1962, the first issue attacked community citizens who criticized CORE's direct action approach to job discrimination. The organ editorialized,

There are those who say CORE moves too fast; that CORE should have more conferences and gather more statistics . . . We cannot wait for those who divert themselves with interminable discussions of ways and means, but can never quite bring themselves to the only kind of action that the forces of retrogression understand, namely boycotting and picketing.

It continued, "Let the High Priests of procedure and procrastination demonstrate their organizations' abilities to that in the same job acquiring league with CORE, before they can cast stones.[sic]" Submitting action as the solution, the article concluded, "Teas and talkathons, endless surveys and pious resolutions . . . never

⁴⁰"Statement by JULIUS W. HOBSON," 4 October 1963, 1 and 2, 1:2:6, Hobson Collection.

⁴¹Press Release, [3 October 1963], 1, 1:2:5, Hobson Collection.

incremented a depressed family's budget or bought an education for its children."⁴²

Editor Ethelbert Haskins continued to publish essays reiterating this theme. One article accounted an exchange of letters in the local paper concerning job discrimination and chided some of the participants. Wendell Parris, Sr. began the debate when he used a letter to the editor to complain about the impact of employment discrimination on his son's ability to find a job. The CORE writer responded to Parris' dilemma:

One cannot help wondering, however, why Parris, Sr. did not at least hint at some of the facts of life to young Mr. Parris before the l[a]tter made his dash into the world of reality. But that's water over the dam. . . . What is more important, one wonders what the Messrs. Parris intend to do about their plight . . . CORE respectfully suggests that Wendell Parris, Sr. bring his son around to our picket line to meet some of the other young people who feel as he does, and are doing something about it[.]⁴³

Another essay attacked the Washington chapter of the Urban League--"an organization known traditionally as a clearing house for Negro job-seekers"--and criticized this group's slow-moving methods and goals. CORE's critique of the association emerged after a large corporation countered CORE accusations of job discrimination by arguing that the Urban League frustrated their attempts to hire African American personnel by consistently sending overqualified applicants. Although the essay's author chastised the corporation for excluding people just for being too skilled, he saved most of his venom for the association supposedly on the side of blacks. He compared the current usefulness of the Urban League to the extinction of animals. The writer suggested that organizations and species both "show conspicuous inabilities for

⁴²"Past, Present and Future," The Washington COREspondent, [1:1 (May 1962):] 1 and 2, 1:2:5, Hobson Collection.

⁴³"Young Mr. Parris," The Washington COREspondent, 1:3 (July 1962), 1:2:5, Hobson Collection.

adjusting to change." At the forefront of change at one moment in time, they become static and unable to evolve. As a result, he explained,

With the same steps which they once strode majestically across a geological or historical stage they later lumber into oblivion. One can hardly decide whether they deserve sympathy or disdain. Certainly the landscape will be neater when they pass into the pages of history-- to be given respect in retrospect, against a backdrop where their outlooks were proper.⁴⁴

The article further criticized the Urban League for only helping those African Americans with education and skills. The CORE writer proclaimed that all black job seekers do not need to be supermen or "enter the trade or profession's Hall of Fame." Instead, civil rights organizations need to work to benefit all black people. The author concluded, "CORE believes in equal opportunity for employment and advancement for all citizens-- without any of the worrisome and unfair qualifications and hesitations which some of us who should know better, persist in retaining.[sic]"⁴⁵

While CORE members believed that other African American organizations and leaders worked on behalf of the elites, they wanted their efforts to benefit all people. A letter from Julius Hobson to Secretary of State Dean Rusk further illustrates CORE members' identification with the general public. On behalf of CORE, Hobson questioned Secretary of State Dean Rusk on the lack of African Americans employed in the upper levels of the federal government. The group became aware of the issue when an article on embassy receptions identified only two African American couples among the guests. The Department of State Chief of Protocol, Angier Biddle Duke, agreed with

⁴⁴"Antediluvianism," The Washington COREspondent, 2:1 (June 1963): 1, 1:2:5, Hobson Collection.

⁴⁵"Antediluvianism," The Washington COREspondent, 2:1 (June 1963): 1, 1:2:5, Hobson Collection.

Hobson's criticisms and asked him to lunch to discuss potential solutions. Misinterpreting the intentions of the letter, Hobson angrily responded to the Secretary of State. He made it clear he had not sought an invitation to these affairs and retorted,

I imagine that it is fascinating to travel in the diplomatic circles and meet all of the pretty ladies from all over the world . . . but as Chairman of Washington CORE, which is an organization designed to deal with the many social problems in the Nation's capital that are crying for solution . . . The time of CORE officials can be better spent down in the mainstreams of our community life attempting to re-kindle the flames of hope in the hearts of the many, many dispossessed there.⁴⁶

Another essay in The Washington COREspondent, critical of contemporary leadership and its lack of action, also allied CORE with the people and urged them to take action now to educate their leaders. According to this CORE writer, people held power and needed to act. The commentary argued, "CORE believes that the slow fermentation of the yeast of justice in human affairs lies in part at the door of the ordinary burgher. . . . Should they nudge their leadership now and then in the direction of progress, all mankind would benefit." The author concluded, "Washington CORE is doing what it can to fill the breach. We intend to keep up a drumfire of protest, picketing, and whatever type of non-violent direct action we can devise until such action is no longer needed here in the Capital of the Free World."⁴⁷

One editorial announcing the 1963 centennial celebration of the Emancipation Proclamation mused over the lack of freedom and equality actually achieved since 1863 by traditional leaders of the black

⁴⁶ Julius Hobson to Dean Rusk, 6 November 1963, 1:1:3, Hobson Collection; Julius Hobson to Dean Rusk, 22 October 1963, 1:1:3, Hobson Collection; Angier Biddle Duke to Julius Hobson, 5 November 1963, 1:1:3, Hobson Collection.

⁴⁷ "A Statement On Intent and Why," The Washington COREspondent, 1:8 (January 1963), 1:2:5, Hobson Collection.

struggle for equality and their methods. The author wrote, "Its forward motion has been shamefully slow. All this, despite the hundreds of Civil Rights committees, commissions, investigations, and surveys--most of which seems to have been apparatuses for stalling." Critical of the weekly parties, speeches and declarations in Washington celebrating Lincoln's pronouncement, the CORE member pondered,

CORE sometimes wonders about the energy expended in staging all the ceremonial goodwill and brotherhood functions. Suppose the effort had been spent over the years on no-kidding, no nonsense programs to eliminate discrimination in voting, employment, and housing. There would perhaps be really something to celebrate by now.⁴⁸

Julius Hobson acted on his group's commitment to action and aversion to the slow-moving tactics and talk of other people by initially rejecting an invitation to testify before the Subcommittee on Equal Employment Opportunity of the D.C. Advisory Committee of the United States Commission on Civil Rights. Chairman Julius Hobson explained, "Ordinarily we would be glad to present testimony before your committee, but we do not feel that we could add to what we know to be a readily available mountain of information on job discrimination, which is the result of too many years of discussion and study of the obvious." If the committee wanted confirmation of job discrimination, it could visit any employer in the city. On behalf of CORE, Hobson rejected their approach:

You must agree that if words in testimony were things, the problem of job discrimination would have been solved many many years ago, and many many time[s] over. Thus, if the Civil Rights Commission and it's advisors ever decide to move beyond the realm of discussion and to institute effective action against job discrimination in specific cases of public as well as private

⁴⁸"Celebration ??" The Washington COREspondent, 1:9 (February 1963): 2 and 1, 1:2:5, Hobson Collection.

employment, CORE will be the first to lend a helping hand.[sic]⁴⁹

Tokenism angered Washington CORE members almost as much as this lack of action by African American leaders, white liberals and the citizenry. A company engaged in token hiring practices when it employed a small number of non-white workers and strategically positioned them to give the public the impression that the firm hired people without regard to race.⁵⁰ Of course perspective determined whether or not someone defined a company's hiring policy as tokenism. Many employers disagreed with the conclusions reached by the Washington CORE employment committee. Through correspondence and negotiations several corporations tried to convince CORE not to target them because, in their opinion, they did not discriminate. Most of the firms, such as D.C. Transit and the Potomac Electric Power Company, failed to deflect the attentions of Washington CORE. Although initially declaring their businesses to be equal opportunity employers, in the end most agreed to hire African Americans on a more proactive basis.⁵¹

Herman Neugass, Vice President of Lansburgh's Department Store, tried to convince CORE investigators that his company operated under a viable merit hiring program. In the opinion of store officials, the 200 African American individuals added to their work force of 1000 since

⁴⁹Julius Hobson to Ben D. Segal, 21 February 1963, 21:7:3, Hobson Collection. A letter from Hal Witt to Editor of the Washington Post, 3 March 1963, 1-2, 1:1:3, Hobson Collection indicates that Hobson ended up presenting testimony before the committee. The reason for this change of heart is unknown.

⁵⁰Julius Hobson to Members of the Washington Congress of Racial Equality, memorandum, 28 March 1961, 1:2:1, Hobson Collection.

⁵¹R. Roy Dunn, President of Potomac Electric and Power Company, to Julius Hobson, telegram, 10 October 1962, 1:1:2, Hobson Collection; O. Roy Chalk, President of D.C. Transit, to U.S. Representative Adam C. Powell, 23 May 1962, 1:1:2, Hobson Collection. Other examples include the Washington Gas Light Company, William Allen Originals, Rich's Shoes, Macke Vending Company, and Central Linen Service.

1958 represented progress. The perspective of CORE negotiators differed: "You describe this as the result of a merit hiring program in which you take pride; we describe it as tokenism." They noticed that only 28 of these 200 people worked as sales or clerical workers and that the suburban department stores failed to employ any African Americans in these positions. To Neugass' protestations and pledges to continue the company's fair hiring policy, CORE President Julius Hobson responded, "Frankly, we are not too interested in whether or not it is fair to single out Lansburgh's rather than some other firm which may have a worse record, for we are not too impressed with the moral distinctions between different levels of discrimination." Hobson concluded, "We will not be satisfied with assurances that you intend to 'accelerate' a program we regard as miniscule, and which you describe as satisfactory."⁵² A few days after receiving this rebuke from Washington CORE, department store officials changed their employment practices and hired eight African American sales persons immediately.⁵³

Fears of tokenism forced CORE members to watch employers vigilantly. Because William Allen Shoe Stores violated their agreement with CORE, picketers returned to the sidewalks in front of three of the firm's shops. The store's owner had failed to hire two black salesmen and to promote a stock person as promised. In addition, the store utilized this worker as a decoy. By watching the company closely, CORE surveyors learned, "They trot him out when they think CORE is coming and trot him back to the stockroom when CORE leaves." In response to this trickery a CORE member declared, "This time CORE will stay until William Allen truly has a merit hiring policy."⁵⁴ In another case, CORE

⁵² Julius Hobson to Herman L. Neugass, 18 January 1962, 1 and 2, 1:1:2, Hobson Collection.

⁵³ "Washington CORE Annual Report," 1962, 2, 2:10, Holden Papers.

⁵⁴ "William Allen Again," The Washington COREspondent, 1:9 (February 1963): 1, 1:2:5, Hobson Collection.

activists "temporarily dismantled" their picket line at the Hub Furniture Company after the firm hired two full time African American sales personnel and promised to employ three or four additional part-time salesmen. Despite reaching a settlement with company officials, the group vowed to "keep close scrutiny on Hub's progress."⁵⁵

The Washington CORE community fought job discrimination, poverty, apathy and tokenism with nonviolent direct action. Although the group sometimes worked on behalf of government legislation, it admitted discomfort with the legislative approach.⁵⁶ Concerning job placement a member of CORE wrote, "We do not have the machinery for recruiting; besides, the sedentary activities would obstruct our action programs. We've got to keep moving."⁵⁷ The action programs of Washington CORE followed the process established by CORE rules and procedures. Thorough investigation to establish the existence of racial discrimination, earnest negotiations and efforts to earn public support preceded nonviolent direct action.

In a memorandum to members of Washington CORE concerning the CORE Department Store Project, President Julius Hobson outlined this set of procedures. First the group needed to investigate their target, the Hecht Company. Through observation and interviews of company employees, CORE workers collected data on company hiring policies and the number and types of positions held by African Americans. One committee gathered statistical information on the District of Columbia, while another assembled the results of the research. They discovered that

⁵⁵"Hub Line Suspended," The Washington COREspondent, 1:8 (January 1963): 1, 1:2:5, Hobson Collection.

⁵⁶ "Statement by Julius Hobson before the Subcommittee on Public Health, Education, Welfare and Safety, Senate District Committee," 4 October 1963, 1, 1:2:6, Hobson Collection.

⁵⁷"Washington CORE's Jobometer Tops 2000," The Washington COREspondent, 2:1 (June 1963): 1 and 3, 1:2:5, Hobson Collection.

non-whites comprised less than ten percent of the personnel but 44 percent of the customers. The employment committee then reported the findings of its investigation to both the public and to the President of the Hecht Company. They requested community support and a conference with Hecht officials. If negotiations fared poorly, CORE would picket the department store until the business changed its hiring practices. In this instance, the target acquiesced to the pressure exerted by CORE without direct action. The Hecht Company promised to hire 35 African Americans as sales personnel, secretaries and an assistant buyer.⁵⁸

The membership of Washington CORE normally collected information on the hiring practices of area businesses through observation and correspondence. To identify firms practicing racial discrimination and to prepare a selective buying guide for the 1961 Christmas season, CORE sent teams of observers to survey automobile dealers, department stores, chain drug stores, laundry establishments, men's clothing stores and shoe companies in downtown Washington during August, September and October. To certify their observations and obtain more information, the group sent a form letter to over 200 businesses. The investigation resulted in a report which identified those companies that employed African American sales and office personnel and those that did not. Over the next two years, Washington CORE targeted many of these businesses.⁵⁹ Sometimes CORE workers received intelligence about a corporation's hiring practices from its black employees. Concerning the

⁵⁸Julius Hobson to Members of Washington Congress of Racial Equality, memorandum, 28 March 1961, 1-3, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00318-00319; Julius Hobson to Members of the Washington Congress of Racial Equality et al, memorandum, 19 April 1961, 2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00324; Julius Hobson to Robert Levi, 25 April 1961, 1:1:1, Hobson Collection; "Washington CORE Annual Report," 1962, 1, 2:10, Holden Papers.

⁵⁹[Selective Buying Guide], [November? 1961], 7-15, 1:2:6, Hobson Collection; "Report of meeting at Raleigh's," 26 February 1962, 1, 1:1:2, Hobson Collection.

Macke Vending Company, CORE learned that most African Americans worked at the lowest skill levels, with the lowest pay and little hope for advancement.⁶⁰

Whether they collected the information through observation, correspondence or first hand experiences of racism, Washington CORE members used it to solicit a negotiation with discriminatory corporations. Under the signature of President Julius Hobson, the employment committee informed the company of their findings and asked for a meeting to negotiate a merit-hiring policy. After detailing evidence of racial discrimination in hiring and promotion practices at the Macke Vending Company, Julius Hobson asked corporate president Aaron Goldman to discuss the problem with CORE.⁶¹ Similarly, Hobson informed manager John MacMannes of MacMannes, Inc. that "cursory observations" of his business by members of Washington CORE revealed no African American sales or office personnel. Not wanting to jump to conclusions, Hobson requested a conference to discuss the findings and "the possibilities of Negro job seekers in your establishment."⁶²

If negotiations failed to convince a company to institute a merit-hiring policy, Washington CORE usually employed picketing to compel the business to change its ways. As a result of one day of picketing, CORE activists pushed the drug store, Drug Fair, to implement a fair-hiring policy. On June 30, 1962 Julius Hobson informed the management of Drug Fair that a survey of the company's twelve District stores revealed that

⁶⁰Julius Hobson to Aaron Goldman, 3 January 1963, 1-2, 1:1:3, Hobson Collection.

⁶¹Julius Hobson to Aaron Goldman, 3 January 1963, 1-3, 1:1:3, Hobson Collection.

⁶²Julius Hobson to John MacMannes, 24 April 1962, 1:1:2, Hobson Collection. Letterhead of John [Mac]Mannes to Julius Hobson, 12 September 1962, 1:1:2, Hobson Collection indicates the company specialized in "industrial gifts, advertising specialties."

they failed to hire African Americans as managers, pharmacists, clerical staff and sales personnel. The initial meeting on July 13 between Drug Fair chairman of the board, Robert Gerber, and CORE negotiators Warren Morse and Rimsky Atkinson ended inconclusively. Although Morse and Atkinson learned that Drug Fair believed it adhered to a fair employment policy and their tour of the Drug Fair factory revealed the company employed African Americans in some responsible positions, the lack of African American personnel interacting with the public at company stores illustrated a policy of employment discrimination to the CORE committee. In response to CORE picketing on July 17, Drug Fair officials met with Julius Hobson, Rimsky Atkinson, Paul Bennett and Ethelbert Haskins of CORE on July 19. The management agreed to implement a fair hiring policy by employing African Americans in white collar positions at Drug Fair stores, contacting the United States Employment Service for qualified black applicants and advertising its corporation as an equal opportunity employer.⁶³

Washington CORE picket lines pressured many businesses to hire people of color immediately and to initiate policies designed to create an atmosphere conducive to merit hiring. CORE members used picket lines to compel agreements from employers such as the Woodward and Lothrop Department Store, Raleigh Haberdasher, the Bond Clothing Store, the University Shop, National Shirt Shops, the Hub Furniture Company, William Allen Shoe Stores and Safeway Supermarkets.⁶⁴ Members of

⁶³Julius Hobson to Gentlemen, 30 June 1962, 1:1:2, Hobson Collection; [Notes of a meeting between Washington CORE and Drug Fair], 19 July 1962, 1, 1:1:7, Hobson Collection; "Drug Fair Agreement," The Washington COREspondent, 1:3 (July 1962): 1, 1:2:5, Hobson Collection.

⁶⁴"Washington CORE Annual Report," 1962, 1-2, 2:10, Holden Papers; Press Release, 19 March [1962], The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:432:00713; Press Release, 15 September 1962, 1:2:5, Hobson Collection; "Hub Line Suspended," The Washington COREspondent, 1:8 (January 1963): 1, 1:2:5, Hobson Collection; "William Allen Again," The Washington COREspondent, 1:9 (February 1963): 1, 1:2:5, Hobson Collection; "Safeway, CORE to Meet After Picketing Here,"

Washington CORE picketed the Lansburgh's Department Store in 1962 because its program of merit hiring, begun in 1958 through an agreement with the NAACP and Urban League, progressed at an extremely slow pace, so slow in fact that it would take 38 years before Lansburgh's sales force matched the composition of the Washington population. Because of the intransigence of the management, Washington CORE asked the community to support their picket lines with a boycott of the department store.⁶⁵

Along with picket lines, Washington CORE strategists found the threat and/or implementation of an economic boycott a powerful tactic. Julius Hobson explained to the Vice President of Lansburgh's Department Store why Washington CORE used economic boycotts: "We hope to mobilize the purchasing power of Negroes and all others concerned with democracy to make it economically necessary for you to integrate completely."⁶⁶ The African American community needed to fight "economic injustice" with its "economic power," argued CORE activists.⁶⁷ They often reminded company officials of the correlation between the large African American population in Washington and their profits. Julius Hobson warned the General Manager of the Wilkins Coffee Company, "no business establishment in this city can afford to discriminate against the majority of its customers."⁶⁸

With this logic in mind the members of Washington CORE organized boycotts in 1961 and 1962 to correspond with fall holiday shopping. They distributed a selective buying guide to help consumers patronize The Sunday Star, 13 October 1963, 21:7:3, Hobson Collection.

⁶⁵Julius Hobson to Herman L. Neugass, 18 January 1962, 1-2, 1:1:2, Hobson Collection.

⁶⁶Julius Hobson to Herman L. Neugass, 18 January 1962, 2, 1:1:2, Hobson Collection.

⁶⁷[Selective Buying Guide], [November? 1961], 6, 1:2:6, Hobson Collection.

⁶⁸Julius Hobson to Roy Parkinson, 1 August 1961, 1:1:1, Hobson Collection.

shops engaged in equal opportunity employment. CORE members hoped the guide enabled the populace "to follow the economic maxim . . . 'in the market money goes where it is treated best.'"⁶⁹ To increase the effectiveness of the boycott, CORE entreated consumers to go beyond the list and shop only where their eyes revealed African American sales persons. In the 1962 consumer guide Washington CORE appealed to shoppers, "PATRONIZE THE STORES ON THIS LIST, AND ALL OTHERS IN WHICH YOU SEE NEGRO SALES PEOPLE. USE YOUR BUYING POWER TO ENCOURAGE EFFORTS IN THE DIRECTION OF FAIR HIRING PRACTICES!"⁷⁰

CORE also used consumer boycotts to target individual businesses, such as the Frito-Lay Potato Chip Company and D.C. Transit Systems.⁷¹ An article in the Washington Afro-American inspired the campaign aimed at the District bus company. A corporate official stated that people of color accounted for only 43 of the 1900 drivers and none of the secretarial staff employed by D.C. Transit because so many blacks committed crimes. CORE joined with the Nonviolent Action Group (NAG) to form the Bus Boycott Steering Committee to persuade the bus company to initiate a fair employment program. With help from a few other groups, the Committee surveyed almost 5000 of the residents who used the 14th Street, 11th Street and Benning Road bus lines. They discovered over 85% of the people favored a boycott and enlisted 486 volunteers and their autos to car pool boycotting bus riders. Threatened with a boycott of three of its routes, D.C. Transit Systems decided to

⁶⁹[Selective Buying Guide], [November? 1961], 4, 1:2:6, Hobson Collection.

⁷⁰"Christmas Selective Buying List," 1962, 1, 1:2:5, Hobson Collection.

⁷¹ "CRISPY, CRUNCHY, YES[,] But hiring's soggy[,] Don't buy Lay's Potato Chips," leaflet, [January 1963], 1:2:5, Hobson Collection; "Skip the Chip," The Washington COREspondent, 1:8 (January 1963), 1:2:5, Hobson Collection.

negotiate. The firm promised to employ immediately 40 bus drivers and 25 office workers without regard to race and to allow Washington CORE to monitor the progress of their merit-hiring policy.⁷²

Through the Bus Boycott Steering Committee, Washington CORE members worked with the Nonviolent Action Group (NAG), the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME, AFL-CIO) and church groups.⁷³ Generally CORE cooperated with other organizations and sought out their assistance, provided their allies accepted the use of nonviolent direct action including picket lines, boycotts and sit-ins. AFSCME Local One unionists peopled Washington CORE picket lines and loaned the use of their office for hearings on employment discrimination at the Central Linen Service. As one of Washington CORE's "proven friends," Julius Hobson asked the President of Local One to help defray the costs of the constant supply of leaflets and picket signs needed to achieve victory in their merit hiring drive.⁷⁴ Local One's parent organization, the AFL-CIO, declared organized labor's support of Washington CORE's campaign against unfair employment practices at Drug Fair.⁷⁵

Along with CORE activists and union members, Howard University students involved with NAG sometimes joined CORE picket lines during the merit hiring drive of 1961 to 1963.⁷⁶ Washington CORE also received

⁷²"Faced With Boycott D.C. Transit Agrees to Hire 55," press release, 1 June 1962, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:432:00721; "D.C. Transit," The Washington COREspondent, [1:1 (May 1962)]: 1-2, 1:2:5, Hobson Collection; "Washington CORE Annual Report," 1962, 2, 2:10, Holden Papers.

⁷³"Faced With Boycott D.C. Transit Agrees to Hire 55," press release, 1 June 1962, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:432:00721.

⁷⁴Julius Hobson to William Mirengoff, 5 January 1962, 1:1:2, Hobson Collection; Julius Hobson to Paul Rilling, memorandum, 9 April 1963, 1, 1:1:3, Hobson Collection.

⁷⁵AFL-CIO Press Release, 14 July 1962, 1:2:5, Hobson Collection.

⁷⁶Warren Morse to Dearly beloved National Officers of CORE, 27 November 1961, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967,

the support of ministers' groups, the NAACP and the Urban League.⁷⁷ In February of 1962 CORE organized and led over 200 pickets representing 46 community associations in a march for equal employment opportunities. The crowd demonstrated in the center of the Washington business district, the 1300 block of "F" Street.⁷⁸

Despite some cooperation among groups working against racism in Washington D.C., the civil rights community lacked unity. U.S. Representative Charles Diggs, Jr., (D-Mich.) commented on the disunity in the Washington movement:

I have long deplored the lack of organized effort in the Negro-liberal segment of this community to correct employment abuses with the utility companies, retail stores, etc. I have long wondered why, in a community with a majority Negro population, there was not some thrust to open up areas in which there was obvious discrimination.

Diggs wrote these lines to chastise Reverend W. E. Fauntroy, Chairman of the Community Committee for Jobs and Justice, for publicly criticizing the agreement reached between the Bus Boycott Steering Committee and D.C. Transit. Rather than displaying public disunity, Fauntroy's group should resolve differences with CORE "behind closed doors." Take a lesson from the relationship between the local chapters of CORE and the NAACP, Diggs suggested. He wrote, "I know, as a matter of fact, that CORE and the NAACP have often differed with respect to techniques, although their objectives are common, but both organizations have been careful to avoid any public disagreement."⁷⁹

5:24:00340.

⁷⁷[Selective Buying Guide], [November? 1961], 15, 1:2:6, Hobson Collection.

⁷⁸"Washington CORE Annual Report," 1962, 2, 2:10, Holden Papers.

⁷⁹Charles C. Diggs, Jr. to Reverend W.E. Fauntroy, 25 June 1962, 1 and 2, 1:1:2, Hobson Collection.

Although not publicly critical of CORE, the NAACP disagreed with more radical CORE action. Washington CORE activists rarely needed to go beyond picketing and economic boycotts to push employers to adopt merit hiring policies. However, in their campaign against District of Columbia utilities, CORE strategists employed a method of civil disobedience which the NAACP opposed. In order to get the Washington Gas Light Company and the Potomac Electric Power Company (PEPCO) to enter into productive negotiations to achieve a merit hiring policy, CORE members organized other community groups into a Bargaining Committee and prepared to distribute 400,000 "We Believe In Merit Hiring" stamps for use against the public utilities. Washington CORE intended to distribute the stamps with instructions on their use at churches, theaters and stores and through local civil rights, civic, political and labor groups. CORE leaflets instructed people to affix the one inch square stamps to the billing stub of their electric and gas bills. By placing the sticker over the punch card holes needed by the companies' IBM computers, CORE intended to disrupt their accounting process.⁸⁰

Although the local chapters of the NAACP and the Urban League participated in the campaign, they refused to endorse the use of stamps or to distribute them through their organizations. NAACP President E. Franklin Jackson informed Julius Hobson, "[we] must strongly oppose and cannot share in stamp activity that may be construed as malicious destruction of electronic property."⁸¹ Urban League officials agreed

⁸⁰Ruby M. Thornton to Barbara Chain, 5 January 1963, 1:1:3, Hobson Collection; [sheet of Merit Hiring stamps], 1:2:5, Hobson Collection; "Help Stamp Out Job Discrimination in the Public Utilities," leaflet, [October 1962], 1:2:5, Hobson Collection; [Court Injunction] Potomac Electric Power Company vs. Washington Chapter of the Congress of Racial Equality and Julius Hobson, [13 October 1962], 2, 1:2:6, Hobson Collection.

⁸¹E. Franklin Jackson to Julius Hobson, telegram, 8 October 1962, 1:1:2, Hobson Collection.

to remain part of the Bargaining Committee, but decided against committing the Urban League to participate in the stamp campaign since it did not use direct action to achieve its goals. CORE and their allies, such as the Negro Community Council, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, the National Council of Negro Women and the D.C. Federation of Civic Associations, decided that any person or group concerned about destroying company property should affix the stickers elsewhere on the bill or envelope.⁸²

Because the Potomac Electric Power Company believed the stamps would cause "irreparable damage...to the billing stubs, machinery, and the business operations" of the firm, they secured a court injunction to prevent Washington CORE and its associates from carrying out the stamp campaign.⁸³ PEPCO halted the implementation of the project, but both the gas and the electric companies agreed to negotiate with the Bargaining Committee. The league requested a program which gave preferential treatment to African American applicants and enrolled them in training programs in order to counter the many years the firms excluded people of color from certain jobs.⁸⁴

CORE demanded preferential treatment for African Americans because the gas and electric companies functioned as public utilities. They enjoyed a monopoly over natural gas and electricity and held contracts with both the local and federal governments. Therefore, like the

⁸²"Chronology of Events Relative to Community Organization Negotiations with Potomac Electric and Washington Gas Light Company," [13? October 1962], 1-3, 1:1:2, Hobson Collection.

⁸³[Court Injunction] Potomac Electric Power Company vs. Washington Chapter of the Congress of Racial Equality and Julius Hobson, [13 October 1962], 3, 1:2:6, Hobson Collection.

⁸⁴R. Roy Dunn to Julius Hobson, telegram, 22 October 1962, 1:1:2, Hobson Collection; F.W. Amadon, Jr. to Julius Hobson, telegram, 26 October 1962, 1:1:2, Hobson Collection; "Main Discussion Points with Pepco and the Gas Co.," 25 October 1962, 1:1:8, Hobson Collection.

government, utilities should operate without discrimination and allow the public to scrutinize their hiring policies.⁸⁵ Washington CORE members often used this argument to persuade private businesses to initiate fair employment policies. Unlike other local chapters, they also pursued the intervention of the federal government in community affairs. CORE members utilized this tactic because Washington lacked self-government. Rather, a congressional committee and three appointed commissioners governed the nation's capital. They also believed that as "democracy's capital" and "the Capital of the Free World" the federal government shared the responsibility to end racism in Washington, D.C.⁸⁶

During the Spring of 1963, CORE members embarked upon a campaign to convince the government of the District of Columbia to hire local, African American young people in summer jobs. In addition to writing directly to the Board of Commissioners, Julius Hobson asked a few members of Congress and two federal agencies to assist Washington CORE. After receiving correspondence from Hobson, New York Representative William Ryan and Senator Jacob Javits, along with Michigan Senator Philip Hart, urged the Commissioners to fill summer employment positions without regard to race.⁸⁷ Hobart Taylor, Executive Vice Chair of the President's Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity, and Berl Bernard, staff director of the United States Commission on Civil Rights, also

⁸⁵"Main Discussion Points with Pepco and the Gas Co.," 25 October 1962, 1:1:8, Hobson Collection; "Statement of Chairman to Pepco and Washington Gas Light Co.," [30 October 1962], 1:2:6, Hobson Collection.

⁸⁶Julius Hobson and Ethelbert Haskins to Members of the Washington Congress of Racial Equality, memorandum, 19 April 1961, 3, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00325; "A Statement on Intent and Why," The Washington COREspondent, 1:8 (January 1963), 1:2:5, Hobson Collection.

⁸⁷Philip Hart to Julius Hobson, 9 April 1963, 1:1:3, Hobson Collection; William F. Ryan to Walter Tobriner, 16 April 1963, 1:1:3, Hobson Collection; Jacob K. Javits to Julius Hobson, 16 April 1963, 1:1:3, Hobson Collection.

contacted the Commissioners on behalf of Washington CORE.⁸⁸ Walter Tobriner, President of the Board of Commissioners, responded to the complaint and pressure promptly. Through a memorandum, he reminded all government departments to make summer jobs available to all people equitably, compiled a list of available positions and contacted the Director of Student Employment at Howard University to recruit black students.⁸⁹ Since the D.C. government hired 200 African American young people in jobs previously unavailable to them, the Washington CORE employment committee declared victory.⁹⁰

During the same period Washington CORE members targeted the Western Electric Company. CORE researchers discovered that the Arlington, Virginia branch employed only white workers. Further investigation revealed that although the firm employed 17,300 installation men in 44 states, African Americans held only 70 to 80 of these jobs. To aid in their efforts, Washington CORE provided this information to CORE chapters with Western Electric divisions in their vicinity and the President's Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity. They asked this federal agency for assistance because Western Electric possessed several contracts with the national government and these contracts required "workers be employed without regard to race, creed or color." To explain why they requested the intervention of the federal authorities and believed their request for merit hiring to be valid, Julius Hobson informed the president of Western Electric, "We are deeply concerned with those companies which deliberately and openly deny

⁸⁸Hobart Taylor, Jr. to Julius Hobson, 11 April 1963, 1:1:3, Hobson Collection; Berl I. Bernhard to Julius Hobson, 15 April 1963, 1:1:3, Hobson Collection.

⁸⁹[Walter Tobriner] to Jacob Javits, 25 April 1963, 1:1:3, Hobson Collection; Walter Tobriner to All Department Heads, memorandum, 12 April 1963, 1:1:3, Hobson Collection.

⁹⁰"Washington CORE's Jobometer Tops 2800," The Washington COREspondent, 2:1 (June 1963): 1, 1:2:5, Hobson Collection.

employment opportunities to any Americans, particularly if these companies realize profits through doing business with the Federal Government, thus, being indirectly paid by all tax payers."⁹¹

The negotiations between Hobson, national CORE staff members and company officials at corporate headquarters in New York City procured 2000 positions for people of color at Western Electric branches across the nation. National CORE mobilized field workers and local chapters to implement the agreement throughout the country. The Director of Program for national CORE, Norman Hill, praised Julius Hobson and his group for initiating a campaign of national significance. "You and Washington CORE should be commended for bringing the situation to our attention," he wrote.⁹²

Similarly, at its demonstrations in support of the 1961 freedom rides, Washington CORE tried to persuade the federal government to intervene on behalf of the people and to enforce existing laws in the South. To undertake the original Freedom Ride, national CORE recruited an interracial group of fifteen to travel from Washington, D.C. to New Orleans in May of 1961 to make the legal desegregation of interstate travel a reality. The original Freedom Riders intended to integrate both the buses and the facilities of bus travel, pledging to remain nonviolent if attacked and in jail if arrested. Severe violence encountered by the travelers in Anniston and Birmingham, Alabama ended the ride. Although a group of students from Nashville, five members of New Orleans CORE and three original riders tried to finish the trip, officials in Jackson, Mississippi arrested everyone. For the remainder

⁹¹Julius Hobson to H.I. Romnes, memorandum, 17 April 1963, 2 and 3, 1:1:3, Hobson Collection.

⁹²Norman Hill to Julius Hobson, 8 May 1963, 1:1:3, Hobson Collection; "Washington CORE's Jobometer Tops 2800," The Washington COREspondent, 2:1 (June 1963): 1, 1:2:5, Hobson Collection; H.G. Mehlhouse to Julius Hobson, 26 April 1963, 1:1:3, Hobson Collection.

of the summer national CORE, with the assistance of SNCC and SCLC, sponsored freedom rides to Jackson.⁹³ Two individuals from Washington CORE, Helene Wilson and Paul Dietrich, both white and in their mid-20s, joined the more than 300 riders arrested in Jackson that summer.⁹⁴

CORE activists in Washington, D.C. distributed leaflets calling District citizens to petition the Attorney General to use the power of the Department of Justice to implement the law.⁹⁵ To raise money for legal expenses and to involve federal officials personally in the freedom rides, Washington CORE members sponsored a mass rally in honor of the original Freedom Riders on June 11. Ethelbert Haskins, Paul Bennett, Richard Anderson, Helene Wilson, Reginald Webb, Audrey Glassman, Barbara Kemp and Warren Morse obtained endorsements, raised money, formulated the program and publicized the rally. In addition to the riders' sharing of their experiences, author James Baldwin spoke and people sang freedom songs.⁹⁶

The mass rally committee invited many members of Congress including Senators Frank Moss of Utah, Pat McNamara of Michigan, Quentin N. Burdick of North Dakota and Margaret Chase Smith of Maine and Representatives James Roosevelt of California and Edith Green of Oregon, among others.⁹⁷ Of those unable to attend, a few sent messages to be

⁹³"Freedom Ride," CORE-lator, 88 (April 1961): 4, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 6:1:00134; "Freedom Ride," CORE-lator, 89 (May 1961): 3, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 6:1:00135.

⁹⁴"White female [freedom riders]," [August? 1961], The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:456:00471; "White Male [freedom riders]," [August? 1961], The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:452:00328; "CORE Enrollment as of May, 1962," 6, 1:2:3, Hobson Collection; "Committee on Employment," [28 March 1961], 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00316.

⁹⁵"Can a Negro American Take a Freedom Ride?" leaflet, May 1961, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00329.

⁹⁶"Program, Mass Rally for 'Original Freedom Riders,'" 11 June 1961, 3-4, 1:2:5, Hobson Collection; James B. Carey to Julius Hobson, 22 June 1961, 1:1:1, Hobson Collection.

delivered at the rally.⁹⁸ Ashamed because he, the Congress and most American citizens had ignored all forms of segregation and discrimination, Senator Clifford Case of New Jersey declared, "Progress in civil rights is a task that can be left neither to time, nor just to the courts or the executive to take care of. All of us, in or out of government, have a responsibility for, all of us have a stake in, its solution." He called for Congress to act.⁹⁹

Beginning in the summer of 1963, the members of Washington CORE tried to use the government of the United States and of the District of Columbia to eradicate housing discrimination in their community. Their campaign began on June 14, 1963 when Washington CORE mobilized approximately 4500 people to march on the District Municipal Building and the Justice Department for jobs, a fair housing ordinance and human rights. The group organized the demonstration, Julius Hobson stated, "[to identify] the failure of the (district) commissioners to issue a fair housing ordinance and to do anything about fair employment."¹⁰⁰ This new orientation toward housing issues, in addition to employment, signaled the end of a single-issue focus on employment discrimination by

⁹⁷ Frank Moss to Julius Hobson, 7 June 1961, 1:1:1, Hobson Collection; Pat McNamara to Julius Hobson, 5 June 1961, 1:1:1, Hobson Collection; Quentin Burdick to Julius Hobson, 5 June 1961, 1:1:1, Hobson Collection; Margaret Chase Smith to Julius Hobson, 1 June 1961, 1:1:1, Hobson Collection; James Roosevelt to Julius Hobson, 7 June 1961, 1:1:1, Hobson Collection; Edith Green to Julius Hobson, 8 June 1961, 1:1:1, Hobson Collection.

⁹⁸ For example, Jacob K. Javits to Julius Hobson, telegram, 10 June 1961, 1:1:1, Hobson Collection.

⁹⁹ "Statement By Senator Clifford P. Case For Washington Area Chapter, Congress of Racial Equality Rally," 11 June 1961, 1:2:6, 3 and 1-2, Hobson Collection.

¹⁰⁰ Hobson quoted in "Capital Awaits Racial March," Boston Traveler, 14 June 1963, 21:7:3, Hobson Collection; "Achievements of Washington CORE Under the Direction of JULIUS W. HOBSON," [28 April 1964], 1, 3:13, Holden Papers; "March For Freedom Now," leaflet, 14 June 1963, 1:2:5, Hobson Collection.

the membership of Washington CORE.

CORE activists first led the demonstrators gathered at Lafayette Park, on Pennsylvania Avenue across from the White House, in a silent prayer. The crowd then paraded four blocks to the Municipal Building where District Commissioner Walter Tobriner addressed the assembly. The messages they directed to the D.C. Commissioners included: "'You See the Need - You Have the Power' ISSUE FAIR HOUSING ORDINANCE - NOW!" and "We Can't Eat Jim Crow - We Demand Fair Job Rights For All." In response, Tobriner promised a fair housing ordinance before the end of Congress' current session. If the federal government failed to act, he pledged to issue the ordinance through the Board of Commissioners. Tobriner also vowed to follow the housing ordinance with an order for fair employment practices in the District of Columbia.¹⁰¹

The marchers advanced next to the Justice Department demanding an end to job discrimination in that agency and calling for department officials to protect more vigorously the right of citizens to protest. Rather than welcoming the assembly and offering them solutions, Attorney General Robert Kennedy angrily dismissed charges of employment discrimination at the Justice Department. Commenting later on Kennedy's challenge to find one African American denied employment in his department, one CORE member suggested Kennedy "played with little truths to conceal big ones." He proposed his readers observe the hundreds of workers leaving the Justice Department at the close of every workday. "Count the Negroes. Then draw your own conclusions," the writer argued.¹⁰²

¹⁰¹"March For Freedom Now," leaflet, 14 June 1963, 1:2:5, Hobson Collection; "Protest a Howling Success," The Washington COREspondent, 2:1 (June 1963): 3, 1:2:5, Hobson Collection; "Capital Awaits Racial March," Boston Traveler, 14 June 1963, 21:7:3, Hobson Collection.

¹⁰²"Protest a Howling Success," The Washington COREspondent, 2:1 (June 1963): 3, 1:2:5, Hobson Collection; "March For Freedom Now," leaflet, 14 June 1963, 1:2:5, Hobson Collection.

Despite their disappointment with Robert Kennedy, the Washington CORE community deemed their freedom march "a howling success."¹⁰³ Other Washington residents agreed. Rodney Clurman wrote to Julius Hobson, "I thought the demonstration last Friday was very successful and you are to be congratulated for making it the peaceful but forceful show of determined interest that it was."¹⁰⁴ Washington Post columnist Bill Gold reiterated this praise of Julius Hobson: "the manner in which he conducted the Friday demonstration made me proud to be a countryman of his. He gave us a perfect demonstration of intelligent, responsible leadership."¹⁰⁵ Even Commissioner Tobriner, the primary target of the protest, wrote to Julius Hobson, "May I take this means to congratulate you on the effective, serious and orderly demonstration sponsored by the Congress of Racial Equality and other groups on Friday, June 14, 1963. My colleagues and I were impressed by the size and tone of the group."¹⁰⁶

Although Tobriner assured Hobson that the District Commissioners understood the concerns brought to their attention during the march, it took the remainder of the year to fulfill their promise of a Fair Housing Ordinance. Within a week of the demonstration, the Board of Commissioners proposed regulations to govern fair housing practices and held a public hearing on the issue the next month. Despite this quick initial action, the proposal remained unpassed in late November.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰³"Protest a Howling Success," The Washington COREspondent, 2:1 (June 1963): 3, 1:2:5, Hobson Collection.

¹⁰⁴Rodney H. Clurman to Julius Hobson, 18 June 1963, 1:1:3, Hobson Collection.

¹⁰⁵Bill Gold to Julius Hobson, 18 June 1963, 1:1:3, Hobson Collection.

¹⁰⁶Walter Tobriner to Julius Hobson, 17 June 1963, 1:1:3, Hobson Collection.

¹⁰⁷Walter Tobriner to Julius Hobson, 17 June 1963, 1:1:3, Hobson Collection; "Fair Housing Practices Regulation Proposed For Adoption by the Board of Commissioners of the District of Columbia," 19 June 1963,

Frustrated, the Washington CORE chapter petitioned Commissioner Tobriner and asked him to deliver on the promise he made to the community during the June march. The membership argued, "The majority of Washington's citizens have already been deprived [of] equal opportunities in housing for too many years. It cannot wait for another session of Congress to pass before our appointed governors fulfill their obligations on this matter."¹⁰⁸ The next month the Board of Commissioners adopted "a police regulation prohibiting housing discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, or national origin within the District of Columbia."¹⁰⁹

Prior to the push for a fair housing ordinance, the Washington CORE housing committee moved slowly. Organized in May 1962 under Dr. Frank Lindenfeld, the group spent a year studying housing discrimination in the District of Columbia.¹¹⁰ It formulated a plan to attack the problem using Executive Order 11063, issued by President Kennedy on November 20, 1962. The directive prohibited racial discrimination in federally assisted housing. In other words, in order to receive a commitment from the Federal Housing Administration or the Veterans Administration to insure a home mortgage, a developer needed to pledge to sell housing to clients without regard to race.¹¹¹

1-6, 1:2:6, Hobson Collection; "Announcement and Agenda for Government of the District of Columbia Executive Offices, Public Hearing," 26 July 1963, 1-2, 2:11, Holden Papers.

¹⁰⁸[Washington CORE] to Walter N. Tobriner, 21 November 1963, 1:1:3, Hobson Collection.

¹⁰⁹Board of Commissioners, Government of the District of Columbia, "News Release," [December 1963], 1, 1:2:5, Hobson Collection.

¹¹⁰"Housing Committee Report," The Washington COREspondent, [1:1 (May 1962)]: 1, 1:2:5, Hobson Collection; "Housing," The Washington COREspondent, 2:3 (October 1963): 1-2, 3:13, Holden Papers.

¹¹¹"Housing," The Washington COREspondent, 2:3 (October 1963): 1-2, 3:13, Holden Papers; "Agenda, Housing Committee Meeting," 30 January 1964, 6:5, Holden Papers; "Housing Committee On The Move," The Washington COREspondent, 1:9 (February 1963): 1-2, 1:2:5, Hobson Collection; "CORE Fires Leader Who Accused Builders of Trying to Evade Kennedy Antibias Order," Wall Street Journal, 12 September 1963, 2.

Therefore, while awaiting passage of the Fair Housing Ordinance for the District of Columbia, CORE members used the Executive Order to target discriminatory housing developments in the white suburbs of Washington, D.C. Beginning in earnest during the fall of 1963, the housing committee used black and white testers to identify the suburban housing developments which discriminated against African American buyers. Under the leadership of Dr. Karl Gregory, an African American economist at the Budget Bureau, the committee submitted six complaints to the Federal Housing Administration. Their strategy combined these petitions, designed to obtain the intervention of the federal government on behalf of black home buyers, with traditional direct action tactics. If the FHA acted on the complaints filed by CORE, a developer could lose federal assistance and be sued for fraud. In addition to this pressure from the federal government, CORE activists believed direct action would persuade builders and real estate agents to allow suburban neighborhoods to integrate.¹¹²

Even before becoming chair of the CORE housing committee Karl Gregory worked actively to end housing discrimination. He became involved personally when he sought to purchase a home in Belair, a suburban Washington housing development near Bowie, Maryland. The builder, Levitt and Sons, refused Gregory because of his race. Although Levittowns in New Jersey, New York and Pennsylvania allowed African Americans to purchase homes, the company decided to sell homes in Maryland in accordance with "local social conditions" and bluntly informed government officials of their decision to segregate Belair.¹¹³

¹¹²"Housing," The Washington COREspondent, 2:3 (October 1963): 1-2, 3:13, Holden Papers; Karl Gregory, "Recent and Prospective Activities of the Housing Committee of the Congress of Racial Equality," 28 November 1963, 1-2, 1:1:7, Hobson Collection; "Belair Demonstration (Fact Sheet)," 29 July 1963, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:357:00023.

During the spring of 1963 the CORE chapters of Northern Virginia and Prince George's County embarked on a campaign to desegregate housing in suburban Washington. Initially these CORE affiliates pressured many of the developers building houses throughout suburban Washington. Learning of Karl Gregory's complaint against Belair, they sought out his assistance. The Federal Housing Administration decided not to act on the complaint against Belair filed by Karl Gregory and the CORE activists of suburban Washington failed to get the builders of Maryland to adopt a state-wide open occupancy policy. Consequently, Gregory persuaded the CORE chapter of Prince George's County, Maryland to spearhead an action campaign directed at Belair.¹¹⁴

Beginning August 3 and continuing every weekend for the remainder of the year, Prince George's County CORE sponsored picketing and sit-ins at Belair sales offices and model homes. CORE members from Baltimore, Northern Virginia and Washington participated in the campaign. Washington CORE activists often joined the weekend picketing and sometimes supplied the majority of individuals on the picket lines. During one demonstration Dr. Gregory tried again to purchase a home. After the salesperson refused him, eleven people joined Gregory for a sit-in. The action became a sleep-in when he, Washington CORE member Tom Ploss and Richard Ochs refused to leave the sales office at closing time. The trio stayed for 28 consecutive hours.¹¹⁵

¹¹³"Belair Demonstration (Fact Sheet)," 29 July 1963, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:357:00023.

¹¹⁴Alfred L. Ochs to To whom it may concern, 20 May 1964, 3:14, Holden Papers; Karl Gregory, "Recent and Prospective Activities of the Housing Committee of the Congress of Racial Equality," 28 November 1963, 1, 1:1:7, Hobson Collection; "March for Freedom of Residence," fact sheet, [23?] November 1963, 2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:357:00043.

¹¹⁵"March for Freedom of Residence," fact sheet, [23?] November 1963, 2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:357:00043; "Belair Demonstration (Fact Sheet) III," 12 August 1963, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:357:00032;

Although Prince George's County CORE continued to exercise leadership in the campaign against Belair during the fall of 1963, Karl Gregory and the Washington CORE housing committee assumed the direction of the broader campaign to open private, single family homes to people of color in the suburbs of Washington, D.C. David Brooks, chairman of Northern Virginia CORE during this period, commented on Karl Gregory's leadership in this campaign. Brooks wrote, "It was acknowledged by all concerned that Karl Gregory of Washington CORE was the de facto director of these projects, and he acted to arrange and coordinate them so they might be most effective." He concluded, "Northern Virginia CORE . . . attributes much of the success of and publicity from the housing program to Karl's indefatigable efforts and effective coordination."¹¹⁶ Alfred Ochs, Vice President of Prince George's County CORE and its housing co-chair, also praised Gregory for his advice and leadership. He commented,

Through[ou]t our entire campaign, Karl never failed to extend his utmost cooperation. His ideas were never forced upon us, but we adopted most of them because of the sheer weight of their logic. I think it is safe to say that much of our success in the housing program was due to his work and advice.

Ochs found Karl Gregory "to be a source of astounding energy, complete cooperation, and good sense."¹¹⁷

Karl Gregory's experience with the Federal Housing Administration concerning Belair convinced him to focus on the FHA and to pressure the agency to establish firm guidelines as to how it would apply the

Karl Gregory, "Recent and Prospective Activities of the Housing Committee of the Congress of Racial Equality," 28 November 1963, 1, 1:1:7, Hobson Collection.

¹¹⁶David B. Brooks to To Whom It May Concern, 11 May 1964, 3:14, Holden Papers.

¹¹⁷Alfred L. Ochs to To whom it may concern, 20 May 1964, 3:14, Holden Papers.

ambiguous Executive Order. After becoming chairman of the Washington CORE housing committee in September of 1963, Gregory focused its energies on testing builders receiving federal assistance, developing test cases and filing formal complaints with the FHA concerning violations of Executive Order 11063. As a result of the mandate and community testing of suburban Washington builders, real estate agents no longer refused African American buyers outright. Rather, the developers used subtle forms of discrimination, such as different terms of purchase and credit refusal, to prevent the integration of suburban neighborhoods. Consequently, the complaints filed by the housing committee identified loopholes in the Executive Order and the completely inadequate regulations the FHA used to enforce the directive.¹¹⁸

Presenting the housing committee's case to David Lawrence, Chair of the President's Committee on Equal Opportunity in Housing, Karl Gregory contended, "An outright refusal is superfluous, for builders have found other ways to achieve the same result. Your Committee must prevail in countering such clandestine practices in order to make freedom of residence a reality in the United States."¹¹⁹ Housing committee co-chairs Tom Ploss and Norma Shelton, who replaced Karl Gregory in December 1963, continued to attack the order from this angle. Ploss and Shelton warned Edward Childs, Director of the Federal Housing Administration, "The weapons of discrimination are ingenious and varied, and would go undetected without CORE's efforts. Unless the Executive

¹¹⁸ Alfred L. Ochs to To whom it may concern, 20 May 1964, 3:14, Holden Papers; Karl Gregory, "Recent and Prospective Activities of the Housing Committee of the Congress of Racial Equality," 28 November 1963, 1, 1:1:7, Hobson Collection; National Capital Clearing House For Neighborhood Democracy, newsletter, 5:9 (October 31, 1963): 1-2, 1:2:5, Hobson Collection; Karl Gregory to David L. Lawrence, 9 September 1963, 2, 1:1:3, Hobson Collection.

¹¹⁹ Karl Gregory to David L. Lawrence, 10 September 1963, 2, 1:1:3, Hobson Collection.

Order is to become a dead letter, FHA's enforcement effort must be as imaginative as the discrimination is ingenious and as detailed as the discrimination is varied."¹²⁰

In public CORE members pushed the federal government politely concerning enforcement of the executive order, but in private they expressed more acrimony. At one point a frustrated activist angrily criticized the "bastards" of the Federal Housing Administration for ignoring whether or not a company planned to abide by Kennedy's directive, neglecting complainants and authorizing additional insurance guarantees to the developers named in these complaints. He declared, "This shows a wanton disregard of its responsibility to enforce the order - almost to the point of a collusive effort with the developer to reduce the effect of the XO [Executive Order] to a minimum."¹²¹ Their frustration only increased as the Federal Housing Administration continued to be inattentive to complaints registered by CORE or responded to them with arrogance.¹²²

To determine whether or not the sales staffs of housing developments practiced subtle discrimination against African American buyers, CORE used "carefully structured comparative tests." In their opinion, "The discrimination becomes clear only upon a test in which the Negro applicant is preceded or followed by a white applicant, both seeking identical accommodations." In the case of the Marmusco Hills development in Northern Virginia, a black family and a white couple

¹²⁰Thomas Ploss and Norma Shelton to Edward Childs, 27 December 1963, 1, 1:1:3, Hobson Collection.

¹²¹Ralph [Fertig or Temple?] to Karl [Gregory], 17 November 1963, 2 and 1, 4:11, Holden Papers.

¹²²"Agenda Housing Committee Meeting," 27 February 1964, 6:5, Holden Papers; "Agenda Housing Committee Meeting," 26 March 1964, 6:5, Holden Papers; Thomas Ploss and Norma Shelton to Edward C. Childs, 2 December 1963, 4:11, Holden Papers; "Specific Charges Against FHA For Failure To Enforce," notes, [17 November 1963], 4:11, Holden Papers.

received very different terms and treatment by the salesperson. Although the salesman offered the identical house to each buyer, the white couple could purchase the home with a lower down payment, occupy the dwelling two months earlier, use the swimming pool, receive air conditioning and kitchen appliances at no extra cost and finance the home through many different financial institutions. While the real estate agent tried to convince the white family how easy the purchase of a house from him could be, he made it very difficult for Sidney Jones, an African American man. He informed Jones that the purchase would be difficult and dominated by legal complications, he offered him only one financing option and questioned Jones' financial resources.¹²³

In another case, the Aaron Williams family attempted to buy the same house from Wilburn Estates in Prince George's County, Maryland as Ann and Ralph Fertig, a white couple. As a development offering federally guaranteed home mortgages, Wilburn Estates violated Executive Order 11063 "by (a) offering more liberal terms to white buyers than to Negro buyers, and (b) pledging to white buyers that it will not sell to Negroes at present or in the future." While the Fertigs could move in immediately, choose a house from any section and pay only \$50 to hold the home, the Allen's needed to pay \$500, choose from section 2 only and wait five or six months before taking possession of the house.¹²⁴ When the Fertigs asked the agent if the neighborhood would integrate he replied, "Don't worry, we will keep this 100% white." He explained,

I may have to tell them yes because I know if I made an issue of it they would all be down here making a lot of trouble but even though I tell them yes I can reject them later on their credit

¹²³Karl Gregory to David L. Lawrence, 9 September 1963, 1-3, 1:1:3, Hobson Collection.

¹²⁴"Complaint of Mr. & Mrs. Aaron Williams," 8 September 1963, 2, 1:1:3, Hobson Collection; "Statement of Mr. & Mrs. Ralph D. Fertig In Support Of Complaint By Mr. & Mrs. Aaron Williams," 8 September 1963, 1-2, 1:1:3, Hobson Collection.

references. . . . I've turned down Negroes who were qualified but I had to because if I sold to three or four of them I'd lose five or six white sales.¹²⁵

In another Prince George's County housing development, Heather Haven, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Nelson experienced difficulties purchasing a home because the mortgage firm refused to finance their mortgage. Despite credit approval by three other lending institutions, the sole creditor used by the developer rejected the Nelson's application. The housing committee identified discrimination by financing agencies as "the greatest potential escape hatch and loop hole in the President's Executive Order." "If the F.H.A is lax," they argued, "it will always be simple to attribute a denial of housing to Negroes to the 'conservative financial policy' of the particular lending institution, or to some 'rule-of-thumb' of the trade."¹²⁶

Through the Nelson complaint, Washington CORE also made the case that very few African American home buyers would benefit from the Executive Order as the FHA administered it. To prepare the complaint, CORE members needed to determine whether Pleasant Valley Estates received FHA commitments, test for discrimination and investigate the Nelson's mortgage eligibility. In fact, the process necessitated "several well-synchronized and executed tests involving 12 persons, who invested over 100 man-hours in aiding the Nelsons."¹²⁷

The housing committee suggested that the FHA identify the developments with federal financing more clearly, devise a method to ensure compliance before discrimination occurs and close loopholes. The

¹²⁵"Statement of Mr. & Mrs. Ralph D. Fertig In Support Of Complaint By Mr. & Mrs. Aaron Williams," 8 September 1963, 2, 1:1:3, Hobson Collection.

¹²⁶Julius Hobson to C.E. Childs, December 1963, 4 and 1-3, 1:1:3, Hobson Collection.

¹²⁷Unaddressed form letter from Julius Hobson (signed by NS [Norma Shelton]), 20 December 1963, 1 and 2, 1:1:3, Hobson Collection.

Washington CORE argument concluded,

We wish to ensure that other Negroes will benefit from the Executive Order, without needing the tremendous amount of effort and coordination that it took to help the Nelsons. This can only be done if the FHA adopts measures to prevent discrimination, rather than merely adjudicating the occasional complaints after the harm has occurred.¹²⁸

After five months of work, the Nelsons finally moved into their new home in Prince George's County on February 28, 1964. They did not win a complete victory though; within a month, someone stoned their home.¹²⁹

In order to attack housing discrimination through Kennedy's directive and open suburban neighborhoods to people like the Nelsons, CORE activists recruited buyers, renters and testers. To initiate de facto integration the housing committee arranged dwell-ins where white individuals rented apartments in "white ghettos" and African Americans occupied them as their guests. Once the group began to open white neighborhoods to black families through their direct action and FHA complaints, CORE members discovered very few people actually aware of housing opportunities outside of the District's black neighborhoods. Other individuals felt too apprehensive to take advantage of the openings. In response to these problems, the housing committee organized an education program. They educated the African American community about housing opportunities in white communities through churches, leaflets, personal contacts and a speakers bureau. They maintained a listing of single-family homes and apartments covered by the Executive Order and directed African American families to these

¹²⁸Unaddressed form letter from Julius Hobson (signed by NS [Norma Shelton]), 20 December 1963, 2-3, 1:1:3, Hobson Collection.

¹²⁹"Agenda Housing Committee CORE," 11 March 1964, 6:5, Holden Papers; "Agenda Housing Committee CORE," 9 April 1964, 6:5, Holden Papers.

dwellings. Finally, they provided advice to other fair housing organizations on an "informal and nonattributive basis."¹³⁰

Criticized in the press for trying to entrap housing developers by sending shoppers, rather than bona fide buyers, to test for discrimination, CORE defended its approach. The criticism erupted when CORE submitted a complaint to the President's Committee on Equal Opportunity in Housing charging Marumsco Hills with discriminatory behavior after the firm sold a home to an African American army sergeant. Although chairman Julius Hobson initially fired the housing committee director, Karl Gregory, over the incident, he later defended Gregory's actions.¹³¹ Regarding the housing complaint, a press release signed by Hobson and Gregory stated, ". . . CORE and its officials, including Mr. Gregory, were in complete conformity to the CORE principles of vigorous, militant, and careful policing of practices to detect and attack discrimination." They defended their tactic by arguing that actual buyers rarely have the emotional and financial resources or time "to invest in the long and painful processes of detecting and prosecuting violations." In fact, they contended, "discriminatory treatment of a decoy is just as valid evidence that housing is, in fact, not open to all regardless of race, as is discriminatory treatment of a bona fide prospective buyer." Rather than curb its activity as a result of this criticism, Gregory and Hobson

¹³⁰Karl Gregory, "Recent and Prospective Activities of the Housing Committee of the Congress of Racial Equality," 28 November 1963, 1, 1:1:7, Hobson Collection; Washington chapter, CORE Housing Committee to [Anna] Holden, 7 January 1964, 5:9, Holden Papers; Comments by [Karl Gregory] on the National Capital Clearing House For Neighborhood Democracy newsletter, 5:9 (October 31, 1963): 2, 1:2:5, Hobson Collection.

¹³¹"CORE Fires Leader Who Accused Builders of Trying to Evade Kennedy Antibias Order," Wall Street Journal, 12 September 1963, 2; Victor Wilson, "Caught In Own Bias Trap," New York Herald Tribune, 12 September 1963, 3:11, Holden Papers.

declared, "CORE's housing efforts will continue and multiply until total freedom of residence becomes a reality."¹³²

Like their compatriots working to end employment discrimination, the membership of the housing committee possessed commitment and militancy. Of the group Karl Gregory wrote, "We are prepared to provide the hammer of militant nonviolent direct action whenever such assistance is needed and cleared through the direct action committee."¹³³ Housing discrimination angered CORE members who impatiently demanded change. On the use of subtle discrimination by housing developers and the need for an immediate solution, Karl Gregory declared, "The paradox will be removed, either in the streets or through forceful, effective Government action."¹³⁴

On behalf of Washington CORE Julius Hobson expressed the members' "indignation and disgust" at the appointment of William Calomiris to the Real Estate Commission of the District of Columbia. Hobson characterized the appointment as "an intolerable outrage" and demanded his recall. Since Calomiris had a verifiable record of discriminatory housing practices, Washington CORE deemed him morally unsuitable to serve on the real estate board. Real estate brokers, in particular, exploited the District's African American population. "Taken by and large, there are few groups in the city which have done as [much] damage to its Negro citizens - and to the city as a whole - as discriminatory realtors," chairman Julius Hobson argued. Washington CORE dubbed Calomiris "one of the chief architects of our ghettos." Identifying

¹³²Julius Hobson and Karl Gregory, press release, 11 September 1963, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, F:2:169:0570.

¹³³Karl Gregory, "Recent and Prospective Activities of the Housing Committee of the Congress of Racial Equality," 28 November 1963, 1, 1:1:7, Hobson Collection.

¹³⁴Karl Gregory to David L. Lawrence, 10 September 1963, 2, 1:1:3, Hobson Collection.

racism as "an utter abomination," CORE members labeled the appointment of this man "an insult and a challenge to the Negro community." They believed a failure to prevent the dominance of discriminatory whites in the Real Estate Commission signaled the failure of the District Fair Housing Ordinance even before its issuance.¹³⁵

While awaiting the passage of the Board of Commissioner's directive, the CORE housing committee planned their actions to foster its implementation. They wanted to follow a program similar to the tactics in use to compel the enforcement of Executive Order 11063. They intended to educate African Americans about the new housing opportunities and to direct them to white neighborhoods in need of integration. They planned to help community members file complaints with the D.C. government and to search for loopholes in the ordinance. Finally, they proposed "to ~~being~~ a thorn in the side of vacillating government officials in charge of enforcement, and otherwise to stamping irrevocably in the public mind, that it is CORE to which one turns if one has problems with discrimination in housing [sic]."¹³⁶ When the Fair Housing Ordinance finally became reality in late December 1963, the CORE housing committee mobilized immediately.

First, group members established a new set of priorities. Although they planned to continue their efforts to assist District citizens obtain federally-assisted, suburban housing through Executive Order 11063, their attention turned to the Fair Housing Ordinance. As their primary goal, they decided "to work for [the] complete obliteration of racial discrimination in housing opportunities within

¹³⁵Julius Hobson to Ernest Eiland, 24 October 1963, 1:1:3, Hobson Collection; Julius Hobson to Selected Civil Rights and Civil Leaders, memorandum, [24? October 1963], 1:2:5, Hobson Collection; Press Release, [24? October 1963], 1:2:5, Hobson Collection.

¹³⁶Karl Gregory, "Recent and Prospective Activities of the Housing Committee of the Congress of Racial Equality," 28 November 1963, 2, 1:1:7, Hobson Collection.

the District of Columbia, using the District regulations as the chief tool."¹³⁷ The Fair Housing Ordinance went into effect on January 20, 1964 and used police regulations to eliminate discrimination in housing in the District of Columbia. The mandate prohibited discrimination in the rental or sale of private housing, advertising, the financing of home mortgages and services provided to tenants. It also required real estate offices and apartment houses to post a notice of the Fair Housing Regulation. The order invested the Commissioners' Council on Human Relations, Corporation Counsel and Real Estate Board with the power to enforce the order. Maximum penalties included fines up to \$500, imprisonment for up to ten days and the possibility of the loss or suspension of a broker's real estate license.¹³⁸

Although members of Washington CORE privately critiqued the fair housing law as weak, they publicly celebrated its passage and endorsed it. On behalf of Washington CORE, Norma Shelton commended the Board of Commissioners for the directive. The new anti-discrimination order, she wrote, "gives legal status to the moral right [for decent and safe housing] many of us have espoused and involves our government-as it should be involved-in the struggle to realize the ideas of the American Creed." Despite the endorsement, she indicated the areas where the regulation needed improvement: "We look forward to the time when all housing offered to the public for rent or sale will be covered by the ordinance; when revocation of a broker's license will be specified as a penalty for violation; and speedy enforcement of the order will be a concrete reality in all cases where discrimination is met."¹³⁹

¹³⁷Thomas Ploss and Norma Shelton, "Report of the Housing Committee to the Chairman and the Executive Committee," 3 January 1964, 1, 6:5, Holden Papers.

¹³⁸Board of Commissioners, Government of the District of Columbia, "News Release," [December 1963], 1-2, 1:2:5, Hobson Collection.

¹³⁹Norma Shelton to the D.C. Commissioners, 9 January 1964, 5:9,

Because of their experience with President Kennedy's anti-discrimination mandate, one of the group's primary concerns involved the possibility of the ineffectual enforcement of the Fair Housing Order. Karl Gregory warned his fellow committee workers, "The normal government tendency is to wait for complaints and then delay while procedures are determined to meet problematical situations, situation by situation." To avoid this problem Gregory advised the CORE housing committee to engage a battery of lawyers to comb the ordinance for weaknesses and enforcement problems and then push for their immediate correction. Gregory also believed that an early display of the public's seriousness and militancy concerning fair housing would foster the enforcement of the regulation. He suggested that CORE members inspect as many real estate offices as possible on January 20 to determine who posted the non-discrimination statement as required by the ordinance. If CORE compiled the results of their observations and issued a press release that same day, it "would impress people on the sincerity and alertness of CORE's efforts." "Above all," he continued, "it would convey the message, better than any words would do, the Negro community is impatient and will not forgive delays.[sic]"¹⁴⁰

The Washington CORE housing committee filed nine complaints regarding violations of the Fair Housing Ordinance within eight days of the enactment of the order. Most documented the failure of apartment complexes to post the ordinance itself, while other complaints described actual discrimination. For example, management stated bluntly "[we] don't rent to Negroes" or informed African American renters "No children." Although the housing committee intended to give the

Holden Papers; form letter from [Anna Holden], Christmas 1963, 2:4, Holden Papers.

¹⁴⁰Karl D. Gregory, "An Outline Of A Proposed Program To Implement The District Housing Ordinance," 2 January 1964, 5:5, Holden Papers.

Commissioner's Council on Human Relations the opportunity to act on violations of the fair housing directive prior to the use of direct action by CORE, the group sprung into action on February 2, 1964.¹⁴¹

It organized picketing and a sit-in at the Park Naylor Apartments because of the intransigence of the management.¹⁴² The complex manager refused to rent an apartment to Mordecai Johnson, an African American CORE activist, and informed Tom Ploss, a white CORE member, blacks were not welcome. Lee and Gerald Charles, an African American couple with one child, tried to move into the complex with no better success. Since the landlord seemed amenable to their inquiry, showed them an apartment and allowed them to submit an application, the Charles' arranged to vacate their current home. After ten days of inaction concerning their application and many anxious inquiries, the company informed the couple they wanted tenants with professional occupations. After filing a complaint against the Hartman Realty Company, the Charles' learned that the complex would rent to them if they passed the company's credit investigation. Gerald Charles labeled the inquiry, which sought the verification of his income, as "excessive and unorthodox."¹⁴³

In support of this complaint CORE submitted statements from Daniel Turner, Frank Weil and Robert Greene. Like Lee and Gerald Charles, Daniel Turner, an African American CORE member, failed to rent a Park Naylor apartment because he lacked professional status. Since the manager neglected to mention this qualification at his first inquiry,

¹⁴¹Quoted in "Complaints Filed 1/28/64," 4:6, Holden Papers; "Agenda Housing Committee Meeting," 16 January 1964, 6:5, Holden Papers.

¹⁴²"Agenda Housing Committee Meeting," 30 January 1964, 6:5, Holden Papers.

¹⁴³"Complaints Filed 1/28/64," 4:6, Holden Papers; Mr. and Mrs. Gerald T. Charles, "Complaint of Possible Violation of Commissioner's Fair Housing Regulation," [February 1964], 4:15, Holden Papers; Gerald T. Charles to Paul M. Rilling, 20 February 1964, 4:15, Holden Papers; "CORE Testing List," [4 April 1964], 6:3, Holden Papers.

Turner asked whether or not the complex would rent to people of color. The Hartman Realty Company replied, "No, we are not!" When Frank Weil and Robert Greene, two white men, conducted separate tests of the complex, the manager never inquired about their occupations nor informed them of any occupational restrictions.¹⁴⁴

With less than two weeks before the expiration of his current lease and no news from the real estate company, a very angry Gerald Charles wrote directly to Paul Rilling, Executive Director of the Commissioner's Council on Human Relations. He expressed his anger at the Hartman Realty Company for their treatment of him, but also at the government of the District of Columbia. He took issue with the human rights commission for accepting the delaying tactics employed by the apartment complex. In Charles' opinion, the management painstakingly examined his qualifications only to oppose his family's residence at Park Naylor. "I contend I have been discriminated against because I am a Negro and it is not my responsibility to provide verification for each and every item on the application which I filled out," Charles contended. He continued, "Your lethargic and unbelieving attitude toward my complaint leads me to believe that you feel it is the responsibility of the complainant to justify his complaint." "I think," Charles asserted, "it is your responsibility to determine whether I have or have not been discriminated against because I am a Negro."¹⁴⁵

The council intervened on his behalf and through mediation secured an apartment for the Charles family at Park Naylor Apartments. Although glad to have a place to reside, Gerald Charles found the resolution of

¹⁴⁴Quoted in Daniel Turner, "Statement," 19 February 1964, 4:15, Holden Papers; Frank Weil, "Statement (copy)," 2 February 1964, 4:15, Holden Papers; Robert F. Greene to Paul Rilling, 26 February 1964, 4:15, Holden Papers.

¹⁴⁵Gerald T. Charles to Paul M. Rilling, 20 February 1964, 4:15, Holden Papers.

his case unsatisfying. The resident manager began placing every African American who desired an apartment at Park Naylor in the same building and arranging for white residents to move into other structures. Again Gerald Charles expressed his displeasure to Paul Rilling. He declared, "I Have Been Discriminated Against by Hartman Realty. They have broken the law and you have not proved to me that they did not.[sic]" The Commissioner's council not only failed to combat the past racism of the company, but encouraged them to continue. He asserted, "if your office does not intercede we will be in the degrading position of being used in an openly flagrant display of segregation. The prospect of that will be intolerable." Revealing the commitment and militance he shared with fellow members of CORE, Charles finished, "If it comes to pass that we are segregated against we will try to drag everyone concerned through every court we can and let the public know the justice we received from [the] Washington, D.C. Government."¹⁴⁶

As chairman of Washington CORE Julius Hobson reiterated the concerns voiced by Gerald Charles. CORE believed the Commissioner's Council on Human Relations poorly handled the eleven complaints filed with their agency by CORE between January 28 and March 5, 1964. Although the commission helped individuals secure apartments, they did not act to end housing discrimination. In other words, the council conciliated complaints rather than initiating policy to prevent further violations of the Fair Housing Order. Hobson summarized,

These enumerated problems cause CORE great concern because they tend to indicate that the Council is not acting within the scope of its full potential to end discrimination in housing, nor dealing with all phases of a complaint, but is merely 'conciliating' respondents when they are the subject of complaints.

¹⁴⁶Gerald T. Charles to Paul Rilling, 5 March 1964, 4:15, Holden Papers; Julius Hobson to Paul Rilling, 5 March 1964, 2-3, 4:6, Holden Papers.

Only with "affirmative action" would the council improve housing opportunities for District of Columbia citizens of color. CORE suggested maintaining an open file on a delinquent realtor even after the resolution of the original complaint and issuing policy statements which clarified the Commission's application of the Fair Housing Order.¹⁴⁷

Although the Commissioner's Council on Human Relations pledged to continue to encourage reconciliation through negotiation, it supported the suggestions raised by Washington CORE. To discourage housing owners and agents from repeat offenses, Paul Rilling reported, "We take the position that the corrective action in a specific case disposes of that case but that the file remains open and is subject to further checks from time to time." The board members also intended to announce the positions of the council on murky areas of the police regulation to prevent violations of the fair housing directive from recurring.¹⁴⁸ Concerning the Charles case against the Hartman Realty Company, the council agreed to keep the case open for further investigation and future complaints. By late April 1964 the case resolved itself when two white persons moved into the building occupied by the Charles family and an African American settled into another section of the complex.¹⁴⁹

As well as testing apartment complexes for compliance with the Fair Housing Order, members of the housing committee investigated real estate offices during the spring of 1964. Anna Holden, a white woman working for the National Capital Area Health and Welfare Council

¹⁴⁷Julius Hobson to Paul Rilling, 5 March 1964, 3 and 1-4, 4:6, Holden Papers.

¹⁴⁸Paul Rilling to Julius Hobson, 24 March 1964, 1 and 2, 4:6, Holden Papers.

¹⁴⁹"Agenda Housing Committee Meeting," 27 February 1964, 6:5, Holden Papers; "Complaints as of 4/20/[64]," 4:6, Holden Papers.

studying child-rearing practices among low income families, coordinated this campaign.¹⁵⁰ CORE testers tried to determine whether or not real estate agencies, such as Boss & Phelps, William J. Davis, Shannon & Luchs and Cafritz Realtors, provided white and black citizens with the same apartment listings. They also observed whether or not an agency posted the fair housing directive prominently. CORE activists worked in pairs, the black and white testers each requesting the same information within a short period of time. To ensure the validity of their research, Holden instructed testers to dress neatly, to tell the truth at all times and to behave courteously. Under no circumstances should the testers bait agency staff or engage in debate. After any test which revealed discrepancies of treatment between the participants, they needed to complete a type-written, notarized report. When African American Julius Johnson and Leonard Goodman, a white, tested several real estate agencies in May 1964, brokers provided each activist with different apartment listings. Realty staff often provided Johnson with only one listing while Goodman received several.¹⁵¹

When the same thing happened to Herbert Woods, an African American housing committee member, and caucasian Tom Ploss, they filed a complaint with the Human Relations Council against the Frank S. Phillips Realty Company. To Woods, the agency's "insufferable two-faced act" represented "an outrageous violation of my fundamental rights as an

¹⁵⁰Form letter from [Anna Holden], Christmas 1963, 2:4, Holden Papers; Anna Holden to James McCain, 22 September 1963, 4, 2:9, Holden Papers.

¹⁵¹[Anna Holden], "CORE Testing of Real Estate Offices," 4 April 1964, 1-3, 6:4, Holden Papers; "Agenda Housing Committee," 9 April 1964, 6:5, Holden Papers; For realtor testing see, for example, "Statement of Julius A. Johnson Concerning Boss & Phelps, Inc.," 6 May 1964, 4:2, Holden Papers; "Statement of Leonard S. Goodman Concerning Boss & Phelps, Inc.," 6 May 1964, 4:2, Holden Papers; "Statement of Julius A. Johnson Concerning William J. Davis, Inc.," 6 May 1964, 4:7, Holden Papers; "Statement of Leonard S. Goodman Concerning William J. Davis, Inc.," 6 May 1964, 4:7, Holden Papers.

American Citizen and a clear-cut violation of the District of Columbia fair housing ordinance."¹⁵² The CORE housing committee followed this complaint with several more against discriminatory realtors, prompting the Commissioner's Council on Human Relations to work with the Real Estate Commission, the Board of Realtors and the Washington Real Estate Brokers Association on a method for listing housing opportunities in a new, non-discriminatory way. The housing committee suggested the public posting of all apartment listings and the prompt investigation and prosecution of violators.¹⁵³

Because of the time-consuming nature of the investigation of housing discrimination and the action taken to combat it, CORE members often expressed their desire to expand their housing campaign but lacked the resources, workers and time to engage in many activities simultaneously. During the fall of 1963 and spring of 1964 the housing committee investigated and worked on small programs designed to enforce housing codes, target slum lords and protect people from reprisal evictions. CORE workers wanted to help slum neighborhoods form self-help groups and initiate clean-up campaigns. They discussed programs to ensure adequate public housing and methods to stop urban renewal from being "Negro removal." Other ideas relied on the intervention of the government. CORE thought public officials could initiate rent control, purchase condemned housing and help low-income citizens form co-operatives, and revoke the real estate licenses of anyone guilty of repeated violations of the Housing Code. ¹⁵⁴

¹⁵²Herbert L. Woods to Paul Rilling, 8 May 1964, 4:24, Holden Papers.

¹⁵³Ruth Bates Harris to Thomas G. Ploss, 24 June 1964, 4:10, Holden Papers; "Agenda Housing Committee," 7 May 1964, 2, 6:5, Holden Papers.

¹⁵⁴"Agenda Housing Committee," 23 April 1964, 6:5, Holden Papers; "Agenda Housing Committee," 16 January 1964, 6:5, Holden Papers; "Agenda

During this period of intense activism to combat housing discrimination, the employment campaign faltered. Between October 1963 and the summer of 1964 the employment committee became the Safeway committee because it targeted one company only, Safeway Stores.¹⁵⁵ Despite their concentration, CORE members resolved the campaign unremarkably. They accused the grocery store of token hiring and promotion practices. Although the merit hiring plan and statistics of the company looked good, CORE labeled them deceptive. The employment committee believed that company management hired a representative number of African Americans at low-paying, menial jobs, but hired them in token numbers at high-paying jobs. Rather than bickering over statistics, the committee declared, "We judge by what we see." "We do not see enough 'black' in Safeway managerial staff positions to suit us," they argued. CORE utilized weekend picketing and a boycott of Safeway Stores to compel the company to go beyond a merit hiring policy which only looked good on paper. Unfortunately, the employment committee sometimes lacked the manpower to mount effective picket lines.¹⁵⁶

In the end, Julius Hobson closed the campaign five months after it began. In defense of its fair hiring policy, the division manager of Safeway indicated that between June and October of 1963 the company had hired 223 African Americans, an increase of 27.7 percent. But when

Housing Committee," 5 December 1963, 6:5, Holden Papers; "Emergency Housing Program For the District of Columbia," [1963], 1:2:5, Hobson Collection; Karl Gregory, "Recent and Prospective Activities of the Housing Committee of the Congress of Racial Equality," 28 November 1963, 3, 1:1:7, Hobson Collection.

¹⁵⁵"Confidential[,] Washington CORE[,] Officers," 26 February 1964, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00353.

¹⁵⁶"Safeway, CORE to Meet After Picketing Here," The Sunday Star, 13 October 1963, 21:7:3, Hobson Collection; [Report of a meeting between Naomi Eftis, Elwood Jackson and Ethelbert Haskins of CORE and Safeway officials], 19 January 1964, 2, 3:13, Holden Papers; "Washington CORE Minutes of the Meeting," 12 November 1963, 1, 1:1:7, Hobson Collection.

Hobson declared victory, little had changed. Safeway still employed the same three black managers who worked for the company before the campaign began and had increased the number of African American personnel hired during the same period by a very small .3 percent. Although glad Washington CORE had declared peace with his company, the division manager noted, "most of the facts revealed by the committee have been available for quite some time. It seems, therefore, that the principal problem between Safeway Stores and the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) stemmed from lack of adequate channels of communication, rather than any major difference of objectives.[sic]"¹⁵⁷

Between the fall of 1963 and the summer of 1964 the CORE membership turned its energies away from employment discrimination. In addition to the housing campaign, Washington CORE activists targeted Benjamin Franklin University to convince the business school to admit people of color, circulated petitions to obtain home rule for the District of Columbia and registered D.C. voters for participation in their first presidential election.¹⁵⁸ Although the members of Washington CORE diversified their campaign against racial discrimination, their community remained united by several characteristics. CORE activists shared militancy, commitment, moral indignation, deeply held beliefs and the intention to use nonviolent direct action and the power of the government to eradicate racism in the District of Columbia. Despite sharing similar goals and beliefs, however, the membership of Washington CORE began to disagree on their

¹⁵⁷J.A. Anderson to Julius Hobson, 27 February 1964, 1, 1:1:4, Hobson Collection; [J.A. Anderson?] of Safeway Stores to Julian B. Hobson, 11 October 1963, 1-2, 3:13, Holden Papers; Julius Hobson to J.A. Anderson, 25 February 1964, 1-3, 3:13, Holden Papers.

¹⁵⁸See for example "Benjamin Franklin University A Fact Sheet," [14? November 1963], 1:1:3, Hobson Collection; Form letter from [Anna Holden], Christmas 1963, 2:4, Holden Papers; "Voter Registration Kick-Off Rally," flyer, 3 January 1964, 1:2:5, Hobson Collection.

priorities, the methods they should employ, how they should make decisions and who should make them. During 1964 these differences erupted into a serious power struggle, irrevocably dividing the Washington CORE community.

Chapter 3

“‘Which Side Are You On?’: Decision-making, Power and the Disintegration
of the Washington, D.C. CORE Community, 1964”

Which Side Are You On?

(arr:Core)

Come all you freedom lovers, good news to you I'll tell
About that good old freedom fight that's come in here to dwell.

Oh, which side are you on, boy?
Which side are you on?
Which side are you on, boy?
Which side are you on?

My father was a freedom fighter and I'm his grateful son,
I'll stick to that freedom fight till every battle's won.

(Chorus)

They say in Hinds County, no neutrals have we met
Your either for the freedom ride or you talk for Ross Barnett.

(Chorus)

Oh, brothers, can you stand it? Oh, tell me how you can.
Will you be an Uncle Tom or will you be a man?

(Chorus)

No time for Mr Charlie, don't listen to his lies.
Us poor folks haven't got a chance unless we organize.

(Chorus)

Oh, brothers, can you stand it? Oh, tell me how you can.
Will you be an Uncle Tom or will you be a man?

(Chorus)

Congress of Racial Equality, Sit-In Songs: Songs of the Freedom Riders,
New York: Audio Fidelity Records, 1962.

As the Washington, D.C. CORE community increasingly embraced individuals with new interests, these members began to lead the organization in new directions. The membership continued to share basic philosophies and goals, but it began to disagree on the best methods to eradicate racism, the process of decision-making and who should control it. Washington CORE chairman Julius Hobson responded to his loss of influence in the organization by tightening his grip. He wanted decision-making to rest with him and his small, hand picked cabinet and he wanted Washington CORE to follow the methods and issues he deemed right. To hold onto power he became increasingly autocratic. An opposition movement, centered on the housing committee, arose to oust him and to achieve democratic reforms. The Washington CORE community--divided over power, not ideological differences--disintegrated into two factions. A very hostile fight erupted during the winter and spring of 1964 between the supporters of Julius Hobson and the oppositional faction, each side battling to save the existence of CORE and their activist community as they defined it. The dispute dominated the attention of the Washington CORE membership. Alfred Ochs, a member of the Prince George's County, Maryland chapter of CORE, observed of the nearby Washington affiliate, "I am saddened that internal conflicts and power struggles occupy so much time of those who are engaged in our common cause."¹

The members who wanted to make decision-making more democratic in Washington CORE first tried to reform the organization through the chapter machinery. Besides trying to use parliamentary procedure and CORE Rules For Action to gain more power and a greater voice in the chapter, Hobson's opposition decided to gain leadership of the

¹Alfred Ochs to To whom it may concern, 20 May 1964, 1, 3:14, Holden Papers.

organization through the election process. The opposition faction nominated Ethelbert Haskins and a slate of candidates pledged to reform the affiliate and to make it more democratic. Because the members of the oppositional faction walked out of the nominating meeting as a result of the autocratic actions of Julius Hobson, the Hobson ticket went unopposed. Although the national office asked Washington CORE to postpone the May election, it went ahead as scheduled.

In response, the members opposed to the leadership of Julius Hobson asked the national organization to expel him and to place the Washington affiliate into trusteeship until the CORE chapter began to function more democratically. The oppositional faction provided the governing body of national CORE with an overwhelming amount of evidence documenting Julius Hobson's autocratic administration of the chapter. They built their case around his undemocratic actions, violation of CORE rules and procedures and abuse of power as the Southeastern Regional Representative to national CORE. Specifically they supported their contention that Hobson hindered democracy in the chapter by misusing parliamentary procedure, making decisions unilaterally and limiting the agenda of meetings. The documentation also substantiated their contention that Hobson and his supporters tampered with the active membership list to determine those eligible to vote at chapter meetings and the May election.

By the May 12 election, the Washington CORE community was completely divided. Each side distrusted the other and the membership behaved in very un-CORE like ways. Julius Hobson incorporated the affiliate under his name to prevent a take-over by the opposition movement; one member asked the police to attend a particularly volatile meeting to prevent violence; another CORE activist illegally taped telephone calls; and the combatants exchanged harsh words in private and

in public. As the infighting incapacitated the CORE group and the dissension began to take place in the Washington news media, the national office of the Congress of Racial Equality intervened at the request of the oppositional faction. On May 22, 1964 the National Action Council considered the evidence provided by the opposition faction and heard testimony from each side. Calling the charges substantial, serious and valid, the national decision-making body instructed Julius Hobson to reform his practices and to become a more democratic leader.

Julius Hobson made no attempt to obey the directives set forth by the National Action Council and threatened to take his followers and defect to another civil rights organization. The oppositional faction again prepared documentation for the national organization, demonstrating that Julius Hobson ran CORE in an undemocratic manner and documenting his violations of the May 22 NAC directives. As a result of the evidence presented by the oppositional faction on June 19, NAC voted to expel Julius Hobson from CORE. In response, Hobson and sixty of his followers left Washington CORE and formed an Associated Community Teams (ACT) chapter. Hobson also challenged his expulsion from the organization at the July national CORE convention. Although the problems of Washington CORE raised a lot of discussion at the convention, delegates from CORE chapters throughout the United States rejected Hobson's appeal and affirmed the NAC decision.

Although its local chapters operated autonomously, the national organization provided assistance to its local affiliates and intervened in crisis moments to resolve conflicts and problems. In the case of Washington CORE, the national body resolved the crisis by mandating a more democratic process in the affiliate. Through the intervention and

guidance of national personnel, the Washington, D.C. CORE community began to reorganize. As in the case of the 1961 coup which brought Julius Hobson to power in Washington CORE, national CORE fundamentally transformed the Washington CORE community once again.

To trace the involvement of the national organization in local chapter affairs and to explore the Washington CORE factionalism of 1964 as a disagreement over decision-making and power rather than ideology, this chapter closely dissects the leadership style of Julius Hobson, his caucuses' actions and the case presented against him by the oppositional faction. Since CORE members differed over the means to achieve their victory over racism rather than their beliefs and goals, the first section re-iterates the values, objectives and demographics shared by this community. Next, the narrative traces how Julius Hobson's personality and the structure of Washington CORE contributed to his dominance in the organization. The evidence which follows presents the efforts of the oppositional faction to reform the group through chapter machinery and national CORE. The objectives of the Haskins platform and the evidence they compile to convince the national body to intervene on their behalf particularly illustrates the primary disagreement between Julius Hobson and those in opposition to him. Rather than differing over ideology and objectives, they battled over the best means--autocratic or democratic--to achieve victory. The complete dissolution of the community, the chaos created by this power struggle and the actions of national CORE to resolve the situation concludes the chapter.

Despite disagreements over power and decision-making in Washington CORE during 1964, the membership still shared basic values, goals and demographic characteristics. Richard Scupi, a white Washington CORE lawyer working on a new constitution for the chapter during the

factional crisis, reminded his fellow activists of the factors that bound them together. Scupi clearly believed Washington CORE community members continued to share important goals and philosophies despite the dissension which plagued them. In the midst of the struggle between the supporters of Julius Hobson and the oppositional faction, Richard Scupi wrote to the entire membership, provided each person with a draft of the proposed constitution and urged its ratification. He stated,

This letter is being mailed to persons who have shown an acceptance of the principles of CORE and of nonviolent, direct action tactics as the method by which to further these principles. This unites us all, and whatever disagreements exist as to the sort of chapter best suited to bring FREEDOM NOW should not disrupt this unity of goals and efforts.²

Although their disagreements centered on the structure of their organization, the decision-making process and who should control those decisions, the Washington CORE community shared the goals, beliefs, values and tactics illustrated in the preceding chapter. The members intended to eradicate racism in the District of Columbia with nonviolent direct action. They wanted to create an integrated American society guided by the principle of equality of opportunity. Although the group increasingly espoused preferential treatment for those subjected to discrimination, the goal of members remained equality of opportunity. They argued for affirmative action only until an equal playing field established itself. The membership also believed that a close relationship existed between racial discrimination and poverty. By ending racism in employment, housing, education, government and all other areas of life, the group hoped to solve the problem of poverty in the black community.

²Richard Scupi to CORE Member, 6 March 1964, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, F:2:169:0473.

The members possessed commitment, militancy and a desire to take action. These people shared moral indignation, anger and impatience because they despised racism. Tokenism irritated them. As a result of their commitment to action, they particularly loathed apathetic individuals who failed to take action or who moved too slowly. Particularly, CORE members criticized those black and white leaders who interminably studied racism but refused to take action.

The Washington CORE community upheld nonviolent direct action as the best method to end racism in the District of Columbia. CORE members followed the CORE rules and procedures. Direct action represented the last resort, taken only after thorough investigation, negotiation and efforts to earn public support. They agreed on using many active tactics, including picketing, marches, rallies, economic boycotts and various forms of sit-ins. Unlike other local chapters, Washington CORE activists also tried to persuade the national government to intervene in local affairs.

As well as possessing similar tactics, goals and beliefs concerning racial discrimination in the District of Columbia, the people who composed Washington CORE shared similar backgrounds. Adults, not students, peopled this interracial community. Most Washington CORE activists worked full time in middle class occupations and cared for families. Several married couples joined the organization together, while other active CORE members brought their spouses and children to march in picket lines. When Genevieve Hughes completed her reorganization of Washington CORE in March, 1961 she characterized it as an adult group which "will never be as fast-moving as a younger group."³

³Genevieve Hughes, "Field Work Report," 17 February to 23 March 1961, 6, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:255:01141; Genevieve [Hughes] to Gordon Carey, [20 March 1961], The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00196.

Two years later Washington CORE remained an adult group. An article in The Washington COREspondent heralded an agreement between the Nonviolent Action Group (NAG) and CORE. NAG decided to provide CORE with regular support at its action projects. The editor declared this "a boon" since "CORE is an organization of working adults and NAG is a college student group." "Weekday 9-5 activities were previously out of the question for all but a hand full of CORE members. Now we can plan picketing projects for the middle of the week as well as on the weekends," the author concluded.⁴ Despite this arrangement most Washington CORE picketing continued to occur on weekends because most of the members worked full time.

In 1964 Julius Hobson stated that CORE was "a middle-class group."⁵ The majority of those individuals with identifiable occupations worked in a middle class profession ranging from law and business to education and government work. Washington CORE particularly benefitted from the talents of its many lawyers who worked in law firms, at universities and in the federal government.⁶ The federal government employed other CORE members including a physicist in the

⁴"NAG Cooperation," The Washington COREspondent, 1:9 (February 1963): 1, 1:2:5, Hobson Collection.

⁵William Raspberry and Robert Baker, "Hobson Expelled by National CORE," The Washington Post, 21 June 1964, A6.

⁶Genevieve Hughes, "Field Work Report," 17 February to 23 March 1961, 7-9, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:255:01142-01143; "New Constitution," The Washington COREspondent, [1:1 (May 1962)]: 1, 1:2:5, Hobson Collection; "Law Offices of Scupi and Witt," letterhead, Richard Scupi to Leonard Weinstein, 4 December 1963, 1:1:3, Hobson Collection; "Housing," The Washington COREspondent, 2:3 (October 1963): 1, 3:13, Holden Papers; [Karl Gregory], "Staff of the Housing Committee," 28 November 1963, 1:1:7, Hobson Collection; "CORE Testing List," [4 April 1964], 6:3, Holden Papers; "Statement of Thomas H. Ploss," 10 June 1964, 3:16, Holden Papers; "Statement of Karl D. Gregory and Mordecai C. Johnson, Concerning the H.G. Smith Realty Co.," [26 June 1964], 1, 4:35, Holden Papers; "Confidential Washington CORE Officers," 26 February 1964, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00353.

Underwater Acoustics Division, an economist at the Budget Bureau, a mathematician at the National Bureau of Standards and a research economist at the Department of Labor.⁷ Other occupations represented in Washington CORE included a certified public accountant, a university professor, a music teacher, a minister, a United States Postal Service worker, a probation officer and the director of a settlement house.⁸

Given the large population of the District of Columbia, a relatively small number of people belonged to Washington CORE and shared these demographic characteristics, tactics, goals and beliefs. Although Julius Hobson announced in various interviews during 1964 that the organization numbered 700, 600 and 450 members, few of these individuals did more than make financial contributions.⁹ Prior to the factionalism of the winter and spring of 1964, Washington CORE seldom differentiated between active members and financial supporters. The

⁷W.F Curtis to Paul Bennett, memorandum, 1 March 1963, 1:1:3, Hobson Collection; "Statement of Karl D. Gregory and Mordecai C. Johnson, Concerning the H.G. Smith Realty Co.," [26 June 1964], 1, 4:35, Holden Papers; "CORE Fires Leader Who Accused Builders Of Trying to Evade Kennedy Antibias Order," Wall Street Journal, 12 September 1963, 2; "Procedure for the Case Worker," [July 1963], 3, 1:2:6, Hobson Collection; John Peter Huttman to W. Willard Wirtz, 7 February 1963, 1, 1:1:3, Hobson Collection.

⁸Marilyn Outlaw, statement, Exhibit #6, 1 May 1964, 3:11, Holden Papers; "Housing," The Washington COREspondent, 2:3 (October 1963): 1, 3:13, Holden Papers; Genevieve Hughes, "Field Work Report," 17 February to 23 March 1961, 7-9, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:255:01142-01143; "Washington CORE - Active Voting List Submitted to National CORE," 31 March 1964, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 1:89:00087; Walter Gold, "CORE Defers Decision of School Boycott," Washington Star, 25 March 1964, Exhibit #28, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, F:2:169:0587; "Home Rules Bills Organizations," sign-up sheet, [November 1963], 3, 1:1:3, Hobson Collection; Joan Bacchus, "Washington CORE Minutes of the Meeting," 12 November 1963, 3, 1:1:7, Hobson Collection.

⁹Susanna McBee, "Use of School Boycott as a Weapon Splits Negro Leaders," The Washington Post, 17 March 1964, C1; Walter Gold, "CORE Defers Decision on School Boycott," Washington Star, 25 March 1964, Exhibit #28, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, F:2:169:0587; "CORE Upholds Hobson Ouster at Convention," Washington Evening Star, 4 July 1964, 21:7:3, Hobson Collection.

"CORE Enrollment as of May, 1962" consisted of 222 people.¹⁰

Applications for membership in 1963 asked the signer to choose between active or associate status.¹¹

Since active membership bestowed voting rights, it became important to establish "Active Voting Lists" when infighting erupted in the chapter. These lists reveal the small size of this activist community. Despite "the great influx of new members" during the fall of 1963, the first membership list prepared during the winter of 1964 identified only 133 people as active members. When reassessed after the group inaugurated new stipulations for membership in March 1964, only 59 of these people appeared on the final active voting list of 106 prepared for the May 1964 election.¹²

Although demographics, values, goals and tactics united the membership of Washington CORE, dissension over decision-making destroyed the tiny community during the winter and spring of 1964. Despite so many similarities, CORE members disagreed on the issue of how to make decisions and who should control the process. In other words, the members supportive of Julius Hobson and the people involved in the opposition movement differed on the best means to fight the war they waged against racism. Julius Hobson dominated the organization between 1961 and 1964 and ruled Washington CORE autocratically. As people in opposition to this type of leadership challenged his authority, Hobson

¹⁰"CORE Enrollment as of May, 1962," 1:2:3, Hobson Collection.

¹¹"Application for Membership," [1963], 1:2:5, Hobson Collection; Jody Jamieson to National CORE Headquarters, 27 April 1964, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, F:2:169:0526; "CORE - New Members," 20 August to 3 September 1963, 2, 1:2:3, Hobson Collection.

¹²"Non-Violent Institute," The Washington COREspondent, 2:3 (October 1963): 3, 3:13, Holden Papers; "Washington CORE Active Voting List," [February 1964], 3:6, Holden Papers; "Washington CORE - Active Voting List Submitted to National CORE," 31 March 1964, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 1:89:00087.

became increasingly undemocratic in his running of the organization.

Julius Hobson controlled decision-making in Washington CORE and at times administered the chapter undemocratically. The evidence establishes both Hobson's authoritarian leadership style and the power struggle it engendered. Julius Hobson, himself, identified his management of Washington CORE as undemocratic. His charisma contributed to his influence over decision-making in Washington CORE and his popularity in the District of Columbia. Hobson dominated Washington CORE because he was a powerful figure, but also because the structure of the organization centralized power in the office of the chairman. Finally, the extensive case against Julius Hobson developed by his opposition and presented to the national organization overwhelmingly documents the undemocratic administration of Washington CORE under Julius Hobson.

As the opposition built its case against the chairman of Washington CORE, Julius Hobson seemed to embrace their characterization of him as undemocratic. When a journalist asked him to comment on the charges of his critics, he said, "You can't run a revolution with Roberts Rules of Order."¹³ At a meeting of the Washington CORE membership held after the National Action Council decided to expel Hobson, he made his case to his supporters and reiterated this sentiment. One observer noted he "made no bones about charges from opponents" and asserted "[you] can't run a Rev[olution] by Rob's Rules[.]"¹⁴

During an interview three years later Julius Hobson explained his

¹³"Disruptive Force Seen As Threat to CORE," Washington Evening Star, 18 April 1964, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, F:2:169:0524.

¹⁴Hobson's remarks recorded by [Anna Holden], [notes from a phone call concerning the CORE meeting of 23 June 1964], 24 June 1964, 3:10, Holden Papers.

approach to leadership further. He recalled,

I was kicked out [of CORE] because I reached a point in the movement where I believed that you couldn't run a revolution with Roberts Rules of Order, that you had to have somebody in charge who would make a decision and see that it was enforced. I felt that CORE had come to a point where it was hung up on constitutions, by-laws, and democracy which never worked.

"So," he continued, "we withdrew the Washington chapter, had a benevolent dictatorship and became the most effective chapter in the country, and I can document this."¹⁵

Between 1961 and the spring of 1964, Julius Hobson did exercise an enormous amount of influence over the activities, membership and organizational structure of this Washington CORE community. Applauding his style of leadership, CORE member Mariann Myers remarked, "it does take a strong leader to co-ordinate a group of such individualists as Washington CORE members are."¹⁶ In complete control of the group until the fall of 1963, Julius Hobson focused the energies of his activists on employment discrimination. The extraordinary amount of power held by him derived not only from his leadership experience, but also as a result of the power of his personality.

People either intensely disliked him or loved him. At his death, an acquaintance and co-worker, Shirl Fairley, confided to Hobson's wife, "With Julie, there was no neutral reaction . . . you either liked him or you hated his guts."¹⁷ One close friend described Julius Hobson as one of the world's "strongest voices for justice and universal love."¹⁸ To

¹⁵Julius Hobson, Interview by Katherine M. Shannon, 3 July 1967, transcript, 7, Bunche Collection.

¹⁶Mariann Myers to James Farmer, 23 June 1964, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 1:88:00057.

¹⁷Shirl Fairley to Tina [Hobson], 24 March 1977, 1, 18:2:2, Hobson Collection.

¹⁸Chuck to Tina Hobson, telegram, 26 March 1977, 1, 18:1:1, Hobson Collection.

Kate Trainor Allen "his indomitable spirit, fine mind and far reaching vision" made him a special person.¹⁹ Hobson exuded charisma and commitment. These characteristics helped him to exert strong leadership in Washington CORE. Those who opposed Julius Hobson in CORE attributed part of his influence to his "charismatic qualities."²⁰ During his reign as chair of the organization he became very well known within the District of Columbia and for many people Julius Hobson and Washington CORE became synonymous.

Although not physically imposing at 5 feet 10 inches, the media covering the activities of the Congress of Racial Equality described Julius Hobson as "aggressive and controversial" and the "fiery leader of Washington CORE . . . whose shrewdness is respected by even his bitterest enemies."²¹ One journalist, who reported on the activities of Julius Hobson throughout his life, depicted Hobson to his readers in detail. Charles Conconi wrote,

Hobson fought on his own terms. He saw no need for dashikis, afros, an elaborate handshake, or a phalanx of tough-looking dudes. He wore his conservative suits, a businessman's fedora, and a pipe clenched between his teeth. He also had a quiet, angry, determined look-sometimes posed, sometimes real-that was more frightening than anything the noisy young militants could produce.

Very articulate, Hobson spoke rapidly with a great energy which often displayed his sense of outrage.²²

¹⁹Kate Trainor Allen to Tina [Hobson] and Family, 23 March 1977, 18:1:1, Hobson Collection.

²⁰A member of the opposition quoted in William J. Raspberry, "Hobson, Washington CORE Expecting Showdown With National This Week," Washington Post, 22 June 1964, B1.

²¹[Civil Service Application Form], 18 March 1949, 1, 14:1:2, Hobson Collection; "Hobson To Resign CORE Leadership," Washington City Tribune, 26 March 1964, 21:7:3, Hobson Collection; William Raspberry and Robert Baker, "Hobson Expelled by National CORE," The Washington Post, 21 June 1964, A6.

To answer the question, "What is Hobson really like?", one writer similarly emphasized Hobson's eloquence. He wrote,

Put him before a small, attentive and friendly group and he is eloquent, moving his audience into a personal, emotional bond. You sense an intellect infused with passion, a passion guided by intellect. Ask him real quick what he thinks of the latest pronunciamento by this or that self-styled leader and you get one of those harsh, abrasive, off-the-cuff judgements that have made him famous. When he addresses a large outdoor audience he is abrupt and casual, for he has no urge to drench a crowd with overblown rhetoric. And all those faces of Hobson are the real faces, for this is a man who is contemptuous of trying to 'build an image.' What his listeners see and hear is how he feels right now.²³

As chairman of Washington CORE Julius Hobson frequently spoke with groups about the civil rights movement, race relations in Washington, D.C. and the activities of Washington CORE. He addressed civic organizations, lectured to classes and delivered sermons. Groups including Americans for Democratic Action, Women's International League For Peace and Freedom and the 4-H club asked Hobson to address them.²⁴ He dialogued with students at Howard University, Georgetown University and Hamilton College of New York.²⁵ He also participated in the services of churches, such as St. James Episcopal Church, Tabernacle

²²Charles Conconi, "Goodbye, Mr. Hobson," The Washingtonian, May 1977, 136 and 137.

²³"An Evening to Honor Julius Hobson," program, 14 November 1972, 7, Vertical File: Julius Hobson, Library Division, Moorland Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C.

²⁴Allen Taylor to Julius Hobson, 9 January 1963, 1:1:3, Hobson Collection; Annalee Stewart to Julius Hobson, 21 February 1963, 1:1:3, Hobson Collection; Rubinette Miller et al. to Julius Hobson, 8 June 1964, 21:7:3, Hobson Collection.

²⁵William A. Banner to Julius Hobson, 12 February 1964, 1:1:4, Hobson Collection; Frank Keegan to Julius Hobson, 14 November 1963, 1:1:3, Hobson Collection; Julius Hobson to Matthew A. Zuckerbraun, 27 January 1964, 1:1:4, Hobson Collection.

Baptist Church and Hunter's Memorial A.M.E. Church.²⁶ Julius Hobson's efforts at community education on behalf of CORE succeeded because he wowed audiences. Thank you letters to him often recorded the excitement with which audiences received his talks.²⁷

Hobson's speeches not only incurred enthusiasm, but Hobson, as an individual, greatly affected his listeners. Ruth Weyand Perry, a friend, informed him, "Your presentation last night at the Kensington-Wheaton Democratic Club of CORE's role made a tremendous impact. The kudos I've heard about the effect you had on that group would give you an awful swell head if I even began to recount a few of them."²⁸ After his talk at Temple Sinai "swirls of people enveloped" him. The rabbi, Eugene Lipman, congratulated Hobson on the success of his meeting with the congregation of the synagogue and also remarked on his charisma. Lipman wrote,

Again, I want to thank you for accomplishing even more than I had hoped when the Sinaite kids suggested a meeting of this sort. One unforeseen result which was fascinating was their response to you as a person. Many of the adults as well as the kids had never met anyone quite as single-minded and determined as you before, and it was good for them.²⁹

Others remarked on his charisma and commitment as well. At his death, a friend exclaimed, "How powerful, dedicated and dynamic he was! A true born leader[.]"³⁰ CORE member Robert Young described Julius

²⁶Donald O. Wilson to Julius Hobson, 5 November 1963, 1:1:3, Hobson Collection; Otis C. Redenburg to Julius Hobson, 31 May 1963, 1:1:3, Hobson Collection; Hunter's Memorial A.M.E. Church, Program, 17 May 1964, 21:7:3, Hobson Collection.

²⁷Robert Martin to Julius Hobson, 9 November 1961, 1:1:1, Hobson Collection; Harold Jordan to Julius Hobson, 18 December 1961, 1:1:1, Hobson Collection.

²⁸Ruth Weyand Perry to Julius [Hobson], 24 October 1963, 21:7:3, Hobson Collection.

²⁹Eugene Lipman to Julius Hobson, 1 October 1963, 1:1:3, Hobson Collection.

³⁰Sallee Hardy to Tina [Hobson], 4 April 1977, 2, 18:1:1, Hobson

Hobson as "a man . . . dedicated . . . to the cause of freedom."³¹ His compatriot, Barbara Rosengard, identified Hobson as a "volunteer who has effectively and repeatedly demonstrated his dedication to the fight."³² Julius Hobson, himself, revealed his commitment to the civil rights struggle and to the Congress of Racial Equality when he confided to the director of national CORE, James Farmer, "Sometimes I wish that I could give fulltime to this epoch-making revolution, but even though I cannot, let me assure you that I have every intention of remaining with you atop this tiger, until its back is broken."³³

When the national organization expelled Julius Hobson, Hobson's supporters argued vehemently against the dismissal. In their eyes Julius Hobson represented the leader of the Washington, D.C. movement for black equality. In letters to CORE National Director James Farmer, members of the Hobson faction equated Julius Hobson with Washington, D.C. CORE. In protest of Hobson's "indefensible ouster," active CORE member Charles Hardy argued, "This man has been the leader in Washington's progress towards equal treatment for all. His present programs are unimpeachable, his record of achievement is outstanding, his leadership is deeply respected and his ability to get results is admirable."³⁴ Mariann Myers, "shocked and dismayed" by Hobson's expulsion from CORE, echoed Hardy's argument. She contended, "Even if I weren't a CORE member, as one of the Washington public, I would have

Collection.

³¹Robert Young to James Farmer, 28 June 1964, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, F:2:169:0647.

³²Barbara Rosengard to James Farmer, 26 June 1964, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, F:2:169:0647.

³³Julius Hobson to James Farmer, memorandum, 26 February 1964, 3, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, F:2:169:0454.

³⁴Charles Hardy to James Farmer, 23 June 1964, 2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, F:2:169:0640.

been upset. To most Washingtonians, CORE and Hobson have become almost synonymous."³⁵ CORE member, Barbara Rosengard, felt "as a result of this situation, the Washington community as a whole will no longer have confidence in the name of CORE, whoever may be leading it." She explained, "As it was, prior to the internal problems, Washington CORE was the most effective civil rights group in the Capital and Julius Hobson the most respected leader in this city."³⁶

Their argument linking Julius Hobson and Washington CORE carried at least some truth. Thomas Ploss, co-chair of the Housing Committee and a leader in the opposition faction, explained to national CORE how the clergy of area churches refused members of the housing committee as speakers because of the close connection in their minds between CORE and Julius Hobson. Housing committee members wanted to speak at ghetto churches to inform people of new housing opportunities and to recruit individuals willing to integrate white neighborhoods. Ploss explained,

In our approaches to the ministers we met rebuff often enough to worry us, and in calling upon Bishop Smallwood E. Williams of the large and influential Bible Way Church he was asked why he too declined to participate in the program. Bishop Williams stated that he had recently (February, 1964) spoken with Hobson and Hobson had made his atheism aggressively clear. Bishop Williams said to us, 'You who are not of the Cross can speak elsewhere, but not in my church.'³⁷

Washington CORE became intricately identified with Julius Hobson because of his approach to leadership. Since the chairman liked to make decisions unilaterally, Washington CORE normally followed his agenda. Journalist Charles Conconi remembered his "'I'll do it my way'

³⁵Mariann Myers to James Farmer, 23 June 1964, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 1:88:00057.

³⁶Barbara Rosengard to James Farmer, 26 June 1964, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, F:2:169:0647.

³⁷"Statement of Thomas H. Ploss, D.C. CORE Member," 21 May 1964, 1, 3:16, Holden Papers.

attitude."³⁸ A few months after orchestrating Julius Hobson's election as chair of the Washington CORE chapter, Genevieve Hughes confronted this attitude head on. She declared, "Hobson is absolutely infuriating. I spent the whole morning in a slow burn over his latest." She continued,

I told him in exact detail what I wanted to announce at the CORE meeting emphasizing that volunteers for testing restaurants would have to test most surreptitiously. He did not tell me that he had invited reporters from the Star and the Post to the meeting - or even warn me not to make my announcement.[sic]

Hughes bemoaned Hobson's unilateral decision-making. She felt the resulting press reports concerning CORE's testing plans damaged their campaign before it began by creating a "climate of resistance right from the start."³⁹

By all accounts, Julius Hobson bluntly informed anyone listening of his opinion. "Julius Hobson was a difficult man to know, but you always knew what he thought, because he told you in no uncertain terms," remarked a commentator on WTOP-TV.⁴⁰ One friend of Tina and Julius Hobson believed they made a wonderful couple because Tina tempered Julius' arrogance and impulsiveness by her finesse with people and patience.⁴¹ A Washington lawyer, Joseph Rauh, described Hobson as "the only one with the guts to put his name behind criticism." Although Hobson often directed the criticism at Rauh, he celebrated this aggressive honesty at Hobson's death. Rauh eulogized, "He was great and

³⁸Charles Conconi, "Goodbye, Mr. Hobson," The Washingtonian, May 1977, 136.

³⁹Gen[evieve Hughes] to Gordon [Carey], 3 August 1961, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:254:00922.

⁴⁰Rich Adams, "Editorial on WTOP-TV," 23-24 March 1977, 18:1:1, Hobson Collection.

⁴¹Kate Trainor Allen to Tina [Hobson] and Family, 23 March 1977, 18:1:1, Hobson Collection.

forthright and determined and we will all miss him."⁴²

One person who knew Hobson well remarked, "When he ran CORE he was not engaged in a popularity contest." According to the writer, Hobson stated his mind, refused to plan his comments or take care not to alienate a listener. He explained that Hobson "had no taste for small compromises. He was concerned only with the issues."⁴³ One friend believed this "inability to compromise" was part of Julius Hobson's uniqueness. She compared him to St. Francis of Assisi who used the same characteristic to shake up the Catholic Church, just as Julius Hobson shook up the Establishment. She added, "No one could accomplish what Julius did by being a 'nice guy.'"⁴⁴

This determination to do things his way, combined with a personality based on charisma and commitment, contributed to Julius Hobson's dominance in the Washington chapter of the Congress of Racial Equality during his reign as chairman between 1961 and 1964. The organization and structure of the association further enhanced his power because it centralized control of the organization in the office of the chairman. The initial constitution drafted in March of 1961 when Genevieve Hughes reorganized the Washington CORE chapter and orchestrated Hobson's election provided few principles to guide the division of power within the group.⁴⁵ How the group made decisions, or rather who made them, over the course of the next year remains unclear,

⁴²Joseph L. Rauh, Jr. to Tina Lower Hobson, 25 March 1977, 18:1:1, Hobson Collection.

⁴³"An Evening to Honor Julius Hobson," program, 14 November 1972, 7, Vertical File: Julius Hobson, Library Division, Moorland Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C.

⁴⁴Virginia [?], to Tina and Julius [Hobson], [November 1972?], 1, 17:1:2, Hobson Collection.

⁴⁵Julius Hobson to Members of Washington Congress of Racial Equality, memorandum, 28 March 1961, 3, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00319.

but the constitution that followed placed most power firmly in the hands of the chapter president.

The group ratified this more complicated document in May 1962. The new organizational structure divided responsibilities between the officers, Executive Committee and the membership. The officers, the chairmen of permanent and temporary committees and two elected active members composed the newly created Executive Committee. This body made decisions and guided CORE policy between general membership meetings; it also determined the agenda of the organization. The chairman dominated the Executive Committee because the constitution provided him with the power to appoint the chairs and members of permanent committees, to create temporary committees and to appoint the leadership and membership of those committees.⁴⁶

The 1962 constitution established only three permanent committees: finance, community relations and projects study. All other committees would be temporary, created by the chairman and defined in the Executive Council. The chairman appointed a temporary committee around an action project devised by the projects study group or to fulfill a temporary duty.⁴⁷ The officers elected between 1962 and 1964 indicate the influence Julius Hobson wielded in Washington CORE through his ability to create and staff temporary committees. All but two of the people put forth by nominating committees and elected in 1962, 1963 and 1964 pledged allegiance to Julius Hobson when factionalism in Washington CORE reached its zenith in 1964.⁴⁸

⁴⁶"Constitution of Washington CORE," [adopted May 1962; reprinted 1963], 1-3, 1:2:2, Hobson Collection; "New Constitution," The Washington COREspondent, [1:1 (May 1962)]: 1, 1:2:5, Hobson Collection; "Executive Committee," The Washington COREspondent, [1:1 (May 1962)]: 2, 1:2:5, Hobson Collection.

⁴⁷"Constitution of Washington CORE," [adopted May 1962; reprinted 1963], 2-3, 1:2:2, Hobson Collection; Joan Bacchus, "Washington CORE Minutes of the Meeting," 12 November 1963, 3, 1:1:7, Hobson Collection.

Another temporary committee created by Julius Hobson further reveals how his appointments could influence the outcome of a committee's work. During 1963 Hobson appointed a committee to revamp the 1962 constitution. Chaired by Richard Scupi, a white lawyer and Hobson supporter, the committee drafted a new constitution after extensive discussions in committee and with the Executive Council. Although they accepted suggestions from the general membership in writing, they allowed very little discussion of the document in general membership meetings. When Richard Scupi submitted the majority and minority drafts settled on by the Executive Committee to the membership for ratification, he reminded the CORE activists, "Experience has taught us that a Constitution cannot be written or re-written during the debate at a membership meeting."⁴⁹

Adopted in March of 1964, this constitution centralized power into the hands of Julius Hobson and the Executive Committee even further. Calling themselves the Ad Hoc Committee for an Effective Washington CORE, the group of CORE members opposed to increasing the power of Julius Hobson challenged the new constitution. They wanted "to reform the constitution to protect individual members' rights, provide that control of the chapter reside in the membership rather than the executive committee, and limit the chairman's authority and interference in such vital areas as direct action projects, membership, treasury, and chapter records."⁵⁰ The opposition opposed the 1964 constitution

⁴⁸To establish officers elected in March 1961, May 1962, and May 1963 please see [Committee membership and officer list], [March 1961], 2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00317; "Annual Election of Officers Held May 8 1962," The Washington COREspondent, [1:1 (May 1962)]: 1, 1:2:5, Hobson Collection; "Election Held," The Washington COREspondent, 2:1 (June 1963): 1, 1:2:5, Hobson Collection.

⁴⁹Richard Scupi to CORE member, 6 March 1964, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, F:2:169:0473.

⁵⁰Ad Hoc Committee for an Effective Washington CORE to James

because it abolished some membership rights, including their right to initiate and terminate all action projects; invested the chairman with "all necessary functions of the organization which are not assigned elsewhere herein or by By-law;" and added to the Executive Committee "the past two Chapter Chairmen if they elect to serve." This ensured Julius Hobson membership on the committee even if he decided not to run for re-election.⁵¹

Julius Hobson not only exercised his power in Washington CORE through committee appointments, but also by firing committee leaders or unexpectedly dissolving temporary committees. To illustrate the irresponsibility and undemocratic acts of Julius Hobson as leader of Washington CORE, the oppositional faction detailed the incredible turnover of committee leaders between the winters of 1963 and 1964. "Note that in the past year the Chairman has made 21 appointments of 19 different people to head eight committees," they informed the national office.⁵² Elsewhere the opposition concluded, "19 committee chairmen in 1 year to produce 5 action projects!"⁵³ Although two individuals vacated their posts as a result of personal circumstances, the rest of the turnover ensued because of dissatisfaction with Julius Hobson, the dissolution of temporary committees by the chairman or outright dismissal. Hobson terminated the employment and action committees by inaccurately declaring the constitution made no allowances for them and fired five people from their positions.⁵⁴

Farmer and the National Action Council, memorandum, 27 May 1964, 1-2, 3:10, Holden Papers.

⁵¹"Constitution of Washington CORE," 31 March 1964, 1 and 2, 3:3, Holden Papers.

⁵²Ad-Hoc Sub-Committee for an Effective Washington CORE Chapter, "Section I. Undemocratic and Irresponsible Administration of the Chapter," 8 May 1964, 5, 3:11, Holden Papers.

⁵³[Ad-Hoc Sub-Committee for an Effective Washington CORE Chapter,] [Draft of Section I., D. Inability to retain committee chairmen,] [8 May 1964], 3, 3:10, Holden Papers.

One fired committee chairman, Karl Gregory, learned he no longer chaired the housing committee from the journalists who called for his reaction. Hobson fired Gregory because the press and public criticized the tactics of the CORE housing campaign. Testing for compliance to Executive Order 11063, which prohibited racial discrimination by home builders offering federally insured mortgages, the housing committee filed a complaint against Marumscos Hills Development for discriminating against CORE testers. The developer charged CORE with entrapment since his salesman had sold a home to an African American army sergeant one hour prior to the CORE test.⁵⁵

When the allegations against the housing committee first appeared in the Wall Street Journal, Hobson and Gregory discussed the charges. Hobson assured the housing chair he would deal with the "adverse public criticism." Rather than defending Gregory, Hobson told reporters he fired him for making "unauthorized and unverified complaints." To the Washington Evening Star Hobson "angrily" stated, "He is removed as chairman of the housing committee as of right now."⁵⁶

⁵⁴Ad-Hoc Sub-Committee for an Effective Washington CORE Chapter, "Section I. Undemocratic and Irresponsible Administration of the Chapter," 8 May 1964, 5-6, 3:11, Holden Papers; Joan Bacchus, "Washington CORE Minutes of the Meeting," 12 November 1963, 2 and 3, 1:1:7, Hobson Collection. [Richard Scupi], comments on Hobson's copy of "Section I. Undemocratic and Irresponsible Administration of the Chapter," 8 May 1964, 5-6, 1:2:6, Hobson Collection. His comments do not deny the charges.

⁵⁵"CORE Fires Leader Who Accused Builders of Trying to Evade Kennedy Antibias Order," Wall Street Journal, 12 September 1963, 2, Exhibit 9, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, F:2:169:0570.

⁵⁶"Statement By Karl D. Gregory: The Marumscos Housing Complaint," Appendix C, 28 April 196[4], 1 and 2, 3:11, Holden Papers; Victor Wilson, "Caught In Own Bias Trap," New York Herald Tribune, 12 September 1963, Exhibit 8, 3:11, Holden Papers; "Baseless Charge By CORE Aide Brings Ouster," Washington Evening Star, 11 September 1963, Exhibit 29, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, F:2:169:0587.

At first Karl Gregory refused to comment on the situation. Hobson's actions surprised him because of their earlier discussion and because the chairman had authorized the release of the original complaint to the media. After a reporter and friend at the Washington Evening Star verified the charges, Gregory commented to the press. He told the New York Herald Tribune, "I'm surprised to hear this, particularly since Mr. Hobson told it to the press, but not to me. He can't fire me. I've resigned." After the incident "dozens of CORE members" apologized to Karl Gregory for the chairman's actions, some suggested impeachment proceedings and others protested. When these CORE members criticized Hobson for his actions, he "denied outrightly that he had said I was 'fired.' [sic]" Although Hobson denied firing him when Karl Gregory confronted the Washington CORE president about the dismissal, he agreed to issue a joint press release which declared that Gregory had conducted the campaign "in complete conformity" to CORE principles.⁵⁷

Despite investing the chairman with power over committee appointments and therefore control of the Executive Committee, the 1962 constitution reserved certain rights for the general membership and an active role in organizational decision-making. The constitution provided active members with power in four ways. First, an active member voted on officers, CORE policy, constitutional changes and new members. Second, in all votes the majority ruled. Third, the membership made all decisions to initiate and terminate action projects. Finally, the constitution mandated that group discussion follow parliamentary procedure.⁵⁸ During his chairmanship, however, Julius

⁵⁷ "Statement By Karl D. Gregory: The Marumsco Housing Complaint," Appendix C, 28 April 196[4], 1 and 2, 3:11, Holden Papers; Victor Wilson, "Caught In Own Bias Trap," New York Herald Tribune, 12 September 1963, Exhibit 8, 3:11, Holden Papers; Julius Hobson and Karl Gregory, "Press Release: CORE's Housing Complaints," 11 September 1963, Exhibit 10, 3:11, Holden Papers.

Hobson infringed on these rights and therefore hampered the involvement of the general membership in the decision-making process of Washington CORE.

In response to Hobson's undemocratic acts and abuse of power, an opposition movement developed to reform Washington CORE during the winter of 1964. These members believed Julius Hobson and his supporters had turned Washington CORE into an autocracy, but they wanted to belong to a democracy. Naomi Eftis, a white D.C. public school teacher and chair of the communications committee, helped to organize the people dissatisfied with Julius Hobson's leadership. She described the nature of their coalition to a national CORE staff person: "[I]t combines those who are personally opposed to our Great Leader for personal reasons (real and grudge), and those who genuinely wish to see a more democratic CORE in D.C. with a long-range, militant program." She added,

The people who are leading this group are not a small bunch of dissidents, but people who have been in the movement for a long time, some as long as Hobson himself. These are people who, until they were given the boot, kept the organization going with active program and well-run organization, both items anathema to our present chairman, since both present a threat to his 'leadership.'⁵⁹

During the spring of 1964, the oppositional faction tried to oust Julius Hobson and his brand of one-man-rule. They first tried to unseat Hobson and reform Washington CORE through chapter machinery. Hobson's challengers tried to transform Washington CORE through the election of their own slate of candidates. Their platform emphasized their primary

⁵⁸"Constitution of Washington CORE," [May 1962; reprinted 1963], 1 and 3, 1:2:2, Hobson Collection.

⁵⁹Naomi Eftis to Jon [Schaefer], 18 March 1964, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:265:01007; "CORE Freedom School to Open Here Today," Washington Post, 10 October 1964, A9.

disagreement with Julius Hobson--his undemocratic administration of the Washington CORE chapter.

Ethelbert Haskins, a leader in the fight against Hobson, agreed to run for the chapter presidency. An African American man in his 30s, Haskins became involved with Washington CORE during March of 1961 when Genevieve Hughes reorganized the chapter. Although Hughes described him as a "[v]ery mild to say timid guy who, however, will follow good leadership," Ethelbert Haskins carried out important responsibilities throughout his involvement in CORE.⁶⁰ He served as corresponding secretary, treasurer and editor of The Washington COREspondent. Haskins also participated in the daily work of the organization. He informed his fellow CORE members, "During this period I participated in almost every CORE action project, from picketing to research and from marches to nursing sick projects." For example, Haskins tested movie theaters in 1961, joined housing committee picket lines at Trenton Park and tried to reorganize the employment campaign against Safeway Supermarkets as director of the project during the winter of 1964.⁶¹

As a candidate for the May 1964 elections, Haskins offered CORE members the oppositional faction's "blueprint" for organizational reform and a renewed attack on racism in Washington, D.C. "I plan to run on a program of administrative change and new project development," he pledged.⁶² His platform suggested projects to expand CORE activity on

⁶⁰Genevieve Hughes, "Field Work Report, Washington, D.C.," 17 February to 23 March 1961, 7, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:255:01142; G. Hughes, "Active Members Attending Meetings Washington CORE," March 1961, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00309.

⁶¹Genevieve Hughes, "Field Work Report, Washington, D.C.," 17 February to 23 March 1961, 7, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:255:01142; Ethelbert Haskins to CORE Member, 22 March 1964, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00355; "'Trenton Park' Picket Line Attendance," 19 April 1964, 6:3, Holden Papers; "Confidential Washington CORE Officers," 26 February 1964, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00353.

employment, housing, police brutality, education and Home Rule, but more importantly explained how the oppositional faction envisioned "program formulation" in a Washington CORE not dominated by Julius Hobson.⁶³

Therefore, the organizational reforms proposed by Haskins reveal the opposition's criticisms of Julius Hobson's leadership. Besides new efforts "to establish cordial working relationships with other civil rights, civic and religious organizations in the community," Haskins and his supporters promised administrative changes to foster the participation of all members in every aspect of CORE's direction and to return decision-making to the membership. They wanted to structure the organization through a "strong committee system" to encourage the involvement of more people, to generate leadership, to develop members' ideas and to complete projects. They also intended to achieve these goals by ending restrictive agendas at membership meetings and allowing any person present to propose projects for discussion. As well as greater membership input, their program promised, "No projects are to be initiated or terminated without the consent of the membership." Finally, they pledged, "Open and democratic discussion of all issues at all meetings."⁶⁴

Another CORE activist, describing the platform proposed by the oppositional faction, similarly placed the emphasis of their program on their intentions to reform the CORE chapter in Washington. Informing national CORE of Ethelbert Haskins' candidacy and platform, Allen

⁶²Ethelbert Haskins to CORE Member, 22 March 1964, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00355.

⁶³[Karl Gregory and 25 others noted as supporters], "Program," [22 March 1964], 1-2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00355-00356.

⁶⁴[Karl Gregory and 25 others noted as supporters], "Program," [22 March 1964], 2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00356.

Weinstein stated, "I would point out, particularly, our intention to democratize local CORE procedures to stop the present high turnover in membership." He concluded, "My sole concern, like that of the other supporters of this program, is to make Washington CORE more democratic and vigorous, in order to make it a more effective leader in the fight against discrimination and poverty in the District."⁶⁵

Despite their efforts, the oppositional faction failed to unseat Julius Hobson through chapter machinery because they failed to get their slate of candidates on the ballot. When the Hobson faction frustrated their efforts, they turned to the national organization for assistance. The dissatisfied members explained in their appeal to national CORE,

We realize that ordinarily the proper way to settle Chapter problems is within the Chapter through normal procedures. We have been trying to do that, some of us for several years. But normal procedures have been consistently thwarted. This has made them increasingly irrelevant and at last impossible.

They asked the national office to expel Julius Hobson from CORE because of his conduct as chairman and regional representative and to take Washington CORE into trusteeship until "it is able to operate in a truly CORE-like manner."⁶⁶

To support their request, the dissenters compiled extensive evidence to document the authoritarian nature of Washington CORE under Julius Hobson. They built a case against him around his undemocratic actions, his violation of CORE rules and procedures and his misuse of power as Southeastern Regional Representative to national CORE. The Ad Hoc Subcommittee for an Effective Washington CORE Chapter submitted the untitled document to the National Action Council of national CORE during

⁶⁵Allen Weinstein to James Farmer, 23 March 1964, 1 and 2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00354.

⁶⁶The Signers[47] to James Farmer, 30 April 1964, 3, Appendix A, 3:11, Holden Papers.

the second week of May, 1964. The group summarized their charges and supporting arguments in twenty-two pages of text and provided evidence to the readers in the form of eleven appendices and 42 exhibits. The documentation included signed statements from CORE members, newspaper articles, press releases, news transcripts, leaflets, telegrams, letters, meeting minutes and the transcript of a public debate.⁶⁷

Oppositional faction members derived their evidence from the activities Washington CORE pursued during the winter and spring of 1964. Concerning the structure of the organization, the membership debated a new constitution and by-laws during March. Hobson's faction introduced the changes and passed them over the opposition's challenge. Program initiatives undertaken by Washington CORE during the factional fight included the Safeway Supermarket campaign, a one-day boycott of the D.C. public schools and demonstrations at the United States Commission on Civil Rights. CORE began the Safeway boycott and picketing in 1963 to convince the store to hire African Americans in non-menial positions. Although the membership voted to continue the project, chairman Hobson unilaterally accepted a settlement with the grocery store and terminated the campaign. CORE targeted the public school system because racial and class inequities influenced the quality of education black children received. Hobson announced a one-day boycott of the schools and canceled it without a vote of the CORE membership. Similarly, Hobson called for and suspended demonstrations at the Civil Rights Commission to protest the refusal of the federal agency to release its report on the state of race relations in Mississippi. Finally, the factions bickered over the expulsion of opposition member Roena Rand and a

⁶⁷Ad-Hoc Sub-Committee for an Effective Washington CORE Chapter, [Case Against Julius Hobson], 8 May 1964, 3:11, Holden Papers. This set of documents can also be found at 1:2:6, Hobson Collection; The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00392; The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, F:2:169:0569

decision by national CORE to reject Brooklyn CORE's plan to cause confusion at the World's Fair by tying up automobile traffic with a stall-in.

When the oppositional faction turned to the national office of the Congress of Racial Equality for assistance to reform Washington CORE, their primary argument attacked Julius Hobson's undemocratic actions as chairman of the Washington chapter. Hobson violated the rights of the membership as guaranteed in the local CORE constitution and CORE Rules For Action. He prevented democratic discussion by misusing the parliamentary process; he made decisions unilaterally by initiating and terminating CORE projects without the consent of the general membership; he abused his power as regional representative; and he limited the agenda of meetings. Hobson and his supporters also tampered with the active membership list to determine those eligible to vote at general meetings and at the May election.

Julius Hobson quashed democratic discussion in Washington CORE meetings although the CORE Rules For Action established, "Each member shall understand that all decisions on general policy shall be arrived at only through democratic discussion."⁶⁸ Hobson and his supporters usually accomplished this by misusing parliamentary procedure or avoiding its use altogether. Observers of Washington CORE meetings remarked on the resulting chaos. Opposition member Ethelbert Haskins testified, "Mr. Hobson uses undemocratic and high handed tactics for barring opposing ideas and free discussion in the conduct of meetings."⁶⁹ Jody Jamieson remarked,

⁶⁸Quoted in Ad-Hoc Sub-Committee for an Effective Washington CORE Chapter, "Section I. Undemocratic and Irresponsible Administration of the Chapter," 8 May 1964, 1, 3:11, Holden Papers.

⁶⁹Ethelbert Haskins, [Statement], 1 May 1964, Exhibit 5, 3:11, Holden Papers.

I don't know Mr. Hobson and I have never before had an opinion on his leadership or conduct. However, I was very upset after attending the last meeting when I saw parliamentary rule used not as a vehicle for orderly presentation of views, but as a slick legal instrument for muffling dissenters.

The turmoil of her CORE chapter surprised and shocked Jamieson because with three small children and a home in the Maryland suburbs she rarely attended meetings.⁷⁰

Staff persons from national CORE also remarked on how Hobson ran meetings and the resulting turmoil. After observing a Washington CORE meeting, James McCain, national CORE Director of Organization, commented,

The Washington CORE meeting was very confusing. Persons had not any regard for motions or the feelings of each other. The chair many times refused to give persons an opportunity to object to motions. In other words, the chairman ruled in a very autocratic manner. There was utter confusion during the meeting.⁷¹

McCain concluded, "Unless some sanity is brought about in Washington CORE after the next election, the group will not function as a viable CORE group or many of the members will leave."⁷²

After another Washington CORE meeting national CORE field secretary Jon Schaefer exclaimed, "This meeting was one of the most disorderly meetings I have ever been to. I am personally appaled at the behaveior of the members of this chapter.[sic]"⁷³ He thought the

⁷⁰Jody Jamieson to National CORE Headquarters, 27 April 1964, 3 and 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, F:2:169:0527 and 0526.

⁷¹James McCain to James Farmer, memorandum, 15 April 1964, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, F:2:169:0522.

⁷²James McCain to James Farmer, memorandum, 15 April 1964, 1-2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, F:2:169:0522.

⁷³J. Schaefer to J. McCain, memorandum, 29 April 1964, 2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968,

language and atmosphere "somewhat abusive and not in any way said in the 'Spirit of good will and reconciliation'. The applause and language came from those supporters of the Hobson faction."⁷⁴ Despite this behavior by Hobson's people, Schaefer thought both sides contributed to the turmoil. He explained, "On one side one saw the attempt to bull through a twofold series of proposals without any attempt to allow on the floor serious charges that were being raised against the chairman or without establishing a committee to examine these charges. One also saw an applauding, jeering caucus supporting Mr. Hobson." "On the other hand[,]" he continued, "one saw the Haskins faction get up, walk to the back of the room and sing We Shall Overcome, thus completely disrupting the meeting. Even though this action may have come out of complete frustration, there is still no excuse for this action."⁷⁵

"The general conduct of the regular CORE meeting leaves much to be desired," Reginald Webb declared. Disgusted, this member of the opposition explained some of the methods Julius Hobson employed to prevent group discussion. Webb testified,

The use of the tabling technique with its obvious direction of the present Chairman shows an organized attempt to stop the democratic process which is one of our guiding principles. The increasing trend to use dilatory techniques to stop opposing ideas through the use of this and similar proceedings has created an unhealthy atmosphere of confusion and an animosity between members of the general body. The editorializing and comments by the Chairman after each speaker; the baiting or squelching of those who the Chairman feels are offering opposing ideas is now standard procedure in our meetings.[sic]⁷⁶

F:2:169:0528.

⁷⁴J. Schaefer to J. McCain, memorandum, 29 April 1964, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, F:2:169:0528.

⁷⁵J. Schaefer to J. McCain, memorandum, 29 April 1964, 2-3, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, F:2:169:0528-0529.

During general membership meetings, Julius Hobson and his supporters misused parliamentary procedure by using tabling motions, refusing to allow members of the opposition the opportunity to speak, ignoring their questions and terminating discussion with the early adjournment of meetings.

To prevent discussion, members of the Hobson faction often introduced motions to table the motions introduced by individuals from the opposition group. The body then voted on the motion to table, rather than take up the initial motion introduced. "At the March 31 meeting of Washington CORE (Special meeting for passing the Constitution)," Thomas Yeager recalled, "all discussion was cut off by the extensive and continuous use of tabling motions." Although Julius Hobson did not introduce the tabling motions, Yeager believed he directed their implementation. During discussion of the new constitution, whenever a meeting participant introduced a motion with which the chairman disagreed, Dr. Abdullah Azeeze would motion to table, another Hobson supporter seconded and the majority voted as a block to table the motion. According to Yeager, "it was quite evident what Mr. Hobson's feelings were on the points being discussed, as he stood in the front of the room, facing the audience shaking his head yes or no."⁷⁷ Naomi Eftis agreed. She corroborated, "At nearly every point that was raised to which it appeared Mr. Hobson was opposed, a couple of avid supporters of Mr. Hobson got up and moved to table further discussion . . . All tabling motions were carried by a small majority. Many minority proposals, when they were heard, were voted down by the same tabling device."⁷⁸

⁷⁶Reginald H. Webb, [Statement], [April 1964], 3:16, Holden Papers.

⁷⁷Thomas W. Yeager, [Statement], Exhibit #3, 6 April 1964, 3:11, Holden Papers.

In his comments Thomas Yeager concluded, "The move to table has been used quite extensively at other meetings also (especially at meetings in the last two months) denying members a chance to be heard and denying them clarity of issues."⁷⁹ Ethelbert Haskins concurred, "Often, Mr. Hobson's close associates move to table matters which he does not agree with." As evidence Haskins described how Dr. Abdullah Azeze introduced a tabling motion immediately after two CORE members suggested that Washington CORE vote in support of national CORE's decision to oppose Brooklyn CORE's intention to disrupt the World's Fair with stall-ins. When the tabling motion passed, Hobson moved on to the next item on the agenda.⁸⁰

Along with the tabling device, Julius Hobson prevented democratic discussion by refusing to recognize members of the opposition and ignoring their questions. When the anti-Hobson faction tried to get Julius Hobson to discuss Brooklyn CORE's stall-in, the campaign against Safeway Supermarket, a proposed boycott of the D.C. public schools and the expulsion of Roena Rand, he evaded their questions and criticisms. CORE members tried to get Julius Hobson to explain his comments to the press regarding Brooklyn CORE's direct action at the World's Fair. Newspapers reported that Julius Hobson and Washington CORE supported Brooklyn CORE's decision to go ahead with the stall-ins even though national CORE forbid the action. National CORE believed tying up New York City traffic through stalled cars and other means was just too dangerous to CORE members and the general public. Julius Hobson refused

⁷⁸Naomi Eftis, [unofficial minutes of the Washington CORE meeting], 31 March 1964, 3, 3:1, Holden Papers.

⁷⁹Thomas W. Yeager, [Statement], Exhibit #3, 6 April 1964, 3:11, Holden Papers.

⁸⁰Ethelbert Haskins, [Statement], Exhibit #5, 1 May 1964, 3:11, Holden Papers; James McCain to James Farmer, memorandum, 15 April 1964, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, F:2:169:0522.

to answer questions concerning the topic or to allow discussion of the matter. Arthur Rosen remembered,

All attempts to bring up the point were summarily dismissed with the Chairman stating only that the newspapers had misquoted him and that the reports were not true. Mr. Hobson did not permit the articles to be read nor did he allow the membership to be informed of their details. No comment on the reports or the explanation of Mr. Hobson was permitted.

Rosen added, "Members who attempted to address the body were rudely cut off and the whole affair was handled in an arbitrary, non-democratic manner, in spite of the obviously important nature of the question being raised."⁸¹

At another meeting member Mike Schutz tried to ascertain the status of the Safeway Supermarket boycott. Accounts in the paper suggested the boycott over, yet the group never officially ended the project. Anna Holden, a member of the opposition faction, recalled, "Mr. Hobson would not answer the question directly as to whether the boycott was still on; he said the report in the paper was 'not incorrect.'"⁸² At the next gathering of the CORE membership, the group focused on the proposed boycott of D.C. public schools. Jim Standish asked Julius Hobson why he announced a school boycott for April 29 although the membership never voted on the action. Standish remembered, "He responded to me by asking whether I had come to heckle and adjourning the meeting.[sic]"⁸³

During one particularly feisty meeting, Marilyn Outlaw tried to read a letter from expelled member Roena Rand. When Hobson failed to

⁸¹Arthur S. Rosen, statement, Exhibit #2, 1 May 1964, 3:11, Holden Papers.

⁸²Anna Holden, "Statement by Anna Holden: Termination of Safeway Project," 30 April 1964, Appendix H, 3:11, Holden Papers.

⁸³Jim Standish, statement, Exhibit #7, 30 April 1964, 3:11, Holden Papers.

recognize Outlaw, she twice stood on a point of personal privilege to read the letter. Hobson ruled her out of order, the second time declaring "the letter is not going to be read." Shelia Machlis recalled how Hobson "spoke angrily of forged letters and of other letters by CORE members which didn't deal with this subject."⁸⁴ The confrontation dismayed associate member Jody Jamieson. She described the scene:

Mr Hobson spoke of a letter some member got with Mr. Hobson's signature forged on it. He was incensing the audience with the injustice done him by some reckless enemy; when a girl in the audience asked for the floor. She was waving a letter she said was evidence that it all was a big mistake and would clear the whole matter up. Mr. Hobson called her out-of-order and persisted with allegations and insinuations as to the moral character of the forger. The girl asked again for the floor + said if Mr. Hobson insisted on relating his misinformed piece of the story it would be a greater lie and a real injustice to the audience. We in the audience hadn't the foggiest of what it was all about. Mr. Hobson did not say what was in the letter But he did say he hadn't even seen the letter but had only heard about it from a 3rd party. Mr. Hobson called the girl out-of-order again and the audience began to insist she be heard.⁸⁵

To end the confrontation Julius Hobson adjourned the meeting. Jamieson reported, "Mr. Hobson pointed to a person seated just behind me (I was seated quite close to the speakers stand) and stage whispered under the din 'STAND UP & MOVE FOR ADJOURNMENT.' The person stood up and was immediately recognized by Speaker Hobson."⁸⁶ A small majority passed the adjournment motion, but such "dissention and disorder" arose from the assemblage, Hobson reconvened the meeting.⁸⁷ Julius Hobson

⁸⁴Quoted in Sheila Machlis, statement, Exhibit #1, 21 April 1964, 3:11, Holden Papers.

⁸⁵Jody Jamieson to National CORE Headquarters, 27 April 1964, 3-4, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, F:2:169:0527.

⁸⁶Jody Jamieson to National CORE Headquarters, 27 April 1964, 4, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, F:2:169:0527.

used or tried to use this technique to end discussion at other times as well. "Typical of Mr. Hobson's demeanor when he is annoyed by someone trying to advance an idea he opposes was the way he adjourned the CORE meeting at the Odd Fellow's Hall on March 18, 1964," Ethelbert Haskins commented. At this meeting members asked him difficult questions concerning his announcement of a boycott of D.C. public schools. Haskins reported, "When the intensity of the questions reached the point where Mr. Hobson found it hard to field them he summarily adjourned the meeting without a motion or a vote."⁸⁸

Beyond misusing and ignoring parliamentary procedure to prevent democratic discussion, Julius Hobson's critics charged him as undemocratic for making chapter decisions unilaterally. Julius Hobson initiated and terminated direct action projects without the consent of the active membership. Just as Julius Hobson's conduct in meetings violated the CORE principle of democracy, beginning and ending projects without group authorization obstructed democratic decision-making. By initiating CORE projects without the okay of the chapter's membership, Hobson transgressed a second CORE principle enumerated in CORE Rules For Action: "A member will never engage in any action in the name of the group except when authorized by the group or one of its units."⁸⁹ Chairman Hobson terminated the campaign against Safeway Stores, initiated and called off a boycott of the District of Columbia public schools and acted alone regarding CORE demonstrations targeting the

⁸⁷Sheila Machlis, statement, Exhibit #1, 21 April 1964, 3:11, Holden Papers.

⁸⁸Ethelbert Haskins, statement, Exhibit #4, 30 April 1964, 3:11, Holden Papers.

⁸⁹Ad-Hoc Sub-Committee for an Effective Washington CORE Chapter, "Section II. Violation of CORE Rules and Procedures in Action Projects," 8 May 1964, 7, 3:11, Holden Papers; Ad-Hoc Sub-Committee for an Effective Washington CORE Chapter, "Table of Contents," 8 May 1964, i-ii, 3:11, Holden Papers.

Civil Rights Commission.

As chair of the Safeway Committee, Ethelbert Haskins reorganized the campaign against Safeway supermarkets in January 1964 after a month long moratorium on demonstrations out of respect for assassinated president John Kennedy. Upon review of the six month campaign, the committee concluded that Safeway still hired too few blacks in managerial positions. When informed of this information the Executive Committee and the general membership voted to resume picketing at Safeway stores. After only two consecutive Saturday pickets, Hobson told Haskins he wanted to terminate the project. The chairman quickly drafted a letter to the management of Safeway, although he promised not to send it until after the committee agreed to the settlement. Before the Safeway committee could inform Hobson of its recommendation to Washington CORE, members read of the agreement between CORE and the grocery store chain in the newspapers. When questioned at the next membership meeting about his unilateral action, Julius Hobson claimed he acted on instructions from the national office to end the campaign.⁹⁰

Opposition member Anna Holden contacted CORE National Director James Farmer to find out whether or not the national office really asked Washington CORE to terminate their project against Safeway. Through investigation, Farmer learned that Julius Hobson had called New York to request two telegrams. One told the chapter to end the project, the other encouraged Washington CORE to continue the boycott. Members of the oppositional caucus believed Hobson wanted these telegrams to pressure the membership. They suspected their chairman used the national office at other times as well to shape CORE policy and program.

⁹⁰"Statement by Naomi Eftis and Ethelbert Haskins: Termination of Safeway Project," Appendix G, 22 April 1964, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00382; "Statement by Anna Holden: Termination of Safeway Project," Appendix H, 30 April 1964, 3:11, Holden Papers.

"There is a growing faction which considers Julius completely unscrupulous; this is one reason I want the above information--several people have asked me how they (or someone) could find out if these communications from the national office which he uses so often to justify actions actually exist," Holden wrote to Farmer.⁹¹

Julius Hobson also utilized the national office to initiate a boycott of the District of Columbia public schools without the consent of the active membership of Washington CORE. Anna Holden continued in her letter to James Farmer,

I might add that the national office was used (or should I say misused) as figuring very heavily in the decision to undertake the 'boycott' of DC schools. To my knowledge no vote has yet been taken to conduct a boycott in the chapter or in the executive committee. Julius gave the membership the impression that the NAC meeting would (and did) vote for Washington CORE to boycott the schools.⁹²

Julius Hobson first proposed a boycott of the District public schools in February, 1964. He planned to present evidence of racial and class inequities in the school system to the National Action Council and ask for their approval. As research continued, Hobson began to lean toward an all night study-in rather than a boycott. During several membership meetings he stated "there would be no boycott because CORE could not swing a boycott." Upon his return from the February NAC meeting the chairman announced that the body supported the study-in and other forms of direct action against the school system.⁹³

⁹¹Anna Holden to James Farmer or Marvin Rich, 13 March 1964, 1, 3:10, Holden Papers; James Farmer to Anna Holden, Exhibit #22, 30 March 1964, 1, 3:11, Holden Papers; James Farmer to Anna Holden, telegram, 7 April [1964], The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, F:2:169:0504.

⁹²Anna Holden to James Farmer or Marvin Rich, 13 March 1964, 1, 3:10, Holden Papers.

⁹³Anna Holden, "Statement re school boycott project," Exhibit

By early March, Holden thought some type of direct action against the school system would occur soon, "but the group did not vote to initiate any action of any form." She recalled, "Mr. Hobson asked CORE members in an informal discussion after the March 3 meeting if we had 'noticed' that he had not called for a vote on the school project. He said that he 'could have gotten a vote but did not want to call for one now.'" ⁹⁴ A few days later, on March 8, Julius Hobson announced the date of the boycott during a television interview. In response to the interviewer's query whether or not this represented the first announcement of a date, Hobson stated, "This is the first time that we have announced the boycott date, because we just decided this, really a couple of days ago." ⁹⁵

The announcement of the boycott created division and cantankerous debate in Washington, D.C. A CORE financial contributor, David Scull, wrote to National Director James Farmer critical of Washington CORE's decision to use the boycott tactic even when communication and negotiation with the school system seemed open. Farmer's response made it clear that the decision to have a school boycott resided with the local chapter. ⁹⁶ Farmer wrote, ". . . I do not have the facts on the school situation in Washington, and thus do not feel competent to comment on the issue, except to say that we consider schools problems to be a local issue with the decisions to be made by the local CORE people.[sic]" ⁹⁷ By the end of March Hobson decided to call off the

#14, 5 May 1964, 1, 3:11, Holden Papers.

⁹⁴Anna Holden, "Statement re school boycott project," Exhibit #14, 5 May 1964, 1-2, 3:11, Holden Papers.

⁹⁵WTOP News, [partial transcript of "City Side" news program], Exhibit #15, 8 March 1964, 1, 3:11, Holden Papers.

⁹⁶David Scull to James Farmer and Jim McCain, 22 March 1964, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, F:2:169:0496.

⁹⁷James Farmer to David Scull, 30 March 1964, 1, The Papers of

boycott.

Although he used permission from the national office to initiate the action, he pushed its termination through a particularly querulous meeting. With five minutes remaining before the predetermined time to take up another matter, Hobson distributed copies of his settlement with the Superintendent of Schools. Before the document even reached individuals in the rear of the room, Hobson called for a vote to cancel the boycott. Naomi Eftis recorded, "An attempt was made to discuss the motion. A substitute motion was made to set up a committee to further study school problems in the city. This was immediately tabled, and then a vote was taken to end the boycott the (commencement of which had never been voted on by the membership in the first place).[sic]"⁹⁸

During the next month Julius Hobson initiated and terminated another demonstration; this time he targeted the United States Commission on Civil Rights for refusing to release its findings concerning Mississippi race relations. During late April Washington CORE activists learned through the news media that CORE planned to picket the Civil Rights Commission on April 29. The news accounts identified the picketing as a CORE project organized by the local CORE chairman. The announcement took many members by surprise since Hobson never even mentioned the issue to the general membership, let alone allowed a vote.⁹⁹

When recording secretary Dolores Pelham asked the chair "to the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, F:2:169:0494.

⁹⁸Naomi Eftis, [unofficial minutes of the Washington CORE meeting], 31 March 1964, 2, 3:1, Holden Papers.

⁹⁹"CORE set to picket rights group," The Washington Afro-American, 25 April 1964, Exhibit #24, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, F:2:169:0584; Karl Gregory, "Statement on CORE's Project with the Civil Rights Commission," Appendix J, [May 1964], 1, 3:11, Holden Papers; Anna Holden, "Statement re Civil Rights Commission Project," Appendix K, [May 1964], 1, 3:11, Holden Papers.

clarify a mistaken impression of some members concerning the news media announcement," Hobson claimed he owed no explanations because he organized the picketing as a regional project as the Southeast Regional Director of CORE. According to Norma Shelton, Hobson further explained,

he liked to stage at least one Regional project a year because this would give him something of value with which to go to the convention. Further, it was his policy to have a big project going at election time for political reasons and [he] cited the Route 40 project as the one he used the first year, the Western Electric the second, and the Civil Rights Commission this year.¹⁰⁰

At the April 28 membership meeting, Hobson answered challenges to his action by arguing his authority to stage the project came from his position as a regional officer and therefore he did not need the consent of Washington CORE.¹⁰¹

Despite identifying the project as a regional project so clearly, the news media reports the next day announcing the cancellation of the picket line identified it as a local project. One CORE member reported a radio newscast which broadcast that the "District Chapter" had canceled the demonstration. A United Press International wire reported, "THE D.C. CHAPTER OF CORE HAS ANNOUNCED CANCELLATION OF ITS PLANS TO PICKET THE CIVIL RIGHTS COMMISSION TODAY." In response Karl Gregory remarked, "Here, it appears to be a local rather than than a regional project. This may be another of the frequent instances in which the Chairman of D.C. CORE has either begun or terminated a project without approval of the chapter."¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ Norma Shelton, "Statement Re: The Civil Rights Commission Report," Appendix I, 30 April 1964, 1 and 2, 3:11, Holden Papers.

¹⁰¹ Anna Holden, "Statement re Civil Rights Commission Project," Appendix K, [May 1964], 2, 3:11, Holden Papers.

¹⁰² Anna Holden, "Statement re Civil Rights Commission Project," Appendix K, [May 1964], 2, 3:11, Holden Papers; "UPI [newstape] - 3," Exhibit #24, 29 April [1964], 3:11, Holden Papers; Karl Gregory,

The oppositional faction also criticized Hobson regarding the Civil Rights Commission debacle because he misrepresented his position as a regional officer of national CORE. Although the national CORE community elected Julius Hobson Southeast Regional Representative, he repeatedly referred to himself as Southeast Regional Director. So, in addition to his undemocratic acts as chairman of Washington CORE, Julius Hobson violated CORE's democratic principles and procedures by misusing his power as a CORE regional representative. The oppositional faction charged that Hobson misrepresented his position and assumed more power than his office conferred.

Commenting on Hobson's announcement of the Civil Rights Commission picketing, observer Jon Schaefer noted, "There were then a number of announcements among them the fact that Mr. Hobson, in his capacity of regional director, excuse, regional representative was calling for an area project.[sic]"¹⁰³ Various press accounts identified Hobson as "Southeast Regional Director," "Eastern Regional Director," "head' of the southeastern branches of CORE," "field director of CORE," or "CORE's regional director for Southeastern United States." Hobson's opponents chastised him for not attempting to correct "this implication of responsibility and authority over Washington CORE and other local chapters in the Southeast region."¹⁰⁴ It appears Hobson himself encouraged this misnomer. He used the title of Southeast Regional "Statement on CORE's Project with the Civil Rights Commission," Appendix J, [May 1964], 2, 3:11, Holden Papers.

¹⁰³J. Schaefer to J. McCain, memorandum, 29 April 1964, 2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, F:2:169:0528.

¹⁰⁴Ad-Hoc Sub-Committee for an Effective Washington CORE Chapter, "Section IV. Misuse and Misrepresentation of Role of Regional Representative to CORE National Action Council, Southeast Region," 8 May 1964, 20, 3:11, Holden Papers; Walter Gold, "CORE Defers Decision on School Boycott," Washington Star, Exhibit #28, 25 March 1964, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, F:2:169:0587.

Director in a biographical summary, during a 1963 membership meeting and in correspondence.¹⁰⁵

By unilaterally organizing the Civil Rights Commission picketing, Hobson's challengers argued that he exceeded the powers of his position as Southeast Regional Representative. In their opinion, he also abused his power as regional representative by hiring a secretary, Sue Rozen. Hobson claimed that the National Action Council approved the employment of a regional secretary and agreed to pay her salary. Rozen worked for Julius Hobson for three months, completing secretarial work for the chapter and the voter registration committee. Although under the impression she worked for the national office, Rozen received wages only sporadically from Julius Hobson and Washington CORE.¹⁰⁶

Julius Hobson also believed that his power as regional officer included the ability to expel members from CORE. Roena Rand, an outspoken African American woman and member of Washington CORE since March 1963, emotionally argued with the voter registration committee chair and verbally attacked Julius Hobson during a January, 1964 membership meeting. After her outburst Hobson expelled Rand and forbade her from attending future meetings, claiming his authority as a national officer. In conversation with Anna Holden, Julius Hobson admitted he lacked authority to expel her, but felt something needed to be done to

¹⁰⁵ Julius Hobson, "Biographical Data on Candidates," Louis Aronica to Americans for Democratic Action member, 19 June 1964, 4, 3:14, Holden Papers; Joan Bacchus, "Washington CORE Minutes of the Meeting," 12 November 1963, 3, 1:1:7, Hobson Collection; Annalee Stewart to Julius Hobson, CORE Southeastern Regional Director, 9 January 1963, 1:1:3, Hobson Collection; Lawrence Oxley to Julius Hobson, Regional Director, [October 1963], 1:1:3, Hobson Collection.

¹⁰⁶ Allen Weinstein, "Affidavit," Exhibit #32, 5 May 1964, 3:11, Holden Papers; Stanley Salett, statement, Exhibit #33, 23 April 1964, 3:11, Holden Papers; Ad-Hoc Sub-Committee for an Effective Washington CORE Chapter, "Section IV. Misuse and Misrepresentation of Role of Regional Representative to CORE National Action Council, Southeast Region," 8 May 1964, 17-18, 3:11, Holden Papers.

regain control of the meeting. The executive committee rescinded this expulsion, but plotted Rand's ouster during subsequent meetings.¹⁰⁷ The chairman asked the recording secretary not to take notes on these deliberations. On February 25 the Executive Committee voted to recommend Rand's dismissal because of her "unrestrained outbursts at CORE meetings" and for unauthorized negotiations with Safeway.¹⁰⁸

On March 3 the membership narrowly voted for expulsion. Although the parliamentarian correctly suggested a suspension required a two-thirds majority, Hobson took the opposite position and declared Rand expelled as a result of the 23 to 21 vote. Anna Holden remembered, "The expulsion case was hotly debated and the membership sharply divided on the question."¹⁰⁹ Instead of relying on his case against Rand, Hobson used a fabricated policy supposedly passed by the National Action Council stipulating "immediate expulsion of a member who persistently violates parliamentary procedures at meetings." Because Anna Holden considered the case against Rand "questionable," she asked Jim Farmer whether this directive existed.¹¹⁰ Farmer replied, "There is no

¹⁰⁷Anna Holden, "Statement re Hobson's Expulsion of Roena Rand as Regional Representative," Appendix K, [8 May 1964], 3:11, Holden Papers; Ad-Hoc Sub-Committee for an Effective Washington CORE Chapter, "Section IV. Misuse and Misrepresentation of Role of Regional Representative to CORE National Action Council, Southeast Region," 8 May 1964, 18, 3:11, Holden Papers.

¹⁰⁸Naomi Eftis, statement, 20 April 1964, 3:16, Holden Papers; [Julius Hobson?], [Summary of Roena Rand's activities in Washington CORE], 25 February 1964, 3, 1:2:6, Hobson Collection; Julius Hobson to Roena Rand, 5 March 1964, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 1:89:00085; Dolores Pelham, "Executive Committee Meeting [minutes]," 25 February 1964, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 1:89:00082.

¹⁰⁹"Statement by Anna Holden: Termination of Safeway Project," Appendix H, 30 April 1964, 3:11, Holden Papers; Ethelbert Haskins, statement, Exhibit #5, 1 May 1964, 3:11, Hobson Collection; Roena Rand to Richard Haley and James McCain, 19 March 1964, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 1:89:00086.

¹¹⁰Anna Holden to James Farmer or Marvin Rich, 13 March 1964, 1, 3:10, Holden Papers; Anna Holden, "Statement re use of tape recordings," 30 April 1964, 3:16, Holden Papers.

provision, either new or old, calling for expulsion of members for 'persistent violation of parliamentary procedure.'"¹¹¹

In addition to inhibiting the democratic process in Washington CORE by ignoring and misusing parliamentary procedure, unilaterally making decisions regarding CORE actions and abusing his power as CORE Southeastern Regional Representative, Julius Hobson prevented chapter democracy by limiting the agenda of membership meetings.¹¹² Members of the opposition pointed in particular to the meeting of April 28, 1964. They wanted to expand the agenda of this meeting in order to discuss "a documented list of formal charges against the Chairman," Hobson's statements in the press regarding a demonstration at the Civil Rights Commission and the qualifications of active membership.¹¹³ As well as exemplifying how Hobson limited the agenda of meetings, the April 28 meeting illustrates how divided and contentious the Washington CORE community had become by the spring of 1964.

In his opening remarks President Hobson asked for a motion to limit the meeting's business to a proposed constitutional amendment which provided for three vice chairmen instead of one and the May election nominations.¹¹⁴ Before he could call for a vote, Ralph Fertig, Reginald Webb and Allen Weinstein tried to expand the agenda to include the case against Julius Hobson the opposition planned to present to

¹¹¹James Farmer to Anna Holden, Exhibit #22, 30 March 1964, 1, 3:11, Holden Papers.

¹¹²Ad-Hoc Sub-Committee for an Effective Washington CORE Chapter, "Section I. Undemocratic and Irresponsible Administration of the Chapter," 8 May 1964, 2-3, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00394.

¹¹³The Signers[47] to James Farmer, Appendix A, 30 April 1964, 2, 3:11, Holden Papers; Karl D. Gregory, "Statement on CORE's Project With the Civil Rights Commission," Appendix J, [1? May 1964], 2, 3:11, Holden Papers.

¹¹⁴Dolores Pelham, "Washington CORE [meeting minutes]," 28 April 1964, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 1:89:00091.

national CORE.¹¹⁵ When questioned, Ralph Fertig explained why they wished to raise this issue: "I stated that we hoped that local chapter discussion could resolve the concerns and might well preclude our seeking intervention from the National Action Council."¹¹⁶ "We felt it only proper that such charges, being primarily a Chapter matter, should be brought first before the Chapter," the group later stated in correspondence to the national office.¹¹⁷

In opposition to their motion to alter the meeting docket, the chairman reiterated his intention to keep the meeting focused on the two items already slated. Julius Hobson classified this gathering as a special meeting, while the opposition defined it as a regularly scheduled meeting since it took place at the regular place and time. According to the opposition, "The Chairman invited us several times to take our complaints 'to New York.'"¹¹⁸ "I was ruled out of order by the Chairman, told that these matters could not be discussed at the chapter meeting, and invite d to present our charges to the N. A. C.,[sic]" Ralph Fertig recalled.¹¹⁹

After the majority voted down their attempt to introduce the charges against Hobson, he refused to recognize other members of the opposition who tried to get the Civil Rights Commission demonstration on

¹¹⁵Dolores Pelham, "Washington CORE [meeting minutes]," 28 April 1964, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 1:89:00091; J. Schaefer to J. McCain, memorandum, 29 April 1964, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, F:2:169:0528.

¹¹⁶Ralph Fertig to To Whom It May Concern, Exhibit #4A, 30 April 1964, 3:11, Holden Papers.

¹¹⁷The Signers[47] to James Farmer, Appendix A, 30 April 1964, 2, 3:11, Holden Papers.

¹¹⁸The Signers[47] to James Farmer, Appendix A, 30 April 1964, 1-2, 3:11, Holden Papers.

¹¹⁹Ralph Fertig to To Whom It May Concern, Exhibit #4A, 30 April 1964, 3:11, Holden Papers.

the agenda. Two radio newscasts on April 22 announced that Washington CORE planned to picket the Civil Rights Commission on April 29. Julius Hobson wanted to initiate direct action against the commission because of their failure to release a report on conditions in Mississippi. Karl Gregory testified, "Several of us wanted to add this project and other important matters to the agenda of the last meeting of D.C. CORE on April 28. We were squelched without a vote."¹²⁰

The contentious atmosphere of the April 28 assembly escalated when the opposition requested a clarification on the standards of active membership. "We feel that some persons not on the active membership list have been more active than some who are on it," the faction argued.¹²¹ They considered this issue important because only active members were eligible to vote, but Hobson ignored their request.¹²² On this portion of the meeting field secretary Schaefer observed, "At this point in the meeting there was some question as to who was eligible to vote. This question was never satisfactorily resolved.[sic]"¹²³

Finally the group considered the first point on the agenda of the April 28 meeting, the constitutional amendment. Although the group attempted to discuss the proposal to expand the number of vice chairmen from one to three, Jon Schaefer noted "it was impossible to do so given

¹²⁰Karl D. Gregory, "Statement on CORE's Project With the Civil Rights Commission," Appendix J, [1? May 1964], 2 and 1, 3:11, Holden Papers; Dolores Pelham, "Washington CORE [meeting minutes]," 28 April 1964, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 1:89:00091; The Signers[47] to James Farmer, Appendix A, 30 April 1964, 2, 3:11, Holden Papers.

¹²¹The Signers[47] to James Farmer, Appendix A, 30 April 1964, 2, 3:11, Holden Papers.

¹²²The Signers[47] to James Farmer, Appendix A, 30 April 1964, 2, 3:11, Holden Papers; Dolores Pelham, "Washington CORE [meeting minutes]," 28 April 1964, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 1:89:00091.

¹²³J. Schaefer to J. McCain, memorandum, 29 April 1964, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, F:2:169:0528.

the tenor of the meeting." They voted on the amendment three times because of the disagreement which erupted after each count. The opposition reported that Julius Hobson announced the results as 37-18 and 41-20. The minutes of the meeting recorded only one vote and stated the amendment passed 39 to 18. Haskins' faction counted the final vote as 38 to 21. The opposition opined, "This is short of the two-thirds required to amend the Constitution. The one sure way to resolve the matter, taking a roll-call vote, was repeatedly requested and denied. The Chairman shouted, 'The Constitution is now amended.'" Schaefer observed to the national office, "All of the votes were inconclusive as it takes a 2/3 majority to amend the constitution. The vote was , however extremely close. A few people called for a roll call vote but the chair stated that the amendment passed.[sic]"¹²⁴ Records classify sixty-eight of the individuals at the April 28, 1964 meeting as active members. Forty-four belonged to the Hobson faction while twenty-four allied themselves with the opposition. Although Hobson could easily obtain a majority, two-thirds required 45 votes.¹²⁵

The oppositional faction judged this the last straw. Twenty-eight dissenters marched out of the hall, accompanied by the applause of the Hobson faction. They returned a few minutes later, stood in the back

¹²⁴J. Schaefer to J. McCain, memorandum, 29 April 1964, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, F:2:169:0528; The Signers[47] to James Farmer, Appendix A, 30 April 1964, 3, 3:11, Holden Papers; Dolores Pelham, "Washington CORE [meeting minutes]," 28 April 1964, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 1:89:00091.

¹²⁵Dolores Pelham, "Washington CORE [meeting minutes]," 28 April 1964, 2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 1:89:00091; Ethylbert Haskins et al to James Farmer, telegram, 29 April 1964, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, F:2:169:0530; "Washington CORE - Active Voting List Submitted to National CORE," 24 March 1964 with 31 March 1964 additions, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 1:89:00087; "People In Our Group Who Are On Hobson's Active Membership List," [April 1964], 3:10, Holden Papers.

and sang "We Shall Overcome."¹²⁶ The next day the opposition sent a telegram signed by 26 individuals to CORE National Director James Farmer justifying their action. It stated, "[OUR] REASONS WERE NON-ACTIVE MEMBERS VOTING. MISCOUNTING VOTING RESULTS. VIOLATION OF RIGHTS TO ADD TO OR DISCUSS AGENDA. FAILURE TO PERMIT DISCUSSION OF LEGITIMATE CHAPTER BUSINESS."¹²⁷ "We realize that leaving the meeting, and especially singing 'We Shall Overcome', had a disruptive effect. At the same time, to remain would have been to lend dignity to the proceedings by acknowledging that a genuine CORE meeting was being held," a letter endorsed by 47 CORE activists explained.¹²⁸

As Hobson's challengers left the meeting frustrated, the chair of the nominating committee called for Ethelbert Haskins or any other independent candidates to present their positions. The minutes record that Haskins declared he wanted no part of it and then the group sang "We Shall Overcome" and left. Schaefer's account of the meeting suggests the dissenters walked out and sang prior to the onset of the nomination proceedings. In fact, he recalled, "A member of the Haskins faction attempted to speak at this time however he was not recognized by the chair because 'he was not an active member'." The nominations committee put forth a slate of candidates headed by Julius Hobson and composed of his supporters and closed the nominations. The recording secretary, Dolores Pelham, noted in her record of the meeting that

¹²⁶Ethylbert Haskins et al to James Farmer, telegram, 29 April 1964, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, F:2:169:0530; J. Schaefer to J. McCain, memorandum, 29 April 1964, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, F:2:169:0528; Dolores Pelham, "Washington CORE [meeting minutes]," 28 April 1964, 1-2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 1:89:00091.

¹²⁷Ethylbert Haskins et al to James Farmer, telegram, 29 April 1964, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, F:2:169:0530.

¹²⁸The Signers[47] to James Farmer, Appendix A, 30 April 1964, 1, 3:11, Holden Papers.

Reginald Webb "came to the front of the room and made a speech about [the] unfitness of Julius Hobson as Chairman."¹²⁹ Jon Schaefer recorded a different event. He wrote, "There were then testimonials for Hobson and derogatory statements about the Haskins faction. Hobson stated that when he came back from the NAC meeting that the members of the Haskins faction would not only be out of Washington CORE but that they would be unable to be in any CORE chapter in the U.S."¹³⁰

Obviously, the oppositional faction failed to transform Washington CORE through the May 1964 election because they failed to get the Ethelbert Haskins slate on the ballot. However, a month prior to the April 28 meeting the group had reason for optimism. They decided to run Ethelbert Haskins for chairman because Julius Hobson announced he would not seek reelection nor accept a draft.¹³¹ During March, 1964 Hobson seemed ready to relinquish control of Washington CORE because of his dissatisfaction with the group and personal concerns.

Before publicly announcing his decision, Julius Hobson telephoned housing co-chair Norma Shelton, a member of the opposition, to ask her opinion concerning whether he should stand for reelection in May. Surprised, she immediately reminded him she "vehemently disagreed generally with his policies and with his methods of enforcing them."¹³² Later in the conversation Julius Hobson asked Norma Shelton "why, if I

¹²⁹Dolores Pelham, "Washington CORE [meeting minutes]," 28 April 1964, 2 and 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 1:89:00091; J. Schaefer to J. McCain, memorandum, 29 April 1964, 2 and 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, F:2:169:0528.

¹³⁰J. Schaefer to J. McCain, memorandum, 29 April 1964, 2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, F:2:169:0528.

¹³¹Allen Weinstein to James Farmer, 23 March 1964, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00354.

¹³²N.S. [Norma Shelton], "Statement re Elwood Jackson's carrying a gun + Mr. Hobson's knowledge of gun," 30 April 1964, 1-2, 3:16, Holden Papers.

had been so displeased, I did not tell him so before." She replied, "I pointed out that I had - again and again - and that while talking to him he very often agreed to change his position in light of our discussion but when the matter did come up he did precisely what he had said he would not do." After apologizing, Hobson explained, "it was simply that he had so many matters on his mind that he over-looked things. These were just such oversights + he hoped that in the future I would be more firm in putting forth my ideas because he respected both me + my judgements - that was the reason for this call."¹³³

He thought he might end his leadership of the group since "perhaps the organization might need a change in leadership to freshen its perspective." He also intended to ignore a petition to draft him because "the quality of the assistance which he had received during his terms was so grossly lacking . . ." More importantly, he confided to Shelton, the amount of time he needed to devote to CORE meant "his obligations to his family were not receiving the attention that they should." In addition, his physician urged him to slow down in the wake of a heart attack.¹³⁴

Press accounts a few weeks later echoed these concerns. Angered that the Washington CORE chapter decided not to act on his recommendations concerning a boycott of the District public schools, Julius Hobson informed the press he intended to resign because of the group's "lack of positive action" and its vote contrary to his advice. He also stated, "I'm getting a little weary now. I think it's time for someone else to take over." One paper reported that a source close to

¹³³N.S. [Norma Shelton], "Statement re Elwood Jackson's carrying a gun + Mr. Hobson's knowledge of gun," 30 April 1964, 4-5, 3:16, Holden Papers.

¹³⁴N.S. [Norma Shelton], "Statement re Elwood Jackson's carrying a gun + Mr. Hobson's knowledge of gun," 30 April 1964, 1, 3:16, Holden Papers.

Hobson suggested his decision stemmed in part from his disillusionment at the failure of other civil rights organizations to advocate his proposed boycott of the public school system. As well as being "tired", Hobson stated he wanted to spend more time with his family.¹³⁵

Although Julius Hobson declared his intentions to steer clear of any official leadership role in Washington CORE, members of the opposition believed he intended to remain a dominate and powerful influence in the group. When Julius Hobson announced his plans not to stand for reelection, he tagged Rimsky Atkinson as his successor.¹³⁶ Hobson's vice chairman and lieutenant since 1962, Atkinson would follow Hobson's lead and conform to the Hobson program.¹³⁷ Rimsky Atkinson worked as a probation officer for the Juvenile Court of the District of Columbia.¹³⁸ The opposition also believed Hobson and his supporters tampered with the active membership list to limit the voting power of Hobson's challengers and to ensure the continuation of the Hobson faction in power. In their case to national CORE to oust the CORE chairman, the oppositional caucus added manipulation of the voting roll to their extensive list of charges against Julius Hobson.

In her request for assistance from the national office, Naomi

¹³⁵Walter Gold, "CORE Defers Decision on School Boycott," Washington Star, 25 March 1964, Exhibit #28, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, F:2:169:0587; "Hobson To Resign CORE Leadership," Washington City Tribune, 26 March 1964, 21:7:3, Hobson Collection; "CORE Stays Decision on School Boycott Here," The Washington Post, 25 March 1964, B8.

¹³⁶Anna [Holden] to Marv [Rich], [27 March 1964], 3, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00358; "Hobson To Resign CORE Leadership," Washington City Tribune, 26 March 1964, 21:7:3, Hobson Collection.

¹³⁷"Annual Election of Officers Held May 8 1962," The Washington COREspondent [1:1 (May 1962)]: 1, 1:2:5, Hobson Collection; "Election Held," The Washington COREspondent, 2:1 (June 1963): 1, 1:2:5, Hobson Collection.

¹³⁸Walter Gold, "CORE Defers Decision on School Boycott," Washington Star, 25 March 1964, Exhibit #28, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, F:2:169:0587.

Eftis asked field secretary Jon Schaefer to observe a Washington CORE meeting. "No," she wrote, "we don't need help getting organized. But we DO need to have contact with National if we are going to over-throw Hobson." The oppositional caucus needed national CORE's help because in their opinion Hobson's group had manipulated the active membership list and intended to continue to do so. "Mr. H. has announced that he is NOT a candidate, and from the things that have taken place since that announcement, it is clear that he is not going to truly bow out gracefully," Eftis declared. On March 3 the rules defining active membership changed, causing the list of active members to drop to 74. "We can anticipate further paring, and also, sudden padding at the end of the month of April. We feel that it is necessary that SOMETHING be done on the part of National before this happens," Eftis concluded.¹³⁹

Anna Holden also wanted an observer from national CORE to attend the March 31 meeting. She explained, "There has been evidence of tampering with the membership list at the last few meetings when role call votes were demanded.[sic]"¹⁴⁰ On behalf of the oppositional faction Allen Weinstein requested the national office obtain a copy of the active membership list "to insure that any changes before May are made solely on the basis of participation in CORE action projects."¹⁴¹ Julius Hobson expressed outrage at this letter and his supporters drafted a response to send to the national office demanding Weinstein produce evidence for the charges levied against them.¹⁴²

¹³⁹Naomi Eftis to Jon [Schaefer], 18 March 1964, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:265:01007.

¹⁴⁰Anna [Holden] to Marv [Rich], [27 March 1964], 2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00358.

¹⁴¹Allen Weinstein to James Farmer, 23 March 1964, 1-2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00354.

¹⁴²Naomi Eftis, [unofficial minutes of the Washington CORE meeting], 31 March 1964, 1-2, 3:1, Holden Papers; Washington Chapter, CORE [drafted by Fran Harris] to James Farmer, 7 April 1964, The Papers

In the case they developed against Julius Hobson, the oppositional faction documented the charges. They argued that Hobson's group continually redefined the standards for active membership, violated stipulations in the national CORE constitution regarding membership and allowed irregularities on the list. The 1962 constitution enumerated few specific requirements for active members. Besides accepting CORE principles and CORE Rules For Action, active membership required an individual "pledges to contribute his best personal efforts and financial support on a regular basis."¹⁴³ In preparation for the May 1963 elections the group decided to differentiate between associate and active members further by requiring participation in "at least one of the 3 preceding action projects."¹⁴⁴ A year later the Hobson faction proposed and passed a more complicated set of standards to define active membership and to determine those eligible to vote on May 12, 1964. These new requirements for active membership disenfranchised several members of the opposition and gave the Hobson-controlled Executive Committee the ability to determine who became active, voting members.

Washington CORE adopted these new standards on March 3 and then incorporated them into the March 31 constitution as a by-law. To qualify as a new active member, an associate member had to participate in three out of four consecutive direct action projects during a three month probation period. A person dropped from active to associate status by missing four successive action projects. To return to the group as a full member, an individual had to engage in two out of four sequential Washington CORE programs. These rules did not recognize of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, F:2:169:0518.

¹⁴³"Constitution of Washington CORE," [May 1962], 1, 1:2:2, Hobson Collection.

¹⁴⁴"Elections Soon," The Washington COREspondent, 1:8 (January 1963): 1, 1:2:5, Hobson Collection.

committee or clerical work as valid activities. Only direct action projects, beginning with Safeway and including voter registration, Park-Naylor, Hecht Company and housing testing, counted. On April 14, Jack Goodwin, the membership chairman, announced that testing for housing discrimination no longer qualified people for active membership and all voter registration efforts counted as one action project. This ruling, in particular, harmed the oppositional caucus since most of its members worked through the housing committee.¹⁴⁵

The Washington CORE by-law on membership requirements also placed the power of decision-making in the hands of the Executive Committee. In accordance with the national CORE constitution, the March 31 constitution established that decisions about active membership required confirmation by a majority vote of current active members at a general meeting. Despite this rule, the by-law stipulated that the Executive Committee determined whether or not an individual got recommended to the membership to become an active member. This body also removed active members for lack of action or readmitted them upon participation in two of four consecutive projects, with no input by the general membership.¹⁴⁶

When first applied on March 10, these requirements resulted in a list of 79 individuals. During the meeting to ratify the new

¹⁴⁵Dolores Pelham, "The following definition of an active member was adopted on March 3, 1964," The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, F:2:169:0514; "Constitution of Washington CORE," 31 March 1964, 1, 3:3, Holden Papers; "By-Laws of Washington CORE," [31 March 1964], 1, 3:3, Holden Papers; Ad-Hoc Sub-Committee for an Effective Washington CORE Chapter, "Section V. Constitutional Violations and Other Irregularities in Active Membership List," 8 May 1964, 20-21, 3:11, Holden Papers.

¹⁴⁶"Constitution of Washington CORE," 31 March 1964, 1, 3:3, Holden Papers; "By-Laws of Washington CORE," [31 March 1964], 1, 3:3, Holden Papers; Ad-Hoc Sub-Committee for an Effective Washington CORE Chapter, "Section V. Constitutional Violations and Other Irregularities in Active Membership List," 8 May 1964, 20, 3:11, Holden Papers.

constitution on March 31, Jack Goodwin read the active membership list. This roster contained thirty-three names which the general membership never confirmed by majority vote as active members. Naomi Eftis testified, "The list as read was longer than the original list distributed two weeks before." She and Dr. Karl Gregory recorded the names as Goodwin read them and carefully compared the old and new lists. As chair of the information and telephone committee, Eftis took attendance at each meeting and picket line to update her records. Committee members used this information to telephone people and inform them of demonstrations. Regarding the new active members announced on March 31, Eftis remembered, "Fourteen of these names are people unknown to me as active members based on my present files. Of these fourteen names many were present at this meeting, and the majority voted as a group with Mr. Hobson. Of the nineteen other names, some were recognized as old members who had been inactive for some time."¹⁴⁷ When Eftis asked the recording secretary, Dolores Pelham, for the addresses and telephone numbers of the people new to her on this list, Pelham provided her with addresses only. When Eftis asked for the telephone numbers, Pelham admitted "that she did not have them because all of these names were on the Associate lists, and that she never took telephone numbers for the Associate members."¹⁴⁸

In her final analysis, Naomi Eftis identified seventeen of these people as qualified, but she found the active status of seventeen others questionable. According to her records, eight of these individuals

¹⁴⁷Naomi Eftis, [unofficial minutes of the Washington CORE meeting], 31 March 1964, 1-2, 3:1, Holden Papers; "Statement by Naomi Eftis: Changes in Active Membership List, Washington CORE, Since March, 1964 and Changes in Standards Used for Qualifying Members For Active Status Since March, 1964," Appendix D, 8 May 1964, 1 and 4, 3:11, Holden Papers.

¹⁴⁸Naomi Eftis, statement, Exhibit #41, 4 April 1964, 3:11, Holden Papers.

failed to participate in any demonstrations prior to April 14. In fact, she found no information as to when five of them joined Washington CORE. Others she identified as Hobson supporters and illustrated their ineligibility for active membership as defined by the Hobson faction. Abdullah Azeze, "a vigorous supporter of Mr. Hobson," participated in voter registration only. His first activism with Washington CORE involved voter registration and he failed to join other demonstrations when this campaign ended in February. Carolyn Bennet, described as "[o]ne of the original members of [W]ashington CORE and old friend of Mr. Hobson," stayed away from CORE demonstrations for many months. Returning as a precinct captain in voter registration work, Bennet voted illegally on March 31. Another "[a]ctive supporter of Mr. Hobson at meetings," Francis Harris, took part in no eligible demonstrations between December 1963 and March 1964. Her last activism for Washington CORE, at the Benjamin Franklin picket lines, occurred prior to the first eligible direct action project as defined by the membership committee.¹⁴⁹

Four individuals on the March 31 active membership roster clearly acknowledged their own ineligibility. Robin Standish telephoned Roger Wheaton to invite him to a CORE-related party. Wheaton admitted to Standish that he knew little about CORE because someone very recently added him to the active membership list although he had not been involved for a while. Standish remembered Wheaton stating, "A few months ago I participated in some CORE activities, and I was put on the associate list, I guess. But I haven't been around for quite some time. All of a sudden this guy asked me if I'd like to become an active member. I was surprised, since I hadn't been around for so long." To

¹⁴⁹"Statement by Naomi Eftis: Changes in Active Membership List, Washington CORE, Since March, 1964 and Changes in Standards Used for Qualifying Members For Active Status Since March, 1964," Appendix D, 8 May 1964, 1-3, 3:11, Holden Papers.

Standish's inquiry why someone awarded him active status he replied, "Well, it seems this whole group wanted me in, so they just asked me. I guess they figure I'll be voting with them --for Julius-- since they got me in and all."¹⁵⁰

Although members of the Washington chapter of CORE for several years, James Eskeridge, Martha Eskeridge and Carolyn Stewart all admitted they had not participated in recent demonstrations. Because of personal matters, Carolyn Stewart's busy schedule prevented her from participating in the past five action projects. Naomi Eftis could find no evidence of Martha and James Eskeridge walking a picket line for over six months.¹⁵¹ Francine Taft, who aligned herself with the oppositional faction, also made the active membership list despite her involvement in committee and telephone work only. "Since I joined Washington CORE about September, 1963 I have never attended a meeting nor have I demonstrated, picketed, tested or participated in any CORE action. Despite this my name is listed on the Washington Core active membership list but according to the Constitution of this Chapter I do not qualify for active membership," Taft attested.¹⁵²

Although Taft made the membership roll, the roster omitted twelve qualified members of the opposition group. Some of the individuals, including corresponding secretary Joan Bacchus, Juliet Donner, Lee Levy

¹⁵⁰Robin Standish, statement, Exhibit #39, 30 April 1964, 3:11, Holden Papers.

¹⁵¹"Statement by Naomi Eftis: Changes in Active Membership List, Washington CORE, Since March, 1964 and Changes in Standards Used for Qualifying Members For Active Status Since March, 1964," Appendix D, 8 May 1964, 3, 3:11, Holden Papers; Sheila Machlis, [statement re telephone conversation with Carolyn Stewart," Exhibit #42, 20 April 1964, 3:11, Holden Papers.

¹⁵²Francine N. Taft, "Statement Re: Active Membership List," Exhibit #38, 1 May 1964, 3:11, Holden Papers; "Statement by Naomi Eftis: Changes in Active Membership List, Washington CORE, Since March, 1964 and Changes in Standards Used for Qualifying Members For Active Status Since March, 1964," Appendix D, 8 May 1964, 4, 3:11, Holden Papers.

and Kerry Napuk, had engaged in CORE activities for several months prior to the first active membership list drawn up in March, 1964.¹⁵³ Leanora and Gerald Charles both joined Washington CORE in February 1964, attended the same housing committee and general membership meetings and demonstrated in the same direct action projects. However, the membership roster listed Gerald Charles but omitted his wife.¹⁵⁴ Members of CORE for two years, Jim and Robin Standish worked with the housing committee testing for discrimination, an approved project in the original by-law. During April they picketed at housing demonstrations.¹⁵⁵

Arthur Rosen joined the organization in August 1963, working with both the employment and the housing committees. He attended all but two of the membership meetings during the winter and spring of 1964 and walked 3 of the last 5 picket lines. Classified as an active member prior to the March membership regulations, he believed he met all defined stipulations to remain a voting CORE member. When he inquired about his status, the membership committee chairman and recording secretary informed him "an 'error' had been made when my name was dropped from this list." Rosen recalled, "They assured me that the 'error' would be corrected. My name is still not to be found on the list of active members and I have thus been deprived of my vote at the last two meetings."¹⁵⁶

¹⁵³Oppositional Faction, [list of faction members and their voting status], [April 1964], 3:10, Holden Papers.

¹⁵⁴Leanora and Gerald Charles, statement, Exhibit #36, 2 May 1964, 3:11, Holden Papers; Thomas Ploss, statement, Exhibit #37, 3 May 1964, 3:11, Holden Papers.

¹⁵⁵"Statement by Naomi Eftis: Changes in Active Membership List, Washington CORE, Since March, 1964 and Changes in Standards Used for Qualifying Members For Active Status Since March, 1964," Appendix D, 8 May 1964, 4, 3:11, Holden Papers.

¹⁵⁶Arthur S. Rosen, statement, Exhibit #40, 1 May 1964, 3:11, Holden Papers.

Other irregularities in awarding active status appear upon examination of membership lists from March. Both the Hobson faction and the opposition developed a list of active members which identified who in their group could vote. An early draft of the March 24, 1964 "Washington CORE - Active Voting List" contains Art Rosen's name. Someone from the Hobson faction labeled each person on the list either "OK - with Program" or "NO - not with Program." This person wrote "NO" clearly beside Rosen's name. This list also contains the names of Venona Booker and Milton Bess.¹⁵⁷ These names appear on a second version of the March 24 roster, but not on the finalized active voting list submitted to national CORE. This final roll contains 24 names not appearing on the annotated Hobson list and eleven of these additions are among those challenged by the opposition. One of these additions, John Locust, appears to have officially become an active member on March 24. The same source identifies Laurence Ottenstein, affiliated with the opposition, as an active new member but he never made the official active voting list.¹⁵⁸

The changes in the rules for active membership and their irregular application also upset CORE members not aligned with the oppositional caucus. When Jody Jamieson and her husband joined

¹⁵⁷"Washington CORE - Active Voting List," 24 March 1964, 1:2:3, Hobson Collection; Oppositional Faction, [list of faction members and their voting status], [April 1964], 3:10, Holden Papers.

¹⁵⁸"Washington CORE - Active Voting List," 24 March 1964 with 31 March 1964 additions, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, F:2:169:0513; "Washington CORE - Active Voting List Submitted to National CORE," 24 March 1964 and 31 March 1964, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 1:89:00087; "Washington CORE - Active Voting List," 24 March 1964, 1:2:3, Hobson Collection; "Statement by Naomi Eftis: Changes in Active Membership List, Washington CORE, Since March, 1964 and Changes in Standards Used for Qualifying Members For Active Status Since March, 1964," Appendix D, 8 May 1964, 2, 3:11, Holden Papers; "New Members as of 3-24-64," 1:2:3, Hobson Collection; Oppositional Faction, [list of faction members and their voting status], [April 1964], 3:10, Holden Papers.

Washington CORE and paid their annual dues they chose active membership status. "I try to be as active as my situation allows," she declared. A suburban home, three small children and no driver's license limited her ability to engage in many of Washington CORE's direct action projects or to attend more than five meetings a year. Along with donations totaling fifty dollars a year, this white women tried to engage in CORE-type activities by inviting her "colored friends" to meet her white neighbors in the "coffee-katches" of the "wastelands of suburbia." Along with recruiting new members and raising her neighbors' awareness, she undertook committee work by telephone and marched in suburban picket lines. "BUT I AM NOT 'ACTIVE' - I CANNOT VOTE IN THE ELECTIONS OR ON MOTIONS AT THE MEETINGS," Jamieson discovered.¹⁵⁹

"The 'active' classification is a new constitutional rule passed without the knowledge much less the 2/3's consent of the membership. It was quietly made law a few months ago by a handful of members at a regular meeting. I found out 2 weeks ago merely by accident," she explained in her complaint to the national office. Jamieson continued,

Complicating the 'active' requirements and assuring the status quo of eligible voters, there is a 3 month waiting period before one realizes 'active' recognition. New members and all us dead weight 'associate' members (many of whom give valuable hours actively engaged in necessary committee work) are excluded. Washington CORE is guilty of something akin to a poll Tax and literacy test and they manipulate it with all the delicacy of a Greenwood, Miss. clerk.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁹Jody Jamieson to National CORE Headquarters, 27 April 1964, 1 and 2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, F:2:169:0526. As evidence of Jamieson's independence from the factionalism, see Oppositional Faction, [list of faction members and their voting status], [April 1964], 3:10, Holden Papers.

¹⁶⁰Jody Jamieson to National CORE Headquarters, 27 April 1964, 2 and 3, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, F:2:169:0526-0527.

In her opinion, these new regulations differentiating between direct action and support work relegated her to second class status and unnaturally influenced the politics of the organization. "The rule has changed the complexion of the coming election. The gerrymandering of the 'active' list to include people never before heard of in the organization has changed Mr. Hobson's reelection from a respectable probability to a curious certainty," Jamieson predicted.¹⁶¹

By the time Jody Jamieson discovered her second class status in CORE, Julius Hobson had reversed his decision regarding the May election. He intended to remain the leader of Washington CORE. A week following the public announcement of his decision not to run, Julius Hobson proclaimed his plans to stand for reelection. "Great cheers" erupted from Hobson's supporters after his pronouncement at the March 31 meeting. He informed the press that "a clear mandate - a pe[t]ition signed by 75 per cent of the chapter membership" motivated his change of heart.¹⁶² Two weeks later the nominating committee put forth a slate headed by Julius Hobson and peopled by his supporters including Rimsky Atkinson, Elwood Jackson, Abdullah Azeeze, Joyce Makel, Francis Harris and Tom Gates.¹⁶³

Julius Hobson ran unopposed for the May 12 election since the oppositional faction walked out of the April 28 meeting prior to nominations. In light of the charges Hobson's challengers filed with the national office on April 30 and the absence of a contested election, the National Action Council (NAC) of CORE asked the Washington chapter

¹⁶¹Jody Jamieson to National CORE Headquarters, 27 April 1964, 2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, F:2:169:0526.

¹⁶²Naomi Eftis, [unofficial minutes of the Washington CORE meeting], 31 March 1964, 3, 3:1, Holden Papers; "Hobson Says CORE Decides to Cancel D.C. School Boycott," The Washington Post, 1 April 1964, B9.

¹⁶³[postcard announcing CORE elections] to Anna Holden, 5 May 1964, 3:10, Holden Papers.

to postpone its election until after NAC reviewed the case and made a decision.¹⁶⁴ Washington CORE, or more likely Julius Hobson and those close to him, decided to proceed with the elections. National Director James Farmer sent Gordon Carey as his observer.¹⁶⁵

Gordon Carey, the Assistant to the National Director, began his report to James Farmer with a factual account of the election. The chair of the nominating committee, Abdullah Azeeze, chaired the meeting. He announced that the agenda consisted of two matters only, the roll call and the election. Azeeze overruled every person in the audience who tried to speak through points of order, information and personal privilege. After one person read the roster, another suggested the membership cast a single ballot for the Hobson ticket since he ran unopposed. A second to the motion and the vote occurred immediately thereafter. Upon the election of the new officers, Azeeze turned the proceedings over to Hobson who abolished all existing committees and adjourned the meeting. "The entire 'meeting' lasted a maximum of six minutes," Carey remarked. In his opinion, "it was the most fantastic railroad job I have ever witnessed. There was not even a pretense of democratic or parliamentary procedure."¹⁶⁶

After adjournment Carey asked Hobson how this meeting reflected others. Did they usually avoid discussion and the use of parliamentary procedure? Julius Hobson told Carey,

¹⁶⁴James Farmer to Julius Hobson, telegram, 6 May [1964], The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, F:2:169:0506.

¹⁶⁵Gordon Carey to Anna Holden, telegram, 11 May 1964, 3:15, Holden Papers.

¹⁶⁶Gordon Carey to James Farmer, "Confidential Report," 13 May 1964, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00388.

the caucus' only purpose was to heckle and that it was impossible to carry on an orderly meeting in their presence. He said that he had been forced to carry on most of CORE's business illegally behind closed doors at the CORE office because of this disruptive faction. He then said that he was going to expel from membership the entire caucus and was going to seek an injunction barring them from attending further meetings.¹⁶⁷

Julius Hobson began preparations to rid Washington CORE of his rivals before the election by incorporating the organization under the laws of the District of Columbia.

Julius Hobson filed incorporation papers with the government on May 8. The Articles of Incorporation identified Washington, D.C. CORE as a non-profit organization, headquartered at Julius Hobson's home and controlled by a Board of Directors. The board consisted of Julius Hobson and two of his lieutenants, vice chairman Rimsky Atkinson and membership committee chair Jack Goodwin.¹⁶⁸ Prior to the May 12 election, members of the opposition distributed a flyer announcing and denouncing the incorporation. It declared, "Last Friday, May 8, 1964, your Chairman, Julius Hobson, without the approval of the group at a general membership meeting, with two of his followers incorporated Washington CORE with its office listed as his home address." Because the corporation abolished their constitution and placed control of the group in the hands of a Board of Directors, the opposition wanted members to vote to defer the election until national CORE conducted an investigation of Julius Hobson and his actions. The dissidents refuted the incorporation because Hobson formed the corporation illegally; he

¹⁶⁷Gordon Carey to James Farmer, "Confidential Report," 13 May 1964, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00388.

¹⁶⁸Nathaniel Grosman, Assistant Superintendent of Corporation, [Certificate of Incorporation], 8 May 1964, 21:7:3, Hobson Collection; Jack Goodwin, Julius Hobson, and Rimsky Atkinson, "Articles of Incorporation of Washington, D.C. Congress of Racial Equality," 8 May 1964, 1, 3:10, Holden Papers.

abolished the local CORE constitution without the required two-thirds vote to amend it.¹⁶⁹

In this leaflet the opposition asked the membership why Hobson incorporated their organization without their approval. In answer to their own query they suggested, "We submit that only one reason exists: to continue Hobson and his supporters in office and capture the name of CORE for himself. This makes a mockery of the 'election' which had been called for tonight, and expresses contempt for the membership generally. DON'T LET HOBSON TURN YOUR ORGANIZATION INTO HIS PRIVATE CLUB."¹⁷⁰ To reporters, Julius Hobson explained he incorporated Washington CORE to prevent his rivals from organizing a competing CORE chapter. "The chapter was incorporated to protect the name, because we don't want to be involved in a jurisdictional dispute if another local group organizes a CORE chapter," Hobson stated. "After the meeting," one journalist reported, "...Hobson told Carey that the local CORE was no longer under national control." The next day Hobson clarified this misinterpretation of his objectives asserting, "I have no intention of bolting national CORE."¹⁷¹

By manipulating the active membership list and incorporating Washington CORE under his name Julius Hobson revealed his desire to retain control of Washington CORE and to continue to direct the Washington civil rights struggle as he saw fit. The oppositional faction threatened his power in Washington CORE by proposing democratic

¹⁶⁹[Opposition], "Hobson's Incorporation of Washington CORE," flyer, [12 May 1964], 3:10, Holden Papers; Michael Padnos to Carl Rachlin, memorandum, 17 May 1964, 1-2, 3:15, Holden Papers.

¹⁷⁰[Opposition], "Hobson's Incorporation of Washington CORE," flyer, [12 May 1964], 3:10, Holden Papers.

¹⁷¹Clarence Hunter, "CORE Is Incorporated To Block D.C. Rivals," Washington Evening Star, 13 May 1964, B3; William Raspberry, "Hobson CORE Unit Bolts National in Big Surprise," The Washington Post, 13 May 1964, A14; "Not Bolting CORE, Hobson Now Says," The Washington Post, 14 May 1964, D4.

reform in the organization. His emotional response to the opposition and his public criticisms of them further illustrate his desire to shape the local civil rights struggle and to maintain his power in CORE.

When Julius Hobson characterized his opponents as a "disruptive faction" on May 12, he summarized his opinion of those in conspiracy against him.¹⁷² He never seriously accepted their challenge to his leadership or their charges as legitimate. He freely told his followers and the press what he thought of the oppositional caucus. Anna Holden recalled, "Julius met with his crowd after last Tues. meetings, made much of opposition against him, efforts of irresponsible people to split group, etc."¹⁷³ Letters the national office received from Hobson supporters confirmed their perception of the opposition as "a group of dissidents set on disrupting CORE's meetings."¹⁷⁴ Elwood Jackson bluntly characterized the challenge as a conspiracy. Jackson wrote, "I have for the last six months been witness to a methodical, deliberate, unjustified attack on the present chairman of our Chapter, Mr. Julius Hobson. The purpose of these attacks was a deliberate attempt to throw our chapter into a state of confusion, and once this was accomplished, assume leadership of Washington CORE." In Jackson's opinion the opposition unscrupulously sought to overthrow the chair and take power through libel, bribery and intimidation.

Anna Holden predicted Julius Hobson intended to fight this conspiracy against him in the public arena. She wrote to Marvin Rich, Program Director of national CORE, "It seems obvious at this point that

¹⁷²Gordon Carey to James Farmer, "Confidential Report," 13 May 1964, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00388.

¹⁷³Anna [Holden] to Marv [Rich], [27 March 1964], 3, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00358.

¹⁷⁴Charles Hardy to James Farmer, 23 June 1964, 2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, F:2:169:0640.

Julius is going to use the press as much as possible in this little struggle, playing for a community image of being 'responsible' + playing the opposition to his 'program' + to him as 'irresponsible.'"¹⁷⁵ An article published in the Washington Evening Star approximately two weeks later validated Holden's prediction.

During the interview Julius Hobson labeled the disruptive faction in his group as part of an organized, nation-wide attempt to disrupt the civil rights movement. He said, "I don't know if it's coming from the far left, the far right or if they are agents of the Confederacy." Hobson cited evidence of these conspirators damaging the struggle for black equality in Brooklyn, Dayton, Los Angeles and Chicago commenting, "This disruption is as effective as if it was done by staunch segregationists." In his organization, Hobson declared, a dozen black and white persons are orchestrating "a well-organized effort to take over the group and to change the basic philosophy of CORE." This group threatened the larger Washington civil rights movement as well, he argued, because the dissenters belonged to both CORE and the NAACP, deliberately cultivating in-fighting and dissension between the groups.¹⁷⁶

As Julius Hobson became increasingly angry and threatened by the oppositional caucus his characterization of the group centered around race. Instead of continuing to identify the opposition as part of an interracial conspiracy to destroy the civil rights movement, Hobson described the in-fighting as a battle pitting white members against black members. To explain why he incorporated the local chapter of CORE Hobson declared, "There's a bunch of white liberals in Washington CORE

¹⁷⁵Anna [Holden] to Marv [Rich], [27 March 1964], 4, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00359.

¹⁷⁶"Disruptive Force Seen As Threat to CORE," Washington Evening Star, 18 April 1964, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, F:2:169:0524.

who are not psychologically attuned to taking orders from a Negro and are trying to take over the chapter. They are misfits in the white community and are trying to come over into the Negro community and lead the Negro revolution in their way."¹⁷⁷

Hobson used similar arguments when he angrily berated Thomas Ploss for continuing to operate as the housing chairman even after Hobson abolished his committee. Hobson telephoned Ploss after he learned the white government lawyer called a picket line for Trenton Park Apartments. Ploss summarized Hobson's "staccato delivery of angry words":

What are you trying to do, take over the Negro revolution? I'm sick of you, and you'd better not approach me again, or it's going to be on a basis of man to man. There wouldn't be any trouble in the Chapter if it wasn't for misfits like you. I'm not interested in reconciliation, for I'm theChairman and I'm going to remain Chairman. You're not the Housing Chairman, and I've told everyone around town that you're not. Don't you come around me again, or it's going to be on the basis of man to man.[sic]¹⁷⁸

Hobson's anger and his veiled threats to use violence indicate the level of importance he attributed to winning this struggle. Earlier in the controversy Anna Holden anticipated the meaning of this battle to him. Explaining why Julius Hobson would use the press against the oppositional faction, Holden wrote to Marvin Rich of the national office, "I think the whole thing of keeping the CORE platform is vital to Julius + he is so threatened that he is very close to losing control of himself + losing contact with reality. He has said some fantastic things to me + is quite emotional about all this."¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁷Claarence Hunter, "CORE Is Incorporated To Block D.C. Rivals," Washington Evening Star, 13 May 1964, B3.

¹⁷⁸"Statement of Thomas Ploss," 10 June 1964, 3:18, Holden Papers.

¹⁷⁹Anna [Holden] to Marv [Rich], [27 March 1964], 4, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00359.

Julius Hobson used this racial argument out of anger. No evidence indicates he really believed this. In fact a few months before he labeled his opposition as white liberals trying to take over the black revolution, he praised the large number of whites who worked in his group. During a television interview a journalist asked Hobson, "Is yours a Negro organization?" Hobson responded,

No, CORE is not a Negro organization. The Washington CORE has never been a Negro organization. There are more Negroes in Washington, but we have 700 members in Washington CORE and at least 75 percent of those members are white. This represents an improvement, because last year, 85 percent of the members of the Washington CORE were white.

Another interviewer wondered whether this meant that whites dominated CORE with white aims. Julius Hobson clearly rejected this idea. He replied,

Well, some of the chapters might be dominated by white people, if you mean white people being present in numbers, but I've got some people in Washington CORE, white, who seek to dominate, who want a great change, and they dominate, in that they are activists, they are in there acting and effectively trying to great-[create?] change and bring about better race relations and if we find a white who is vigorous and who wants to dominate the organization and push it in this direction, I say by all means let him come.¹⁸⁰

Comments made by Julius Hobson later in his life confirm his aversion to an anti-white or black separatist position. A biographical speech, probably written for a testimonial in honor of Julius Hobson in November 1972, uses Hobson's words to describe his opinion of the changing civil rights struggle. The speechwriter quoted Hobson:

The nature of the beast of discrimination has changed; there is less open friction between the races. . . . What frightens me

¹⁸⁰WTOP News, "City Side," transcript-press release, Exhibit #15, 8-9, 3:11, Holden Papers.

about what is going on in the country right now is that blacks, particularly young blacks, are duplicating the white man's mistakes. The whole thrust toward separatism is a bad move. But I know from my youth that it takes a tremendous effort to throw off hate. I've found that my shoulders are just not broad enough to carry around all that hate.¹⁸¹

During his last interview in 1977, Julius Hobson reiterated this position. He commented on the trend in civil rights organizations toward black nationalism, "That was the move in the late 1960s--to get rid of white leadership. I remember that happening in CORE. I didn't go along with it but it happened. I thought that, black or white, if you have the qualities and you want to stick your head in the fire like John Brown, then you should be able to."¹⁸²

In addition, Hobson's charges against white liberals dominating the organization made little sense because the oppositional faction contained many African Americans. After national CORE expelled Julius Hobson in June 1964 he again charged "white liberals who are psychologically not attuned to taking orders from a Negro" with orchestrating his ouster. The Washington Post reported, "Probably two-thirds of the dissidents are white, though they insist their leaders are Negroes. The Hobson faction is predominantly Negro." This does not seem possible since Hobson told reporters eighty percent of the 700 members of CORE supported him despite his earlier claims that whites comprised seventy-five percent of the membership.¹⁸³

Racial statistics are available for twenty-four of the forty-nine members of the oppositional faction qualified to be active members.

¹⁸¹ "Julius Hobson," [speech probably written for Hobson's November 1972 testimonial], 19:1:4, Hobson Collection.

¹⁸² Charles Conconi, "Goodbye, Mr. Hobson," The Washingtonian, May 1977, 140.

¹⁸³ William Raspberry, "Hobson, Washington CORE Expecting Showdown With National This Week," The Washington Post, 22 June 1964, B1; "CORE Ousts Hobson As Washington Leader," Washington Star, 21 June 1964, B1.

Thirteen identified themselves as African Americans and eleven as whites. Although not one individual, white or black, claimed leadership of the oppositional caucus, several African Americans played central roles. Ethelbert Haskins spearheaded the electoral challenge to Julius Hobson. He, along with Karl Gregory, headed the six person Ad Hoc Subcommittee for an Effective Washington CORE. The opposition singled out Karl Gregory, Reginald Webb and white Anna Holden for their efforts to transform Washington CORE. The housing committee meeting minutes of June 25 declared, "Karl, Anna, Reggie Webb deserve our gratitude for chapter reform." Norma Shelton, African American co-chair of the housing committee, actively compiled the opposition's case against Hobson. Gerald Charles and white Gordon Adams led the effort to formulate the reformed chapter's future program. African Americans Lee Charles, Tom Glenn, Amy Hatcher, Julius Johnson, Mordecai Johnson, Daniel Turner and Herbert Woods all publicly filed affidavits contesting Hobson's leadership.¹⁸⁴

By portraying the oppositional faction as conspiratorial and selfish white liberals, Julius Hobson revealed how much he wanted to hold onto his power in Washington CORE. It also illustrates the intensity of the battle between the two factions. Both sides took this

¹⁸⁴ "Agenda CORE Housing Committee," 25 June 1964, 1, 6:5, Holden Papers; Oppositional Faction, [list of faction members and their voting status], [April 1964], 3:10, Holden Papers; Ad Hoc Subcommittee for an Effective Washington CORE Chapter to James Farmer, 8 May 1964, 3:11, Holden Papers [consult opening letter and contents of the case for affidavits]. Race: "CORE Testing List," 4 April 1964, 6:3, Holden Papers; Genevieve Hughes, "Field Work Report," 17 February to 23 March 1961, 7 and 9, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:255:01142-01143; "Sign Up for Realtor Testing," March [1964], 1-2, 6:3, Holden Papers; "CORE Fires Leader Who Accused Builders Of Trying to Evade Kennedy Antibias Order," Wall Street Journal, 12 September 1963, 2; "Purlie Victorious A Success," The Washington COREspondent, 2:3 (October 1963: 2, 3:13, Holden Papers; Julius Hobson to C.E. Childs, December 1963, 1 and 2, 1:1:3, Hobson Collection.

struggle very seriously because they fought for the survival of CORE as they defined it. Each side believed CORE the proper vehicle to eradicate racism in Washington D.C., but disagreed vehemently on how decisions should be made and who should control them. As the Washington CORE community completely disintegrated, national CORE staff persons decided that the national organization needed to intervene and resolve the crisis.

After observing the May 12 election, speaking with Julius Hobson and observing a meeting of the oppositional faction, Gordon Carey revealed the importance of CORE to members of the opposition and the ferocity of their beliefs. The national CORE Program Director remarked,

As far as I can see, most of the better members of the chapter are in the anti-Hobson caucus. . . . The caucus members are intelligent activists and are extremely loyal to CORE's principles and to CORE as an organization. I am almost certain that we will lose most of the valuable members of the chapter unless strong action is taken by the NAC Steering Committee.

He thought national CORE would need to expel Hobson, put the chapter under extremely strict trusteeship or disaffiliate and reorganize. He concluded, "Hobson seems to be increasingly difficult and, in my opinion, is going to create severe problems for the national organization, and for Washington CORE unless we act forthrightly."¹⁸⁵

Although field secretary Jon Schaefer witnessed misbehavior on both sides during the cantankerous April 28 meeting, he also suggested the National Action Council needed to intervene. He advised national CORE to place the chapter in trusteeship, administered by a board of trustees composed of one person from each faction, a representative from the National Action Council, two staff members and National Director

¹⁸⁵Gordon Carey to James Farmer, "Confidential Report," 13 May 1964, 2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00388.

James Farmer. Along with developing a program and establishing "reasonable criteria" for active membership, the two staff members would develop "sane leadership." Schaefer concluded, "The situation is now so crystalized within the chapter that I am afraid that if it appears that one side or the other 'wins' a large number of people may leave.[sic]"¹⁸⁶

After observing a meeting on April 15, James McCain also commented on the intensity of the division between the two factions in CORE. "Unless some sanity is brought about in Washington CORE after the next election, the group will not function as a viable CORE group or many of the members will leave," the national CORE Director of Organization predicted.¹⁸⁷ As already illustrated, people demonstrated very un-CORE like behavior toward one another. Abandoning the CORE principles of nonviolence, good will and reconciliation, some people acted and spoke out of anger. Meetings became so cantankerous in 1964 that Hobson appointed a Sergeant-At-Arms to keep order.¹⁸⁸ By April and May, Washington CORE was a severely divided community. Some nasty incidents occurred, demonstrating the alienation and lack of trust between members. For example, Dick Brown, the office manager and a Hobson supporter, purchased a "new lock" for the Washington CORE office on Ninth Street during March and again in June, 1964 after Hobson's expulsion.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁶J. Schaefer to J. McCain, memorandum, 29 April 1964, 3, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, F:2:169:0529.

¹⁸⁷James McCain to James Farmer, "Confidential [memorandum]," 15 April 1964, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, F:2:169:0522.

¹⁸⁸"Confidential Washington CORE Officers," 26 February 1964, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00353; "Washington CORE Officers," [May 1963], 1:2:3, Hobson Collection.

¹⁸⁹Receipt from the American Safe and Lock Company paid by RB, 3-4 March 1964, 1:2:1, Hobson Collection; Dick Brown, "Received of Petty Case for keys and lock, office," 22 June 1964, 1:2:1, Hobson Collection.

Another member of the Hobson faction, Elwood Jackson, covertly taped telephone conversations. Jackson initiated conversations with those opposed to Julius Hobson and then shared the tapes with him. Hobson explained that he became aware of the tapes when Elwood Jackson knocked on his door, introduced himself and said he held evidence to prove members of the Executive Committee plotted to sabotage the Safeway project. Hobson then listened to the tapes. On March 14 he told Norma Shelton he understood wiretapping to be a federal offense and rushed Jackson and the tapes out of his house as soon as he finished listening to them. To Shelton, Hobson "expressed regret over and over at having listened." But, he played the tapes at a secret meeting in February with four members of the Executive Committee, told Naomi Eftis he possessed a recording of her saying unflattering things and informed Anna Holden he had conversations of members plotting against the Safeway campaign.¹⁹⁰

Ethelbert Haskins attended the secret meeting at Hobson's home and heard the recording between Naomi Eftis and Elwood Jackson. Haskins recalled,

The initiator of the call played the part of the agent provocateur. He asked Mrs. Eftis questions designed to show she and I were intriguing, as Julius put it, to take over CORE. 'Taking over CORE' amounted to my making a decision to run for Chairman of the chapter. . . . Since there was nothing incriminating (by Hobson's definition) on the tape, my impression was that Mr. Hobson played the tape for the purpose of showing us that he was 'on top' of the goings on in the chapter.

Hobson also informed them he possessed other tape recordings of

¹⁹⁰Norma Shelton, "Statement re: Tape recordings of telephone conversations and Mr. Hobson's knowledge and use of them," 2 and 1, 3:16, Holden Papers; Naomi Eftis, statement, [March or April 1964], 3:16, Holden Papers; Anna Holden, "Statement re use of tape recordings," 30 April 1964, 3:16, Holden Papers.

conversations between members of CORE.¹⁹¹ Not surprisingly Naomi Eftis seemed a bit paranoid when she wrote to the national office for assistance. She confided to field secretary Jon Schaefer,

I am refraining from naming names, since there is a possibility that this letter may fall into other than your hands, and that would spell the death of those of us who have, as yet, had to operate under cover. Don't think I am being overly-dramatic. We have had previous experience where Mr. Hobson has somehow gotten wind of who has contacted whom whenever someone has complained to National, or asked for assistance.¹⁹²

The lack of trust between members, the un-CORE like behavior of individuals and the constant state of dissension completely disintegrated the Washington CORE community by May, 1964. Washington CORE became so divided that each faction began to operate independently of the other after the May 12 election. Both sides identified themselves as CORE so intensely, each group operated as an independent unit while awaiting action from national CORE. The members of the oppositional faction declared the election and incorporation unconstitutional and therefore void. In their opinion, Julius Hobson acted illegally immediately following his reelection when he abolished the employment, housing, membership and finance committees because the Washington CORE constitution established their existence as standing committees. He could not terminate all committee projects with one declaration. Since the opposition saw the incorporation as illegal they chose to ignore the injunction threats from Julius Hobson and Rimsky Atkinson. A resolution signed by 36 members of the group informed the national office, "we shall continue with existing projects (presently

¹⁹¹Ethelbert Haskins, statement, 30 April 1964, 3:16, Holden Papers.

¹⁹²Naomi Eftis to Jon [Schaefer], 18 March 1964, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:265:01007.

underway in the name of Washington D.C. CORE), unless otherwise requested by National CORE."¹⁹³

Through the housing committee the members of the oppositional faction continued to conduct projects begun before the turmoil. They maintained their campaign against the management of Trenton Park Apartments who violated the Commissioners' Fair Housing Ordinance by refusing to rent to African Americans. The oppositional faction picketed each weekend and organized at least two sit-ins which resulted in arrest. The housing committee, still under the leadership of Norma Shelton and Tom Ploss, also renewed their church speaking program to publicize housing opportunities, pursued fourteen housing discrimination complaints filed by Washington CORE with the government of the District of Columbia and investigated complaints of discrimination and reprisal evictions. "All these matters are quite current and face abandonment if Hobson is upheld," Ploss argued to the national office.¹⁹⁴ Karl Gregory concurred, testifying that the status of the complaints with the Commissioners' Council on Human Relations required housing committee members to continue their work. He asserted,

For the last three quarters of a year, the Housing Committee has been the most continuously active of Washington CORE's committees. . . . It is to be greatly doubted that Mr. Hobson will be able to expedite the work load on these and other complaints as well as

¹⁹³Michael Padnos to Carl Rachlin, "Validity of The Incorporation of Washington CORE," 17 May 1964, 1-3, 3:15, Holden Papers; Sheila Machlis and 35 signers, "Resolution to National CORE," 13 May 1964, 2 and 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 1:88:00007; Anna Holden, [notes to prepare new charges against Hobson after incorporation and injunction], [May 1964], 1-3, 3:10, Holden Papers; "Statement of Thomas H. Ploss, D.C. CORE Member," 21 May 1964, 2, 3:16, Holden Papers.

¹⁹⁴"Statement of Thomas H. Ploss, D.C. CORE Member," 21 May 1964, 3, 3:16, Holden Papers; Anna Holden, [notes to prepare new charges against Hobson after incorporation and injunction], [May 1964], 2, 3:10, Holden Papers; "4 Arrested As CORE Holds Sit-in," The Washington Post, 21 June 1964, A6; Norma Shelton, press release, 27 June 1964, 4:36, Holden Papers.

the purportedly vacant committee which has over 20 active members.¹⁹⁵

The fact that the oppositional caucus continued the housing program reveals the close relationship which existed between the opposition and the housing committee. In one of his complaints to the national office Thomas Ploss bluntly tied Hobson's challengers to the committee. Ploss declared,

The Housing Committee was the sole functioning body within D.C. CORE, and Hobson's views are patently inimical to further functioning of the Committee. It has been my observation that Hobson has the support of only a small minority of Chapter members, but that through manipulation of the membership list (which adversely affected several Committee members, . . .) succeeded in grasping a numerical majority. Not one member of the Committee supports Hobson, and several, as I, state that if Hobson continues in D.C. CORE we shall leave the organization.¹⁹⁶

The opposition centered on the housing committee during the entire struggle to reform the chapter. Beginning in April the committee added "Chapter Business" to each meeting agenda. Housing activists discussed the changing active membership rules and the leadership encouraged committee members to participate in the chapter election. They continued to deal with existing projects, one agenda declaring "we're on our own now" regarding the Trenton Park campaign. At the committee meeting preceding national CORE's deliberation of the charges levied against chairman Hobson the agenda noted, "Many going to New York Friday aft and eve. to see The Great Confrontation. I've written summary (read). Who else can go?"¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁵Karl Gregory, "Mr. Hobson's Withdrawal of Authority From His Housing Committee In the Midst of a Project," 20 May 1964, 3:16, Holden Papers.

¹⁹⁶"Statement of Thomas H. Ploss, D.C. CORE Member," 21 May 1964, 3, 3:16, Holden Papers.

¹⁹⁷"Agenda Housing Committee CORE," 26 March 1964, 6:5, Holden

Following the initial decision by the National Action Council regarding Washington CORE's problems, Karl Gregory supplied committee members with information about the "New York occurrences" and the reaction of the "dissident group." One person indicated their dissatisfaction with the solution by titling the meeting's schedule "Agenda Housing Committee ???CORE???"¹⁹⁸ At the next meeting of the committee one of the chairs stated, "Success in reform of Chapter appears imminent. Should we accept new members, keep our own treasury on an interim basis?"¹⁹⁹ A few days later Karl Gregory received the appropriate forms from the national office to apply for affiliation indicating the opposition considered establishing a rival chapter in the District if the reforms initiated by the national office failed to work.²⁰⁰ After representatives of the national body finally expelled Julius Hobson and placed the chapter in trusteeship, the housing committee thanked Gregory, Webb and Holden for their efforts to reform the chapter and began to plan a future program.²⁰¹

While the oppositional caucus ran Washington CORE through the housing committee, Julius Hobson and those supporting him sponsored direct action projects under the banner of Washington CORE, Incorporated. The Hobson faction picketed the Civil Rights Commission to demand the release of the report on race relations in Mississippi, Papers; "Agenda Housing Committee CORE," 9 April 1964, 6:5, Holden Papers; "Agenda Housing Committee CORE," 23 April 1964, 6:5, Holden Papers; "Agenda Housing Committee CORE," 7 May 1964, 6:5, Holden Papers; "Agenda Housing Committee CORE," 21 May 1964, 6:5, Holden Papers.

¹⁹⁸"Agenda Housing Committee ???CORE???", 28 May 1964, 6:5, Holden Papers.

¹⁹⁹"Agenda Housing Committee Washington CORE," 11 June 1964, 6:5, Holden Papers.

²⁰⁰Marcia McKenna to Karl Gregory, 16 June 1964, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, F:2:169:0621.

²⁰¹"Agenda Housing Committee CORE," 25 June 1964, 6:5, Holden Papers.

marched in front of the National Press Club while Alabama Governor George Wallace spoke and demonstrated at Washington Hospital Center in protest of their practice of segregating patients.²⁰² The Hobson group later conducted sit-ins at the U.S. Civil Rights Commission and Washington Hospital Center.²⁰³ During May and June, 1964 Julius Hobson did not call general membership meetings, but conducted business with his officers in closed Executive Committee meetings.²⁰⁴

By June 1964 the intensity of the factionalism in Washington CORE had completed the destruction of this community of activists. They still agreed on ending racial discrimination, obtaining equal opportunity, building an interracial society and taking action. They also agreed on the use of nonviolent direct action to achieve these goals. In the end they disagreed on how decisions in the organization should be made and who should make them. The resulting power struggle tore the Washington CORE community into two separately functioning CORE chapters. With the disintegration of Washington CORE as an organization and a community complete, the national organization of the Congress of Racial Equality intervened to resolve the crisis.

On May 8, the National Action Council of the Congress of Racial Equality considered the charges raised by the oppositional faction of Washington CORE. The decision-making body of the national organization referred the matter to its steering committee. The NAC Steering

²⁰²Officers, Washington, D.C. CORE, "Mississippi: The Civil Rights Commission versus The Civil Rights Movement," leaflet, [28 May 1964], 3:13, Holden Papers; Washington CORE, "Why Are We Picketing the Washington Hospital Center?" 14 June 1964, leaflet, 3:13, Holden Papers; Karl Gregory to Louis Smith, [19? June 1964], 3:10, Holden Papers.

²⁰³"CORE plans sit-in at Dept. of Justice," Washington Afro-American, 26 May 1964, 4; "7 Arrested In Sit-In At Hospital," The Washington Post, 15 June 1964, Exhibit O (June case), The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 1:88:00034.

²⁰⁴[Oppositional Faction], "Violations of Steering Committee Instructions Of May 22, 1964 To Julius Hobson, Chairman, Washington, D.C. CORE," 18 June 1964, 1-2, 3:12, Holden Papers.

Committee held a hearing on May 22 to consider the expulsion of Julius Hobson. At the hearing, the eight person committee reviewed the evidence against Hobson submitted previously by the "Ad Hoc Subcommittee for an Effective Washington CORE Chapter" and heard testimony from both factions. After deliberation, the NAC Steering Committee members determined, "the general substance of the charges made are substantial, serious and valid." Rather than expel Julius Hobson and place the Washington affiliate in trusteeship as requested by the caucus which brought the charges, the Steering Committee issued seven instructions to Julius Hobson.²⁰⁵

The national body told Hobson to respect members' rights and to use parliamentary procedure at all meetings. The instructions reminded him not to initiate or terminate action projects or to appoint and remove committee chairmen without the approval of the active membership. Hobson was not to make any inaccurate statements to the news media or to take any action as the Southeast Regional Representative. The Steering Committee ordered the chairman to withdraw the papers of incorporation immediately. Finally, it asked Washington CORE to refrain from expelling or suspending anyone from active membership for the next ninety days. The NAC Steering Committee decided to review the case at its next meeting on June 19 and appointed one of its members, Louis Smith, to help the chapter resolve its difficulties.²⁰⁶

Over the next month Louis Smith and the membership of the anti-Hobson faction realized that Julius Hobson had decided not to obey the

²⁰⁵"Minutes of the May 22, 1964 Steering Committee Meeting," 1-3, 3:15, Holden Papers; Floyd McKissick and James Farmer to [Washington] CORE Member, 24 June 1964, 1, 3:15, Holden Papers; "Steering Committee of the National Action Council," minutes, 22 May 1964, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, C:1:74:0588.

²⁰⁶"Minutes of the May 22, 1964 Steering Committee Meeting," 3, 3:15, Holden Papers.

NAC directives. Hobson and his supporters seemed unwilling to cooperate with Smith. He found the "hostility" of the Washington CORE officers toward him, the Steering Committee and the national office particularly problematic. The chairman bluntly informed Smith he would not obey the directives and violated the instructions by retaining the incorporation, initiating projects unilaterally and appointing committee chairmen without general membership approval. Consequently, Smith recommended that the NAC Steering Committee expel Julius Hobson and place the Washington chapter into trusteeship.²⁰⁷

On June 19 the NAC Steering Committee unanimously agreed to expel Julius Hobson. They based their decision on Louis Smith's report, testimony by Julius Hobson and evidence provided by the oppositional caucus. The latter presented a five page argument and seventeen supporting documents to illustrate Hobson's violation of the seven NAC instructions between May 22 and June 18. Although Hobson's violation of their instructions influenced the Steering Committee's decision, they expelled Julius Hobson because he violated basic CORE principles and procedures.²⁰⁸ As "the first time that an active member has ever been expelled by National CORE," Steering Committee members made their decision very carefully.²⁰⁹ They enumerated the following reasons to justify their decision:

1. He administered the Washington, D.C. chapter in an undemocratic and irresponsible manner.

²⁰⁷Louis Smith to The June 19 Steering Committee Meeting, "Preliminary Report on Washington, D.C. CORE," 17 June 1964, 3:15, Holden Papers; Julius Hobson to Lou Smith, 3 June 1964, 1:1:4, Hobson Collection.

²⁰⁸Floyd McKissick and James Farmer to [Washington] CORE Member, 24 June 1964, 2-3, 3:15, Holden Papers; [Oppositional Faction], "Violations of Steering Committee Instructions Of May 22, 1964 To Julius Hobson, Chairman, Washington, D.C. CORE," 18 June 1964, 3:12, Holden Papers.

²⁰⁹Floyd McKissick and James Farmer to [Washington] CORE Member, 24 June 1964, 1, 3:15, Holden Papers.

2. Violated by-laws of the organization in regard to internal disagreements and news media.
3. Violated CORE rules and procedures in action projects.
4. Misuse of his role as regional representative.
5. Violated CORE's Constitution and permitted irregularities in the membership list.²¹⁰

Although Julius Hobson appealed his expulsion at the CORE national convention in July, delegates upheld the decision of the NAC Steering Committee by a vote of 217 to 27.²¹¹ Many of the supporters of Julius Hobson left Washington CORE and joined him in a new organization, Washington ACT.²¹² Those CORE members who remained, rebuilt the chapter under the guidance of national CORE. The new community which evolved contained individuals from the oppositional faction, people neutral during the factional fight, a few members from Hobson's group and new recruits.²¹³

Through the expulsion of Julius Hobson, national CORE significantly influenced the civil rights movement of Washington, D.C. By resolving Washington CORE's power struggle, the national organization

²¹⁰Floyd McKissick and James Farmer to [Washington] CORE Member, 24 June 1964, 3, 3:15, Holden Papers.

²¹¹"Minutes of the 1964 Annual Convention," 2-5 July 1964, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, C:1:79:0789; "CORE Upholds Hobson Ouster At Convention," Washington Evening Star, 2 July 1964, 21:7:3, Hobson Collection.

²¹²"Hobson Has 60 Backers In Core Unit," The Washington Post, 24 June 1964, 1; Ray Boone, "Hobson to battle CORE ouster," Washington Afro-American, 23 June 1964, 1; "CORE Upholds Hobson Ouster At Convention," Washington Evening Star, 2 July 1964, 21:7:3, Hobson Collection.

²¹³See, for example, "Housing Committee Membership List," 1 July 1964, 6:3, Holden Papers; "Washington CORE Active Members," 8 August 1964, 1-2, 3:6, Holden Papers; "New People at Meeting of August 18, 1964," 3:6, Holden Papers; "Tentative Active CORE Members," 6 September 1964, 1-2, 3:6, Holden Papers. To link membership to the Hobson and anti-Hobson groups consult, "Washington CORE - Active Voting List," 24 March 1964, 1:2:3, Hobson Collection; [Oppositional Faction], [list of faction members and their voting status], [April 1964], 3:10, Holden Papers.

of the Congress of Racial Equality fundamentally reorganized the Washington affiliate. By placing Washington CORE in trusteeship, representatives of national CORE administered and controlled the rebuilding of the chapter. The trustee assumed the powers of all of the officers, supervised chapter activities and approved all chapter decisions.²¹⁴ Washington CORE maintained this close relationship with the national organization through the remainder of 1964, but increased its autonomy as it drafted a new constitution, developed action projects, recruited new members and tried to build a new sense of community.

²¹⁴Floyd McKissick and James Farmer to [Washington] CORE Member, 24 June 1964, 4, 3:15, Holden Papers; [Anna Holden?], [Chapter Meeting Minutes], 27 June 1964, 1-8, 3:1, Holden Papers; James Farmer to Wardell Lindsay, 30 September 1964, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, F:2:169:0669.

Chapter 4

"'It Could Be A Wonderful World': Community Organization and the Death of Washington CORE, 1964-1966"

It Could Be A Wonderful World

(Earl Robinson)

If we could consider each other,
A neighbor, a friend, or a brother,
It could be a wonderful, wonderful world,
It could be a wonderful world, oh yes,
It could be a wonderful world.

If each little kid could have fresh milk each day,
If each working man had enough time to play,
If each homeless soul had a good place to stay,
It could be a wonderful world --

If there were no poor and the rich were content,
If strangers were welcome wherever they went,
If each of us knew what true brotherhood meant,
It could be a wonderful world --

Jimmy McDonald, ed., CORE: Sit-In Songs, [1962?], 5, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, Microfilm Edition (Sanford, N.C.: Microfilming Corporation of America, 1982), A:I:89:0547.

Breathing a collective sigh of relief, the Washington CORE members opposed to the authoritarian leadership of chairman Julius Hobson gladly put the internal conflict behind them in July, 1964. After the national decision-making body of the Congress of Racial Equality expelled Julius Hobson and placed the Washington, D.C. chapter in trusteeship, affiliate members labored to create a democratically structured organization and to develop programs to eradicate racial discrimination in the District of Columbia. Reporting the group's progress to the national office, chairman Karl Gregory declared,

IN EVALUATING THESE ACTIVITIES, ONE SHOULD CONSIDER THAT THE CHAPTER HAS BEEN UNDER TRUSTEESHIP, HAS JUST REBOUNDED FROM AN INTENSE AND PERVASIVE INTERNAL STRUGGLE, IS STILL IN THE PROCESS OF RECOVERY AND REORGANIZATION, AND HAS LOST TEMPORARILY SEVERAL KEY MEMBERS BECAUSE OF SUMMER VACATIONS. WITH THE TERMINATION OF THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, WASHINGTON CORE WILL ACCOMPLISH EVEN MORE THAN IT HAS IN JULY AND AUGUST OF 1964.

All of this renewed activism occurred, Gregory reported, because the oppositional faction defeated Julius Hobson and his supporters. He proudly noted the chapter's many accomplishments, "Arguing successfully our case against Hobson and his type of 'leadership' before CORE's national convention at Kansas City and winning the fight to democratize our chapter and operate under CORE's rules of action."¹

In the months of July and August, the membership undertook direct action projects, recruited new members, began to restructure the organization to make it more democratic and tried to repair CORE's public image. Members' efforts emphasized housing and employment, but they also initiated a community organizing project in a District neighborhood. Regarding housing discrimination, CORE activists

¹Karl D. Gregory, "Report on Washington D.C. CORE's Activities for the Months of July and August, 1964," [August 1964], 3 and 2, 3:1, Holden Papers.

continued to pressure apartment complexes and real estate companies to comply with the D.C. Fair Housing Ordinance. The employment committee, meanwhile, targeted job discrimination in the tourism industry, focusing on restaurants and hotels. While these two committees continued to tackle racial discrimination with the methods and tactics CORE had utilized for many years, another group of members went in a new direction.² The community organization committee initiated "a poverty program for one low-income community." Specifically, CORE workers organized the residents of a poor neighborhood into "a separate and indigenous" organization. CORE advisors then helped the Southeast Neighborhood Action Association undertake a clean-up campaign.³

For the remainder of its existence, the Washington CORE community continued to attack racism in the District of Columbia from both these directions. Members utilized more traditional tactics of investigation, negotiation and direct action and became organizers of and advisors to the residents of ghetto communities. Civil rights activists throughout the country began to turn to the methods and tactics of community organizing in 1964, and by 1965 most people in the CORE movement recognized it as the best way to tackle the racism faced by the many African Americans living in poverty in inner-city slums.⁴

In practice, although Washington CORE activists tried to initiate projects to alleviate the problems of poor blacks, they found it

²Karl D. Gregory, "Report on Washington D.C. CORE's Activities for the Months of July and August, 1964," [August 1964], 1 and 2, 3:1, Holden Papers.

³Karl D. Gregory, "Report on Washington D.C. CORE's Activities for the Months of July and August, 1964," [August 1964], 3 and 2, 3:1, Holden Papers; Naomi Eftis, "Report of Community Organization Committee to Washington CORE," 13 October 1964, 2, 3:1, Holden Papers.

⁴August Meier and Elliot Rudwick, CORE: A Study in the Civil Rights Movement, 1942-1968 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), chapters 10 and 11.

difficult to conceptualize and carry out community organizing. Committee members spent a great deal of time searching out projects beneficial to the immediate needs of inner-city residents, but once they initiated these new programs they had problems sustaining them. Although group members experienced more success with traditional civil rights activity, they increasingly dedicated their energy to programs designed to enable local communities of people to tackle the problems in their lives.

In the end, the shift from nonviolent direct action tactics to community organizing contributed to the demise of the Washington CORE chapter. CORE members found it difficult to make the transition to community organizing as individuals and as a group. Activists lacked the skills and time to devote to the task of organizing and training other communities of people. The group disagreed over how to proceed in this new direction and so each committee often worked independently of the others. By dividing their efforts, Washington CORE rarely sustained its projects and infrequently engaged in direct action. Because Washington CORE seldom sponsored exciting, action projects which gained media attention, their organization failed to attract new members and financial supporters.

Community organizing damaged the organizational structure of Washington CORE further because it required CORE activists to become the advisors of new, indigenous community groups. Engaged in organizing and advising the residents of ghetto areas, CORE workers concentrated on building community within neighborhoods and tenement buildings. Because they invested their energy in forging inner-city residents into independent and active entities, they seldom put effort into sustaining Washington CORE as a community of local civil rights activists. As the number of members in the Washington CORE chapter subsequently declined

and the income of the affiliate dwindled, the group increasingly formed coalitions with other associations engaged in community organizing. By working with other organizations, CORE remained active in the District of Columbia longer than it could have without the collaboration. But by cooperating with other groups, Washington CORE became one participant of many, making it difficult for CORE to maintain an identity separate from the other groups. In the end, Washington CORE simply disappeared because its members failed to maintain themselves as a distinct community of civil rights activists.

Washington CORE began the move to community organization work in ghetto neighborhoods during the summer of 1964. Using its members as "organizers and advisors," the chapter initiated "a poverty program for one low-income community."⁵ During July, the community organization committee helped a group of people living in southeastern Washington organize themselves into "a direct-action civic group." CORE workers brought together the residents of one low-income housing development and the congregation of St. John Freewill Baptist Church, located "in the heart of the SE ghetto." Its minister, Reverend Truman Dixon, became the president of the Southeast Neighborhood Action Association.⁶ Washington CORE workers chose this area because two of its active members already belonged to the community. Reverend Dixon had served on the housing committee for several months and white sociologist Ralph Fertig operated a settlement house in the area. The Southeast Neighborhood House contained the Washington CORE office and served as a

⁵Karl D. Gregory, "Report on Washington D.C. CORE's Activities for the Months of July and August, 1964," [August 1964], 2 and 3, 3:1, Holden Papers.

⁶"Community Organization Committee Report to Washington CORE," 15 September 1964, 3:1, Holden Papers; "Minutes of Lou Smith Meeting," 17 July 1964, 3:1, Holden Papers.

meeting place for the new civic association.⁷

Having drawn people into the Southeast Neighborhood Action Association, organizers from Washington CORE surveyed community residents to determine the program of the new group. "Though the Core workers had ideas around which they hoped to organize the people, the basic approach which was taken was that the community knew what its problems were, and that it should be asked," the committee later reported to the general membership. As a result of their door-to-door canvassing, CORE members organized the neighborhood association into smaller groups. Some people worked to improve traffic safety, while the members of the public housing committee cataloged the disrepair of the housing development and challenged the management to improve conditions. Others formed into the "Eviction Squad" to help any family expelled from their home for any reason. The team concerned with police brutality wanted to educate the community about its rights in relationship to the police, but also intended to convince the police to provide residents with greater police protection. Finally, CORE and the Southeast Neighborhood Action Association planned to meet the needs of the community with a freedom school.⁸

Classes began at the Southeast Freedom School in October, 1964.

⁷"Washington CORE - Active Voting List Submitted to National CORE," 24 March 1964, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 1:89:00087; Herbert Woods to Afro-American Editor, [March 1965], 2:11, Holden Papers; "Steering Comm," meeting minutes, 22 September [1964], 4, 3:1, Holden Papers; "The Ad Hoc Committee on the Housing Crisis," notes on the document concerning the Southeast Neighborhood House, [1965], 3:2, Holden Papers; "Home Rules Bills Organizations," sign-up sheet, [November 1963], 3, 1:1:3, Hobson Collection; Joan Bacchus, "Washington CORE Minutes of the Meeting," 12 November 1963, 3, 1:1:7, Hobson Collection; "CORE Fires Leader Who Accused Builders Of Trying to Evade Kennedy Antibias Order," Wall Street Journal, 12 September 1963, 2; "Steering Comm.," meeting minutes, 6 October 1964, 1, 3:1, Holden Papers.

⁸"Community Organization Committee Report to Washington CORE," 15 September 1964, 3:1, Holden Papers.

Six instructors offered classes every Saturday afternoon in Negro History, citizenship, English, mathematics, typing and music. In addition, Reverend Dixon provided training in barbering on Monday evenings. Forty students, aged 6 to 60, attended the first day and responded enthusiastically to the material presented in class. While CORE workers assumed responsibility for the school curriculum, the Southeast Neighborhood Action Association undertook the development of a library for the school.⁹ Naomi Eftis, a D.C. public school teacher teaching music at the freedom school and chairing the community organization committee, shared her excitement about the project with the CORE national director, James Farmer. She wrote,

the school itself is what is so amazing! It's the first one in D.C. and it's already beginning to mushroom after only being in operation 2 weeks. We've added several new courses -- boxing, art, French and English usage -- and people from ALL OVER the city have been calling us about the school. It's becoming apparent that we're going to have to open more schools in other parts of the city[.]¹⁰

The CORE workers considered the courses in citizenship and Negro History as the most important. Through their efforts to mobilize area residents into the civic association, they discovered first hand that they needed to invest people with knowledge and to train community leaders. Naomi Eftis explained,

The philosophy and aims of the Freedom School have grown out of the experiences we have had working in the ghetto this summer.

⁹"CORE Freedom School set to open Saturday," Washington Afro-American, 10 October 1964, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, F:2:169:0676; Naomi Eftis, "Report of Community Organization Committee to Washington CORE," 13 October 1964, 1, 3:1, Holden Papers.

¹⁰Naomi Eftis to [James] Farmer, 19 October 1964, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, F:2:169:0694; "CORE Freedom School To Open Here Today," Washington Post, 10 October 1964, A9.

The slum-dweller has had no share in the democratic processes of the community at large. We found he feels helpless to control his own life, let alone have some control over his environment. He has been so 'brain-washed' by white society that he thinks of himself only as capable of being the sweeper of Mist' Charlie's floor. As civil rights workers, we feel a responsibility to break through this wall of discouragement and apathy. But we must also help people in the community learn what their rights are and how to get them, so that they themselves can begin to bring about changes in our society. To do this, we use our philosophy of non-violence and also, our knowledge of direct action and its techniques.

The summer project in the Southeast was successful in that our group helped the community to get some much-needed improvements. For this to be a continuous, on-going thing, leadership must be developed from the ghetto and in it..We soon will bump up against the power-structure and we and the people in the community, must be prepared for this. Hence, the idea of a Freedom School to develop this sort of leadership began to grow amongst the CORE workers, and was eagerly picked up by the Southeast Action Association and carried out.[sic]¹¹

These ideas led the community organization committee to define as the aims of the freedom school: to "develop leadership in the community towards political awareness and strength," to "encourage dignity and self-respect in the individual," to "develop needed skills" and to "develop a more democratic society where each can participate equally and fully."¹²

Although the housing committee also recognized the need to develop programs designed to assist African Americans living in low-income neighborhoods, the group failed to get beyond the investigation stage during 1964. Like the individuals involved in the community organization committee, those CORE workers interested in housing agreed upon the "necessity for [a] slum program" in July, 1964.¹³ They

¹¹Naomi Eftis, "Report of Community Organization Committee to Washington CORE," 13 October 1964, 2, 3:1, Holden Papers.

¹²Naomi Eftis, "Report of Community Organization Committee to Washington CORE," 13 October 1964, 1, 3:1, Holden Papers.

established a slum subcommittee to lead CORE's housing program in this new direction. The subcommittee decided to interview "slum residents" to identify living conditions in a small section of central Northwest Washington. They discovered "extensive housing deterioration and dilapidation." After investigators pinpointed the worst slumlords and documented their housing code violations, CORE members planned to mobilize area residents and to use direct action to improve conditions. As a related project, CORE workers studied the "probability" of racial discrimination in the enforcement of the housing code. Although the three member slum subcommittee compiled data and planned the project, the housing committee did not carry it out.¹⁴

The housing committee again took up the housing problems of slums in April, 1965. Once more the committee declared slums to be the "new direction of [the] Housing Committee," but launched the program by again studying the problem and investigating a solution.¹⁵ This time the slum subcommittee focused on a three-block area with no playground, underemployment and overcrowded schools. The discovery stumped the committee members because they found "no pure Housing problem or even [a] pure Racial problem - [its?] problems of the poor - crowded school - no playground, unemployment, welfare."¹⁶

¹³"Agenda for Housing Committee Meeting," 6 July 1964, 1, 6:5, Holden Papers.

¹⁴Anna Holden to Marvin Caplan, [Report] for National Capital Clearinghouse Newsletter, 2 November 1964, 3, 6:9, Holden Papers; Tom Ploss, "Report of the Housing Committee," 27 October 1964, 6:5, Holden Papers; "Housing Committee Meeting," minutes, 13 August 1964, 2, 6:5, Holden Papers; Thomas Ploss, "Report of the Housing Committee," 15 September 1964, 6:5, Holden Papers; Tom Ploss, "Report of the Housing Committee," 29 September 1964, 6:5, Holden Papers; Tom Ploss, "Report of the Housing Committee," 13 October 1964, 6:5, Holden Papers.

¹⁵"CORE Housing Comm.," meeting minutes, 8 April 1965, 6:5, Holden Papers; "Special Meeting - CORE Housing Committee," minutes, 1 April 1965, 1-2, 7:1, Holden Papers.

¹⁶"CORE Housing Comm.," meeting minutes, 22 April 1965, 6:5, Holden Papers; "CORE Housing Comm.," meeting minutes, 7 May 1965, 1,

During this period of investigation they did gain some experience working in low income neighborhoods. While they searched for a way to target the housing problems of poor blacks, a tenants' council came to the housing committee for help. Members of the Fontenet Tenants Association contacted the Washington chapter of CORE after forming themselves into an organization. The residents of 1400 Fairmont wanted to organize a rent strike because the owner of their building refused to address their complaints concerning plumbing problems, a lack of heat, faulty wiring and poor security. The CORE housing committee advised the group, helped it compile its complaints and organized negotiating sessions with the owner of the property. CORE workers also prepared the tenants for direct action, including picketing and a rent strike. But a month after becoming involved in the project, the CORE housing committee wanted out. CORE had helped the Fontenet Tenants Association persuade the owner of the building to address some of the tenants' complaints through mediation, but very few of the building's residents actively supported the campaign and even fewer agreed to withhold their rent if a strike occurred.¹⁷ The housing committee decided to pursue the project only "at such time as [a] substantial # [number of residents] ask[s] us to come back in."¹⁸

Between the summers of 1964 and 1965 the housing committee fell

6:5, Holden Papers; "Spec. Housing Comm.," meeting minutes, 27 July 1965, 2, 6:5, Holden Papers.

¹⁷"CORE Housing Comm.," meeting minutes, 8 April 1965, 6:5, Holden Papers; "Spec. Meeting," Housing Committee meeting minutes, 13 April 1965, 6:5, Holden Papers; Mordecai Johnson to Gittleson & Heff Associates, Inc., 18 April 1965, 4:12, Holden Papers; "CORE Housing Comm.," meeting minutes, 22 April 1965, 6:5, Holden Papers; "Meeting (me + P. Procter) w/Fontenet T. Assoc. [and Resident Manager]," minutes, 27 April [1965], 1-2, 6:5, Holden Papers.

¹⁸"CORE Housing Comm.," meeting minutes, 7 May 1965, 2, 6:5, Holden Papers. The situation at "1400 Fairmont" was still considered "problematical" in July, 1965. "Spec. Housing Comm.," meeting minutes, 27 July 1965, 2, 6:5, Holden Papers.

short of its intention to organize poor African Americans living in slums. Committee members concentrated on investigating the housing problems of the poor and failed to sustain the one project they became involved in. The community organization committee also encountered problems maintaining its activity in the one southeast Washington neighborhood it targeted. Despite the strong poverty program initiated by the group in 1964, it collapsed in 1965. The freedom school closed in February and CORE's work with the Southeast Neighborhood Action Association ended around the same time.¹⁹ Although the community organization committee continued to exist, it moved much more slowly in 1965. Reporting on the work of Washington CORE in the area of community organizing, a national CORE field secretary criticized the chapter members' lack of initiative. Herbert Callender reported in July, 1965, "There has been some attempt made at community organization by the chapter through block parties and some work with the children in the immediate area of the chapter office."²⁰

Callender discovered that the membership of Washington CORE found it very difficult to make the transition to community organization. It disagreed on how to develop and enact a program aimed at mobilizing the residents of ghetto communities and addressing their problems. After talking with Roena Rand, the chapter chair, Callender stated, "There seems to be some undercurrent of internal fighting going on within the chapter. They could only agree on one project and that was the general issue of Home Rule."²¹ In his next report, Callender more bluntly

¹⁹"CORE Calendar For February 1965," 2:11, Holden Papers; "CORE Calendar for March 1965," 2:11, Holden Papers; "CORE April 1965 Calendar," 2:11, Holden Papers.

²⁰Herbert Callender to Joyce Ware, field report, 30 July 1965, 2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, F:2:63:0384.

²¹Herbert Callender to Joyce Ware, field report, 30 July 1965, 2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968,

attributed the chapter's problems to a tactical disagreement over community organization. The field secretary wrote, "This group does not particularly want to deal with the man in the ghetto."²²

Rumblings of discord began to surface in the Washington CORE community during the fall of 1964. CORE workers disagreed on how to make the activities of their group more responsive to the needs of the majority of African Americans in Washington, D.C. Many members recognized the need to become involved with the problems of the poor and national CORE staff members pushed them in this new direction. For example, national CORE decision-makers created a regional office to serve chapters in the Northeast and assigned staff to help them create "programs centered around community organizing."²³ At a meeting of these field secretaries and the Northeastern chapters, Washington CORE members learned, "CORE [was] moving into [the] ghetto community, away from [the] activities of [the] last 5 yrs."²⁴

The problem of determining how Washington CORE should move in this new direction created conflict between community members beginning in the fall of 1964. Anna Holden felt frustrated by the chaos created by this lack of direction. The white research sociologist wrote in December,

the aftermath of the internal struggle, plus heightened nationalism and dilemmas over 'new directions' in the movement, have made continued participation in the local CORE situation most depressing and discouraging. I am beginning to feel quite 'overcome' with petty chapter politics and the confusion that is characteristic.²⁵

F:2:63:0384.

²²Callender quoted in Meier and Rudwick, 389.

²³Louis Smith to Jim McCain, "Field Report for N.A.C.," 25 January 1965, 2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, A:1:66:0766.

²⁴"Steering Comm.," meeting minutes, 6 October 1964, 3, 3:1, Holden Papers.

Division over how to respond to the problems of poor African Americans continued to plague Washington CORE until the disappearance of the affiliate in 1966. The membership of Washington CORE never worked as a group to define CORE's new orientation toward the ghetto and community organization. Instead, each committee approached the dilemma independently. Small groups of CORE members working on different issues tried to move into the ghetto, while continuing to initiate projects based around more traditional civil rights activity. The housing committee, for example, searched for a "slum project" and at the same time used the District Fair Housing Ordinance to combat housing discrimination. While the tiny committee never launched a program in the ghetto, it succeeded in forcing real estate companies to provide the same rental listings to both black and white customers.²⁶ Meanwhile, the employment committee targeted hotels and restaurants to obtain job openings for blacks. The committee used investigation, negotiation and direct action to secure non-discrimination agreements with individual businesses, but also demanded the companies offer training programs and CORE workers recruited unemployed blacks to fill the jobs they had created.²⁷

²⁵Anna [Holden] to [Friends and Family], holiday letter, 18 December 1964, 6:5, Holden Papers; "Rights Worker Fired, HEW Picketed," Washington Evening Star, 7 January 1966, A1.

²⁶See, for example, Thomas Ploss, "Report of the Housing Committee," 15 September 1964, 6:5, Holden Papers; Tom Ploss, "Report of the Housing Committee," 29 September 1964, 6:5, Holden Papers; Tom Ploss, "Housing Committee Report," 13 October 1964, 1-2, 6:5, Holden Papers; Tom Ploss, "Your Housing Committee," report to membership, 27 October 1964, 6:5, Holden Papers; "Housing Committee Report to Chapter," 19 July 1965, 1-2, 6:5, Holden Papers; Anna Holden to Stanley P. Holt, 8 August 1965, 1-2, 5:9, Holden Papers.

²⁷See, for example, "Employment Committee Report," [September? 1964], 1-2, 3:5, Holden Papers; "Employment Committee Report," 2 February 1965, 1-5, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, F:2:169:0708-0710; [Employment Committee Report], [16 February 1965], 3:5, Holden Papers; "COREMPLOYMENTLABORER," 16 March 1965, 3:5, Holden Papers; "Employment Committee Report," [13 April

Although each committee tried to engage in a community organization approach, committee members failed to develop strong programs and to sustain these projects because the committees did not work together. The community organization committee focused on one small community in southeastern Washington, D.C. Its efforts to mobilize the residents of this neighborhood into the Southeastern Neighborhood Action Association revealed the many problems which faced this community. These citizens lived in squalid housing, lacked political power, faced unemployment and needed higher quality education. Although the community organization committee presented these problems to the entire Washington CORE membership, individuals working through the housing, employment, education and political action committees continued to concentrate on their own projects.²⁸

The political action committee investigated the "political structure" of Washington, D.C.; the education committee focused on protesting the school budget; the employment committee targeted hotels and restaurants; and the housing committee searched for its own slum neighborhood.²⁹ The lack of cooperation between the community organization and housing committees particularly highlights the inability of CORE committees to work together. During the fall of 1964, individuals working with the Southeast Neighborhood Action Association decided to organize the residents of the Arthur Capper Housing

1965], 1-3, 3:5, Holden Papers.

²⁸Naomi Eftis, "Report of Community Organization Committee to Washington CORE," 13 October 1964, 1-3, 3:1, Holden Papers; "Community Organization Committee Report to Washington CORE," 15 September 1964, 3:1, Holden Papers.

²⁹"Steering Comm.," 6 October 1964, 4, 3:1, Holden Papers; Herbert Woods, "Testimony of Washington, D.C. Chapter of The Congress of Racial Equality During Hearings on the Fiscal Year 1966 School Budget Before the District of Columbia Board of Commissioners," 14 October 1964, 1-8, 3:9, Holden Papers.

Development into a tenants' council. Although they wanted the housing committee to work with them and the housing committee needed a community organization project, the joint enterprise never materialized.³⁰

Frustrated by this lack of collaboration between committees, Ethelbert Haskins, the editor of The Washington COREspondent, wrote an editorial very critical of the organizational state of Washington CORE in May, 1965. "If this incessant verbosity and inertia is the democracy so many of us clamored for all the spring and summer of 1964, it could more suitably have been called the requiem for Civil Rights progress as far as Washington CORE is concerned," he asserted. He blamed the lack of direction and lethargy in the chapter on the excessive autonomy of the committees. Haskins chastised his CORE colleagues in the following commentary:

A great deal of praiseworthy work is being carried on in Washington CORE at the present time. Committee A, with its five members, is engaged in planning a project whose importance no sane Civil Rightser could question. Committee B, three members strong, is setting up an equally commendable plan, but for a different project. Neither Committee A nor B feels responsible for lending aid and comfort to one another however: nor to Committee C: nor to the Chapter as a whole, one might sadly add. About the only times A, B, and C join forces are not on picket lines as one could expect of an action outfit, but to take digs at Committee D. Our biweekly meetings are sterile encounters of this loose confederation of autonomous Committees inwhich each gives a glowing report of plans for its pet project. Our projects are more often than not in the planning and talking stage.[sic]

Haskins finished his remarks by suggesting the members cooperate with one another before their community completely disintegrates. He concluded,

³⁰Naomi Eftis, "Report of Community Organization Committee to Washington CORE," 13 October 1964, 3, 3:1, Holden Papers; "Housing Committee Agenda," 19 November 1964, 6:5, Holden Papers; "Housing Committee Meeting," 13 August 1964, 3, 6:5, Holden Papers.

We are fast approaching the squirming, thrashing, directionless state in which a centipede would find itself if each foot stumbled off in a direction independent to the other ninety-nine. If a few of the Committees could sublimate their egos for only a short time, we could get an action project or two going worthy of CORE's name and tradition.[sic]³¹

Although Ethelbert Haskins identified the lack of cooperation between chapter committees as the cause of Washington CORE's inactivity, the memberships' fear of strong leadership aggravated their problems. CORE members structured their organization around independently functioning committees because they could not agree upon how to develop a program around community organization, but also because they detested centralized authority. The constitution ratified by the group after Julius Hobson's expulsion placed authority firmly in the hands of the masses. The document established, "The Active membership in general meeting shall be the supreme governing body of the organization."³²

A strong leader might have unified the various factions in the chapter who disagreed on how Washington CORE could help poor African Americans. Karl Gregory, one of the leaders in the campaign to democratize the chapter, chaired the affiliate in July and August, 1964. When the African American economist accepted an academic appointment at Wayne State University in Detroit, the membership could not agree on an acceptable leader to replace him. Gregory wanted Anna Holden as his replacement, but her gender and race made her unsuitable to a majority of CORE members. In his final report to national CORE regarding the Washington chapter, Gregory wrote in September, "I have very high hopes for the D.C. Chapter. I would have higher hopes, given the prejudices within the chapter, were Anna Holden a black male."³³ In the next few

³¹Ethelbert Haskins, "CORE Committees," The Washington COREspondent, 3:3 (May 1965): 1, 3:9, Holden Papers.

³²"Constitution Washington CORE," 13 October 1964, 5, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, F:2:169:0673.

months chapter members elected two black men as chairmen, Wardell Lindsey and Herbert Woods.³⁴ Neither leader unified the membership.

After observing the Washington CORE chapter, field secretary Eric Mann thought a strong leader would provide the affiliate with the direction it lacked. His report, however, emphasized the group's dissatisfaction with its choices. Mann observed,

Essentially, the problem is that since the departure of Hobson, the chapter is in a very ambivalent position. On one hand, they want a strong leader, but on the other they distrust anyone who tries to assert any leadership. As a result, Wardell Lindsey is not well liked in the chapter . . . Nominations were made for a new set of officers, but no one seems particularly happy with the candidates, and in general although the chapter has many capable and dedicated individual members, it is missing someone who can unite the factions and give the chapter the necessary direction. None of the proposed chairmen seem to have the confidence of many of the members. This situation will make the extensive community involvement which I discussed with the members of the executive committee difficult to implement.³⁵

This undercurrent of internal fighting persisted, even after the chapter elected its final president, African American Roena Rand in May, 1965. Her campaign literature declared, "She firmly believes that with your vote and your cooperation, we can together go forth to make this Chapter second to none in this country."³⁶ Despite this optimism, the

³³Karl Gregory to Marvin Rich, 11 September 1964, 1-2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:24:00410; Karl D. Gregory, "Report on Washington D.C. CORE's Activities for the Months of July and August, 1964," [August 1964], 1-3, 3:1, Holden Papers.

³⁴Washington D.C. C.O.R.E, "Chapter Questionnaire, The Organizational Department, Congress of Racial Equality," 23 September 1964, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, F:2:169:0668; Anna Holden to James McCain, 12 December 1964, 2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, F:2:169:0687.

³⁵Eric Mann to Lou Smith et al, "Trailways Progress Report," 30 November 1964, 2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:22:00268.

Washington CORE chapter continued its slow demise over the next year and a half.

Community organization caused the death of Washington CORE as an organization and as a community because it failed to bring new members and money to the group. The members' desire to sponsor programs designed to generate community involvement, their inability to agree on how to do this and their fear of centralized power led to a decentralized and disunified organizational structure. Since small groups of CORE activists worked through independent committees and did not cooperate with one another, they failed to initiate and sustain community organization projects. Because CORE members divided their efforts, they diluted the overall effectiveness of Washington CORE. Lacking manpower, the committees did not sponsor exciting direct action projects which received media attention. By failing to be an active force in the community, Washington CORE did not attract new members and raise money.

The tactics of community organization also cost Washington CORE membership and hurt fundraising. As organizers and advisors in community organization projects, CORE members concentrated on building community among the people living in a neighborhood or in a tenement. Because CORE workers invested their effort into mobilizing and empowering indigenous groups of people into independent entities, the community organization approach made it difficult to maintain Washington CORE itself. Just as the absence of action harmed CORE as an organization and a community, social work in low income neighborhoods did little to enhance Washington CORE. Acting as consultants in ghetto

³⁶"Roena Rand Campaign Literature for Chairmanship, Washington, D.C. CORE," [May 1965], 3:7, Holden Papers; Roena Rand to Gentlemen of National CORE, 28 June 1965, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, F:2:169:0741.

communities, CORE activists recruited few people into CORE and earned even less money.

Because the program of Washington CORE increasingly concentrated on community organization and the membership engaged in fewer and fewer direct action projects, the affiliate became embroiled in a repeating cycle of declining money, membership and activity. By May, 1965, Washington CORE faced severe "financial worries." To raise money, the finance committee begged members for pledges and resorted to street corner collections.³⁷ At the same time, every committee needed new members desperately. Participation levels became so low that the editor of The Washington COREspondent chastised CORE activists for their inactivity and the membership committee reminded them of their responsibility to undertake committee work and direct action.³⁸ Declining membership became an even greater problem for the group over the next year. Between June of 1965 and the following March, the active membership list of Washington CORE dropped from 73 individuals to 39.³⁹

In April, 1966 Roena Rand identified the primary problems facing Washington CORE as declining membership, fundraising and coming to terms with the "new methods of doing civil rights battle in a drastically changed arena." Rand went on to explain to a Washington Post reporter that working in the community required more time, planning and sustained

³⁷"Finance Committee," The Washington COREspondent, 3:3 (May 1965), 3:9, Holden Papers; "Finances," The Washington COREspondent, 3:2 (April 1965), 4:2, Holden Papers; Ralph Temple to Carl Rachlin, 13 May 1965, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, F:2:169:0742; "CORE April 1965 Calendar," 2:11, Holden Papers; "Washington D.C. Chapter of the Congress of Racial Equality Calendar for May 1965," 2:11, Holden Papers.

³⁸"CORE April 1965 Calendar," 2:11, Holden Papers; "Anti-Track Rally," The Washington COREspondent, 3:3 (May 1965), 3:9, Holden Papers; "Membership," The Washington COREspondent, 3:2 (April 1965), 4:2, Holden Papers.

³⁹"Active Membership of Washington, D.C. CORE as of June 1, 1965," 1-2, 3:6, Holden Papers; "Active Membership As Of March - 1966," 3:6, Holden Papers.

effort than part-time civil rights workers could muster. She continued,

We were, and still are, a part-time civil rights group. Most of our members were Government employees who would come around on weekends to get their picketing assignments and we wouldn't see them again until the next demonstration. . . . But things have changed now, the problems are more subtle. There's no more place for a part-time rights group.

According to Rand, Washington CORE members responded to their lack of money, manpower and time by "working through coalitions of organizations."⁴⁰

During 1965 and 1966, the political action, education and housing committees all cooperated with other local groups. The political action team worked toward home rule for the District of Columbia with the D.C. Coalition of Conscience, a federation of thirty-three religious and rights groups.⁴¹ CORE members working on education joined the Committee for Freedom in the Schools to protest the use of the track system of education in the District of Columbia. This coalition of religious, civil rights and civic associations believed the track system relegated the poor and people of color to an inferior curriculum and reserved high quality education for those in the superior track.⁴²

Meanwhile, the housing committee built an alliance with the Ad Hoc Committee on the Housing Crisis. This coalition represented sixty organizations concerned with the availability of low income housing in the District of Columbia. Members of the CORE housing committee

⁴⁰William Raspberry, "CORE Seeks Election of D.C. 'Shadow Government,'" Washington Post, 30 April 1966, 21:7:3, Hobson Papers.

⁴¹Herbert Callender to Joyce Ware, field report, 30 July 1965, 2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, F:2:63:0384; "D.C. Coalition of Conscience," 22 April 1965, 1-2, 2:2:5, Hobson Papers.

⁴²"Why has the Track System been Imposed on our Children?" leaflet, [April 1965], 3:9, Holden Papers; "Anti-Track Rally," The Washington COREspondent, 3:3 (May 1965), 3:9, Holden Papers.

particularly worked with the group to protest the federal government's decision to use the 325 acres of the National Training School site for a Government Printing Office plant instead of for low and moderately priced housing.⁴³ At the same time, the housing committee led a community-wide effort to persuade the D.C. Board of Commissioners to strengthen the District Fair Housing Ordinance. Calling itself "22 Civic, Religious and Civil Rights Organizations Sponsoring Amendments to the D.C. Fair Housing Regulation," the federation presented the commissioners with fourteen carefully drafted amendments to the law and pressured them to adopt these stronger enforcement procedures.⁴⁴

At the same time housing committee members worked to strengthen government action against housing discrimination, other CORE activists prepared a plan to organize a Freedom Election during the summer of 1966. If Congress refused to pass a home rule bill for the District of Columbia, CORE proposed that D.C. residents elect a "de facto government" for the city. The popularly elected mayor, city council and school board could act as a shadow government, providing advice to the District's appointed rulers on important issues such as crime, education, urban renewal and housing. With a proven constituency, CORE chair Roena Rand reasoned, "the Commissioners would have to give a lot

⁴³See, for example, Washington Chapter, Congress of Racial Equality, press release, 13 August 1965, 4:22, Holden Papers; Washington CORE, press release, 3 November 1965, 4:22, Holden Papers; "Testimony of Congress of Racial Equality[,] Citizens Hearing," 17 March 1966, 1-2, 6:6, Holden Papers; Anna Holden to James Harrison, 28 March 1966, 4:22, Holden Papers.

⁴⁴"Housing Committee Report to the Membership," 15 December 1964, 6:5, Holden Papers; "Report on the Enforcement of the D.C. Fair Housing Ordinance and on the Continuing Discriminatory Practices in the Real Estate Community," 30 November 1964, 1-11, 5:5, Holden Papers; 22 Civil, Religious, Civil Rights & Fair Housing Organizations to District Board of Commissioners, "Proposed revisions to Article 45, Police Regulations," 21 April 1966, 1-9, 6:1, Holden Papers; Anna Holden to F.E. Ropshaw, 20 April 1966, 6:1, Holden Papers; Memorandum to 22 Civic, Religious, and Civil Rights Organizations Sponsoring Proposed Amendments to District's Fair Housing Regulations, 10 May 1966, 6:1, Holden Papers.

of weight to what their advisers said."⁴⁵

Because Washington CORE lacked the resources to enact the project, the organizers intended to persuade other civil rights and pro-home rule groups to work with them. CORE vice chairman Dan Ingram told William Raspberry of the Washington Post, "We just wouldn't have the money or staff to carry it out." Although coalition building would enable Washington CORE to undertake the Freedom Election and had allowed the group to remain active in the District of Columbia, Ingram recognized the drawbacks of working with other organizations. When Washington CORE "submerged its identity in coalitions," Ingram explained, it lost financial contributions. He added, "When we work through other organizations, we lose our organizational identity. But as long as we get a job done, we're crazy enough not to care."⁴⁶

Ingram's statement reflects how community organization destroyed the Washington chapter of the Congress of Racial Equality. The affiliate lost its identity as an organization and a community because its members could not make the transformation from nonviolent direct action to community organization. Although Washington CORE activists tried to develop a program to address the problems of poor African Americans living in the District of Columbia, their efforts at community organizing hampered their ability to maintain the structure and integrity of the Washington CORE chapter. Factional divisions, a lack of exciting direct action and the absence of sustained projects caused membership to decline and hurt fundraising. The loss of members and money made strong programs increasingly difficult to enact.

This cycle of decline began because of the inability of CORE

⁴⁵William Raspberry, "CORE Seeks Election of D.C. 'Shadow Government,'" Washington Post, 30 April 1966, 21:7:3, Hobson Papers.

⁴⁶William Raspberry, "CORE Seeks Election of D.C. 'Shadow Government,'" Washington Post, 30 April 1966, 21:7:3, Hobson Papers.

members to agree upon a common project to resolve the problems of the ghetto. It worsened because of the lack of cooperation between CORE members and the failure of CORE committees to work together. Even the type of work done through community organization hurt Washington CORE; as organizers and advisors CORE workers worked to energize ghetto communities, but seldom recruited these people into CORE. Attracting new members and raising money became even more difficult when Washington CORE tried to combat the problems created by low membership, no money and part-time activists. Although Washington CORE prolonged its life by building coalitions and participating in joint community organization projects, it lost its identity as an independent organization.

By the time national CORE adopted a black nationalist ideology and program in July of 1966, community organization had already caused the death of the Washington CORE chapter. The membership might have tried to develop a Black Power program to re-vitalize Washington CORE during the fall of 1966, but by the following winter the organization and the community no longer existed.⁴⁷

⁴⁷I have found very little evidence on Washington CORE during 1966 and 1967. The following documents indicate the chapter existed but they do not indicate what the chapter did. I do not know if chapter members ever developed a black nationalist program. "NAC Steering Committee Meeting," minutes, 4 June 1966, 11, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, C:1:109:1011; "Minutes of the NAC Meeting Held in Cleveland, Ohio at the Glennville YMCA, April 22 and 23, 1966," 3, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, C:1:115:1053.

Chapter 5

"'Hold On': The Lunchcounter Campaign, White Resistance and the
Development of Community in New Orleans CORE, 1960-1962"

Hold On

(arr: Core)

All in silence bound in jail
Ain't no money to go that bail

Keep your eyes on the prize, hold on, hold on
Hold on...Hold on...Hold on...Hold on...
Keep your eyes on the prize, hold on, hold on

I am just sat down in jail
Got a mission to pay no bail

CHORUS

The only thing we did wrong
Let segregation stay so long

Got my hand on the freedom now
Wouldn't give nothin' for my journey now

We fought jail and violence too
But God's love has seen us through

Work all day and work all night
Try to gain our civil rights

The only chain that a man can stand
Is the chain of a hand in hand

Congress of Racial Equality, Sit-In Songs: Songs of the Freedom Riders,
New York: Audio Fidelity Records, 1962.

To the national office of the Congress of Racial Equality, the establishment of a CORE chapter in New Orleans represented an important goal for 1960. National CORE thought a New Orleans affiliate would hasten the growth of CORE in the South and strengthen the civil rights movement in general. Not only did national CORE play an important role in the creation of the New Orleans branch of the Congress of Racial Equality, but it continued to play a significant role in the continuation, maintenance, success and failure of the organization.

With the guidance and assistance of national organization personnel, the New Orleans CORE chapter worked to desegregate public accommodations in New Orleans. Between 1960 and 1962 the group concentrated on integrating drugstore lunchcounters and bus terminals through sit-ins, picketing, an economic boycott and freedom rides. Their direct action campaign reveals the severe white repression that characterized the civil rights struggle of the deep South. Many of the city's white citizens resisted the demands of CORE activists for equal rights with violence, legal maneuvering, jail, verbal abuse and charges of communism.

This shared experience of white oppression bound the members of the New Orleans chapter of CORE into a tight-knit group and shaped the goals, principles and characteristics of the community. Always a small organization, students and student-aged individuals peopled the interracial group. Because of the importance they placed on ending racism in New Orleans and the entire South, CORE members abhorred the apathy of the African American community. Victory required the support and participation of the entire black population. CORE's nonviolent philosophy, moralism and the belief that African Americans deserved basic human and constitutional rights motivated the membership.

Militant actionists, women played as active and significant a role as men, both in leadership and in direct action campaigns. Courage, commitment, dedication and determination describe many of the members of New Orleans CORE.

A CORE contributor, John Alford of New Orleans' Tulane University, contacted the national office in the fall of 1959 asking for the names of other people in the New Orleans area interested in the Congress of Racial Equality. The Executive Secretary of national CORE, James Robinson, responded with interest. He remarked, "We are very much interested in doing something in the city of New Orleans, and hope to be able to send one of our field secretaries there sometime this winter."¹ Field Director Gordon Carey responded to another white supporter of integration, Richard Ashman, in a similar way. In reply to Ashman's July 1960 ten dollar contribution and letter stating his moral support for the goals of CORE Carey wrote, "I believe that we will be able to get a CORE chapter started in New Orleans."²

After successfully establishing a group in the city, Gordon Carey expressed why national CORE placed such high expectations on the development of a New Orleans affiliate and why the national staff worked so hard to achieve this goal in letters written to the first chair of the New Orleans chapter, Rudy Lombard, and to the Bishop of the city's African Methodist Episcopal Church, Frederick D. Jordan. To Lombard, Carey explained,

¹James Robinson to John Alford, 4 November 1959, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00749; Gordon Carey to Jim [McCain], 1 April 1960, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00751.

²Gordon Carey to Richard Ashman, 27 July 1960, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00760; Robert[Richard] Ashman to [Gordon] Carey, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00761.

We feel that the development of CORE in Louisiana is of tremendous importance not only to us but to the cause of civil rights. If we are successful in New Orleans this will be one of the first times that interracial direct action has penetrated so far into the deep South on a consistent planned basis. What happens in New Orleans can be meaningful to the entire South - there is no questions about it!³

Later that month Carey expressed similar sentiments to Bishop Jordan,

New Orleans is of course very much on all our minds these days. It seems to me that the struggle for equality going on in your city is one of the most significant in the entire South. I believe that the fact that you have an interracial CORE group there is an indication of what we may see before too long, throughout the entire Southland.⁴

During 1960 the efforts of national staff members were central to the formation of the New Orleans chapter of CORE. The national office compiled lists of possible New Orleans activists as contacts for organizing a community-based CORE group, sponsored several New Orleans students at national CORE's 1960 training institute, and sent field secretaries Marvin Robinson and James McCain to help organize the affiliate and oversee initial direct action efforts by CORE members.

The staff of national CORE developed a contact list as the first step to organize a New Orleans affiliate. The list contained the names of New Orleans citizens who contacted the national office, area contributors who completed a questionnaire distributed by the national body and the liberal black and white leadership of the city. On March 1, 1960 union activist Joe Jones contacted CORE headquarters in New York City about involving the students of New Orleans in the sit-in

³Gordon R. Carey to Rudolph Lombard, 12 October 1960, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00819.

⁴Gordon R. Carey to Bishop Frederick D. Jordan, 25 October 1960, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00832.

demonstrations against lunchcounter segregation sweeping the nation since the first sit-in held in Greensboro, North Carolina on February 1. Executive Secretary James Robinson encouraged Jones to begin contacting interested black and white students but warned him not to rush into sit-in demonstrations. In order to ensure that students held nonviolent demonstrations, Robinson stressed the importance of training and preparation in direct action. He also informed Jones that a field secretary would stop in New Orleans as soon as possible, but the timing of that trip would be dependent on "the situations in areas where sit-ins are already in progress." But Robinson continued, "we have a particular interest in the city of New Orleans as it is one of the largest in the South and also one of the most cosmopolitan."⁵

Along with putting people on the contact list who approached national CORE, such as Joe Jones, Richard Ashman and John Alford, the national staff sent a questionnaire, or "Local Action Interest Sheet," to all of the persons in Louisiana on the CORE mailing list. The effort produced only two names in New Orleans, Gene Grabbe and Dr. Frederick Rhodes because "[a]s usual, most of the people did not reply." Grabbe requested more information and contact with a field secretary to learn more about CORE's program of action before committing himself to work with the organization. Rhodes, already active with the NAACP, held no interest in belonging to CORE but also requested more information. The doctor suggested that CORE could work on discrimination in employment, hotel accommodations, hospital admissions and the national guard.⁶

⁵James R. Robinson to Joe Jones, 1 March 1960, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00750; Gordon R. Carey to Jim [McCain], 1 April 1960, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00751.

⁶Gordon Carey to James T. McCain, Marvin Robinson, and Major Johns, 25 July 1960, Memorandum, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00756; "New Orleans Contacts," [1960], The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00885-00886; "Contacts in New Orleans, Louisiana," [1960], The Papers of the Congress

To buttress this short contact list national staff members added the names of ministers, leaders of black businesses and institutions, and black and white community activists. The list contained clergy members such as Reverend A.L. Davis, Jr. of the New Zion Baptist Church, Reverend E.J. Thompson of St. Marks Fourth Baptist Church and Bishop Frederick D. Jordon of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Leaders from area educational institutions included Dr. Albert Dent, Dr. S.L. Gandy and Dr. Charles Morton of Dillard University; Dr. Raymond Floyd of Xavier University; Margaret L. Groben of Newcombe College; and Barney Offerman from Loyola University. Other professionals on the list included Public Relations Director Peter Clark and Sampson Alexander from the radio station WBOK; Edmond J. Harris, director of the Dryades Street YMCA; Attorney Robert F. Collins; and orchestra leader Harold Battiste. Finally the list included community activists such as J. Harvey Kerns and John T. Hendrix of the Urban League, Dr. Henry T. Mitchell of the Consumer's League, Dr. James A. Dombrowski of the Southern Conference Education Fund and Betty Wisdom of S.O.S. (Save Our Schools).⁷

Arriving in New Orleans during the second week of April, national field secretary James McCain used this list to try to build a chapter of CORE in New Orleans. Marvin Robinson, a student leader recently expelled from Southern University in Baton Rouge for his involvement in lunchcounter sit-ins, accompanied McCain to New Orleans to help to organize a new chapter and to raise funds for the student activism in Baton Rouge.⁸ Several people on the contact list supplied by the of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00884.

⁷"New Orleans Contacts," [1960], The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00885-00886; "Contacts in New Orleans, Louisiana," [1960], The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00884; "New Orleans Contacts," [1960], 5:44:00884.

⁸Jim Robinson to James T. McCain, 5 April 1960, The Papers of

national office suggested the pair contact Dr. Gandy of Dillard University as the most promising person to help start a CORE chapter in New Orleans. Gandy agreed to aid the men, provided they found "enough persons . . . interested in an action program."⁹ Although he promised to help get the group started, Gandy lacked the time to participate actively in a new group as a result of his campus responsibilities and efforts to train Dillard University students in nonviolent direct action.¹⁰

McCain contacted everyone on his list and invited them to attend a meeting on April 14 in Dr. Gandy's office. Although only three people joined McCain and Gandy, they all agreed to hold a second meeting and to recruit people to attend because "of the need for a CORE type group in New Orleans." Even fewer people attended the next meeting held on April 19. McCain recounted, "We made our second attempt tonight to get a group organized, but to no avail. We did not get but three person[s] to the meeting. Everyone here is too busy or have other interests." He further reported to the national office, "We concluded that for the present it was impossible to get enough persons to a meeting who wanted action."¹¹

the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:258:00262; "Report of James T. McCain[,] March 28 through April 9, 1960[,] Houston, Texas and Baton Rouge, LA.," 1-3, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:258:00259-00260.

⁹"Report of James T. McCain[,] March[April] 11 through May 1, 1960[,] New Orleans, La., S.C., & Univ. Mich.," 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:258:00269.

¹⁰McCain indicates both Gandy and Dr. Morton as "early CORE members." "Report of James T. McCain[,] March[April] 11 through May 1, 1960[,] New Orleans, La., S.C., & Univ. Mich.," 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:258:00269.

¹¹"Report of James T. McCain[,] March[April] 11 through May 1, 1960[,] New Orleans, La., S.C., & Univ. Mich.," 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:258:00269; Jim [McCain] to Jim [Robinson], 19 April 1960, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:258:00261.

At this meeting McCain discovered the dearth of interracial activism in New Orleans as one of the obstacles to building a CORE chapter in this deep southern city. From this small group he learned of the lack of meetings between blacks and whites over the past "several years" because "Whites have been reluctant to meet with Negroes since Eastland's investigations in New Orleans several years ago[sic]."¹² Despite the inability of McCain to organize an interracial CORE chapter in New Orleans at this time, he learned of a new group formed by the adult, African American leadership of the city. The Consumers League of Greater New Orleans initiated their first campaign against employment discrimination at the time of McCain's visit.¹³

The Consumers League of Greater New Orleans (CLGNO) formed early in 1960 to increase job opportunities for the city's black population. Their first campaign in April of 1960 focused on the white merchants of Dryades Street who did not hire African Americans or refused to employ blacks in top, merit employment positions even though 80 to 90% of their trade depended on people of color. The group targeted the Dryades Street stores where management refused to negotiate with the Consumers League about hiring black clerks. Daily, several pickets paraded in front of stores such as the Winn-Dixie and A & P grocery stores, Kaufman's Department Store, Waterbury's Drug Store and Roy's Shoe Store. Invited to participate in the planning of the picketing for the day before Easter, James McCain suggested the CLGNO use leaflets as well as picketing to keep Easter shoppers out of the stores. The economic

¹²"Report of James T. McCain[,] March[April] 11 through May 1, 1960[,] New Orleans, La., S.C., & Univ. Mich.," 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:258:00269.

¹³"Report of James T. McCain[,] March[April] 11 through May 1, 1960[,] New Orleans, La., S.C., & Univ. Mich.," 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:258:00269; James McCain, "Report to the National CORE Convention June 29 - July 3, 1960," 2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:258:00283.

boycott and negotiations proved successful; by late April many white merchants literally hung white flags of truce from their buildings. Faced with the loss of 85% of their business, several of the stores hired black clerks, including Kaufman's Department Store, McCrory's Drug Store and Ben Franklin's. By early May black cashiers and sales personnel worked at all major stores on Dryades Street, except A & P, where the CLGNO continued the picketing.¹⁴

Dr. Raymond Floyd, president of the Consumers League, declared the Dryades Street campaign a victory not only because of the substantial gains in employment opportunities for blacks, but because of the centrality of the African American community of New Orleans in the victory. Of the changed attitude of blacks and their "willingness to follow faithfully their own leaders," Floyd claimed, "This is indeed a new day and one we should be all proud."¹⁵ McCain reported to national CORE the opinion of those in New Orleans about the Dryades Street campaign; he learned "that this is the first time anything like this has ever happened in New Orleans."¹⁶

Although the adult leadership of the city's black population organized the campaign and conducted the negotiations, youth from around the city helped to man the picket lines. James McCain identified the pickets of the Dryades Street boycott as students from Dillard and

¹⁴"Report of James T. McCain[,] March[April] 11 through May 1, 1960[,] New Orleans, La., S.C., & Univ. Mich.," 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:258:00269; "Picket Dryades Street Stores," The Louisiana Weekly, 23 April 1960, 1; "Call Pickets Off Where Clerks Hired," The Louisiana Weekly, 30 April 1960, 1 and 8; "Only One Holdout In Dryades St. Boycott," The Louisiana Weekly, 3 May 1960, 1.

¹⁵Floyd quoted in "Call Pickets Off Where Clerks Hired," The Louisiana Weekly, 30 April 1960, 8.

¹⁶McCain quoted a New Orleans resident in "Report of James T. McCain[,] March[April] 11 through May 1, 1960[,] New Orleans, La., S.C., & Univ. Mich.," 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:258:00269.

Xavier Universities.¹⁷ Many of the founding members of New Orleans CORE originally participated in the Consumers League picket lines, gaining both experience and building a network. Oretha Castle later remembered that the initial group of young adults who comprised New Orleans CORE knew one another through the Dryades Street economic boycott.¹⁸

One day Jerome Smith came upon a Dryades Street picket line, joined in, and met Rudy Lombard.¹⁹ The day Smith started picketing for the Consumers League, he worked on the waterfront loading banana boats. Initially Smith had become involved in the student movement for racial equality the month before while a freshman at Southern University in Baton Rouge. Smith had marched at Southern University in protest of the expulsion of students for sitting in. He withdrew from school "as a protest" and went to work in New Orleans. Smith described himself during this period as a "freelance person." If he knew of a location under picket by a group such as the NAACP or Consumers League, he just showed up and walked the line.²⁰

In May of 1960 Hugh Murray, a white student at Tulane University, learned from his classmate, Lanny Goldfinch, of the Consumers League campaign against the A & P Grocery Store on Dryades Street. Murray joined the picketing and remembers his first day on the line vividly. City law only allowed two pickets at a time, but at Murray's arrival his African American co-picket complained that his shoes hurt and left

¹⁷"Report of James T. McCain[,] March[April] 11 through May 1, 1960[,] New Orleans, La., S.C., & Univ. Mich.," 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:258:00269.

¹⁸Oretha Haley, Interview by Kim Lacy Rogers, 27 November 1978, tape recording, side one, Rogers Collection.

¹⁹Jerome Smith, Interview by Kim Lacy Rogers, 8 July 1988, tape recording, side one, Rogers Collection.

²⁰Smith, Interview by Rogers, 8 July 1988, side one; Jerome Smith, Interview by Kim Lacy Rogers, 26 July 1988, tape recording, side one, Rogers Collection.

Murray walking the line with two picket signs. Murray felt uncomfortable carrying the signs and marching back and forth alone. To make matters worse two white children kept pace with him, trying to coat him with black paint. He felt relieved when a black longshoreman joined him on the picket line.²¹

Prior to his involvement in the Dryades Street demonstrations, Hugh Murray had met other individuals interested in racial equality at meetings of the Intercollegiate Council for Inter-Cooperation (ICIC) and the NAACP Youth Council. Through ICIC, an interracial bible study group organized by a Catholic priest at Loyola University, Murray first met his future CORE colleagues Rudy Lombard and Oliver St. Pee. Murray joined the ICIC because of his discontent with the NAACP Youth Council. Involved with voter registration activities in 1959, Murray found the NAACP youth chapter lacked an action orientation.²² Other students who belonged to the NAACP Youth Council and shared this dissatisfaction eventually joined CORE for this same reason.

Inge Powell Bell, a scholar who observed the New Orleans CORE affiliate during the summer of 1962, discovered that many CORE members had defected from the NAACP youth chapter because of their "belief in greater militancy."²³ Field secretary Marvin Robinson courted these individuals during the summer of 1960 by attending meetings of the NAACP youth.²⁴ Founding CORE members Cecil Carter, Rudolph Lombard and Joyce

²¹Hugh Murray, Jr., Telephone interview by Anderson-Bricker, 14 February 1996, tape recording, side 1, Murray Papers.

²²Murray, Interview by author, 14 February 1996, side one; Hugh Murray, Jr., [notes from an interview], [September? 1960], The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00871; Oliver St. Pee, [notes from an interview], [September? 1960], The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00870.

²³Inge Powell Bell, CORE and the Strategy of Nonviolence (New York: Random House, 1968), 97.

²⁴Marvin Robinson to Gordon [Carey], 13 July 1960, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:265:00835.

Taylor enrolled in the NAACP during 1953 and 1954. Betty Daniels held offices in both CORE and the NAACP during 1961. She chaired the membership committee in CORE and served as vice president of the youth council. Doratha Smith and Jean Thompson, both very active in New Orleans CORE and arrested for their activism, also belonged to the NAACP Youth Council in 1961. Jean Thompson was the group's chaplain, while Doratha Smith served on the public relations committee.²⁵

Overall, the CORE membership seemed to hold a low opinion of the NAACP Youth Council. One CORE member remarked in 1962, "They were always discussing their next party . . . They are just social. They can't do anything that isn't approved by the adults. We used to always go asking them to help us picket. Once they came out--a couple of them. But they were never here when we needed them."²⁶ Oretha Castle remembered the reaction of the local NAACP chapter to talk about the use of nonviolent direct action in New Orleans. "Of course," she recalled, "they felt this was real kind of militant and radical action--to be talking about sitting in and all that kind of stuff. And they really didn't want to have any of it."²⁷

²⁵"New Orleans Branch NAACP Youth Enrollment," 1953, 1, 28-304, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People Collection, New Orleans Branch, Archives and Manuscripts/Special Collections Department, Earl K. Long Library, University of New Orleans, Louisiana. [Hereafter cited as box-folder, NAACP Collection.]; "Youth Membership," 1954, 2, 28-304, NAACP Collection; "The officers and members of the executive board of the N.O. Branch NAACP - Youth Division," 1961, 28-304, NAACP Collection; "The Following is the Official Directory of the New Orleans Branch Youth Council," 23 December 1961, 28-304, NAACP Collection. For CORE activism, see for example, "Arrest 15 For 'Sit-Ins' At Police Headquarters," The Louisiana Weekly, 2 September 1961, 2; "Riders to Fast in Miss. Jail," The Times-Picayune, 2 June 1961, 8; Oretha Castle to Gordon Carey, New Orleans CORE letterhead, 28 May 1962, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:494:00115.

²⁶Quoted in Bell, CORE and the Strategy of Nonviolence, 97.

²⁷Castle quoted by Kim Lacy Rogers, Righteous Lives: Narratives of the New Orleans Civil Rights Movement (New York: New York University Press, 1993), 113.

Oretha Castle initially became involved in New Orleans civil rights activity as a student at Southern University-New Orleans through the Consumers League economic boycott on Dryades Street. Through her involvement in this campaign, along with learning about civil rights activity throughout the United States, she gained "a kind of consciousness and awareness" about the status of race relations in New Orleans. She describes CORE in New Orleans as evolving out of a group of young people who began meeting at the Dryades Street YMCA because of their interest in direct action beyond picketing. They wanted to use sit-ins, considered a very radical tactic at that time. Oretha Castle, Rudy Lombard of Xavier University and three or four other students met to discuss the kinds of activities they wanted to undertake and then they went to the NAACP with their ideas. Because the NAACP rejected their approach, the small group "got into contact" with people in CORE and told them what they wanted to do in New Orleans. During an interview with Kim Lacy Rogers, Oretha Castle responded in the affirmative when Rogers summarized that the impetus came from "y'all instead of CORE coming in and organizing."²⁸

These young people active in the Dryades Street picketing, the NAACP Youth chapter and the ICIC came together with other youth during the month of July at a series of meetings organized at the Dryades Street YMCA by national CORE field secretary Marvin Robinson. Robinson met with groups of students and young adults separately, establishing the ground work for a meeting of all groups on July 28. Jim McCain returned to New Orleans to attend this meeting, designed to organize this assembly of people into a local chapter. After a presentation by McCain on the techniques and history of CORE, a lecture on the organizational structure needed to establish a CORE group and several

²⁸Haley, Interview by Rogers, 27 November 1978, side one.

hours of discussion, the body decided to organize themselves into a chapter of the Congress of Racial Equality and determined to reconvene on August 4 to establish the organization and elect temporary officers. In addition to these accomplishments, the newly-formed chapter established a project committee to develop an action project they could vote on at the next meeting of August 11 and begin as soon as possible. McCain suggested New Orleans CORE begin to test eating places in the same communities targeted by the employment campaign of the Consumers League.²⁹

Although neither recalled who informed them of the meetings at the Dryades Street Y with Jim McCain, both Hugh Murray and Jerome Smith remembered the gatherings that resulted in the creation of New Orleans CORE.³⁰ At these interracial meetings, Jerome Smith met, for the first time, many of the individuals who gave direction to the "CORE movement" in New Orleans.³¹ Twenty people, including four white persons, attended the first meeting, while nineteen African Americans and five white persons comprised the assemblage to create New Orleans CORE on August 4. McCain identified a number of these people as current or former students at Dillard, Xavier and Southern University of New Orleans.³² A few adults joined the young people at the August 4 organizational meeting. McCain and Robinson carefully screened the

²⁹Marvin E. Robinson to Gordon [Carey], 13 July 1960, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:265:00835; James T. McCain, "Report of James T. McCain," 26 July through 9 August 1960, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:258:00289; Marvin E. Robinson to Jim [Robinson ?], 29 July 1960, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:265:00839.

³⁰Smith, Interview by Rogers, 26 July 1988, side one; Murray, Interview by author, 14 February 1996, side one.

³¹Smith, Interview by Rogers, 26 July 1988, side one.

³²James T. McCain, "Report of James T. McCain," 26 July through 9 August 1960, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:258:00289; Marvin E. Robinson to Jim [Robinson], 29 July 1960, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:265:00839.

adults who became involved with New Orleans CORE because of the "Negro Power Structure" at work in New Orleans. In McCain's opinion "many organizations have not lasted in this city" because members of the "Negro Power Structure" try to take over an organization for "political means" once it becomes active and gains a following. "So in organizing our CORE group here," McCain explained, "we were very careful in not having some of these leaders connected with the group."³³

Both James McCain and Marvin Robinson anticipated action and accomplishments from this new CORE community. James McCain described these people as "very enthusiastic" and expected the student members to push the young people on their campuses into action as soon as the area colleges began a new academic year in the fall. McCain reported, "If things develop here like we are hoping, there will be quite a bit of activity going on by the time the schools open or immediately after they open."³⁴

Marvin Robinson described the atmosphere in New Orleans as "ripe and ready for an 'action group' such as CORE" and the New Orleans CORE members as "ready for action." He wrote, "After many hours of screening and talking with people we have a group of people that are what we want. They are now ready to move." But, he argued, the group "lacks the leadership that we could provide." During the July 28 meeting the membership informed Robinson they needed a national CORE field secretary in New Orleans to advise them when they began their action program.³⁵

³³James T. McCain, "Report of James T. McCain," 26 July through 9 August 1960, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:258:00289.

³⁴James T. McCain, "Report of James T. McCain," 26 July through 9 August 1960, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:258:00289.

³⁵Marvin E. Robinson to Jim [Robinson], 29 July 1960, pages 2,3 and 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:265:00839-00840.

Consequently, Robinson contended that national CORE should allow him to stay in New Orleans until the chapter began its action program.

Although the national office scheduled Robinson to begin work in Baton Rouge beginning July 28 or 29, Robinson stayed in New Orleans and tried to persuade Executive Secretary James Robinson to allow him to remain in the city. He argued,

If action begins in Louisiana, New Orleans should be the focal point. Here we have several colleges and almost a million people. It is the place to concentrate upon in this state.

Leave a Secretary here and gain a foothold in the State, move him and you may lose the position obtained.³⁶

Robinson placed particular faith in a small group of students he recruited from the New Orleans area to attend the CORE Interracial Action Institute held in Miami, Florida between August 14 and September 5, 1960. Of these young people he wrote, "This group of mixed students hold the key to action in the State of Louisiana."³⁷ The workshop intended to train them in both the theory and application of the principle of nonviolence. National CORE used the annual three-week summer workshops to prepare people from across the country to use the

³⁶Marvin E. Robinson to Jim [Robinson], 29 July 1960, 3, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:265:00840; Gordon R. Carey, Field Director, to Marvin Robinson, 28 July 1960, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:265:00838.

³⁷Marvin E. Robinson to Jim [Robinson], 29 July 1960, 3 and 2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:265:00839-00840; Gordon Carey to Major Johns, 16 July 1960, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:256:01186; "Action Institute," CORE-lator, 82 (June 1960):4 in The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 6:1:00122; Hugh Murray, "Autobiography," [mid-1970], 28, Box 2, Folder Autobiography, Chapter 1, Hugh Thomas Murray, Jr. Papers, Manuscripts Collection 728, Manuscripts Department, Howard-Tilton Memorial Library, Tulane University, New Orleans, Louisiana 70118. [Hereafter cited by document author, title or description, date, page number, box, folder, Murray Papers.] Part of the "Autobiography" is published as Hugh Murray, Jr., "The Struggle for Civil Rights in New Orleans in 1960: Reflections and Recollections," Journal of Ethnic Studies 6:1 (Spring 1978): 25-41.

technique of nonviolent direct action to create change in their local communities.³⁸ A New Orleans participant, Hugh Murray, summarized the purpose of the workshop, "To those of us from New Orleans, or from anywhere, here was an opportunity to learn from the experience of others, gaining courage as one learned of what others had, and therefore could be endured."³⁹

Of the forty people who attended the interracial workshop, Hugh Murray remembers that the largest single group came from New Orleans. Members of the New Orleans delegation even outnumbered CORE staff in attendance! According to Hugh Murray, a large contingent attended from New Orleans because national CORE determined the formation of a CORE chapter in the deep South to be central to battling segregation in the South.⁴⁰ The group of seven included five blacks and two whites, Rudy Lombard, Juanita Betz, Archie Allen, Ruth Despenza, A.D. Moore, Oliver St. Pee and Hugh Murray, respectively. Juanita Betz taught school, while the other delegates attended different universities in the New Orleans area, including Xavier, Dillard, Southern University-New Orleans, Loyola and Tulane University. A native of Miami, A.D. Moore, studied at Dillard University and joined the Interracial Action Institute from home.⁴¹ Many of the others, as students, needed financial assistance to attend the workshop, which cost \$150 per person.

³⁸Gordon R. Carey, "The Interracial Action Institute: An Intensive Three Weeks," CORE-lator, 84 (September 1960): 2 in The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 6:1:00125.

³⁹Murray, 32, Box 2, Folder Autobiography, Chapter 1, Murray Papers.

⁴⁰Gordon R. Carey, "The Interracial Action Institute: An Intensive Three Weeks," CORE-lator, 84 (September 1960): 2 in The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 6:1:00125; Murray, 32-33, Box 2, Folder Autobiography, Chapter 1, Murray Papers.

⁴¹Murray, 28, 29 and 33, Box 2, Folder Autobiography, Chapter 1, Murray Papers; Murray, Interview by author, 14 February 1996, side one; "Photographs from the CORE Miami Conference," Summer 1960, photos 10, 12, 14 and 16 with attached notes, Box 2, Murray Papers.

Although the young people attained some funds from area black organizations, such as the United Clubs, CORE financed the group. Hugh Murray remembered that CORE provided funds "not just for me, but for most of the New Orleans contingent."⁴²

Participants in the institute from fifteen states including Louisiana, New York, Virginia, Tennessee, Pennsylvania, Michigan and Florida studied the principles of nonviolence, put these ideas into action and practiced integration. Together they learned about Ghandi, passive resistance and the tactic of nonviolent direct action. They spoke about themselves and their communities, sharing their past experiences and concerns over future challenges. They practiced how to protect themselves from violence without fighting back. To Hugh Murray "It was anti-assertiveness training so that we could be assertive in protest; it was anti-assertive for our egos, so that we could become assertive for our cause. And the cause was justice and integration."⁴³

Although their training emphasized protest as a last resort, to be used only after the failure of negotiation, the workshop members worked to eliminate discrimination and segregation in Miami with direct action. In preparation for the workshop Miami CORE surveyed employment opportunities and lunchcounter service at supermarkets with a large black clientele; they found a few black employees in menial jobs and received service at only one lunchcounter.⁴⁴ Because Miami CORE

⁴²Murray, 28 and 33, Box 2, Folder Autobiography, Chapter 1, Murray Papers; "Action Institute," CORE-lator, 82 (June 1960):4 in The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 6:1:00122.

⁴³Murray, 34 and 31, Box 2, Folder Autobiography, Chapter 1, Murray Papers; Marvin E. Robinson to Jim [Robinson], 29 July 1960, 2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:265:00839; Gordon R. Carey, "The Interracial Action Institute: An Intensive Three Weeks," CORE-lator, 84 (September 1960): 2 in The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 6:1:00125.

⁴⁴"King at Action Institute," CORE-lator 83 (August 1960): 3 in The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 6:1:00123.

succeeded in ending segregation at variety and drug store lunchcounters two weeks before the onset of the Institute, workshopers concentrated on the testing of restaurants and movie theaters. Out of forty eating places, twenty-three served the CORE trainees. Negotiations led to results at the coffee shop of Freiderich's Supermarket; but the lunchcounter of Shell's City Supermarket resisted. The group held a sit-in on August 17 in the coffee shop of the supermarket that resulted in the arrest of eighteen workshop members, including Oliver St. Pee--a member of the New Orleans contingent. Seven of the group determined to remain in jail until their trials set for August 26. During the Interracial Action Institute members discussed jail versus bail and many decided "that in cases of unjust arrest arising from nonviolent protest action, remaining in jail is effective in mobilizing community support. It also forms a direct protest of itself against segregationist laws." The rest of the workshop group mobilized community support to free those arrested and to end segregation at Shell City. Although they picketed, distributed leaflets announcing a boycott of the supermarket and attended black churches to gain support, Shell City remained segregated at the close of the three-week workshop. Miami continued the fight on its own.⁴⁵

The workshop participants from New Orleans not only learned how to test segregated public accommodations, to negotiate, to demonstrate, and to sit-in, they also participated in a voter registration project, organized a mass rally attended by 1200 persons and observed tactics to use in employment campaigns. They also practiced integration among

⁴⁵James R. Robinson, "The Interracial Action Institute: Jail-Not Bail," CORE-lator, 84 (September 1960): 3 in The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 6:1:00125; Gordon R. Carey, "The Interracial Action Institute: An Intensive Three Weeks," CORE-lator, 84 (September 1960): 2 in The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 6:1:00125; Murray, 38 and 40, Box 2, Folder Autobiography, Chapter 1, Murray Papers.

themselves by living interracially, swimming in the pool together and attending interracial beach parties.⁴⁶ While swimming in the hotel pool with black persons, New Orleans native Hugh Murray first tasted the goal of the integrated society. He realized, "I was losing my consciousness of race; I had to think of it that someone was not white. I would be talking to people [and would] not [be] consciously aware of their color. It was the first time that had ever happened to me."⁴⁷ At the close of the Miami Interracial Action Institute workshop members returned to their own communities to transpose their experience to their own neighborhoods. After returning home Hugh Murray recalled, "I knew that the Miami trip was not an end but a beginning. The purpose of the workshop had been to train people to work in their local areas."⁴⁸

Four days after the close of the Miami Interracial Action Institute, on September 9, 1960, members of New Orleans CORE initiated the city's first sit-in demonstration. Three participants in the workshop, Ruth Despenza, Archie Allen and Hugh Murray, Jr., joined Jerome Smith, Joyce Taylor, William Harper and William Harrell to desegregate drugstore lunchcounters in New Orleans. This integrated group of students and former students ranged in age from 19 to 21, with one 28-year-old graduate student. The white participants, Hugh Murray and William Harrell, both attended Tulane University as graduate students. Murray, a native of New Orleans, identified himself as a student in political science and sociology. Harrell, studying sociology at Tulane, hailed from Dallas, Texas. The African American contingent

⁴⁶Gordon R. Carey, "The Interracial Action Institute: An Intensive Three Weeks," CORE-lator, 84 (September 1960): 2 in The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 6:1:00125.

⁴⁷Murray, 39, Box 2, Folder Autobiography, Chapter 1, Murray Papers.

⁴⁸Murray, 42, Box 2, Folder Autobiography, Chapter 1, Murray Papers.

of demonstrators represented Southern University, Louisiana State University-New Orleans, Xavier University and Dillard University. At the time of the sit-in, Archie Allen studied chemistry at Dillard. Those not currently enrolled in school included former Southern University students Jerome Smith and Ruth Despenza, Xavier University pupil Joyce Taylor and Louisiana State University student William Harper.⁴⁹

As their first target the group chose the Woolworth store at the corner of Canal and Rampart streets. Entering the variety store at 10:35 A.M., the CORE activists took seats at a lunchcounter reserved for whites and ordered soft drinks. The manager refused service to the entire group and informed the black members to move to counter four if they wanted to be served. They refused and told reporters they intended to stay in their seats until they received service. The group sat, chatting and reading, until their arrest at 3 P.M.⁵⁰

Along with the demonstrators, store patrons and Woolworth personnel, a large crowd of spectators and police arrived at the scene. A force of forty officers, including top police department and city officials, guarded the store and patrolled the surrounding area. Police Superintendent Joseph Giarrusso stated that the police would maintain peace and order and try to resolve the situation. Although the manager,

⁴⁹"Seven in Sit-In Here Arrested," Times-Picayune, 10 September 1960, 18; "Close Counter at Canal St. Sit-in Site," New Orleans States-item, 9 September 1960, in The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00765; "7 Released On Bail After Sit-in Here," New Orleans States-Item, 10 September 1960, in The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00769; and "Seven Charged in Store Sit-in," The Times-Picayune, 17 September 1960, 18. [Joyce Taylor intended on enrolling at Southern University sometime that year.]

⁵⁰"Seven in Sit-In Here Arrested," Times-Picayune, 10 September 1960, 18; "Close Counter at Canal St. Sit-in Site," New Orleans States-item, 9 September 1960, in The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00765; and Ruth Despenza, [Written Statement re Sit-In], 10 September 1960, 1 and 2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00767-00768.

A.L. Colson, refused the demonstrators service, he did not register a complaint during the entire sit-in. When a large crowd gathered in the store during the busy lunch hour, he closed the section of the counter occupied by the activists and police cordoned it off, but he failed to order the students to leave. District Attorney Richard A. Dowling spent the afternoon sitting at the counter studying state laws, trying to determine what statute would allow for the arrest of the students or require them to leave. City Attorney Alvin Liska suggested that a complaint from the store manager would have provided the police with the necessary authority to arrest the demonstrators under a city ordinance which charged criminal trespassing against anyone refusing to leave a place of business when asked to do so by the management. When questioned by police as to why he did not ask them to remove the students, Colson declared Woolworth's to be a "public place."⁵¹

Around three o'clock Dowling, after discussing the situation with Police Superintendent Giarrusso and other officials, presented the CORE activists with an ultimatum. He urged them to leave or face arrest, giving them five minutes to make their decision. After the time elapsed the Police Superintendent asked the students if they understood the district attorney and repeated their options. When the students began to discuss the situation among themselves Giarrusso got impatient and declared, "I am not interested in your poll[,] you are under arrest." The seven left a tip of several dollars on the counter and peacefully walked to the police wagon.⁵² City officials finally decided to charge

⁵¹"7 Released On Bail After Sit-in Here," New Orleans States-Item, 10 September 1960, in The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00769; "Seven in Sit-In Here Arrested," Times-Picayune, 10 September 1960, 18; "Close Counter at Canal St. Sit-in Site," New Orleans States-item, 9 September 1960, in The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00765.

⁵²Ruth Despenza, [Written Statement re Sit-In], 10 September 1960, page 2 and 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-

the CORE activists with criminal mischief using a new state law designed to prevent sit-ins making it illegal to take "temporary possession of a man's business after all other customers were excluded."⁵³

During the September 9 sit-in reporters asked designated New Orleans CORE spokesperson Rudolph Lombard and national CORE field secretary James McCain what action would follow the first New Orleans sit-in. McCain confirmed that "further action will take place" but Lombard stressed to reporters the need for New Orleans CORE to evaluate the impact of the demonstration before determining the group's next move.⁵⁴ However, some confusion did arise over the next move of arrested CORE members. Under the impression that arrested demonstrators intended to undertake the "jail, no bail" strategy, McCain informed the media that four of the demonstrators would remain in jail to test the law under which they had been arrested. Later that evening McCain and Lombard received a surprise when the attorneys Lolis Elie and Robert Collins informed them of the release of all seven arrested CORE members.⁵⁵ According to the lawyers, the arrests upset some of the demonstrators' mothers. In fact the mother of Ruth DeSpenza went to the jail and demanded the release of her daughter. When the lawyers

1967, 5:44:00767-00768; "7 Released On Bail After Sit-in Here," New Orleans States-Item, 10 September 1960, in The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00769; and Ruth Despenza, "New Orleans' First Sit-In," Core-lator, 84 (September 1960): 1 in The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 6:1:00124.

⁵³Quoted in "Seven in Sit-In Here Arrested," Times-Picayune, 10 September 1960, 18; Ruth Despenza, "New Orleans' First Sit-In," Core-lator, 84 (September 1960): 1 in The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 6:1:00124.

⁵⁴"Seven in Sit-In Here Arrested," Times-Picayune, 10 September 1960, 18.

⁵⁵"7 Released On Bail After Sit-in Here," New Orleans States-Item, 10 September 1960, in The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00769; "Report of James T. McCain[,] New Orleans, Louisiana," 25 September 1960, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00788.

surveyed the jailed group, all seven wanted to be released.⁵⁶

City officials assumed a tough stance in reaction to the use of direct action to desegregate New Orleans lunchcounters. On September 9 Police Superintendent Joseph Giarrusso issued a statement in response to the city's first sit-in demonstration, an action he labeled "regrettable." Giarrusso argued that the people behind the demonstration represented a "very small group" and "do not reflect the sentiments of the great majority of responsible citizens, both white and Negro, who make up our population." He urged people to continue to act in responsible, law-abiding ways in order to maintain the "normal, good race-relations that have traditionally existed in New Orleans." He also stressed the ability of the police department "to keep and preserve peace and order." Giarrusso warned that his department "is prepared to take prompt and effective action against any person or group who disturbs the peace or creates disorder on public or private property." He finished by directing comments to the parents of the students who took part in the day's sit-in demonstration, asking them "to urge upon these young people that such actions are not in the community interest."⁵⁷

A few days later, on September 12, Mayor de Lesseps Morrison banned all sit-ins and picketing, commissioning police to arrest immediately any demonstrator engaged in these activities. As justification Morrison declared, "It is my determination that the community interest, the public safety, and the economic welfare of this city require that such demonstrations cease and that henceforth they be prohibited by the police department."⁵⁸ Morrison based the injunction

⁵⁶"Report of James T. McCain[,] New Orleans, Louisiana," 25 September 1960, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00788.

⁵⁷Giarrusso statement reprinted in "Seven in Sit-In Here Arrested," Times-Picayune, 10 September 1960, 18.

against further demonstrations in the city of New Orleans on two new state laws passed specifically by the 1960 Legislature to combat desegregation demonstrations. One act gave the police the authority to arrest demonstrators who disturb the peace or alarm the public; the other law prohibited the obstruction of public sidewalks by picketers.⁵⁹

Many white citizens in New Orleans supported the aggressive stance taken by the city against people using direct action to end segregation. A spokesman for the Young Men's Business Club congratulated the police department for "the prompt action" it took to end the September 9 Woolworth sit-in and added "This demonstration is not in the best interest of either race or class of lunchcounter patrons; rather, the action borders on the irresponsible since such demonstrations tend to inflame the passions of extremists of both races."⁶⁰

On the other hand, portions of the community rallied behind New Orleans CORE. The Youth Council of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People picketed two Woolworth stores on September 10 in support of the seven arrested sit-in demonstrators. The eighteen pickets marched in the rain with signs bearing slogans such as "If you can't sit-in, stay out," "Will There Be Segregation In Heaven?" and "They Were Arrested Because They Wanted To Eat."⁶¹

⁵⁸Morrison quoted in Gordon Carey to Local Contacts, memorandum, [September 1960], 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00783; "Report of James T. McCain[,] New Orleans, Louisiana," 25 September 1960, TD, 2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00788.

⁵⁹"Mayor Morrison Clamps Lid on 'Sit-ins'," The Louisiana Weekly, 17 September 1960, 1; "Integrationists Meet in Orleans With Morrison," Baton Rouge Advocate, in The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00773.

⁶⁰Quoted in "YMBC Commends Promptness of Police," Times-Picayune, 10 September 1960, 18.

⁶¹"Negroes Picket Orleans Stores," Times-Picayune, 11 September 1960, in The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967,

In the days following the September 9 sit-in James McCain and members of New Orleans CORE contacted community members, organizations, clubs and ministers to build support for the arrested individuals and for CORE direct action. McCain reported, "All comments on the sit-in, with the exception of a few have been favorable."⁶² The Louisiana Weekly, the African American newspaper of New Orleans, identified the statements of police Superintendent Giarrusso and Mayor Morrison as important "catalytic agents" in rallying the community behind the sit-in of New Orleans CORE and support picketing by the NAACP Youth Council.⁶³ The Consumer League, Studs Club and New Orleans Chapter of the Frontiers of America publicly endorsed the sit-in and picketing. A local civic and service group, the Studs Club stated, "The Studs Club not only endorse[s] the actions of the two groups but will contribute to the financial support and call upon other organizations and individuals to give their support to these courageous youths[sic]."⁶⁴ The Junior Women's Baptist Convention responded to an appeal by Rudolph Lombard with a donation of \$51.28. On Sunday, September 11 New Orleans CORE members traveled to area churches to ask for financial and moral support. Their efforts resulted in contributions totaling \$692.25.⁶⁵

Community members not only supported New Orleans CORE following 5:44:00769; "New Orleans Stores Picketed," Detroit Free Press, 11 September 1960, in The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00769; and "NAACP Youth Council Pickets Woolworth," The Louisiana Weekly, 17 September 1960, 1.

⁶²"Report of James T. McCain[,], New Orleans, Louisiana," 25 September 1960, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00788.

⁶³"Mayor Morrison Clamps Lid on 'Sit-ins'," The Louisiana Weekly, 17 September 1960, 1.

⁶⁴Quoted in "Mayor Morrison Clamps Lid on 'Sit-ins'," The Louisiana Weekly, 17 September 1960, 1.

⁶⁵"Report of James T. McCain[,], New Orleans, Louisiana," 25 September 1960, TD, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00788.

the city's first sit-in demonstration, but many wanted to join the group. To national executive secretary James Robinson, James McCain reported, "Since the sit-in on Friday, many persons have asked to join in with the group, both young persons and adults." Robinson believed this to be an important opportunity for New Orleans CORE to grow and achieve its goals. However, he informed Rudolph Lombard, "It also means that you face the difficulty of having to continue action immediately in one field or another." Despite the injunction against picketing, he suggested it as one of the activities that New Orleans CORE could undertake. Asking the advice of the American Civil Liberties Union, Robinson discovered that it believed it would be easy to overturn the city ban on picketing. "Of course," he continued, "it is always a strong action to repeat a sit-in after an arrest." He suggested using new people willing to risk arrest or using the hit-and-run form of sit-in if New Orleans CORE lacked people willing to be arrested. At a hit-and-run sit-in activists occupy lunchcounter seats until asked to leave by the police and then move on to a new location and do it again. He concluded,

As you try to build the New Orleans CORE group, it is rather important that the name CORE be attached to most of the action which goes on in the city. This does not mean, of course, that you cannot cooperate with other groups, but the group itself will gain most from the action that it carries on on its own and under its own name. Often, in the south, this becomes crucially important, since most other groups will back down in the case of threats much more easily than the CORE group.⁶⁶

Members of New Orleans CORE realized the importance of maintaining the momentum started with their sit-in and began planning their next moves immediately. On Sunday, September 11 a committee formed to work

⁶⁶James Robinson to Rudolph Lombard, 14 September 1960, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00772.

with the NAACP Youth Council and to coordinate the picketing of Woolworth. Representatives of the NAACP, the NAACP Youth Division, the United Clubs of New Orleans and the Consumers League joined New Orleans CORE on Tuesday, September 13 in a meeting to negotiate with the mayor and management of the targeted Woolworth store. The negotiations failed, largely because the management neglected to attend. The mayor suggested the meeting reconvene the next week, but the CORE representative rejected the offer. Prior to the meeting members of New Orleans CORE made the decision to picket on Wednesday if the Tuesday negotiations failed and informed the press that future demonstrations may occur if the conference ended in an unsatisfactory fashion. Hurricane Ethel interrupted CORE's action program, but the members spent the time wisely making picket signs, mimeographing 6000 leaflets to encourage a boycott of Woolworth, distributing the leaflets in black communities and finalizing plans for a Saturday sit-in at the lunchcounter of McCrory's variety store.⁶⁷

All of the community groups interested in lunchcounter integration did not agree on how to proceed. The NAACP Youth Council wanted to picket with CORE that week but needed to get permission from the adult group first, consequently New Orleans CORE told the NAACP youths it could not wait for them. Dr. Raymond Floyd, the leader of the Consumers League at that time, tried to talk the young people of New Orleans CORE out of their action plans to no avail. He wanted the group to hold off on action until the next meeting with the mayor, but CORE membership rejected this proposal.⁶⁸ National Field secretary James McCain wrote

⁶⁷"Report of James T. McCain[,] New Orleans, Louisiana," 25 September 1960, 1 and 2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00788; "Integrationists Meet in Orleans With Morrison," Baton Rouge Advocate, in The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00773.

⁶⁸"Report of James T. McCain[,] New Orleans, Louisiana," 25 September 1960, 2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-

of the resolve of the CORE group to Marvin Rich,

Don't let the articles on Race Leaders, Mayor Confer, mislead you. After hearing the report last night [September 13] from our representative, the group voted to start making picket signs in preparation for picketing soon. We also told the other groups in the negotiating body, that we would not be responsible to wait any longer on further negotiations before we demonstrated again.[sic]⁶⁹

Despite their chairman's reservations, the membership of the Consumers League voted to picket the Claiborne Street shopping center on September 16 to challenge the ban on picketing. After this decision they asked the CORE membership to picket with them first on Friday, and then members of the Consumers League would picket with CORE people on Saturday, September 17. The CORE group agreed, choosing James McCain to represent them in the Friday night picketing with the Consumers League.⁷⁰ The Consumers League sponsored the demonstration to challenge discriminatory hiring practices at five of the stores at the shopping center including Walgreen's Drugs, T.G. & Y Store, the Dollar Department Store, Winn-Dixie Grocery Store and Western Auto. Consumers League officials argued that African Americans should obtain jobs in the shopping center on the basis of ability rather than race. Because blacks comprised eighty percent of the customers at the Claiborne shopping center, Consumers League chairman Dr. Henry Mitchell contended, they must be hired as cashiers and in positions "other than menial."⁷¹
1967, 5:44:00788.

⁶⁹Jim McCain to Marvin [Rich], 14 September 1960, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00771.

⁷⁰"Report of James T. McCain[,], New Orleans, Louisiana," 25 September 1960, 2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00788.

⁷¹"Arrest 6 in Picketing of Shopping Area," The Louisiana Weekly, 24 September 1960, 12 and 1; "Pickets Jailed at N.O. Center," The Times-Picayune, 17 September 1960, 18.

Consumers League Vice Chair, Reverend Avery Alexander, notified the police and media organizations preceding the League's challenge of the Mayor's injunction against demonstrations so more than thirty policemen and a huge crowd awaited the arrival of the picketers at the corner of South Claiborne and Washington streets. Seven demonstrators, including national CORE staff member Jim McCain, picketed in front and along the sides of the Claiborne shopping center Friday evening before being arrested after about an hour and ten minutes of picketing. They carried signs with slogans such as "Don't Buy Where You Can't Work First Class" and "First Class Jobs For First Class Dollars." The arrest occurred after Police Superintendent Joseph Giarrusso delivered the ultimatum: cease and desist or face arrest for disturbing the peace. Six of the picketers determined to continue picketing and as the police loaded each into the waiting paddy wagon the assembled crowd of a few hundred African Americans cheered and declared, "Hooray for the Consumers League."⁷²

A very different reaction to the picketing came from the whites on the scene. Managers of four of the picketed stores declared that at conferences with the Consumers League prior to the picketing they had agreed to try to meet the group's requests. To illustrate, the manager of Walgreen's indicated, "We have hired one Negro as a cashier." The T, G, & Y manager agreed saying, "There are no 'menial jobs' here. The league asked us to hire two additional Negroes, we hired three. They told us we wouldn't be picketed if we met their request.[sic]" In his store's defense, the supervisor at Winn-Dixie added, "We employ 35 Negroes and 28 whites, which is about the ratio of our business. Negroes are employed in the stock room and market, with the same hours,

⁷²"Arrest 6 in Picketing of Shopping Area," The Louisiana Weekly, 24 September 1960, 12 and 1; "Pickets Jailed at N.O. Center," The Times-Picayune, 17 September 1960, 18.

pay and responsibilities as whites. We asked some of our Negro stock men if they wanted to be trained as cashiers, but they said no."⁷³ The Times-Picayune, one of the city's dailies, also recounted that both blacks and whites continued to shop at the Claiborne center during the demonstration. James McCain viewed the same situation differently, reporting that during the picketing African Americans left the shopping center while other blacks stayed out.⁷⁴

As a result of the pickets' challenge to the mayor's injunction and concern over the large crowd that gathered to watch the demonstration, police charged the arrested activists with obstructing public passage and disturbing the peace. Along with McCain the six arrested included two ministers, an eye doctor, a refrigeration repairman and a cleaning company employee. When asked during the arrest by bystanders if they wanted to be paroled, the group replied no. Consumers League chair Dr. Henry Mitchell stated to reporters the next day that the five still in jail "plan to stay here indefinitely. We want equal jobs for Negroes."⁷⁵ Although the Consumers League accepted the participation of CORE representative James McCain, Dr. Mitchell worked to distance his group from CORE. He denied that the Congress of Racial Equality or NAACP sponsored or inspired the Consumers League; rather, he argued, "the Consumers League is strictly a local organization."⁷⁶

⁷³"Pickets Jailed at N.O. Center," The Times-Picayune, 17 September 1960, 18.

⁷⁴"Pickets Jailed at N.O. Center," The Times-Picayune, 17 September 1960, 18; "Report of James T. McCain[,] New Orleans, Louisiana," 25 September 1960, 2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00788.

⁷⁵[UPI teletype stamped Samson Alexander], 17 September [1960], The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00775; "Arrest 6 in Picketing of Shopping Area," The Louisiana Weekly, 24 September 1960, 1; and "Pickets Jailed at N.O. Center," The Times-Picayune, 17 September 1960, 18.

Even before arriving in New Orleans on September 9 McCain understood that he might go to jail as a result of his efforts to organize the people of New Orleans to fight against racism and segregation. James Robinson informed local chair person Rudolph Lombard that the commitment of national CORE staff to New Orleans included jail. He wrote, "It is my understanding from conversations with him [Jim McCain] that he will accompany the group on projects and risk jail." If McCain did end up in jail Robinson urged Lombard to call the national office collect so they could arrange to send Field Director Gordon Carey to New Orleans to provide assistance during McCain's tenure in jail.⁷⁷

McCain stayed in jail from Friday, September 16 through the evening of Sunday, September 18. During his time in jail, he and the other demonstrators experienced horrible conditions. After the experience he wrote, "Jail[s] in New Orleans are pretty rough." He referred to the jails of Miami as "a King's Palace" in comparison to the detention cells of New Orleans.⁷⁸ The group of five who remained in jail shared a 9X6 cell with only one steel slab for sleeping, two blankets which smelled of dogs, an out-of-order drinking fountain and a disgusting commode. The prison served two meals a day consisting of an indistinguishable lunch meat sandwich and a "poor" cup of coffee. Prison personnel cursed and berated inmates. McCain remembered, "We were cursed and called the most vile names that I have ever heard before."⁷⁹

⁷⁶"Pickets Jailed at N.O. Center," The Times-Picayune, 17 September 1960, 18.

⁷⁷James Robinson to Rudolph Lombard, September [1960], The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00805.

⁷⁸"Report of James T. McCain[,], New Orleans, Louisiana," 25 September 1960, 4, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00789; Jim McCain to Gordon [Carey], 19 September 1960, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:258:00300.

⁷⁹The only "bright" spot of their jail experience involved the officers on shift between 3:00 P.M. and 6:00 A.M. who treated the jailed

Later, during McCain's first full day in jail on Saturday, September 17, four members of New Orleans CORE joined him temporarily before being moved to another prison complex. Police arrested Rudolph Lombard, Oretha Castle, Cecil W. Carter and Sidney Langston "Lanny" Goldfinch for violating the mayor's ban on demonstrations with the city's second sit-in at McCrory's variety store on Canal Street. Immediately after the group sat down at McCrory's white lunchcounter the police barred news people from the area and the store manager asked the students to leave the premises or face arrest. They refused to vacate their seats without service, so the police arrested the group and herded them into waiting paddy wagons. Police charged the four CORE members with criminal mischief, trespassing and disturbing the peace.⁸⁰

The community first expressed support for jailed demonstrators on the afternoon of Sunday, September 18 when a group of 200 to 300 persons, representing fifty African American churches, held a prayer meeting in the playground adjacent to the detention center housing James McCain and the four members of the Consumers League still in jail. President of the New Orleans Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance, Reverend A.L. Davis, Jr., conducted the service with the assistance of twenty-five ministers who led prayers and songs that could be heard by the prisoners in their nearby jail cell.⁸¹

inmates more humanely and allowed them to callout for food. On jail conditions see, "Report of James T. McCain[,] New Orleans, Louisiana," 25 September 1960, 3-4, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00789.

⁸⁰[UPI teletype stamped Samson Alexander, number 2], 17 September [1960], The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00774; "4 More CORE Members Arrested in 'Sit-In'," The Louisiana Weekly, 24 September 1960, 1; "Report of James T. McCain[,] New Orleans, Louisiana," 25 September 1960, 3, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00789; and Gordon Carey to Local Contacts, memorandum, [September 1960], 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00783.

⁸¹"Report of James T. McCain[,] New Orleans, Louisiana," 25

The next evening the Consumers League of Greater New Orleans sponsored a mass meeting to protest the arrest of the students and adults trying to end segregation and discrimination in New Orleans. Before the rally of September 19 began a group of between 1500 and 2000 "freedom seeking Negroes" marched around the target of the Consumers League picketing, the Claiborne Shopping Center. The organization held the public meeting that followed in the ILA Union Hall across the street and the rally featured the CORE and Consumers League demonstrators recently released from jail. Reporters on television, the radio and in the press all hailed this as the city's "largest protest march and demonstration" and "the largest Negroe[sic] gathering in the history of New Orleans."⁸²

Speakers representing the Consumers League likened the battle for equal employment in the Claiborne Street area to the battle between the army of biblical hero Joshua and the city of Jericho. One speaker declared the area of South Claiborne Street "like the City of Jericho and . . . predicted that the walls of opposition to fair employment of Negroes in top level jobs would come tumbling down before the demonstrations have been called off."⁸³ They also urged the people of New Orleans to champion CORE's action program. James McCain spoke on behalf of CORE at the gathering. Not only did McCain advertise the New September 1960, 3, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00789; "Arrest 6 in Picketing of Shopping Area," The Louisiana Weekly, 24 September 1960, 12; "Negroes Hold Kneel-In Here," The Times Picayune, 19 September 1960, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00777.

⁸²"Report of James T. McCain[,], New Orleans, Louisiana," 25 September 1960, 4, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00789; "2000 March in 'Protest' Demonstration: Job Fight Picks Up Steam, Raise \$2,000," The Louisiana Weekly, 24 September 1960, 1.

⁸³Quoted in "2000 March in 'Protest' Demonstration: Job Fight Picks Up Steam, Raise \$2,000," The Louisiana Weekly, 24 September 1960, 1.

Orleans CORE boycott of Woolworth's and McCrory's through the distribution of leaflets, but presented the assemblage with a challenge. He asserted, "Youth are on the move and if we can get 2,000 Negroes to walk picket in Claiborne and Canal Street areas, we will see what the police department of New Orleans will do about it."⁸⁴ He urged the crowd to support the movement since New Orleans CORE could not win alone, but even without its assistance, CORE would move ahead.⁸⁵

As part of the public meeting, New Orleans CORE demonstrators jailed for their participation in the sit-ins appeared before the assembly. New Orleans CORE chairperson Rudolph Lombard remained the only CORE activist still in jail on September 19. A twenty-one year old senior and the student body president at Xavier College, Lombard pledged to remain in jail until his conscience indicated the battle was won or near solution.⁸⁶ A letter written by Lombard in prison and read to the gathered crowd on Monday night reveals some of the values and beliefs motivating the initial group of activists composing the CORE community. Lombard considered it a "moral obligation" to stay in jail to fight against the "evils" of segregation and discrimination.⁸⁷ He explained further, "The issue is clear. Segregation is morally wrong. We must

⁸⁴McCain quoted in "4 More CORE Members Arrested in 'Sit-In'," The Louisiana Weekly, 24 September 1960, 12 and 1; and "Report of James T. McCain[,] New Orleans, Louisiana," 25 September 1960, 4, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00789.

⁸⁵"Mass Meeting," [handwritten notes taken at the meeting], [19 September 1960], 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00878.

⁸⁶"4 More CORE Members Arrested in 'Sit-In'," The Louisiana Weekly, 24 September 1960, 1; and "Report of James T. McCain[,] New Orleans, Louisiana," 25 September 1960, 4, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00789; "Rudolph Lombard," [biographical data], [1963], The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:230:01105.

⁸⁷"Mass Meeting," [handwritten notes taken at the meeting], [19 September 1960], 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00878.

oppose it if we are to live with ourselves. The Mayor has said that we cannot do what we believe to be our duty. The Mayor defies the law of the land and morality. We must then challenge his edicts."⁸⁸ Although the members of CORE wanted public support for their battle, he assured the assembly of the intentions of New Orleans CORE to make "any sacrifice" to achieve their goals with or without community aid. He finished, "If we cannot secure your backing then we must carry on this struggle alone."⁸⁹

Other members of CORE reiterated both the centrality of morality to their position and their commitment to eradicate racism in New Orleans. A financial appeal published in The Louisiana Weekly and designed by New Orleans CORE to earn money in support of the seven activists arrested in the September 9 Woolworth sit-in attests to beliefs rooted in ethics and an intense obligation to attain their goals. The appeal, signed by chair Rudolph Lombard and secretary Joyce Taylor, stated, "This demonstration, the first in New Orleans, dramatized to the white and Negro community the immorality of racial discrimination. It will not be the last." They pledged their intentions "to continue attacks on segregation, wherever and whenever it occurs." Further, they informed the public of their action-orientation by promising, "Your aid will be shown in our actions."⁹⁰

When announcing a demonstration or describing the group, CORE members often called attention to the rightness of their cause and the virtue of their actions. Chair Rudolph Lombard defined the purpose of

⁸⁸Lombard quoted in "4 More CORE Members Arrested in 'Sit-In'," The Louisiana Weekly, 24 September 1960, 1.

⁸⁹"Mass Meeting," [handwritten notes taken at the meeting], [19 September 1960], 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00878.

⁹⁰"Ask Support of Sit-ins," [advertisement printed in The Louisiana Weekly, 24 September 1960, pg 12], The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00808.

the Congress of Racial Equality as "an attempt to appeal to the moral conscience."⁹¹ One activist described a New Orleans CORE march and twenty-four hour fast in support of the activism of students at Southern University in Baton Rouge as "our attempt to awaken the moral conscience of the community."⁹² In comments from jail to his fellow "Freedom Fighters," project director Jerome Smith praised the membership on their dedication and moral position. He wrote, "I extend congratulations because I know saturating the community with the message of human righteousness is no picnic, because 'pavement patting' (picketing) is hard."⁹³

An African American longshoreman in New Orleans, Jerome Smith quit school and moved to the city after police crackdowns against students at Southern University-Baton Rouge early in 1960. Twenty-one and married, Smith deeply believed in the goodness of the struggle for racial equality. Despite "family-pressure," Smith informed his colleagues in CORE, "I profoundly believe that I must lock within me, all personal spoil and emotional desires, in order to be worthy of my membership, simply because the need to abolish racial injustice, transcends any personal pleasure or hardship. I have a deep seeded, divine belief, that Freedom is to be prized above all things.[sic]"⁹⁴

Because of this commitment Rudy Lombard nominated Smith for CORE's 1960 Gandhi Award. The honor celebrated "the individual doing the most

⁹¹"Direct Action No Violence, Says CORE," newspaper clipping, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00831.

⁹²New Orleans C.O.R.E., "New Orleans 1961[,] Summary of Activities 1961," 3, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00925.

⁹³Jerome Smith to the Freedom Fighters, 5 May 1960[1961], The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00754.

⁹⁴Jerome Smith to the Freedom Fighters, 5 May 1960[1961], The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00754; Jerome Smith, "Application Blank for Freedom Ride," 6 April 1961, 1-2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:443:01324.

to improve race relations through direct, nonviolent methods." Jerome Smith deserves the award, Lombard argued, because of his "day to day contribution toward CORE's objectives, personal commitment and subordination of job, family relations, etc. to the task of R.E.[Racial Equality]." ⁹⁵ Observers and colleagues identified this commitment in other members of New Orleans CORE.

To nominate Doris Jean Castle to participate in a national direct action project, CORE attorney Lolis Elie remarked, "My observations have served to convince me that Doris has the necessary courage, dedication and patience to serve on the Freedom Highway Project." ⁹⁶ After reviewing CORE Rules for Action and information on the Freedom Highway campaign, Doratha Smith thought Jean Thompson qualified for the project. Concerning her fellow activist Smith observed, "Her previous experience as a Freedom Rider and [in] the Civil Rights Movement here in New Orleans has proven her to be a person dedicated to the cause of ending segregation and discrimination." ⁹⁷ Oretha Castle, chapter chair in 1962, pledged for the qualifications of Doris Castle, Isaac Reynolds and Shirley Thompson to participate in Freedom Highways. She noted that all of them nonviolently had faced extreme white resistance in New Orleans and other parts of the South. ⁹⁸

The membership strictly adhered to nonviolence in practice and belief. Various members viewed the philosophy of nonviolence either as

⁹⁵"Nomination for 1960 Gandhi Award," [May? 1961], The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:233:01232; Rudy [Lombard to national CORE], [May? 1961], The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00755.

⁹⁶Lolis Elie to Gordon Carey, 1 June 1962, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:494:00125.

⁹⁷Doratha Smith to Gordon Carey, 29 May 1962, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:494:00111.

⁹⁸Oretha Castle to Gordon Carey, 28 May 1962, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:494:00115.

a way to live or as a tactic to achieve their goal of racial equality or both. The group discussed CORE Rules for Action and instructed newcomers in the technique of nonviolent direct action. In answer to police queries regarding CORE efforts to teach it, Anna Mae Giles described the group's dramatization of violent situations and the proper response learned by students. She summarized her dialogue with law enforcement officials,

ques. Does CORE teach non-violent passive resistance?

ans. Definitely, we even dramatize it.

ques. What do you mean, dramatize it?

ans. We set up suppositions, example:

1. Suppose someone walks behind you while sitting-in and hit[s] you with an umbrella.
2. Suppose the waitress accidentally on purpose spills coffee in your lap. etc. etc.

ans. We are taught to ignore these violent provocations.⁹⁹

On her second picket line Connie Bradford, a white student at Sophie Newcombe College, utilized the tactic of nonviolence as taught to her by fellow CORE members. In a report to national CORE she explained her response to a woman who berated and struck her while she picketed McCrory's dime store. She recalled,

I had first picketed only a week before and, although I had been hit once before and had received many insults and accusations, I had not yet had a chance to apply the technique of non-violence. I had heard much about it and I thought that it would be very difficult to be non-violent in a situation like this. However, all I had time to think about in this situation was keeping on my feet and keeping my arms down. I had no time to strike back, either in anger or in self-defense. . . . I hope that the people in the crowd were affected in some way by the sight of a non-violent CORE member being roughed up by a screaming, nearly hysterical woman.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹Anna Mae Giles, "Report," 15 October 1960, 1-2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00827; New Orleans CORE, "Application for Affiliation," 23 September 1960, 2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00781.

After being exposed to the technique of nonviolent direct action, some members of the New Orleans CORE community embraced Gandhi's ideas as a philosophy as well as a tactic. In nominating Rudy Lombard for the Gandhi Award, Jim Laue, a member of Boston CORE, wrote, "Rudy's combination of brilliant insight into action techniques and his solid commitment to nonviolent philosophy have made him one of the best examples of the high quality of leadership in the sit-ins."¹⁰¹

Historians August Meier and Elliot Rudwick learned from one New Orleans activist, "The chapter had a deep Gandhian philosophy. . . . All the members were prepared to die if necessary. In fact we spent hours talking about Gandhian philosophy and willingness to give our lives. We would not eat or talk for days as a means of acquiring discipline."¹⁰²

In applying to participate in national CORE's Freedom Ride in May, 1961 Julia Aaron wrote a statement to explain her experience with the philosophy and technique of nonviolence. Her statement illustrates many of the values and principles which characterized New Orleans CORE members. The twenty-year-old African American student at Southern University-New Orleans expressed her intense belief in the philosophy of nonviolence, her commitment to the civil rights movement, the moral terms in which she viewed the struggle and her activist approach. She stated,

My first contact with the non-violent philosophy was with New Orleans C.O.R.E. This philosophy inspired my heart and soul so much that I have participated in several forms of social action with an unlimited dedication. Because of my sincere dedication

¹⁰⁰Connie Bradford, "Report of New Orleans CORE Action," 16 April 1961, 2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00906.

¹⁰¹Jim Laue, "Nomination for 1960 Gandhi Award," [May? 1961], The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:233:01232.

¹⁰²August Meier and Elliot Rudwick, CORE: A Study in the Civil Rights Movement (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1973), 116.

and profound beliefs in C.O.R.E and its aims, I hope I'm given the opportunity to participate in this project which I feel will help to remove the sins of human injustice from our society. Consequently, I hope that you will feel that I have the 'material' that will help Freedom Ride [be] a success.¹⁰³

Beyond a commitment to Gandhian philosophy, Oretha Castle remembered that people, like Julia Aaron, joined New Orleans CORE because they wanted to create change through action. In 1978 Castle recalled the very definite ideas held by the group concerning the kinds of activities that would attack the problems as they "perceived and understood them at that time." As the mode of action or tune of youth across the country, it made sense to use the sit-in at McCrory's and Woolworth's. In 1960 Castle believed "very strongly" that the sit-in represented the best method to address the problems created by racism in New Orleans.¹⁰⁴

It took courage to make the decision to risk jail. Hugh Murray equated the decision to sit-in with the decision to go to jail.¹⁰⁵ Oretha Castle also knew participation in a sit-in would result in jail and the loss of her job. Although she did not question her intention and desire to sit-in, she needed to work and therefore experienced some concern over the consequences of the action. Once she discovered an opportunity to obtain employment if she lost her current job as a result of the sit-in, Castle abandoned her hesitation. At the time of the September 17 sit-in Castle worked in the dietary department of the hospital, Hotel Dieu. On the day news of her arrest appeared in the newspaper she lost her job. After losing her job in 1960 Castle revealed her commitment to the movement when she asserted, "[The]

¹⁰³Julia Aaron, [Freedom Ride Application], April 1961, 2 and 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:456:00451.

¹⁰⁴Haley, Interview by Rogers, 27 November 1978, side one.

¹⁰⁵Murray, Jr., Interview by author, 14 February 1996, side 1.

Struggle for human dignity + 1st class citizenship is worth all sacrifice. Jail and the loss of my job is a small price to pay."¹⁰⁶

Other members in the CORE community also saw the struggle against segregation as a struggle to obtain dignity, freedom and citizenship. Fighting for equality and the rights the United States Constitution promised to all Americans represented both a goal and a motivation for CORE activists. Oliver St. Pee, a 23-year-old sociology student at Loyola University and a white southerner, defined his goal of freedom as "something you gotta win every day of your life - Not [a] country you think about when you see [the] flag.[sic]"¹⁰⁷ Lanny Goldfinch more clearly expressed how CORE members rooted their beliefs in ideas about equality and human rights in a statement he submitted to the press after his sit-in arrest on September 17. The philosophy graduate student remarked,

The real charge is that I, a white American, sat side-by-side with colored Americans, who were asking for equal service at a McCrory's lunchcounter.

My crime has been that I have joined CORE to fight for the American dream for all Americans. We in CORE try to bring America closer to its promise of security and dignity for all.¹⁰⁸

In a speech delivered at a city-wide meeting chairman Rudolph Lombard further communicated the members' desire for basic citizenship

¹⁰⁶Oretha Castle, [notes of an interview], [September 1960], The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00873; Haley, Interview by Rogers, 27 November 1978, side one.

¹⁰⁷Oliver St. Pee, [notes of an interview], [September 1960], The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00870.

¹⁰⁸Lannie Goldfinch, [statement to Times-Picayune], [23 September 1960], The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00809. Please see "Report of James T. McCain," 8 September through 25 September 1960, 5, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00790 and Marvin Rich, "Action in New Orleans," CORElator, 85 (November 1960): 1-2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 6:1:00126-00127.

rights and their commitment. Arrest and the threat of arrest will not hinder our campaign or frighten us, Lombard declared. He continued,

Such injustices hurled upon us by the city and state officials have only strengthened our determination to persever[e], in our fight [for] liberty and equality. We believe that all men are create[d] equal and endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights. These rights are and should be self evident.

As chairman of New Orleans CORE, I spent six and half days in jail to let the nation and the world know, that we the citizens of New Orleans are demanding our freedom and are willing to pay the price. No man can imprison the desire to be free. I speak with confidence when I say, not even the threat of death shall silence the cry of the Negro for liberation from the imprisonment of segregation.[sic]¹⁰⁹

The lawyers defending those arrested in the September sit-ins echoed the demands of New Orleans CORE members for equal rights for African Americans as American citizens. Rudolph Lombard contacted Lolis Elie, Robert Collins and Nils Douglas after the first sit-in arrests. Black lawyers with a new practice established on Dryades Street, they initially refused to take the sit-in cases. When the local chapter of the ACLU also turned the CORE activists down, the partners agreed to represent the students. From this point these three lawyers worked very closely with the New Orleans CORE chapter and the national office. In addition to legal assistance, they supplied general leadership and advice to New Orleans CORE.¹¹⁰

By arresting those involved in a sit-in, the lawyers argued, police deprived CORE activists of their freedom of speech and violated

¹⁰⁹[Rudy Lombard], "Rudy's Statement At City-wide Meeting," 27 September 1960, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00798.

¹¹⁰Rogers, Righteous Lives, 51-56, 68, 105; "Atty. Douglas Files For La. Senate Seat," The Louisiana Weekly, 12 January 1963, 1-2; Lolis Elie to Gordon Carey, 5 December 1961, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:497:00888.

their fourteenth amendment rights to the equal protection of the laws. Through the sit-in, a form of speech, individuals expressed their disapproval of racial discrimination. Further, the more a property owner opened his business to public occupancy the more his customers' constitutional rights--for equal treatment and free speech--outweighed his. Therefore, by enforcing segregation with laws passed specifically for that purpose, the state violated the constitutional rights of its citizens to free speech.¹¹¹ The national office echoed this argument when it called for its local chapters to publicize "this basic infringement of the right to peaceful assembly and protest as well as the right of free speech [in New Orleans]."¹¹²

When this argument failed, jail resulted in serious legal consequences for arrested demonstrators. As punishment for criminal mischief, the charge levied against CORE activists for sitting-in, a judge could impose a maximum sentence of one year in jail and a fine of \$500.¹¹³ For their part in the September 17 sit-in, a judge ordered Rudolph Lombard, Oretha Castle, Cecil Carter and Lanny Goldfinch to pay a \$350 fine and to serve sixty days in jail. The group never served their sentences because national CORE appealed their case to the Supreme Court and won.¹¹⁴

As in the case of enduring the legal consequences of direct

¹¹¹"Judge Studies Move To Quash Sit-In Case," The Louisiana Weekly, 12 November 1960, 8; Collins, Douglas & Elie, "Motion to Quash," State of Louisiana vs. Rudolph Lombard et al, [3 November 1960], 1-3, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:4:00454.

¹¹²Gordon Carey to Local Contacts and members of the Advisory Committee, memorandum, [25?] September 1960, 2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00785.

¹¹³"Seven in Sit-In Here Arrested," Times-Picayune, 10 September 1960, 18.

¹¹⁴"4 Sit-Ins To Appeal 60 Day Jail Sentence," The Louisiana Weekly, 14 January 1961, 1; James Farmer to CORE Group Leaders, 31 May 1963, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:9:00910.

action, their willingness to accept the disapproval of family and friends indicates the commitment of New Orleans CORE members to eradicating racism. Demonstrating against segregation and participating in civil disobedience generated tensions between the activists of New Orleans CORE and their parents. As noted earlier, the arrest of the participants of the September 9 sit-in disturbed many of their mothers.¹¹⁵ Hugh Murray's decision to sit-in on September 9 alienated both of his parents. During the afternoon Hugh Murray, Sr. went to Woolworth to persuade his son to leave the demonstration. At the incident Hugh Murray, Jr. acknowledged that his father did not condone the sit-in action because "He is more conservative on this issue."¹¹⁶

Even before participating in the sit-in 21-year-old Murray knew he would need to find a new place to live. Neither parent understood why he wanted to challenge segregation with direct action. His father, a steamship clerk on the waterfront, held segregationist views. His mother told him to obey the law.¹¹⁷ Because the decision to sit-in occasioned consequences for you and your relatives, Murray considered it a very difficult resolution to assume. He knew his parents continued to love him despite his action, but he also knew it would be "easier all around" if he moved out. In the nights following the sit-in he slept at the homes of friends until he and fellow CORE member Oliver St. Pee found an apartment near Tulane University. Following Hugh Murray's participation in the sit-in his parents began receiving threatening phone calls. Callers identified themselves as the police and informed

¹¹⁵"Report of James T. McCain[,], New Orleans, Louisiana," 25 September 1960, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00788.

¹¹⁶"Seven in Sit-In Here Arrested," Times-Picayune, 10 September 1960, 18.

¹¹⁷Hugh Murray, Jr., [notes of an interview], [September 1960], The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00871; Murray, 45, Box 2, Folder Autobiography, Chapter 1, Murray Papers.

his mother they found Hugh dead; others threatened to blow up the house. His father experienced harassment at work and fellow workers spit on him. Although Hugh Murray, Sr. had never lived outside of New Orleans, he even considered moving his family to the West Coast where it might be easier for them.¹¹⁸

The parents of Oliver St. Pee, a 23-year-old sociology student at Loyola University and a white southerner, also disapproved of his involvement with New Orleans CORE. Although his parents never declared themselves to be segregationists or integrationists, they wanted to avoid the issue altogether. The St. Pee's believed their son would "get in [a] lot of trouble" and argued that he was "being used by N[egro] communists." His friends claimed to be liberal but questioned his involvement. Of his pre-CORE community, only his church offered him personal support.¹¹⁹

On the other hand, some parents supported the activities of their children in CORE. Although his family feared for his safety, the parents of Carlos Zervigon approved of his involvement in New Orleans CORE. Zervigon, an Hispanic undergraduate at Tulane University, joined CORE because he always wanted to fight against racism. Although the white citizens of New Orleans were more tolerant of the Latin community than African American residents, he experienced subtle discrimination and witnessed the "horrible treatment" of his relatives in Texas. In 1996 Zervigon recalled,

In those days, the Hispanic community blended in quite well into New Orleans, we were not radically discriminated against; [but]

¹¹⁸Murray, Interview by author, 14 February 1996, side 1 and 2; Hugh Murray, Jr., [notes of an interview], [September 1960], The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00871; Murray, 51, Box 2, Folder Autobiography, Chapter 1, Murray Papers.

¹¹⁹Oliver St. Pee, [notes of an interview], [September 1960], The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00870.

enough so that I had anger, enough so that I heard enough things behind my back to goad me into the civil rights movement, but it was not near as severe as what the black community was going through nor what my relatives were going through in south Texas.¹²⁰

Oretha and Doris Jean Castle also remembered the encouragement they received from their families. Their parents played a very important role in the New Orleans CORE movement. Although not action oriented themselves, they allowed their home to become the CORE base in New Orleans. We understood they would not march, picket or go to jail, Doris Jean Castle recalled, but they played a significant role in enabling CORE activism to happen. Her sister remembered that people from across the country knew that everything took place at their parents' home; people knew 917 North Tonti Street as a center of the movement.¹²¹ During the Freedom Ride campaign of 1961, Matteo Suarez remembered 917 North Tonti as CORE's New Orleans' headquarters. Freedom riders gathered at the home for orientation and slept, ate and bathed at the residence; everyday the press and police surrounded the house. He added,

There will be no way of repaying her . . . family for all that they did because that's a . . . five room house and one bath and there was times when 60 was sleeping in there and her mother cooked and fed all of them three meals a day, you know without getting any money from anybody or any food or anything like that, this was strictly out of her paycheck and her husband's paycheck that she kept them going.[sic]¹²²

The Castle sisters, and others such as Rudolph Lombard and Jerome Smith,

¹²⁰Carlos Zervigon, Interview by author, 8 May 1996, tape recording, sides 1 and 3.

¹²¹Haley, Interview by Rogers, 27 November 1978, side one; Doris Jean Castle-Scott, Interview by Kim Lacy Rogers, 19 January 1989, tape recording, side one, Rogers Collection.

¹²²Matteo Suarez, Interview by Robert Wright, 11 August 1969, transcript, 4 and 5, Bunche Collection.

also saw their parents as important role models in their resistance to white racism.¹²³

By the time members of New Orleans CORE applied to become an affiliate of national CORE in late September 1960, the group began to realize they shared many values, beliefs and experiences.¹²⁴ The membership welcomed actionists, believed in nonviolence as a philosophy and technique, and possessed dedication to their goal of eradicating racial inequality. Moralism and a belief in the constitutional and human rights of all Americans motivated their involvement in the fight to desegregate public accommodations in New Orleans. But despite their shared ethics and a developing sense of community, the intensity and stress of their September lunchcounter campaign and a division between members who attended the Miami Interracial Action Institute and those who did not posed important challenges to the evolution of this community.

The Consumers League picket line of September 16 and McCrory's sit-in of September 17 resulted in the arrest of two important New Orleans CORE leaders, national field secretary James McCain and local chairperson Rudolph Lombard. On September 18, a lack of leadership and disorientation in New Orleans CORE motivated McCain to obtain a release from jail earlier than expected. In the midst of straightening out these difficulties McCain wrote to Gordon Carey to describe the situation. "One of the reasons I came out when I did, was," he wrote, "because of the difficulty the local group was having since both Rudy and I were in jail." He continued, "I learned in jail from our lawyer that the group was beginning to argue ~~amongst~~ with each other.[sic]"¹²⁵

¹²³Rogers, Righteous Lives, 110.

¹²⁴New Orleans Congress of Racial Equality, "Application for Affiliation," [23? September 1960], 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00780.

McCain also learned of Hugh Murray's decision to resign as vice chair of the group. McCain informed Carey, "Hugh Murray is giving up the Vice Chairmanship of the group. He is willing to remain in the group, but only as a member."¹²⁶ Hugh Murray resigned from the position after serving as vice president officially for one week. The aftermath of the September 9 sit-in forced him to vacate the post. As a result of the arrest, he remembered, "for a week I was in total personal problems." Lombard's arrest forced Murray to assume leadership of the CORE group after a week of being unable to return home, sleeping at the homes of different friends each night, searching for an apartment, working to retain his job at Tulane University Library and worrying over a suspension from Tulane University.¹²⁷

Other New Orleans CORE members shared some of the stressful and difficult experiences Hugh Murray encountered as a result of direct action to desegregate lunchcounters. National CORE Field Director Gordon Carey observed, "I believe that the group got into action a little prematurely. Many of them were really not prepared for the things that would happen." He thought the problem resided in the decision made by the group of CORE members who remained in New Orleans while seven of their compatriots participated in the Miami Interracial Action Institute. He continued, "When the Institute group arrived back in New Orleans the rest of the CORE group had already made plans for a sit-in which was to take place immediately. Those persons who had been at the Institute tried to get them to hold off but they wanted to go

¹²⁵Jim McCain to Gordon [Carey], 19 September 1960, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:258:00300.

¹²⁶Jim McCain to Gordon [Carey], 19 September 1960, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:258:00300.

¹²⁷Murray, Interview by author, 14 February 1996, side 2; "Report of James T. McCain[,] New Orleans, Louisiana," 25 September 1960, 2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00788.

ahead. Of course they did sit-in and seven were arrested."¹²⁸

Hugh Murray identifies this disagreement as part of the first division in New Orleans CORE which he labels a split between those who attended the three week Miami Interracial Action Institute and those who remained in New Orleans. While the group Murray labels as the "New Orleans CORE nucleus" trained in Miami, new people became involved in New Orleans CORE.¹²⁹ "A new leadership developed in the vacuum caused by the Miami Workshop," he explained, "and at one point TV newsmen were invited to a CORE meeting at the Negro Y and sit-ins were publicly discussed. When the rest of us returned from Miami, we were displeased by this premature press conference, and the first cleavage in New Orleans CORE was not along black-white lines, but along the Miami workshop--non-workshop members."¹³⁰

The reluctance of workshop members to sponsor a sit-in immediately upon their return stemmed from their concern over the integration of New Orleans public schools scheduled to begin in early September. The federal court system intended to rule on school desegregation on September 1 and the workshop group believed it unwise to hold a sit-in just prior to or during the onset of school integration.¹³¹ "Why should we have a sit-in on Saturday," argued Hugh Murray, "and [be] held responsible for any problem at the school on Monday?"¹³² The sit-in went ahead as planned with workshop member participation because the judge postponed a decision in the case and eventually delayed the onset

¹²⁸Gordon Carey to Marvin Robinson, 20 September 1960, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:265:00843.

¹²⁹I think this new influx included many white students from Tulane University. Murray, 45, Box 2, Folder Autobiography, Chapter 1, Murray Papers; Murray, Interview by author, 14 February 1996, side 2.

¹³⁰Murray, 45, Box 2, Folder Autobiography, Chapter 1, Murray Papers.

¹³¹Murray, 47, Box 2, Folder Autobiography, Chapter 1, Murray Papers; Murray, Interview by author, 14 February 1996, side 2.

¹³²Murray, Interview by author, 14 February 1996, side 2.

of school integration until November.¹³³

The tension between workshopers and nonworkshoppers not only derived from their disagreement over the timing of the organization's first sit-in but resulted because the two groups did not know one another very well. While in Miami "a certain kind of trust had already grown up" among the founding members of New Orleans CORE who participated in the Institute. This group of seven warily approached the strangers, who joined in their absence. Hugh Murray remembered being suspicious of these new activists, but also interested in growth. In his opinion, "we needed people and here was a supply." When asked about the duration of the division Murray replied, "I think it was over in a short--as far as I was concerned it was over in a short time."¹³⁴

Another difficulty contributing to the stress and tension experienced by the membership of New Orleans CORE during its September lunchcounter campaign derived from the disagreements between CORE and other community activists and organizations over the proper tactics and timing to combat segregation and racism. The flurry of CORE activity during the first half of September ruffled feathers not only in the segregationist community, but also among sections of the African American community. Shortly after the second sit-in and his time in jail a tired James McCain stated to Gordon Carey of the national office, "This is a difficult situation in New Orleans the the local group is finding itselt.[sic]" He continued, "The Group has been accuse[d] of jumping the gun, breaking faith with other group[s] and many other things, but I am hoping that we can turn all negitive remarks into something tangible, that will move this area.[sic]" "Because of our

¹³³Murray, 47, Box 2, Folder Autobiography, Chapter 1, Murray Papers.

¹³⁴Murray, Interview by author, 14 February 1996, side 2.

action," he argued, "the Consumers League moved. Even though its Chairman resigned because of our action and the support of his group. The Youth Council of the NAACP is split down the middle because the Adult NAACP group is against action.[sic]"¹³⁵ Later on the same day McCain wrote this letter, during a mass rally, he probably alienated other civil rights groups in New Orleans further when he identified the Consumers League and CORE as the only two organizations in the city committed to action.¹³⁶

The response of white segregationists to the CORE sponsored lunchcounter desegregation campaign gained in intensity in the weeks following the September 17 sit-in, further aggravating the situation faced by the young students of New Orleans CORE. The community confronted an intense challenge as it battled charges of criminal anarchy against Sidney "Lanny" Goldfinch and the identification of CORE as a subversive, communist group. One of the CORE activists arrested on September 17 during the sit-in at McCrory's variety store, Lanny Goldfinch faced an additional charge of criminal anarchy because of a statement he made to the police. At his arrest Goldfinch exclaimed, "We came here with a purpose in mind. We want to achieve that purpose or be arrested." For this declaration police charged this white, 21-year-old Tulane University graduate student in philosophy with "advocating opposition to the state of Louisiana" and "conspiracy to commit anarchy."¹³⁷

¹³⁵Jim McCain to Gordon [Carey], 19 September 1960, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:258:00300.

¹³⁶"4 More CORE Members Arrested in 'Sit-In'," The Louisiana Weekly, 24 September 1960, 12; "Mass Meeting," [handwritten notes taken at the meeting], [19 September 1960], 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00878.

¹³⁷Quoted in "'Sit-In' Student Faces Criminal Anarchy Charge," The Louisiana Weekly, 1 October 1960, 1; "N.O. 'Kneel-Ins' Termed Quiet," The Times-Picayune, 12 September 1960, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00769; "Report of James T. McCain," 8

Once Lanny Goldfinch publicly identified himself as a member of the Congress of Racial Equality, Assistant District Attorney A.I. Kleinfeldt also charged him with "being a member of an organization or society which was known to him to advocate teachings and practices in opposition to the state of Louisiana." Kleinfeldt justified his action by identifying CORE as one of the organizations "on the United States attorney-general's list of subversive organizations." District Attorney Richard Dowling went further to threaten to charge anyone with criminal anarchy who "incites others to take direct action against the laws of Louisiana rather than testing them (the laws) in the courts." National CORE's Community Relations Director, Marvin Rich, promptly denounced Kleinfeldt's accusation as false since the national government never had classified CORE a subversive organization. Rich went on to add, "CORE excludes from its membership all Communists."¹³⁸

Kleinfeldt declared it "immaterial whether or not CORE is on the list." Since certain members of CORE's advisory committee belonged to bona fide subversive organizations and national CORE financed the New Orleans demonstrations, the city would continue to investigate the charges.¹³⁹ During this same week state representative James Pfister organized a new legislative committee to investigate unamerican activities in Louisiana and to inform the public of the subversive activities taking place in their state. Although Chairman Pfister did not mention race relations or CORE, one member giving testimony to the

September through 25 September 1960, 5, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00790.

¹³⁸Quoted in "'Sit-In' Student Faces Criminal Anarchy Charge," The Louisiana Weekly, 1 October 1960, 3 and 1; "CORE Director Denies Listing," The Times-Picayune, 25 September 1960, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00787.

¹³⁹Marvin Rich, "Action in New Orleans," CORE-lator, 85 (November 1960): 2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 6:1:00127.

committee linked Louisiana sit-ins to "white leftwingers." Guy Bannister, a former New Orleans private investigator, opined, "The Negro race is not capable of the leadership or organization for sit-ins. It is white people." He went on to link national CORE to the racial "troubles" of the South.¹⁴⁰

As New Orleans CORE members began the next phase of their lunchcounter campaign, they discovered that white authorities intended to continue to harass their attempts to integrate New Orleans. Portraying CORE as a subversive organization represented only one tactic used by the city government in their attempts to crush New Orleans CORE. James McCain informed the national office,

It has been reported to the local group that the district attorney's office is out to destroy the group if possible, by using all the segregation laws at his command, and by the same token, we must prove to the authorities that we are in this area to stay and will use non-violent means in fighting segregation as long as it prevails[sic] and is used against persons of color. . . . National CORE must lend all assistance it can in terms of field staff to help solidify what has been started in New Orleans.¹⁴¹

Field secretary James McCain worked closely with chapter members to keep the lunchcounter campaign moving and CORE in the public eye.¹⁴² Following the September sit-ins New Orleans CORE members organized an

¹⁴⁰Bannister quoted in "Pfister Notes La. Subversion," The Times-Picayune, 22 September 1960, 28; Gordon Carey to Local Contacts and members of the Advisory Committee, memorandum, 4 November 1960, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00839.

¹⁴¹"Report of James T. McCain," 26 September through 13 October 1960, 3, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:258:00303.

¹⁴²"Report of James T. McCain," 8 September through 25 September 1960, 5, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00790; James T. McCain to James Robinson, 26 September 1960, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00791; "Report of James T. McCain," 26 September through 13 October 1960, 1-3, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:258:00302-00303.

economic boycott of Woolworth and McCrory's variety stores. Between September 14 and October 6 CORE activists distributed more than 44,000 handbills asking community members to spend their money elsewhere. "The leaflet [campaign] has not been 100% effective," McCain reported, "but it has and is cutting into the trade by Negroes at these two stores."¹⁴³

To minimize the risk of arrest but still challenge the Mayor's ban on sit-ins, national staff persons James Robinson and Jim McCain advised their affiliate to employ "several gimmicks that we have employed elsewhere." For example the group could use hit-and-run sit-ins or have white members order food at white lunchcounters and pass the food to their African American confederates. These actions differed from a sit-in because activists obeyed police orders to leave.¹⁴⁴ Initially, the size of the chapter community hampered their ability to undertake these projects. At the time Jim McCain pushed members of New Orleans CORE into new sit-in-type actions, twenty-one active members comprised the group with eleven of these activists recently arrested for lunchcounter sit-ins.¹⁴⁵

In the weeks following the September sit-ins, several individuals asked to join New Orleans CORE. On September 22 nineteen white and black persons came to the chapter meeting and "expressed . . . [a]

¹⁴³"Report of James T. McCain," 26 September through 13 October 1960, 2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:258:00302; "Report of James T. McCain," 8 September through 25 September 1960, 2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00788.

¹⁴⁴Jim McCain to Gordon Carey, 2 October 1960, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00811; M [James Robinson] to Rudolph Lombard, 26 September 1960, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00782; James McCain to Marv [Rich], 9 October 1960, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00816.

¹⁴⁵New Orleans CORE, "Application for Affiliation," [23? September 1960], 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00780; "Seven In Sit-In Here Arrested," Times-Picayune, 10 September 1960, 18; "4 More CORE Members Arrested in 'Sit-In'," The Louisiana Weekly, 24 September 1960, 1.

willingness to become active in an action program with the local group." A week later several more persons asked to join.¹⁴⁶ Despite the addition of new members, McCain believed the group needed more actionists. "I think this group here will survive the storm," McCain argued, "if we can continue to add the right kind of persons to the group." He continued, "Many persons have expressed an interest in the group, but what the group needs most, are persons of action. The majority of the members of the group are students and . . . they are occupied in school."¹⁴⁷ Ten days later McCain reported on the many ministers, clubs, organizations and individuals constantly expressing their support to the local affiliate. He wrote, "This is the kind of moral suuport[sic] I think the group needed. The problem now, in the group, is to find others to join the group who are action minded and will help them to act."¹⁴⁸

The new actionists who joined the CORE affiliate during the fall of 1960 were students. Commenting on the student composition of the CORE movement in New Orleans, the editor of The Louisiana Weekly wrote, "Significant in the New Orleans demonstrations is the fact that students involved are Negro and white and come from the major universities in the area . . . This unity of purpose is heartwarming."¹⁴⁹ Although the affiliate identified area campuses as important sources of new members,

¹⁴⁶"Report of James T. McCain," 8 September through 25 September 1960, 4, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00789; "Report of James T. McCain," 26 September through 13 October 1960, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:258:00302.

¹⁴⁷Jim McCain to Gordon Carey, 2 October 1960, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00811.

¹⁴⁸"Report of James T. McCain," 26 September through 13 October 1960, 3, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:258:00303.

¹⁴⁹Quoted by Marvin Rich to Matthew H. Ahmann, 28 September 1960, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00793.

a membership composed of students presented some problems. In an attempt to keep field secretary McCain in New Orleans and working with his chapter, Chairman Rudolph Lombard indicated why a student group needed a full-time activist in residence. To national CORE field director Gordon Carey he argued, "James T. McCain is instrumental in carrying out necessary function[s] during times when many of the local CORE members are in school."¹⁵⁰ Field secretary Genevieve Hughes, assigned to New Orleans to convince white parents to send their kids to integrated schools, wanted CORE members to canvass white neighborhoods. She discovered "no CORE people available because they were in classes."¹⁵¹

Hughes also experienced problems working in the white neighborhoods of New Orleans because the membership of the chapter contained so few white persons. "The lack of a substantial no. of white persons in N.O. CORE was a disadvantage," she reported to the national office.¹⁵² Although an interracial group from its founding, the number of African Americans in New Orleans CORE outnumbered whites. One of the few interracial organizations in New Orleans, the founding group elected both blacks and whites as officers. The black leaders included chairman Rudolph Lombard and secretary Joyce Taylor, while two whites, Hugh Murray and Lanny Goldfinch, served as the vice chairman and financial secretary. When Murray resigned in mid-September, the group elected another caucasian, William Harrell, as vice chairman. During the remainder of 1960 whites continued to become involved in New Orleans CORE, but in fewer numbers than African Americans.¹⁵³

¹⁵⁰Rudolph Lombard to Gordon R. Carey, 8 October 1960, 2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00820.

¹⁵¹Genevieve Hughes, "Report on School Situation in New Orleans," 28 November 1960, 2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00861.

¹⁵²Genevieve [Hughes] to Gordon Carey, 26 January 1961, 4, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:254:00880.

Most of the white individuals involved in CORE attended Tulane University or Sophie Newcombe college, an institution for women associated with Tulane. Eighteen-year-old Margaret Leonard and nineteen-year-old Houston, Texas native Annette Horsch attended Sophie Newcombe College. Students at Tulane University included William Harrell, Hugh Murray, Steve Blank, Stephen Chanin, Robert Heller and Allan Nathanson.¹⁵⁴ The African American CORE members identified as students or former students attended Xavier College, Dillard University, Southern University-New Orleans and Louisiana State University at New Orleans. Chairman Rudolph Lombard and chemistry student Archie Allen attended Xavier College.¹⁵⁵ The large contingent from Dillard University included Roosevelt Bryant, A.D. Moore, Clifford Roberson, Jr., David Dennis, Charles Hardy and Edward Jackson.¹⁵⁶ Edward Myers, Jr., Clarence McCall, Oretta Castle and Evelyn Villa worked on degrees

¹⁵³New Orleans CORE, "Application for Affiliation," [23? September 1960], 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00780; "Report of James T. McCain," 26 July to 9 August 1960, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:258:00289; Sissi [Margaret] Leonard, statement, 15 October 1960, 2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00823; Rudolph Lombard to Gordon Carey, letterhead, 8 October 1960, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00820.

¹⁵⁴"16 Questioned in Sit-In Probe," Times Picayune, 23 October 1960, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00831; "Seven In Sit-In Here Arrested," Times-Picayune, 10 September 1960, 18; "New Orleans CORE Trial Continued," national CORE press release, 15 December [1960], The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00858.

¹⁵⁵"Rudolph Lombard," biography, [1963], The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:230:01105; "Seven In Sit-In Here Arrested," Times-Picayune, 10 September 1960, 18.

¹⁵⁶"16 Questioned in Sit-In Probe," Times Picayune, 23 October 1960, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00831; "CORE Members Test New Orleans Ban," national CORE press release, 13 October [1960], The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:258:00308; "Sit-In At Store Soon Broken Up," Times-Picayune, 15 October 1960, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00822.

at Southern University-New Orleans.¹⁵⁷

By mid-October the members of this interracial, student group began to challenge Mayor Morrison's ban on demonstrations through hit-and-run sit-ins. The police quickly quashed the demonstrations by ordering the students to leave and interrogating them at police headquarters. On October 13 and 14 African American CORE members sat-in at Waterbury Drug Store and Woolworth's five and dime until asked to leave. The sit-ins lasted no longer than thirty minutes, but at one lunchcounter a white customer passed Dillard student A.D. Moore, Jr. a cup of coffee.¹⁵⁸ The next day a white, Margaret Leonard, joined several African American CORE members at Woolworth's to attempt a new tactic.

The 18-year-old Sophie Newcombe college Student ordered food at the white counter and when Anna Mae Giles and Kermit Moran sat next to her she moved to the African American counter, leaving the pair a ham sandwich, piece of chocolate cake and glass of milk. Leonard sat next to Edward Myers, Jr. who passed her the pie and milk he had ordered. After eating the pie under the scrutiny of all of the diners, a white woman asked her if she slept with him too. When the demonstrators got up to leave, a policewoman arrested them.¹⁵⁹

They asked both Anna Mae Giles and Margaret Leonard whether CORE

¹⁵⁷"Sit-In At Store Soon Broken Up," Times-Picayune, 15 October 1960, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00822; "New Orleans CORE Trial Continued," national CORE press release, 15 December [1960], The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00858; Oretha Castle, [notes of interview], [September 1960], The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00873.

¹⁵⁸"CORE Members Test New Orleans Ban," national CORE press release, 13 October [1960], The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:258:00308; "Sit-In At Store Soon Broken Up," Times-Picayune, 15 October 1960, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00822.

¹⁵⁹Sissi [Margaret] Leonard, statement, 15 October 1960, 1-2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00823.

paid or forced them to demonstrate, about their relationship to Lanny Goldfinch, how CORE made money and to name names.¹⁶⁰ From Margaret Leonard the police wanted to know why a southern women, raised in Georgia, would be involved in such an unlawful action. "I said that I, personally, just didn't like segregation, and hoped to be a[bl]e to help end it," Leonard replied. They wanted to know as much about CORE as possible but also wanted to convince Leonard she made a mistake. Leonard recalled, "Everybody I talked to seemed surprised that I was from Newcomb and an authentic southern girl, and I was pleased to be southern and on a scholarship from Newcomb and not some oddball Yankee rabble rouser. I'm sure they think I'm an oddball, anyway." They asked if she dated, went to church or thought about how her actions would ruin the community.¹⁶¹

The reaction of these policemen to Margaret Leonard indicates the reaction of many white citizens and government officials in New Orleans to whites involved in the integration movement. Incredulous at their involvement in CORE, some whites reacted with verbal abuse and violence. A white woman in her fifties attacked Birmingham, Alabama native Connie Bradford while she picketed McCrory's five and dime store. After learning the white, Sophie Newcombe student belonged to "'that nigger' organization," the lady trailed Bradford shouting questions and accusations. "I remember her asking me if I knew what I was doing, and if I knew what Japan, China, Russia, and Cuba were doing," Bradford recalled. She continued,

¹⁶⁰Anna Mae Giles, report, 15 October 1960, 1-2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00827; Sissi [Margaret] Leonard, statement, 15 October 1960, 1-4, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00823-00824.

¹⁶¹Sissi [Margaret] Leonard, statement, 15 October 1960, 3 and 4, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00824.

My refusal to answer her must have annoyed her, because she began shoving and pushing me. She tried to knock the sign down, but I lifted it up again and tried to keep walking. Then she pushed me against a parked car, kicked me, and hit me around the shoulders and body with her purse and her hands. This time I relinquished my picket. She put it on the roof of the car and before I could regain my balance, she began pushing and hitting me again. All the time she was screaming insults at me. When she realized she was not making much headway, she took the sign from the top of the car and, rushing into the street, she threw it in front of a moving car.

The woman quickly vanished, leaving Bradford confused. Her African American picket mate, Pat Smith, handed Bradford her sign and went into the street to recover the other one. As the traffic cleared and the crowd dispersed, the demonstrators resumed picketing. Two police officers, directing traffic across the street, observed the incident but failed to investigate it.¹⁶²

The repression experienced during the 1960 lunchcounter campaign by the white and black students of CORE reveals the severe white resistance to integration and the lengths the city and many of its citizens would take to prevent change. Both members of New Orleans CORE and the national staff began to realize the difficulty of ending racism in the deep South. Shortly after spending six and a half days in jail for trying to get served at a lunchcounter Rudolph Lombard expressed to Gordon Carey his realization of the long fight ahead for New Orleans CORE. He confided, while in jail, "I was faced with the cold, naked realization that before we accomplish our objectives in New Orleans, Many more humans will be subjected to such humiliation, and persecution.[sic]" He went on to state clearly the "tyranny" plaguing

¹⁶²Connie Bradford, "Report of New Orleans CORE Action," 16 April 1961, 1 and 2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00906; James Farmer to Attorney General Robert Kennedy, telegram, 20 April 1961, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 3:44:01096.

his community and state. Lombard wrote, "I refer to: Police brutality in New Orleans, voter's purges in northern Louisiana, elimination of negroes from the State Welfare program, mass arrest of person's in sit-ins, pickets, etc., the slander hurled at CORE, and the complacency of the mass of citizens.[sic]"¹⁶³

To Miami Action Institute participant Ruth Despenza CORE Executive Secretary James Robinson remarked, "It is as you know, very difficult to start an action program in a community where there is significant resistance. By this time, Miami must seem like a picnic to you in contrast with New Orleans."¹⁶⁴ On the same day he wrote to Rudolph Lombard, "I think it is evident that the price of struggling for freedom in New Orleans is very significantly higher than in most other places in the country."¹⁶⁵

Despite the resistance and lack of dramatic success, national CORE believed victory could be achieved in New Orleans and provided a great deal of encouragement and aid to the fledgling chapter. Assessing the situation in a report to the director of field staff, Gordon Carey, field secretary Jim McCain wrote, "This is a tough nut to crack, but some how, I have the feeling that we must continue to struggle against strong opposition if we are to come out victorious." He continued,

I think this group here will and can survive the storm, if we can continue to add the right kind of persons to the group. . . . This group needs a great deal of help from the staff in guiding and pushing them. Rather [sic] that much staff time can be given to this group will have to be determined by you. . . . Of course there is much more work to be done. If the community will back this group, I think the group will become a very good one.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶³Rudolph Lombard to Gordon R. Carey, 8 October 1960, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00820.

¹⁶⁴James Robinson to Ruth Marie Despenza, 26 September 1960, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00791.

¹⁶⁵M [James Robinson] to Rudolph Lombard, 26 September 1960, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00782.

The next week McCain wrote again to Carey stressing, "New Orleans is a challenge to us. I think we can arouse this community if we stay at it long enough and work hard constantly at this problem of segregation."¹⁶⁷ To Gordon Wilcox of the United Christian Youth Movement Marvin Rich reiterated his understanding of the difficulty and hope of the New Orleans situation, "The situation is fraught with difficulty and yet is not unhopeful."¹⁶⁸

National staff people often sent supportive messages to members of the New Orleans CORE affiliate. Regardless of the problems, James Robinson encouraged Ruth Despenza, "I am confident that, with sufficient action and sufficient perserverance, the whole pattern can be changed in that city."¹⁶⁹ He stated to Rudolph Lombard, "congratulations to you personally for spending a number of days in jail. I understand that the jails in New Orleans are among the very worst in the entire United States."¹⁷⁰ Lombard received a morale booster from Marvin Rich that went "Have fun - give'em hell!"¹⁷¹

Other encouragement offered to members of New Orleans CORE took the form of emotional support extended by national staff persons. Close relationships between local and national CORE members developed at the Miami Interracial Action Institute and in the tense experiences of

¹⁶⁶Jim McCain to Gordon Carey, 2 October 1960, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00811.

¹⁶⁷Jim McCain to Gordon [Carey], 9 October 1960, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00814.

¹⁶⁸Marvin Rich to Gordon W. Wilcox, 5 November 1960, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00840.

¹⁶⁹James Robinson to Ruth Marie Despenza, 26 September 1960, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00791.

¹⁷⁰M [James Robinson] to Rudolph Lombard, 26 September 1960, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00782.

¹⁷¹Marvin Rich to Rudy Lombard, 11 October 1960, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00817.

September, October and November of 1960. Executive Secretary James Robinson informed Rudolph Lombard that the national staff "were all very much impressed with the kind of people who came to the Institute from New Orleans."¹⁷² Wishing Ruth Despenza the best of luck, he wrote, "regards to all the wonderful people I got to know from New Orleans while I was in Miami."¹⁷³ Marv Rich echoed these sentiments to Rudy Lombard, "My best to Juanita, to you, and to the other wonderful people in New Orleans."¹⁷⁴

Early in October local chairman Rudolph Lombard wanted to ensure more than emotional and moral support from national CORE. He worked to keep field secretary James McCain working with his group in New Orleans. McCain, with the assistance of Marvin Robinson, organized the summer meetings which resulted in the formation of the CORE affiliate and recruited the members who attended the Miami Interracial Action Institute. He also assisted the group in their lunchcounter campaign of September and early October. McCain arrived in New Orleans on September 9 during the course of the first sit-in and remained for the next month.¹⁷⁵ Concerned that Jim McCain would not return to New Orleans after his vacation, Rudy Lombard presented arguments to Acting Executive Secretary Gordon Carey as to why McCain should be reassigned to New Orleans. On October 8 Lombard argued,

[W]e of New Orleans CORE must acknowledge the tremendous and invaluable service performed by one, James T. McCain. His

¹⁷²James R. Robinson to Rudolph Lombard, 14 September 1960, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00772.

¹⁷³James Robinson to Ruth Marie Despenza, 26 September 1960, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00791.

¹⁷⁴Marv [Rich] to Rudy Lombard, 5 November 1960, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00839.

¹⁷⁵"Report of James T. McCain[,] New Orleans, Louisiana," 25 September 1960, TD, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00788; Jim McCain to Gordon [Carey], 9 October 1960, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00814.

experiences here, along with those of Marvin Rich again point out the appauling situation in New Orleans. To make the necessary contacts, few people are in a better position than Jim. He is well know[n] and respected throughout the New Orleans-Baton Rouge area. . . . His advice and suggestion[s] are priceless. If he is allowed to remain (at least) until after Thanksgiving, New Orleans CORE will be ten times closer to its goals.[sic]¹⁷⁶

Because of the tremendous problems in New Orleans and the group's need for assistance Lombard requested in the same letter that national CORE hold a workshop in his city as well. He stressed that "on the basis of need, New Orleans has a great deal more to benefit from a workshop . . . than any other city."¹⁷⁷

Responding a few days later Gordon Carey assured Rudy Lombard that either McCain or someone else from the staff would return to New Orleans and stay through Thanksgiving because of the importance that national CORE placed on building a strong CORE group in that city. He also indicated that national CORE would sponsor a three-day workshop in New Orleans over the weekend following Thanksgiving day. But, Carey warned Lombard, "It actually seems unlikely . . . that we will be able to leave a field secretary there very long after Thanksgiving. Unfortunately it is a big country and there is a great deal to do. And, of course, New Orleans CORE will eventually have to fend for itself anyway."¹⁷⁸

Regarding the Thanksgiving workshop, McCain thought it "most important" to hold the training session in New Orleans.¹⁷⁹ Field Director Gordon Carey agreed. He believed a workshop in Louisiana to be

¹⁷⁶Rudolph Lombard to Gordon R. Carey, 8 October 1960, 2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00820.

¹⁷⁷Rudolph Lombard to Gordon R. Carey, 8 October 1960, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00820.

¹⁷⁸Gordon R. Carey to Rudolph Lombard, 12 October 1960, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00819.

¹⁷⁹Jim McCain to Gordon Carey, 2 October 1960, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00811.

"a most important effort" and that "this Workshop can be most meaningful to New Orleans."¹⁸⁰ Held November 25-27, 1960 at Union Bethel AME Church in New Orleans, CORE staff designed the "Workshop on Nonviolent Action" to train 100 to 125 people from Louisiana and Mississippi in the principle of nonviolence and the tactic of direct action.¹⁸¹ They particularly desired individuals who could withstand arrest and violent attacks "with quiet dignity."¹⁸² With the assistance of national CORE staff members, New Orleans CORE sponsored the meeting, planning recreation, arranging housing for out-of-town participants, recruiting attendees and functioning as staff members.¹⁸³

Gordon Carey assigned the students of New Orleans CORE and CORE field secretary Tom Gaither the responsibility of recruiting workshop participants. In Carey's opinion, the local CORE group could more effectively recruit workshop members than staff in the national office. He suggested they recruit people from the New Orleans area and more widely by distributing application forms to student groups throughout Louisiana.¹⁸⁴ Carey sent Tom Gaither to Jackson, Mississippi to recruit

¹⁸⁰Gordon R. Carey to Reverend Ralph Abernathy, 11 October 1960, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00817; Gordon Carey to Reverend L.G. Long, 11 October 1960, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00818.

¹⁸¹Gordon Carey to Reverend L.G. Long, 11 October 1960, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00818; "Workshop on Nonviolent Action," [November 1960], The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:479:00749; and Gordon Carey to Henry Hodge, 26 October 1960, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:252:00759.

¹⁸²"A Weekend of Training.....in Nonviolent Action," [November 1960], The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:137:00867.

¹⁸³Regarding New Orleans CORE's role in securing housing for out-of-town participants see Gordon Carey to Rudolph Lombard, 17 January 1961, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00890; concerning the role of New Orleans CORE people as staff persons see "Workshop on Nonviolent Action," [November 1960], The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:479:00749 and Gordon R. Carey to Rudolph Lombard, 12 October 1960, 1 and 2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00819.

participants for the New Orleans institute. He wrote, "It would be great if we could get ten or fifteen persons from Jackson down to New Orleans."¹⁸⁵ Unable to secure any participants in Jackson, Gaither traveled on to New Orleans to make plans for the Workshop, to assist New Orleans CORE and to visit area colleges to recruit workshop members. In the two weeks proceeding the training weekend Gaither went to the black and white campuses surrounding New Orleans including Dillard University, Xavier University, Southern University at New Orleans, Louisiana State University at New Orleans, Tulane University, Loyola University, Newcombe College and Southern University of Baton Rouge. Although he found few students able to participate in the institute, "the impression given of the students was one of sincere interest in the Workshop and the movement."¹⁸⁶

In addition to recruiting participants the members of New Orleans CORE arranged housing for out-of-town participants and worked with national staff people to plan the workshop program. Gordon Carey wanted the students to think seriously about what project the institute could undertake without resulting in mass arrests. "In three days," he cautioned, "people come to be trained and get some ideas but they probably don't come to get arrested and spend three months in jail!"¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁴Gordon R. Carey to Rudolph Lombard, 12 October 1960, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00819; Gordon R. Carey to Rudolph Lombard, 29 October 1960, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00836.

¹⁸⁵Gordon Carey to James McCain, 3 November 1960, 2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:249:00304.

¹⁸⁶Gordon Carey to James McCain, 3 November 1960, 2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:249:00304; Thomas Gaither, "Detailed Report [of] New Orleans, Louisiana," 11-28 November 1960, 1-2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00854; and "Attended New Orleans Workshop," [November] 1960, 1-2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00875.

¹⁸⁷Gordon R. Carey to Rudolph Lombard, 12 October 1960, 2 and 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00819.

As a result of white resistance in New Orleans and the probability of direct action resulting in arrests, the New Orleans Workshop on Nonviolent Action emphasized the principles of nonviolence, the development of projects and the steps of nonviolent direct action. They learned of the investigation, evaluation and negotiation that must proceed direct action, as well as various action techniques. The participants also discussed the problems unique to the lower South such as white repression and community apathy.¹⁸⁸

In addition to national staff persons Gordon Carey, Thomas Gaither, Jim McCain, Genevieve Hughes and Marvin Rich, the Reverend Ralph Abernathy of Montgomery, Alabama participated in the conference. The leader of the Montgomery Improvement Association, treasurer of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and pastor of Montgomery's First Baptist Church, Abernathy spoke at a mass meeting held the evening of Friday, November 25. At the public meeting Abernathy urged the use of non-cooperation to call attention to the treatment of blacks and suggested a nation-wide boycott of Greyhound buses and other means of transportation to achieve racial justice. He also defended the sit-ins as "justifiable" since participants are citizens of the United States using peaceful means to achieve change and "to redeem the soul of America." Gordon Carey followed Abernathy's remarks with a description of the CORE nonviolent approach and principles. He also asked the audience to boycott stores that maintain segregation, to support CORE and other civil rights organizations, and to abstain from violent action.¹⁸⁹ These comments, along with the "Don't Buy Discrimination!!"

¹⁸⁸"Workshop on Nonviolent Action," [November 1960], The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:479:00749.

¹⁸⁹"Workshop on Nonviolent Action," [November 1960], The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:479:00749; Marvin Rich to Rudolph Lombard, 10 November 1960, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00842; and Marcus Neustadter, Jr., "'Sit-Ins

flyers advertising the mass meeting, reveal the nonviolent workshop as part of the ongoing lunchcounter campaign against the Woolworth and McCrory stores waged by New Orleans CORE.¹⁹⁰

Despite the participation of Reverend Abernathy and widespread recruitment efforts, very few people attended the mass meeting or the workshop. In fact only twenty-seven people received training during the weekend action institute. Only three of the attendees lived outside of New Orleans, with the majority being members of New Orleans CORE and some already experienced in nonviolent direct action, such as William Harper, Oretha Castle, S. Langston Goldfinch, David Dennis, Margaret Leonard and Hugh Murray, Jr.¹⁹¹ Because of the poor attendance and the "great deal of tension" existing in New Orleans Gordon Carey evaluated the training institute as "only so-so" and "generally okay." Although the national staff did not see the conference as an overwhelming success they believed the workshop to be worthwhile because of the interest and experience gained by those who attended.¹⁹² Regarding the success of the institute Thomas Gaither suggested that "the real result of the Workshop is yet to come pending the Action of the students who attended."¹⁹³ At least some members of the group took immediate action.

Justifiable' Says N.O. CORE Speaker," The Louisiana Weekly, 3 December 1960, 1 and 7.

¹⁹⁰"Don't Buy Discrimination!!" flyer, [November] 1960, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00853.

¹⁹¹"Attended New Orleans Workshop," [November] 1960, 1-2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00875 and Thomas Gaither, "Detailed Report [of] New Orleans, Louisiana," 11-28 November 1960, 2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00854.

¹⁹²Gordon R. Carey to James Laue, 17 December 1960, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:50:00345 and Thomas Gaither, "Detailed Report [of] New Orleans, Louisiana," 11-28 November 1960, 2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00854.

¹⁹³Thomas Gaither, "Detailed Report [of] New Orleans, Louisiana," 11-28 November 1960, 2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00854.

Two sisters from Tallahassee, Florida, Patricia and Priscilla Stephens, "got so inspired they immediately went back and initiated picket lines."¹⁹⁴

Thomas Gaither attributed his inability to recruit more students and the poor attendance at the mass meeting to tactics taken by the White Citizens Council and segregationist State Representative James Pfister.¹⁹⁵ A rumor circulated that CORE designed the workshop as "a training school for student sit-in demonstrators."¹⁹⁶ Representing white citizens resisting the attempts of civil rights activists to end segregation, the White Citizens Council charged CORE with preparing people to stage mass sit-ins and mass picketing despite the already tense race relations caused by the current school desegregation crisis. They further alleged that during the public meeting of November 25 CORE intended to train members of the black community for a mass demonstration down Canal Street for the following day. Pfister smeared CORE and the nonviolent action workshop by identifying CORE, the NSA and the students of Tulane and Loyola Universities as communist. He also declared the sit-ins to be un-American. Despite a statement by New Orleans CORE challenging his accusations, workshop attendance suffered. The White Citizens Council further tried to intimidate community members interested in racial justice by having one of its members take pictures of all who attended the mass meeting.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁴Gordon R. Carey to James Laue, 17 December 1960, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:50:00345.

¹⁹⁵Thomas Gaither, "Detailed Report [of] New Orleans, Louisiana," 11-28 November 1960, 1 and 2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00854.

¹⁹⁶Quoted in Marcus Neustadter, Jr., "'Sit-Ins Justifiable' Says N.O. CORE Speaker," The Louisiana Weekly, 3 December 1960, 1.

¹⁹⁷Thomas Gaither, "Detailed Report [of] New Orleans, Louisiana," 11-28 November 1960, 1 and 2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00854 and Marcus Neustadter, Jr., "'Sit-Ins Justifiable' Says N.O. CORE Speaker," The Louisiana Weekly, 3 December

Even without the rumors spread by the White Citizens Council and the charges made by Pfister, strong white resistance to ending public school segregation made recruiting participants for the Workshop on Nonviolent Action difficult. The contention in New Orleans over school desegregation reached a high point in the weeks preceding the conference. After four years of delays orchestrated by the state legislature and local school board, a federal court judge ordered New Orleans public schools to begin desegregation on November 14. When four African American girls enrolled in first-grade at the William Frantz and McDonough 19 elementary schools, angry crowds jeered at the black families and white parents pulled their children out of school. A week of Citizen Council rallies, segregationist protest marches and sporadic rioting ensued. Most white parents boycotted the schools. By the end of the school year only 49 white children had returned to classes.¹⁹⁸

Although police prevented CORE members from protesting, they failed to punish the several thousand whites who mobbed the city hall and school board buildings. Mayor Morrison refused to take a public position on school integration and withheld police protection from the families who sent their kids to school and faced the segregationist mob daily. Crowds of angry mothers and their children greeted the few black and white students who attended school during November and December of 1960 with rocks, eggs, screams, racial slurs and threats.¹⁹⁹

New Orleans CORE played a very peripheral role in public school desegregation. They offered their assistance and support to the families integrating the elementary schools and the organizations 1960, 7.

¹⁹⁸Rogers, Righteous Lives, 70-72.

¹⁹⁹Rogers, Righteous Lives, 62-66, 70-71. See also Anthony Lewis and The New York Times, Portrait of a Decade: The Second American Revolution (New York: Random House, 1964), 159-164.

spearheading the action. The New Orleans NAACP handled the legal side of the campaign while an interracial organization, Save Our Schools (SOS), tried to keep the schools open and integrated.²⁰⁰ National CORE responded by sending two field secretaries to the city to help community groups curb violence and to convince white parents to return their children to school. The national staff unsuccessfully tried to persuade the federal government to intervene in the affair through telegrams and a nation-wide petition drive. The local CORE chapter called a moratorium on direct action demonstrations, organized a "minute-man" squad to provide "nonviolent vigil at the homes of the children attending the integrated school[s]" and pleaded for community leaders to restore peace and sanity to the city.²⁰¹

The press release issued by New Orleans CORE at the height of the school crisis violence reveals a religious understanding of the principle of nonviolence held by at least some of the members. On behalf of New Orleans CORE Lombard proposed, "The christians and liberals of this community must now come to the forefront to guide into brotherhood those who seek to promote Violence and Hate." Leaders must council nonviolence, parochial schools must provide an example and peacefully desegregate, and parents must keep their kids off the streets. The statement concluded, "Negroes and believers in the cause of Brotherly love pray that God will forgive those who despitefully use every effort to oppress human dignity."²⁰²

²⁰⁰Rogers, Righteous Lives, 62-66, 70-73.

²⁰¹"Interracial CORE Field Team Works For Peaceful Schools," national CORE press release, 18 November [1960], The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00849; "CORE Launches Petition to Eisenhower 250,000 to Ask Action in New Orleans," national CORE press release, 28 November [1960], 1-2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00857-00858; New Orleans CORE, "New Orleans Fight For Human Rights," [December 1960], The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00926.

²⁰²Rudolph Lombard, "New Orleans CORE Calls For Sanity In Chaotic

During 1960 white violence and police harassment hampered New Orleans CORE efforts to desegregate the city's lunchcounters. It took twenty-one additional months of direct action and negotiations before CORE activists could declare victory. Throughout 1961 and into 1962 CORE members continued to picket, leaflet, sit-in and employ other direct action tactics to integrate variety store eating facilities. The police often arrested demonstrators and at other times white citizens abused them.²⁰³

Although police did not detain CORE members every time they staged a demonstration, they periodically arrested the activists. Besides sit-ins, police targeted leaflet distribution, picket lines and marches. In December 1960, police charged nine students with distributing leaflets without a license. The Louisiana Weekly called attention to the fact that the police targeted CORE members who passed out literature urging a boycott of dime store lunchcounters, but ignored the anti-integration pamphlets distributed the same week by white supremacists.²⁰⁴ In response to the contradictory actions of the police CORE president Rudolph Lombard declared,

In New Orleans bricks are thrown at homes and there are no arrests. Priests and ministers are reviled and there are no arrests. Parents escorting their children to school are insulted and spat upon and there are no arrests. But nine white and Negro CORE members are arrested for peacefully passing out leaflets. Is this equal protection of the laws?²⁰⁵

City," press release, 16 November 1960, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00844.

²⁰³New Orleans C.O.R.E., "New Orleans 1961[,] Summary of Activities 1961," 1-3, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00924-00925; Rudy Lombard, "Lengthy New Orleans Restaurant Drive Won," CORE-lator, 97 (September [1962]): 1-2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 6:1:00153-00154.

²⁰⁴"9 CORE Members Jailed For Passing Out Leaflets," The Louisiana Weekly, 17 December 1960, 1 and 7.

²⁰⁵"New Orleans CORE Trial Continued," national CORE press release, 15 December [1960], The Papers of the Congress of Racial

After two months of negotiating failed to desegregate the lunchcounters, CORE members resumed daily picketing in March, 1961. Although law enforcement officials told them they could employ four pickets in each block, police arrested six CORE members between the ages of eighteen and twenty-one on April 17 and 19 when they began to picket the back entrance of the Canal Street Woolworth and McCrory stores as well as the front. When police arrested the two pickets at the rear of the store for obstructing pedestrian traffic, Julia Aaron and Doris Jean Castle left their positions in the front to replace them and face arrest. Despite these arrests, Geraldine Conrad and Alice Thompson reformed the picket line a few days later. These four African American women, along with Jerome Smith and David Dennis, decided to adopt a "jail, no bail" strategy. An attack of appendicitis forced Doris Jean Castle to leave jail after a week; Jerome Smith remained in jail the longest, serving an entire month.²⁰⁶

Clearly, individuals characterized by commitment and courage peopled New Orleans CORE. Members of the CORE community willingly faced white violence, arrest, and now time in jail. In statements to The Louisiana Weekly both David Dennis and Jerome Smith revealed their determination to eradicate racism in New Orleans. "It takes courage to stay in jail, but the time has come when segregationists can no longer use the threat of jail to frighten those who fight for liberty and equality," Dennis avowed. Smith asserted, "We chose to remain in jail because we believe that our sacrifice and suffering will win support for Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00858.

²⁰⁶"CORE Pickets Say 'Jail No Bail' After Arrest," The Louisiana Weekly, 22 April 1961, 1 and 7; "Jail 2 More CORE Pickets: 5 Students Now In Clink Refusing Bail," The Louisiana Weekly, 29 April 1961, 1 and 7; "U.S. Must Put House In Order Says Freedom Rider At Rally," The Louisiana Weekly, 27 May 1961, 1.

the boycotting of those stores which refuse to serve Negroes at all lunchcounters."²⁰⁷

Statements made by chairman Rudolph Lombard on behalf of the group further emphasized the dedication of the six CORE members and reiterated the memberships goal of full equality for persons of color. In other words, CORE activists demanded full access to and protection of all the natural and legal rights enumerated in the American creed. New Orleans CORE reported the six remained in jail and refused bail "as an indication to the community that they are willing to make personal sacrifices in order to achieve their rights as citizens and human beings."²⁰⁸ By detaining CORE pickets, Lombard argued, the police denied CORE members their freedom of speech by infringing on their right to picket peacefully against segregation.²⁰⁹ Protesting this violation of their civil rights, the Consumers League of Greater New Orleans joined CORE to issue a resolution demanding the city government refrain from enforcing unconstitutional state laws designed to prevent picketing.²¹⁰

"We shall continue to exercise our constitutional right to picket," Lombard declared. But his statements also made clear their fight to picket went way beyond constitutional rights. Morally, African Americans possessed the right to eat at any lunchcounter they desired. The mayor and police chief, Lombard argued, "must face their own

²⁰⁷"CORE Pickets Say 'Jail No Bail' After Arrest," The Louisiana Weekly, 22 April 1961, 7.

²⁰⁸Barbara Brent to Marvin Rich, [article "CORE Members In Jail" contained within the letter], 25 April 1961, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00915.

²⁰⁹"CORE Pickets Say 'Jail No Bail' After Arrest," The Louisiana Weekly, 22 April 1961, 7.

²¹⁰Consumers League of Greater New Orleans and the Congress of Racial Equality, "Resolution," [April 1961], The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00883; New Orleans C.O.R.E., "New Orleans 1961[,] Summary of Activities 1961," 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00924.

consciences, the questions of their families and the concern of the community." He finished, "We in CORE know that we can not in good conscience stop the picketing which is both moral and legal."²¹¹ As the picketing and boycott campaign gained in intensity earlier that month, a spokesperson for CORE also went beyond a discussion of legal rights to argue support for CORE's economic boycott of Woolworth and McCrory variety stores in spiritual terms. In the week preceding Easter, New Orleans CORE urged every person to remember "patronage to such an establishment would be an indictment of Jesus Christ's sacrifice." The statement concluded, "So let's up-lift the dignity of man, by supporting the Congress of Racial Equality with a spiritual and patriotic dedication, that is symbolic of the true meaning of Easter."²¹²

When members of CORE spoke to the people of the city of New Orleans and reminded them of Christian principles or the personal sacrifices of CORE members in jail, they wanted to convince people to participate consciously in the local movement for equality. Members of the CORE community believed they needed the support and cooperation of the African American citizens of New Orleans in order to desegregate public accommodations in the city. In order to end racism, the membership of CORE viewed community participation as their most powerful weapon. One member revealed the importance of the larger community to their strategy when he described CORE's re-invigorated lunchcounter campaign of the Spring of 1961. In addition to picketing and sit-ins, he wrote, "We again took our cause to the community, appeal letters were sent, the community was saturate[d] with leaflets, door to door canvassing, contacts established with other organizations and

²¹¹"Jail 2 More CORE Pickets: 5 Students Now In Clink Refusing Bail," The Louisiana Weekly, 29 April 1961, 7.

²¹²"CORE Set To Picket D'town Stores Again," The Louisiana Weekly, 1 April 1961, 4.

churches."²¹³ CORE members understood that most people would not become involved in nonviolent direct action or join their group, but they held little patience for those people who crossed a picket line, ignored an economic boycott or failed to use newly integrated facilities.

The group decided to target the rear doors of the Woolworth and McCrory variety stores in April, 1961 when they discovered blacks sneaking in the back to be served. Over a year later, when the Louisiana Supreme Court overturned the convictions of the six picketers arrested at the back entrances, CORE members reminded the public they caused the arrests through their lack of support for the economic boycott.²¹⁴ Throughout the remainder of 1961, New Orleans CORE activists used techniques designed to chastise the African American community for their lack of support and to force compliance with the economic boycott. They asked respected ministers to picket, published photographs in The Louisiana Weekly of delinquents crossing picket lines and "dining 'jim-crow style,'" expressed their frustration verbally and embarked upon "Operation Freezout" as a last resort.²¹⁵

Observing large numbers of black people ignoring her picket sign and entering the dime stores she marched before, Oretha Castle discouragingly remarked, "Do Negroes really want to be free from racial segregation?" Although she felt awful when adults crossed her picket line, she felt even worse when college students ignored her protest.

²¹³New Orleans C.O.R.E., "New Orleans 1961[,] Summary of Activities 1961," 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00924. See "Jail 2 More CORE Pickets: 5 Students Now In Clink Refusing Bail," The Louisiana Weekly, 29 April 1961, 1 and 7.

²¹⁴"CORE Pickets Say 'Jail No Bail' After Arrest," The Louisiana Weekly, 22 April 1961, 7; "CORE 'Picketing Case' Ruling Held Important," The Louisiana Weekly, 17 November 1962, 6.

²¹⁵"Ministers Picket," The Louisiana Weekly, 2 December 1961, 1; "Indifference To CORE Pickets 'Crushing Blow,'" The Louisiana Weekly, 7 October 1961, 1; "CORE Sit-Ins Harassed On Canal Street: Doused With Acid After New Technique," The Louisiana Weekly, 30 December 1961, 1.

She told a Louisiana Weekly reporter,

I felt bad when I saw a number of Negroes go inside these establishments. However, I felt that these were people who did not really understand that CORE's efforts are aimed at securing first-class treatment for Negroes.

The crushing blow came when I beheld many Negro college students--with Dillard and Xavier University emblems in evidence--give a look at my sign and hasten inside to be segregated.²¹⁶

Seventeen years later Oretha Castle Haley admitted "New Orleans never really had a student movement or real overall mass movement" because of the extreme apathy and conservative nature of its citizens.²¹⁷

After several months of watching African Americans cross their picket lines, CORE members transformed their frustration into a new tactic. They embarked upon "Operation Freezout" to enforce the economic boycott of the Woolworth and McCrory stores despite negro patronage. Under this plan, activists occupied every stool at the black lunchcounter, ordered a soft drink, took many hours to consume it and remained in their seats the entire day. lunchcounter employees and white spectators tried to intimidate the occupants. In a statement to The Louisiana Weekly spokesperson Oretha Castle placed blame for the abuse squarely on the shoulders of the African American community. Because of your lack of support, she intimated, we took this action and now face this harassment.²¹⁸

McCrory's manager pulled the stools from under the CORE patrons, paced the aisles of the store examining a revolver and asked police to arrest newsmen photographing the sit-ins. The Woolworth's manager encouraged his staff to smear the counters in front of the demonstrators

²¹⁶"Indifference To CORE Pickets 'Crushing Blow,'" The Louisiana Weekly, 7 October 1961, 1-7.

²¹⁷Haley, Interview by Rogers, 27 November 1978, side one.

²¹⁸"CORE Sit-Ins Harassed On Canal Street: Doused With Acid After New Technique," The Louisiana Weekly, 30 December 1961, 1.

with ammonia, grease, mustard, chocolate and iodine. One of the waitresses sprayed the activists with Raid insecticide after declaring "Oh, let's spray these big black files." Both the managers and police stood by while employees poured hot coffee on demonstrators, a worker removed C.O.R.E. caps from the heads of those sitting-in and burned them and white hoodlums threw acid on CORE members at the counter and on the picket line.²¹⁹

New Orleans CORE members continued these sit-ins and endured this abuse through February, 1962. On weekdays the group mustered between four and twenty participants, while on Saturdays as many as seventy demonstrators joined the direct action. The resulting violence and disruption pushed the variety store managers and other local merchants to call for talks to end the demonstrations. CORE promised a moratorium on all direct action in New Orleans when negotiations began. From February to September, CORE attorney Lolis Elie led negotiations between African American leaders and the white business community. Elie chaired the Citizens' Committee on Race Relations which contained respected community members, such as the editor of The Louisiana Weekly and local ministers, and representatives from the Consumers League, NAACP, Urban League, New Orleans Co-ordinating Council and New Orleans CORE. Chairman Oretha Castle spoke for CORE on the seventeen member committee.²²⁰

²¹⁹"CORE Sit-Ins Harassed On Canal Street: Doused With Acid After New Technique," The Louisiana Weekly, 30 December 1961, 7 and 1; New Orleans C.O.R.E., "New Orleans 1961[,] Summary of Activities 1961," 3, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00925.

²²⁰Rudy Lombard, "Lengthy New Orleans Restaurant Drive Won," CORE-lator, 97 (September [1962]): 1-2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 6:1:00153-00154; Bell, CORE and the Strategy of Nonviolence, 101-102; Marvin Robinson to Fredricka Teer, 22 May 1962, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:265:00859; The Sub-Committee on Priorities [Citizens' Committee], "Suggested Priorities in Local Plan for Desegregation," [May 1962], 3, The Papers

Although the Citizens' Committee wanted "total desegregation in all community life areas" to be the ultimate goal of the negotiations, they established a plan for a "progressive program of integration." As top priorities the leadership group sought equal employment opportunities and the desegregation of city restaurants and lunchcounters.²²¹ The committee succeeded in desegregating 77 downtown eating facilities, first opening for business without segregation on September 11, 1962. That day, after a two year struggle waged primarily by New Orleans CORE, members ate victoriously at the newly desegregated restaurants without incident. Past chairman Rudy Lombard said of the victory, "Their opening is testimony to the dedication of New Orleans CORE members, their attorneys and their friends--and to the effectiveness of nonviolent action under trying circumstances."²²²

In praising the efforts of his colleagues, Lombard pointed out the commitment of the members of New Orleans CORE and their triumph despite massive white resistance. Between September 1960 and September 1962 the membership focused on their campaign to desegregate variety store lunchcounters in New Orleans. Through this campaign the interracial, student membership revealed not only their commitment, but their action orientation, their adherence to nonviolence, their belief that African Americans deserved both constitutional and human rights and their moralism. The campaign indicates the tremendous violence and abuse experienced by the activists and the community apathy they abhorred and of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00882.

²²¹The Sub-Committee on Priorities [Citizens' Committee], "Suggested Priorities in Local Plan for Desegregation," [May 1962], 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00881.

²²²Rudy Lombard, "Lengthy New Orleans Restaurant Drive Won," CORE-lator, 97 (September [1962]): 2 and 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 6:1:00154; Marvin Robinson to Jim McCain, monthly report, 25 September 1962, 2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:265:00895; "N.O. Lunch Counters Quietly Desegregate," The Louisiana Weekly, 15 September 1962, 1 and 8.

struggled against.

Because of this white resistance and apathy, New Orleans CORE required more assistance from the national organization than most chapters. As illustrated through the lunchcounter campaign, national CORE personnel played an extensive role in the creation, organization, maintenance and day to day functioning of the New Orleans affiliate. The severe opposition to black equality in New Orleans and the corresponding intensity of the civil rights struggle also created a close-knit community characterized by intense relationships, loyalty and a desire to live their goal of the interracial community.

Chapter 6

"'Hallelujah, I'm a Traveling': Freedom Riding and the Transformation of the CORE Community, 1961-1962"

Hallelujah, I'm a Traveling
(arr: CORE)

In 1954 the Supreme Court has said
Listen here Mr. Jim Crow it's time you were dead

Hallelujah I'm a traveling
Hallelujah ain't it fine?
Hallelujah I'm a traveling
Down freedom's main line.

At Howard Johnson's one day we will all buy a Coke
And the waitress who serves us will know its no joke

CHORUS

I'm taking a trip on the Greyhound bus line
I'm riding the front seat to Jackson this time

CHORUS

In Fayette County, set off and remote
The polls would not open for the Negroes to vote

CHORUS

Three hundred Freedom Riders when offered a choice
6 months 300 dollars respond in one voice

Hallelujah I'm a jailbird
And I ain't paid no fine.
Hallelujah I'm a traveling
Down freedom's main line.

Congress of Racial Equality, Sit-In Songs: Songs of the Freedom Riders,
New York: Audio Fidelity Records, 1962.

Strangers to one another, the students brought together in New Orleans CORE soon became one, close-knit group. They became united as a community as they faced the severe white resistance to desegregation in New Orleans and the general lack of support from the black and white citizens of the city. As they learned about one another they realized they shared goals, principles, motivations, courage and commitment. Their discussions and activities revealed a dedication to use action to end racism, a commitment to nonviolence as a philosophy and a tactic, a belief in the righteousness of their cause against the evil of segregation, a drive to attain both constitutional and human rights for African Americans and a desire to build an interracial community.

Members of New Orleans CORE clearly articulated their sense of this close-knit community in a report on their 1961 activities to those local chapters represented at the 1962 national convention. The report finished, "You will probably note that no one has been singled out and named in this report. This has been done because it's felt that all ac[t]ion is a group action. This is not to say we don't have any outstanding members, because it's felt that every member of New Orleans C.O.R.E. is an outstanding member."¹ Although people came to CORE as strangers, in a short period they developed intense relationships and a strong sense of community.

William Harrell, a 28-year-old white, graduate student in sociology at Tulane University, learned of the CORE meetings during the summer of 1960 from an African American short-order cook he and his wife befriended at a diner in the Tulane area. At the first meeting he and Laurel attended, they met Jerome Smith, Oretha Castle and other CORE

¹New Orleans C.O.R.E., "New Orleans 1961, Summary of Activities 1961," [1962], 3, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00925.

members and joined them as they made plans for the first lunchcounter sit-in. "The meeting itself was very exciting," Harrell remembered. He went on, "There was a very strong sense of purpose, a very strong sense that we were right . . . that this was something that needed to be done and the time seemed to be ripe. We were excited about acting, about taking some kind of positive action in this way." Through his involvement in action, meetings and discussions Harrell developed strong relationships with other CORE members and learned that developing a community among themselves seemed just as important as fighting racism in New Orleans.²

Between the summer of 1960 and the spring of 1961 Harrell developed very close relationships to the group of individuals who made up the "hard core of the CORE." He remembered,

There was a group of us--Jerome, Oretha, Rudy, myself, a few others--I felt we were just as close as we could possibly be. We weren't strangers. . . . we didn't go to their house and they didn't come to our house . . . It just really was dangerous, or it certainly seemed dangerous at the time. But that in the meetings, in the actions, in the times we would get together, I mean I really liked those guys and I felt they [liked me too].³

Because CORE members developed personal relationships and because the group tried to make decisions through lengthy discussion and consensus-building, Harrell thought the membership confronted racism through their interracial CORE community as well as with nonviolent direct action. "My perception of it was that there was a deeper agenda there and it was about community. It was how to build a community--one fair and equal and ultimately loving," Harrell remembered.⁴

The membership of New Orleans CORE quickly integrated into their

²William Harrell, Interview by author, 17 May 1996, tape recording, side one.

³Harrell, 17 May 1996, side three.

⁴Harrell, 17 May 1996, side one.

tight-knit community other young people who joined CORE as strangers. Jerome Smith and Rudy Lombard attended one gathering of the NAACP Youth Council and attracted the attention of several female students not satisfied with the activities the NAACP adults allowed the youth division. After meeting the CORE membership and joining the picketing on Canal Street, Dorothy and Dorothea Smith, Betty Daniels, Louise Williams and Alice, Jean and Shirley Thompson defected to CORE. "I did not know any of them," Alice Thompson recalled, "but I joined CORE and we became the best of friends."⁵

Dorothea Smith described the New Orleans CORE community as a family.⁶ CORE attorney Lolis Elie felt the same way. As council and advisor to New Orleans CORE he developed a big brother relationship with Rudy Lombard and Oretha Castle. He remembered how many conversations between CORE members exemplified the kinship they held for one another; many individuals felt closer to each other than to their blood relatives.⁷ In the late 1980s surviving CORE members still cared for one another deeply and those in the New Orleans area still saw one another on occasion.⁸

Alice Thompson's most vivid memories of CORE surrounded the people, the friendships and the work CORE people did together.⁹ Doris

⁵Alice Thompson, Interview by Kim Lacy Rogers, 25 July 1988, tape recording, side one, Rogers Collection; Dorothea Smith Simmons, Interview by Kim Lacy Rogers, 27 July 1988, tape recording, side one, Rogers Collection.

⁶Dorothea Smith Simmons, Interview by Rogers, side one.

⁷Lolis Elie, Interview by Kim Lacy Rogers, 12 July 1988, tape recording, side one, Rogers Collection.

⁸Alice Thompson, Interview by Rogers, side one; Dorothea Smith Simmons, Interview by Rogers, side one and two; Doris Jean Castle-Scott, Interview by Kim Lacy Rogers, 19 January 1989, tape recording, side 7, Rogers Collection; Matt Suarez, Interview by Kim Lacy Rogers, 20 June 1988, tape recording, side 3, Rogers Collection; Oretha Haley, Interview by Kim Lacy Rogers, 27 November 1978, tape recording, side 3, Rogers Collection.

Jean Castle felt the meaningful friendships which developed during that time stayed with her throughout her life. The white oppression they confronted and the fear they faced created extremely close bonds.¹⁰

"We were each others' savior," Jerome Smith recollected. To Smith, CORE relationships provided strength, revitalized one's faith in the movement, minimized fear and erased loneliness. He never felt isolated because he always felt a part of a larger collective. When alone, Smith remembered, he drew upon others' commitment and knew that he would be rescued, helped, celebrated and thanked.¹¹

Jerome Smith, Oretha and Doris Jean Castle, Dorothea Smith, Alice Thompson and a few additional African American New Orleans CORE members formed a particularly close bond with one another as a result of their experiences together during the freedom rides of the summer of 1961 and the testing of the Interstate Commerce Commission desegregation order the following fall. The individuals who comprised this elite coterie of activists identified one another as "the basic people," "the same handful of people [taking action] over and over again," "the closest knit" and "the core of CORE." If one called a demonstration, Alice Thompson remembered, one could count on about ten people every time. Although very few individuals made up his CORE unit, Jerome Smith recalled, "our influence was our commitment and spiritual power, our presence." When questioned about who belonged to New Orleans CORE, the activists interviewed by historian Kim Lacy Rogers consistently named the same people. These included the Thompson and Castle sisters, Ruthie Wells, Dorothea Smith, Jerome Smith, David Dennis, Julia Aaron, Sandra

⁹Alice Thompson, Interview by Rogers, side one.

¹⁰Doris Jean Castle-Scott, Interview by Rogers, side 7.

¹¹Jerome Smith, Interview by Kim Lacy Rogers, 26 July 1988, tape recording, side 2, Rogers Collection; Jerome Smith, Interview by Kim Lacy Rogers, 8 July 1988, tape recording, side 1, Rogers Collection.

Nixon, Isaac Reynolds and Pat and Carlene Smith.¹²

From 1962 forward this small group of people remained the nucleus of the Congress of Racial Equality affiliate in New Orleans. Although other individuals became involved with the chapter, very few additional people moved from membership on the periphery to full membership in the tight group of friends centered on Oretha Castle. Increasingly the CORE community in New Orleans became defined as this group of people; they determined the organization's agenda and undertook the action. Ultimately the nature of this community contributed to the demise of the organization.

Early in 1962 an interracial group of old and new members wanted to broaden the group which considered itself the nucleus of CORE and to achieve a greater role in decision-making. Similar to the experience their colleagues in Washington CORE had two years later, the membership of New Orleans CORE became divided predominantly as a result of differences over the means to achieve their goals, not over their basic ideas and goals. Divided over how to make decisions, who should control the process and tactics, New Orleans CORE required the intervention of the national office to resolve this conflict. The core of the CORE community remained dominant in the group after the intervention of national personnel. Although this small group of individuals cared deeply for the cause of civil rights and continued to work diligently for African American equality, the internal conflict of 1962 initiated the slow and steady decline of New Orleans CORE.

To challenge segregated seating and facilities in interstate bus travel, the national office of the Congress of Racial Equality announced

¹²Alice Thompson, Interview by Rogers, side one; Dorothea Smith Simmons, Interview by Rogers, side one; Doris Jean Castle-Scott, Interview by Rogers, side one; Oretha Haley, Interview by Rogers, side 2; Jerome Smith, Interview by Rogers, 26 July 1988, side one.

in April 1961 a Freedom Ride from Washington, D.C. to New Orleans, Louisiana beginning May 4. As the terminus of the project, the New Orleans CORE chapter planned a mass rally and banquet for May 17 to celebrate the arrival and accomplishment of the riders. To further support this national project, two local CORE members volunteered to participate in the ride. The national staff welcomed the participation of Julia Aaron, a twenty-year-old African American student at Southern University-New Orleans, and Jerome Smith, an African American longshoreman and the twenty-one year old project director of the chapter. Embroiled in the lunchcounter desegregation campaign, members of the affiliate picketed the McCrory and Woolworth variety stores daily during April. As part of the contingent of students arrested for demonstrating at the back entrances of the dime stores, Aaron and Smith missed the Freedom Ride bus because of their decision to remain in jail without bail in the New Orleans Parish Prison.¹³

When the two buses carrying freedom riders reached the Alabama cities of Anniston and Birmingham, white mobs attacked them. Near Anniston they firebombed the Greyhound bus and hoodlums in both cities brutally beat the integrationists. One rider suffered a stroke as a result of his injuries and another required fifty-three stitches. When both Greyhound and Trailways bus drivers refused to take the group to Montgomery, Alabama the next day and another mob began to threaten their

¹³"CORE To Test Bus Bias In 'Freedom Ride' May 2 to 17," The Louisiana Weekly, 8 April 1961, 1; James Peck, Freedom Ride (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1962), 114-115; Anne Higgins to Marvin Rich, 12 April 1961, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00905; Julia Aaron, "Freedom Ride, 1961 Application Blank," [April 1961], 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:456:00451; Jerome Smith, "Freedom Ride, 1961 Application Blank," [April 1961], 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:443:01324; National CORE, "Freedom Ride, 1961 - Participants," 26 April 1961, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:456:00448; "Challenge Aim of Mixed Group, 13 Bound for N.O. to Attack Segregation," Times-Picayune, 3 May 1961, 6.

lives, they decided to fly to New Orleans.¹⁴

By stopping the Freedom Ride, hostile whites in Alabama initiated a year-long campaign to integrate interstate transportation across the South. The membership of New Orleans CORE became intricately involved in this national CORE project. Although it began as many of the students involved in the New Orleans affiliate left the city for summer vacation, those CORE members who remained focused their energy on this national campaign. Some individuals took freedom rides to Jackson, Mississippi, while others helped to train the many riders CORE funneled through New Orleans. Through their participation in the freedom rides and their testing of the Interstate Commerce Commission desegregation order that followed, a small group of New Orleans CORE members suffered severe white repression at the hands of violent whites. This intense experience created a very close bond between them and initiated a new group dynamic that would shape the future of the chapter.

Three days after the Congress of Racial Equality ended the original Freedom Ride from the District of Columbia to Louisiana with a mass rally in New Orleans on May 17, a group of students from Nashville, Tennessee boarded buses to finish the ride. When these young people from the Nashville Student Movement first arrived in Birmingham, police placed the riders in protective custody and transported them to the Tennessee border. Returning to Birmingham, the twenty-one activists finally convinced a driver to take them to Montgomery, Alabama. Although escorted by police cars and helicopters, a mob greeted them at the station and viciously beat the demonstrators. The segregationists also attacked news reporters and black pedestrians. The rioting that

¹⁴Peck, 124-132; "Alabama Group Attacks Buses," The Times-Picayune, 15 May 1961, 1 and 3; "CORE Members Arrive in City," The Times-Picayune, 16 May 1961, 1 and 2.

followed compelled the declaration of martial law in Montgomery and the use of U.S. marshals and national guardsmen to regain law and order. The next day rioters targeted a mass meeting led by Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. Although guards protected the integrationists inside the church, angry whites pelted the church with stones, yelled insults and forced the demonstrators to remain in the building the entire night.¹⁵

Despite the violence in Montgomery, the Nashville students intended to complete the journey to New Orleans. When they left Montgomery for Jackson, Mississippi, five members of New Orleans CORE and three of the original CORE freedom riders joined them. In addition to Jerome Smith and Julia Aaron, the New Orleans contingent contained Doris Jean Castle, Jean Thompson and David Dennis. All African American and between eighteen and twenty-two years old, only David Dennis hailed from outside of New Orleans. Although he attended Dillard University, he considered Shreveport, Louisiana his hometown. State police escorted the two buses of freedom riders to Jackson, but when they arrived at the station local law enforcement officials arrested them when they entered the white waiting room and tried to gain service at the white-only lunchcounter. Jailed for refusing to move on when ordered by the police and attempting a breach of the peace, every rider refused bail.¹⁶

During the summer of 1961, approximately 300 people followed the example of these riders and went to Jackson, Mississippi by bus, plane and train. The Nashville Student Movement, the Student Nonviolent

¹⁵Jim Peck, "Freedom Ride," CORE-lator 89 (May 1961): 4, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 6:1:00136; "20 Beaten in Race Riot Over 'Freedom Riders,'" Times-Picayune, 21 May 1961, 26; "Troop Rule Ordered For Montgomery Area," Times-Picayune, 22 May 1961, 1 and 20.

¹⁶Jim Peck, "Freedom Ride," CORE-lator 89 (May 1961): 4, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 6:1:00136; "Police Arrest 27 Bus Riders," Times-Picayune, 25 May 1961, 8; "Miss. Can Avoid Violence, Belief," Times-Picayune, 26 May 1961, 18.

Coordinating Committee and the Congress of Racial Equality coordinated this activity. The national office of CORE headquartered its operation in New Orleans and established a training center which instructed almost one-third of the riders in the techniques of nonviolent direct action. The membership of New Orleans CORE assisted the director of the school, field secretary James McCain, and provided food and housing to the freedom riders who came through New Orleans.¹⁷

Six additional members of New Orleans CORE "joined their brothers in Jackson, Miss." during the summer of 1961.¹⁸ Robert Heller and Sandra Nixon traveled to Jackson by train in late May with students from Cornell University of New York and Claflin University of South Carolina. Heller, a white, 19-year-old undergraduate at Tulane University, grew up in Rockville Center, New York. Sandra Nixon, black and also nineteen, lived with her parents in New Orleans and attended Southern University.¹⁹ A week later Shirley Thompson, an 18-year-old high school student, joined her sister Jean in the city jail by taking a Trailways bus to Jackson.²⁰ The other CORE members to take a freedom ride to Jackson during June included George Raymond, Margaret Leonard and Constance Bradford. George Raymond, Jr., a CORE member since 1960, was a 19-year-old African American male.²¹ Sophie Newcombe College

¹⁷Thomas Gaither, "Final Report On Freedom Rider Cases, Hinds County, Mississippi," [July 1962], 7, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:450:00206; "Report of James T. McCain, New Orleans and Jackson, Mississippi," [October 1961], 1-2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:450:00207; New Orleans C.O.R.E., "New Orleans 1961, Summary of Activities 1961," [1962], 1-2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00924; "Jail Fails to Halt Freedom Riders Spirit," The Louisiana Weekly, 5 August 1961, 1.

¹⁸New Orleans C.O.R.E., "New Orleans 1961, Summary of Activities 1961," [1962], 1-2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00924.

¹⁹"8 Train 'Riders' Are Jailed," Times-Picayune, 31 May 1961, 14.

²⁰W.F. Minor, "Riders Given Stiffer Terms," Times-Picayune, 7 June 1961, section 2, 4.

students Connie Bradford of Birmingham, Alabama and Margaret Leonard of Atlanta, Georgia participated in the freedom rides before going abroad for a year of study in England.²²

All of these CORE members experienced some time in jail. Few freedom riders bonded out of jail prior to trial and many remained in prison for up to forty days before filing an appeal of the conviction. At first the Mississippi judge imposed a \$200 fine and a sixty-day suspended sentence; later he tried to deter riders with harsher punishments. After 65 convictions the judge sentenced each demonstrator that followed with a \$200 fine, a two month jail term and a sixty-day suspended sentence. If riders refused to pay the fine, they worked it off on the county farm at three dollars a day. Throughout the summer many of the activists remained in jail. For example, of the 227 freedom riders arrested through the first week of July, 145 resided in Jackson city jail or the state penitentiary.²³

When a judge upheld the convictions of New Orleans CORE member Julia Aaron and field secretary Henry Thomas, national CORE urged all of the freedom riders who had appealed their convictions to return to Jackson to serve out their sentences. CORE adopted this strategy in

²¹George Raymond, Jr., "Application for Field Worker in CORE Task Force," 13 May 1962, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:261:00696; "Freedom Riders," [1961], 6, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, A:I:31:0833.

²²Gordon Carey to Henry Thomas, 4 December 1961, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:270:01291; "White Female [Freedom Riders]," [1961], The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:456:00471; "Names and Trial Dates of Southern States Freedom Riders," [early 1962], 3, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:447:00092.

²³"Freedom Riders Test Case Postponed By U.S. Court," The Louisiana Weekly, 15 July 1961, 1; "Freedom Riders Step Up Campaign, 14 More Jailed," The Louisiana Weekly, 24 June 1961, 3; W.F. Minor, "Stiffer Terms Will Be Asked," Times-Picayune, 16 June 1961, section 2, 3; W.F. Minor, "Riders Given Stiffer Terms," Times-Picayune, 7 July 1961, section 2, 4.

part because the judge imposed an even more severe punishment on Aaron and Thomas. The penalty for their freedom ride went from a \$200 fine and a sixty-day suspended sentence to a four-month jail term in addition to the fine. When the judge also raised her bail from \$500 to \$1500 dollars, Aaron decided to return to jail immediately. Her New Orleans colleagues, Jerome Smith and Doris Jean Castle, dropped their appeals and elected to serve out their sentences as well. To prevent mass numbers of the freedom riders from withdrawing their appeals and serving out the remainder of their original sentences, the judge outlawed it after Smith and Castle returned to jail. They served their entire ninety-day sentences, while Julia Aaron served all of her time and paid part of her fine. Only twelve other individuals completed their entire sentence or followed the example set by Julia Aaron.²⁴

Sandra Nixon spent forty days in prison and described her experience in The Louisiana Weekly. Her story illustrates what the freedom riders experienced in jail and reveals her commitment, her dedication to obtain basic constitutional rights for African Americans and her faith in nonviolent direct action. "Those of us who volunteered to participate in the Freedom Rides were well aware that we were not embarking on a pleasure jaunt. . . . We felt very much like missionaries going into an unknown, hostile territory," she wrote. Nixon continued, "We felt it to be our duty to our Nation and to ourselves to demonstrate our belief in the democratic principles by attempting to avail ourselves of the rights and privileges which the Constitution says are ours." Nixon expected the arrest and to spend time in jail, so she prepared for

²⁴"Freedom Riders To Serve Out Terms," The Louisiana Weekly, 9 September 1961, 2; "Mississippi Tries To Bankrupt CORE," CORE-lator, 92 (October 1961), 1; "3 Members of CORE 'Guilty' of Picketing," The Louisiana Weekly, 25 November 1961, 1; Thomas Gaither, "Final Report On Freedom Rider Cases, Hinds County, Mississippi," [July 1962], 6, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:450:00206.

the worst.²⁵

During her time in the Hinds County Jail and the Parchman State Penitentiary, Nixon thought that the jailers treated the freedom riders preferentially in comparison to other Mississippi inmates. The activists received enough food, jailers allowed them to read and to receive mail and most of the guards behaved civilly. The inmates sang freedom songs and hymns, held devotional services and visited with Protestant clergy to keep their spirits high. But they lived in overcrowded conditions with as many as thirteen persons in a four-person cell and certain guards wanted to punish the inmates. For example, one jailer closed all the windows so it became very hot and stuffy in the cell; another took away the prisoners' mattresses to stop them from singing.²⁶ One guard slapped New Orleans CORE member Jean Thompson three times for refusing to address him with sir.²⁷ Despite the hardships Nixon concluded, "I feel that my experiences, my sacrifices, are a necessary phase in our non-violent efforts to secure first-class citizenship. . . . Young people everywhere should join this movement. As for me, I would not hesitate to do the same thing over again."²⁸

As the summer progressed and increasing numbers of freedom riders filled Mississippi jails, conditions in the cell blocs worsened. As more integrationists arrived at Parchman Penitentiary, female trustees began to subject the female freedom riders to very personal, internal physical examinations in a very unsanitary manner. One witness

²⁵Sandra Nixon, "Felt Like A Missionary Says College Soph After Ordeal," The Louisiana Weekly, 22 July 1961, 1 and 8.

²⁶Sandra Nixon, "Felt Like A Missionary Says College Soph After Ordeal," The Louisiana Weekly, 22 July 1961, 1 and 8.

²⁷"Freedom Riders Continue Test Of All Segregation," The Louisiana Weekly, 10 June 1961, 7; "'Riders' To Fast In Miss. Jail," Times-Picayune, 2 June 1961, 8.

²⁸Sandra Nixon, "Felt Like A Missionary Says College Soph After Ordeal," The Louisiana Weekly, 22 July 1961, 8.

testified, "This procedure was instituted for the specific purpose of trying to degrade and harass the female Freedom Riders."²⁹ When Julia Aaron, Jerome Smith and Doris Jean Castle returned to jail to complete their sentences, they found even more restrictions. Jailers refused the inmates reading material, kept them segregated from other prisoners and denied them visitors.

After Mrs. Betty Smith, Mrs. Florence Aaron and Mrs. Virgie Castle arrived at the Hinds County Jail to see their imprisoned relatives, the warden refused the freedom riders their visitors. Not permitted to see the prisoners, Smith called to her husband and Castle and Aaron shouted to their daughters through a square opening in the door leading into each cell block. They found their loved ones safe and healthy, but bored. Mrs. Aaron reported, "The girls say they are still singing their songs, that all they can do is to sing and pray because they have nothing to read and no other form of amusement or information."³⁰

Along with the shared experience of jail, the New Orleans CORE members involved with the freedom rides witnessed and experienced white violence and abuse. In August 1961, New Orleans police officers arrested three white freedom riders for vagrancy and brutally beat the men. The police targeted George Blevins, a 21-year-old Los Angeles artist, University of California-Berkeley student John Dolan and Frank Nelson, 23, a New York civil engineer with the United States Coast Guard. Recently released from the Parchman State Penitentiary after forty days in jail for freedom riding, the men decided to remain in New Orleans before returning to Jackson for their appeal. While awaiting their re-trial, the men stayed with a black Episcopal minister. On

²⁹Quoted in "Female Freedom Riders Get Rougher Treatment Says One," The Louisiana Weekly, 5 August 1961, 7 and 1.

³⁰Aaron quoted in "Mothers Travel In Vain To See Jailed 'Freedom Riders,'" The Louisiana Weekly, 30 September 1961, 3 and 1.

August 12 Patricia and Carlene Smith, two African American New Orleans CORE members who lived in close proximity to the minister, invited the activists to their home for dinner. Twenty-two-year-old Carlene worked as a secretary while her younger sister attended school.³¹

About ten minutes after their guests arrived, several police entered the house uninvited. They claimed to be investigating complaints of fighting between whites and blacks. Seeing the three white men in the living room of a Negro family, the police searched the house and questioned the group to discover the nature of this interracial gathering. The uniformed officers decided to arrest the trio after learning they were not from New Orleans. Asked if they had a warrant to come into a private residence and arrest someone, one of the policemen replied, "Look, when an officer says come, you have no civil rights."³²

At the Second District Police Station the officers questioned the men extensively, charged them with vagrancy and then placed the freedom riders in a paddy wagon for the trip to police headquarters to be photographed, fingerprinted and jailed. A man arrested for assault waited inside the transport. He became agitated during the trip when he learned that the other prisoners were freedom riders. George Blevins recalled, "As we traveled further he became more and more belligerent toward us. What had at first appeared to be a strong dislike for Freedom Riders grew steadily into an intense hatred." The segregationist began to taunt them and throw punches. Although the three riders remained nonviolent and informed him they would not strike

³¹Eleanor Roosevelt, chair, "Commission of Inquiry into the Administration of Justice in the Freedom Struggle," transcript, 25-26 May 1962, 147-148, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:474:00444; "Freedom Riders Charge N.O. Cops With Brutal Beatings," The Louisiana Weekly, 19 August 1961, 1 and 3.

³²Quoted in "Freedom Riders Charge N.O. Cops With Brutal Beatings," The Louisiana Weekly, 19 August 1961, 3.

back, he continued to create a ruckus.³³

When the van arrived at police headquarters and an officer began to unlock the door, the man grabbed John Dolan's leg and began to yell for help. George Blevins described what happened next:

We sat in our places and watched him while the police entered. I think we all believed that nothing more would follow, that it was all over. What did follow was something of a surprise to me. The first thing I noticed was a policeman's fist coming toward me. The blow caught me in the side of the head before it occurred to me to duck it. I was kicked and knocked to the back of the van and shoved out.

Meanwhile a policeman held Frank Nelson, who was on his knees outside of the paddy wagon, and battered him about the head with a nightstick while shouting, "[L]ook out, he's trying to escape!" After ordering the men to line up along a wall with their faces and arms stretched against it, the police proceeded to beat them with blackjacks while policemen from inside the station came outside to watch. Frank Nelson remembered, "I myself was hit mostly in the back and lower kidney area about a dozen times. Each time with an effective cursing out in between, and the others were also struck."³⁴

Inside the station the police repeatedly asked the men the whereabouts of other freedom riders and who had paid them to come to New Orleans. During the interrogation police officers further pummeled John Dolan. "I heard some noise so I edged forward so I could see and they were slapping him and hitting him with a blackjack and kicking him in

³³George M. Blevins, [Affidavit Submitted to United States Attorney General], [August or September 1961], 2-3, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:281:00378-00379.

³⁴George M. Blevins, [Affidavit Submitted to United States Attorney General], [August or September 1961], 3-4, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:281:00379; Eleanor Roosevelt, chair, "Commission of Inquiry into the Administration of Justice in the Freedom Struggle," transcript, 25-26 May 1962, 150, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:474:00445.

the stomach and groin, trying to get him to tell where the other Freedom Riders were," Frank Nelson reported. Nelson also overheard the officers discussing their motives behind the arrest and beating. They wanted to pick up as many freedom riders as possible "to prevent us from going to this hearing, because if we didn't appear there we would lose our bail." The police delayed medical attention to the bleeding integrationists, denied them their right to call a lawyer and further charged the men with aggravated assault, simple battery and attempted escape.³⁵

In response to this episode of police brutality, members of New Orleans CORE mobilized to picket city hall and sit-in at police headquarters. "A sit-in outside of the chief of police office was of the greatest necessity to protest the beast like action of the police, also a picket line at city hall to protest the apathy toward the inhuman action of the police department [was necessary]," a CORE member later explained.³⁶ As usual, the whites in power squelched the CORE demonstrations and labeled the activists outside agitators. Police arrested fifteen people outside of the police station and two at the mayor's office. A judge sentencing the two city hall picketers opined, ". . . nowhere in the Constitution do we find the right for one individual or group or[f] individuals to become the yeast of the unleavened dough of turmoil - chaos -- dissension - and anarchy." Many of those arrested would remain the most active members of New Orleans CORE and come to compose the nucleus of the affiliate. These young

³⁵Eleanor Roosevelt, chair, "Commission of Inquiry into the Administration of Justice in the Freedom Struggle," transcript, 25-26 May 1962, 151-152, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:474:00446; George M. Blevins, [Affidavit Submitted to United States Attorney General], [August or September 1961], 5-6, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:281:00380; "Freedom Riders Charge N.O. Cops With Brutal Beatings," The Louisiana Weekly, 19 August 1961, 3.

³⁶"New Orleans 1961, Summary of Activities 1961," [1962], 2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00924.

people included Patricia and Carlene Smith, Thomas Valentine, Doris and Oretha Castle, Dorothea Smith, Alice and Shirley Thompson, Jerome Smith and Isaac Reynolds.³⁷

Even after his violent experience at the hands of the law enforcement officials of New Orleans, Frank Nelson remained in the city to work with New Orleans CORE. When an investigative committee asked him in 1962 why, as a white person, he participated in the freedom rides, he replied, "Actually, it is just a matter of getting down to finally doing what just about everybody thinks is correct, and I finally . . . got tired of sitting around in the living room and discussing how bad things were there and finally decided to see if I could perhaps do something to help change things."³⁸ This action orientation motivated Frank Nelson to assist New Orleans CORE in the second phase of the freedom rides, testing the Interstate Commerce Commission desegregation order.

In September 1961 the Interstate Commerce Commission, an agency with regulatory powers over all interstate commercial transportation, issued a ruling forbidding segregation in bus seating and prohibiting interstate buses from using terminals with segregated facilities. The order required all buses and terminals used by interstate passengers to post notices affirming their use without regard to race, color, creed or national origin by November 1. Officials of national CORE asked all CORE affiliates throughout the North and South to test compliance with the ICC regulations during the first week of November.³⁹

³⁷Judge quoted in "2 Of CORE Convicted For Picketing Mayor's Office," The Louisiana Weekly, 16 September 1961, 3; "15 Plead Innocent In Police 'Sit-In' Trial," The Louisiana Weekly, 16 December 1961, 1.

³⁸Eleanor Roosevelt, chair, "Commission of Inquiry into the Administration of Justice in the Freedom Struggle," transcript, 25-26 May 1962, 162, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:474:00451.

Although a project sponsored by national CORE, the membership of New Orleans CORE devoted a great deal of energy to making ICC ruling test rides throughout Texas, Louisiana, Alabama and Mississippi. Seven members of the chapter traveled from New Orleans, Louisiana to Beaumont, Texas on November 1 and 2. The group tested terminals in fifteen Louisiana towns and two Texas locations. Frank Nelson joined African American members Oretha Castle, Betty Daniels, Dorothea Smith, Alice Thompson, David Dennis and Shirley Thompson. The riders met with segregation at some of the terminals, but since their instructions emphasized testing they avoided arrest.⁴⁰ David Dennis, the captain of the action, praised the band's adherence to nonviolence and their intimacy. He reported, "The group was very disciplined and we had a very enjoyable trip. We would like to take another in the very near future."⁴¹

The freedom riders confronted much greater difficulties on other testing trips and their experience of white repression and violence created tight bonds between the participants. On November 9 six members of New Orleans CORE encountered trouble in Poplarville, Mississippi.

³⁹James Farmer to CORE group leaders, memorandum, 25 September 1961, 1-4, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:497:00721-00723; "Desegregation of Interstate Bus Travel: Enforcement of Ruling to Begin Nov. 1," The Louisiana Weekly, 30 September 1961, 1; Gordon Carey to CORE chapters, Officers, memorandum, 19 October 1961, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:495:00532.

⁴⁰New Orleans C.O.R.E., "New Orleans 1961, Summary of Activities 1961," [1962], 2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00924; David Dennis, "Report of Tests of the Interstate Commerce Commission Regulations In Louisiana and Beaumont, Texas," 1-2 November [1961], 1-4, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:497:00913-00914, 00774; David Dennis, "Confidential Report-Bus Terminal Survey," 1-2 November [1961], 1-4, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:497:00772-00773, 00738.

⁴¹David Dennis, "Report of Tests of the Interstate Commerce Commission Regulations In Louisiana and Beaumont, Texas," 1-2 November [1961], 3, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:497:00914.

Returning to New Orleans on the second leg of a freedom ride to Mobile, Alabama, the contingent included Frank Nelson, the only white in the group, and five African American women including Patricia Smith, Alice and Jean Thompson and Betty Daniels. During the course of the trip the bus driver ordered black passengers to move to the back of the bus and at many stops he informed terminal employees he had freedom riders aboard his bus. Because of mechanical difficulties the bus made an unscheduled stopover in Poplarville.⁴²

During the delay 18-year-old Patricia Smith and 22-year-old Alice Thompson went inside the terminal for a Coke. A local policeman told the attendant to serve the women but when Alice Thompson sat on the same bench he occupied he ordered them to move along. Although they began to comply, he grabbed them by the arms declaring "You are not moving fast enough."⁴³ When Frank Nelson saw the policeman ushering the women to his truck, he decided he needed to intervene. In a 1962 statement Nelson described what happened next,

Well, I was very concerned for their safety since this town has a fairly bad reputation, and I got out of the bus and asked the officer if they were under arrest and if they were being taken to the police station. However, as I approached them, before I was able to say anything, he grabbed me by the neck, pulled out his billy club and asked me if I wanted anything, if I wanted some of this. I said no, and that was about the only word I got to say. He told me to get over there with the others.⁴⁴

⁴²Committee of Inquiry [national CORE], "Summary of the testimony of Frank Nelson at Poplarville, Miss.," 25 May 1962, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:3:00409; Gordon Carey to Clifford Cherry, telegram, 10 November 1961, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:497:00865; Alice Thompson, [Notarized Statement], 4 December 1961, 1-2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:497:00876; Jean Thompson, "Freedom Highways Application Blank," 1962, 2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:494:00111.

⁴³Alice Thompson, [Notarized Statement], 4 December 1961, 2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:497:00876; "Given Police Escort After Tense Trial," The Louisiana Weekly, 18 November 1961, 1.

The officer threw the trio in jail and charged them with disturbing the peace.

The situation got scarier when the threesome returned to Poplarville a few days later for their trial. Although two lawyers and six members of their CORE chapter accompanied them, they were keenly aware of the 1959 lynching of Mack Charles Parker from the same jail cell they had occupied. One of the defendants' lawyers, Robert Collins, later described this trial as "the most dangerous situation" and the most frightening experience of his life because of the tense atmosphere created by the threat of lynching. Collins recalled,

We arrived at the place where the court was to be held which was a combination fire station and City Hall. Just a big open area and they had a fire truck in there . . . they had a lot of hostile people in this room, farmers with overalls with straps across the back, hobnail boots, really menacing characters around this room, a lot of white people there. They were yelling and making all kinds of remarks while the case [wa]s going on.⁴⁵

The hostile white crowd particularly hated Frank Nelson. The arresting officer testified that he wanted to kill Nelson and tried several times to attack him during the trial. When Nelson took the stand, the crowd tried to intimidate him. A reporter from The Louisiana Weekly observed, "An ominous silence prevailed as a dozen or more white males converged slowly on Nelson in a menacing manner and stopped some four feet away from him. Undaunted, Nelson continued his testimony." The judge convicted the trio and sentenced them to two months in jail

⁴⁴Eleanor Roosevelt, chair, "Commission of Inquiry into the Administration of Justice in the Freedom Struggle," transcript, 25-26 May 1962, 156, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:474:00448.

⁴⁵Judge Robert Collins, Interview by Kim Lacy Rogers, 8 June 1988, transcript, 14, 18, 16-17, Rogers Collection; "Given Police Escort After Tense Trial," The Louisiana Weekly, 18 November 1961, 1.

and a \$200 fine. Determined to appeal the case, the attorneys tried to keep the accused out of jail on the same bail.⁴⁶

Unfortunately, the white crowd wanted to keep Nelson in its jail. Officials additionally charged Nelson with "obstructing justice" and raised his bail another \$500 dollars. As the crowd became increasingly agitated, the mayor decided to intervene to prevent violence. Lawyer Collins told the end of this story some years later. He recalled,

Just about that time the Mayor called us on the side and talked to us and he said I don't like the way this situation looks. We had a conference behind the fire truck. [Laughter] That was his office. He said I don't like the way this situation looks, he said I think you all in danger. I have called for two state police cars. He said I'm going to let all of you go, but I want you to get out of this state. I'm going to escort you to cars and I want you to get out of here. We had a four car caravan, convoy, two state police cars, one in front and one behind us, to escort us out of Mississippi back to Louisiana and they stayed all the way with us . . . until we got across the Mississippi state line. And were we glad to get out of there, because it really was a hostile situation.[sic]⁴⁷

A few weeks after extricating herself from this frightening situation, Alice Thompson became involved in an even more violent situation as the result of another test of the ICC desegregation ruling. This time Thompson joined New Orleans CORE chairperson Jerome Smith, George Raymond, Tom Valentine and Dorothea Smith on a bus trip to McComb, Mississippi. When this African American group arrived at the bus terminal on November 29 they discovered it closed. Forewarned, the station master had opportunistically discovered a gas leak. Returning

⁴⁶"Given Police Escort After Tense Trial," The Louisiana Weekly, 18 November 1961, 3; Committee of Inquiry [national CORE], "Summary of the testimony of Frank Nelson at Poplarville, Miss.," 25 May 1962, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:3:00409; Collins, Interview by Rogers, 17.

⁴⁷Collins, Interview by Rogers, 17-18; "Given Police Escort After Tense Trial," The Louisiana Weekly, 18 November 1961, 3.

later that day for the trip back to New Orleans, the riders encountered crowds of "mean-looking whites" in and around the building. While Jerome Smith went to the ticket window, his comrades took seats at the lunchcounter. After George Raymond asked for service, the operator of the terminal told each freedom rider, "Greyhound does not own this building; Greyhound does not own this restaurant. You get out of here."⁴⁸

At this point a hoodlum hit Raymond in the back of the head with a cup of hot coffee and pandemonium erupted. As the CORE members moved to the waiting area whites began to pummel them with their fists and brass knuckles. Angry segregationists pulled the activists from their seats, kicked, slapped and pushed them out of the terminal. Outside in the street the mob threw Jerome Smith into the air repeatedly and kicked him as he struck the ground. An elderly black man drove a truck through the crowd to rescue Smith.⁴⁹ Chased by whites, Dorothea Smith ran toward the black section of town. A crowd of African Americans surrounded her and while she hid among the black bodies she concluded, "I thought for sure [I would] not see another day; [I] thought for sure I would be killed that day." As soon as she calmed herself enough she walked out of the crowd as though she had lived in McComb her entire life. Once out of sight of the street she started running. When Jerome Smith and the others found her she was still running. Dorothea remembered, "I was so frightened I outran the truck."⁵⁰ Alice Thompson remembered this day as "the only time I was really afraid for my life." It seemed

⁴⁸Raymond quoted in "Newsmen Also Feel Wrath of a Violent Mob," The Louisiana Weekly, 9 December 1961, 12 and 1; Dorothea Smith Simmons, Interview by Rogers, side 1.

⁴⁹"Newsmen Also Feel Wrath of a Violent Mob," The Louisiana Weekly, 9 December 1961, 12; Jerome Smith, Interview by Rogers, 26 July 1988, side 2.

⁵⁰Dorothea Smith Simmons, Interview by Rogers, side 1.

people had death in their eyes and in their hearts; like they wanted to kill us. "I was really afraid," Thompson recalled.⁵¹

When asked by an interviewer how she withstood the violent attack, Dorothea Smith attributed her resolution to Jerome Smith and his insistence that every member of CORE understand the techniques of nonviolence and adhere to the philosophy. "When we joined CORE and knew what it was about we knew it might cost us our lives but we agreed to be a part of it," she explained.⁵² The membership of New Orleans CORE also believed nonviolence to be more powerful than violence. Despite the response of McComb whites to its action, the membership decided, "Nonviolence must be triumphant over violence, therefore we strongly felt it was necessary to send another group."⁵³ Two days later six individuals from the New Orleans and Baton Rouge CORE affiliates returned to McComb and desegregated the bus terminal under the protection of the local police, federal officials and the FBI. Unable to target the riders, angry whites pummeled journalists covering the event.⁵⁴

These experiences of white repression and violence bound together those members of New Orleans CORE active in the freedom rides and in testing the ICC desegregation order during the summer and fall of 1961. Since the New Orleans CORE community had evolved into an intimate group of friends, the affiliate experienced internal dissension as the CORE chapter grew in size during the first half of the 1961-1962 academic year. As former CORE members returned to school after the summer

⁵¹Alice Thompson, Interview by Rogers, side 1.

⁵²Dorothea Smith Simmons, Interview by Rogers, side 1.

⁵³New Orleans C.O.R.E., "New Orleans 1961, Summary of Activities 1961," [1962], 2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00924.

⁵⁴"Waiting Room Desegregated: Newsmen Are Attacked in McComb," Times-Picayune, 2 December 1961, section 2, 4.

holiday they also resumed their activities with CORE. In the wake of the freedom rides, new young people flocked to join the organization. As the fall semester progressed, students who periodically participated in CORE action projects increasingly applied to become full-fledged members of the group. Many of these students first assisted the membership of New Orleans CORE during the intensified lunchcounter campaign of November and December, 1961. Other students joined the CORE community after the New Orleans police department crushed a march held on December 18 and arrested all 292 participants. The leadership of the New Orleans affiliate mobilized these young people from area colleges to protest the mass arrests and expulsions of Southern University-Baton Rouge students over their civil rights activities.⁵⁵

In a letter to Jim McCain of national CORE, Carlene Smith, an African American involved with the affiliate during the freedom rides, later explained the rapid growth of the New Orleans chapter and the problems it engendered. She wrote,

[S]tarting in the fall of 1961, New Orleans CORE began to acquire a considerable number of new members. During the summer of 1961 the chapter had become a small group of committed actionists (almost all of them Negro[e]s), bound together in close personal association by the experience of the Freedom Rides. In the fall of 1961, the white membership of the chapter began to increase. Students of Tulane University who had been active during the

⁵⁵Inge Powell Bell, CORE and the Strategy of Nonviolence (New York: Random House, 1968), 99; Nooker [James McCain] to Gordon [Carey], 21 December 1961, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:258:00360; New Orleans C.O.R.E., "New Orleans 1961, Summary of Activities 1961," [1962], 3, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00925; "Mass Arrests Break March," Times-Picayune, 18 December 1961, section 2, 4; Robert Collins to Carl Rachlin, 21 December 1961, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:4:00456; New Orleans Department of Police, "Arrest Book, First District, A-608," 18 November 1961 - 18 December 1961, 286-295, City Archives, Louisiana Division, New Orleans Public Library, New Orleans, Louisiana; New Orleans Department of Police, "Arrest Book, First District, 609-A," 18 December 1961 - 23 January 1962, 1-10, City Archives, Louisiana Division, New Orleans Public Library, New Orleans, Louisiana.

previous school year returned from a summer vacation and some new Tulane students entered the group. An additional increase of white members came about early in 1962, consisting of students from Tulane University and Louisiana State University at New Orleans. The Negro membership increased, with students from Southern University of New Orleans and Dillard University, especially after 292 of them were arrested during the Christmas holidays in a mass demonstration.

This increase in membership brought in its turn a change in the nature and attitude of the group, a change for which, as will subsequently be shown, the existing leadership and the organizational structure of the chapter were totally unprepared. Conditions were created making possible the internal conflict which now threatens to disrupt the group or at least to alienate permanently a member [number?] of its members.⁵⁶

The internal dissent referred to by Carlene Smith first erupted into conflict in early February, 1962 after The Louisiana Weekly printed in the form of an article an editorial letter written by reader Maguella Williams.

The biting commentary attacked the interracial socializing of "white male opportunists who are posing as integration workers" and the "'overly willing' Negro females who are obviously afflicted with glaring inferiority complexes and 'white fever.'" The appearance of these white men and black women at African American nightclubs infuriated Williams because they seemed to enjoy dancing, dining and embracing one another, while the few white females in their company did not appear to dance with the black men of the group. Further, Williams criticized the black men for their overt friendliness to the white men and their willingness to share their women. She found it ridiculous that this interracial group integrated the black bars. If the white men really wanted to promote integration, she argued, they would take the black women to white bars instead. In her opinion, the white men only wanted to return

⁵⁶Carlene Smith to Jim McCain, 22 February 1962, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:351:01111.

to the slave days of black female concubinage. To their black female companions she spat,

You are a sorry sight. A pitiful, degrading bunch of show-offs, who won't be able to get a decent Negro male -- to respect you enough -- to marry you. That is, if you are the marrying kind -- which I doubt seriously. The pretentious imposter-hypocrite you are making so much over has only one thing in mind...and it's not marriage, sister. . . . You little idiots had better wake up.[sic]

She finished, "If all Negroes don't join hands and put a stop to this fiasco, there will be to[o] many 'white feverish' Negro females around this city...and the Negro male might just find himself womanless.[sic]"⁵⁷

The only contemporary account of the events immediately following the publication of this article is a letter written by Carlene Smith, a member of New Orleans CORE since 1960. The twenty-three-year-old, African American school teacher wrote to national CORE to explain the position of those expelled from the organization as a result of the letter. At the first meeting of the organization after The Louisiana Weekly printed this letter, chairman Oretha Castle read it aloud. Carlene Smith recalled, "During the reading the group broke out laughing, and was rebuked by the chairman 'You can laugh now, but this is something serious.'" Castle then addressed the membership, declaring she agreed with both the tone and content of the article. Summarizing Castle's remarks, Smith wrote, "The letter was offered as evidence of a strong community reaction against CORE, on the grounds stated. Those 'guilty' of the kind of behavior described in the article were charged with destroying CORE's reputation in the community and depriving it of the community support upon which it was so dependent."⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Maguella Williams, "Writer Fears White Opportunists Forays," The Louisiana Weekly, 3 February 1962, 3.

During the "lively discussion" that followed Castle's comments, the membership committee emerged from a secret meeting and announced the suspension of fifteen active members. According to Carlene Smith, "The chairman of this committee read off a list of members who had been suspended---without notice and without a hearing---allegedly because their conduct had in some way served to provoke the article in the Louisiana Weekly, and to arouse feeling throughout the Negro community akin to that expressed by the writer of the article." As the room erupted in chaos, Doris Jean Castle entered and erroneously announced that the entire chapter was suspended from the national organization.⁵⁹

On the surface this conflict appears to be about race and basic philosophical differences. Although these factors played a small role in provoking the discord which plagued New Orleans CORE during the winter of 1962, the disintegration of this community largely resulted from different ideas about tactics, decision-making and power. The small group of people who considered themselves the nucleus of New Orleans CORE as a result of their experiences with the freedom rides represented one side of the conflict. Their opponents combined a few individuals from the nucleus group with old and new members of both races. Tactically, the two sides disagreed on the role interracial socializing should play in their mission to build an integrated society. The two factions also disagreed over the distribution of power in the organization. The opposition wanted to become full members of New Orleans CORE and challenged the control of decision-making exercised by the nucleus group.

⁵⁸Carlene Smith to Jim McCain, 22 February 1962, 2 and 3, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:351:01111-01112; New Orleans Department of Police, "Arrest Book, First District, A-608," 18 November 1961 - 18 December 1961, 293, City Archives, Louisiana Division, New Orleans Public Library, New Orleans, Louisiana.

⁵⁹Carlene Smith to Jim McCain, 22 February 1962, 3, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:351:01112.

In Carlene Smith's summary of the reaction of Oretha Castle and her supporters to the Williams' letter published in The Louisiana Weekly, she stressed the chair's displeasure at the effect of interracial socializing on CORE's relationship with the black community of New Orleans. Partying between black and white CORE activists fueled community reaction against CORE, destroyed CORE's reputation among black citizens and deprived the organization of community support. In her letter to national CORE Smith admitted that differences of opinion over the role social integration should play in the practice and mission of New Orleans CORE had existed in the local chapter since the origination of the group. She explained,

Because our chapter is located in the heart of the deep South, its members, in engaging in integrated social activities, expose themselves to possible censure from both the white and Negro sections of the surrounding community. One may say that New Orleans CORE, since it first began to include white as well as Negro members, has contained two groups of opinion on the subject of social integration; especially in regard to the immediate question of integrated social relationships among the members themselves. Some members have felt that, an integrated society being the ultimate goal both of CORE and of the civil rights movement as a whole, it would be only natural and desirable that they practice social integration among themselves, insofar as circumstances would permit. Other members apparently have felt that social integration is not only objectional in itself, and not a part of the group's real aims, but dangerous to those aims because of the possible disapproval which it might provoke in the outside community.

This disagreement never became "a major subject of concern" until the fall and winter of 1962 when New Orleans CORE experienced an influx of both white and black members.⁶⁰

With the increase of white members, the membership began to engage

⁶⁰Carlene Smith to Jim McCain, 22 February 1962, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:351:01111.

in interracial social activities. At the same time, both old and new members increasingly expressed their "dissatisfaction" and "frustration" with the leadership and organizational structure of the affiliate. According to Carlene Smith, those critical of the process of decision-making in the chapter were most critical of the power wielded by the president of the group. She summarized their argument,

That, for all practical purposes, only the chairman had authority or responsibility in New Orleans CORE. Decisions on all matters were made by the chair, including matters which were the proper concern of the committees appointed by the chair itself. The chair showed little sense of responsibility towards the group; decisions were made, and orders given, without first being submitted to group discussion, suggestions by committee members were ignored by the chair or overridden. The observation was repeatedly made that it was impossible for an ordinary member to obtain a straightforward answer from the chairman to any legitimate question about CORE business; while a small clique of favored individuals had ready access to all information.

For reasons such as these, a number of members had begun to feel that they were being subjected to an arbitrary rule, that they were not responsible participants in a democratic movement, but puppets manipulated by an unknown power for unknown purposes.

In her opinion, the incredible transformation of the CORE community during the fall of 1961 created this situation.⁶¹

"In a few months CORE was transformed from a small intimate group in which leadership depended more on personal contact and confidence than on formally defined relationships, into a larger group of individuals mostly unknown to each other," Smith wrote. Smith criticized the leadership for not evolving to fit the needs of an expanded membership. She theorized,

As long as a group leader is dealing with a small circle of initiates, it is likely that they will accept his decisions simply

⁶¹Carlene Smith to Jim McCain, 22 February 1962, 2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:351:01111.

because they accept his personality, even if his decisions sometimes seem arbitrary and unjustified. But the leader of a larger group should not, simply as a matter of elementary group psychology, expect this kind of acceptance on the part of people who do not know him personally.⁶²

After the membership committee announced the expulsion of fifteen black and white members and the suspension of the chapter from CORE, the "outcast" and their allies assembled at an apartment to discuss the situation. The discussion that evening, Carlene Smith remembered, emphasized decision-making and the division of power in the organization. "The feeling of most of them was that the real problem facing New Orleans CORE was not its relations with the outside community in the sense proposed by the chairman, but rather their own subjugation, as CORE members, to an apparently irrational authority," she wrote.⁶³

Assisted by Attorney Lolis Elie and former chairman Jerome Smith, chair Oretha Castle continued to maintain the position she presented at the first explosive meeting. In the meetings that followed she argued that integrated social activities hurt the chapter's relations with the black community. Some of the more outspoken of the expelled members raised the issue of leadership and requested a new constitution which "would provide for a strong decentralization of authority and for its diffusion throughout the group." Although Castle admitted the suspensions "had been a mistake," they stayed in effect. She also rejected the idea of a structural reorganization of the chapter, arguing inaccurately that the national office needed to okay any constitutional changes. "As the situation now stands," Carlene Smith wrote on February 22,

⁶²Carlene Smith to Jim McCain, 22 February 1962, 2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:351:01111.

⁶³Carlene Smith to Jim McCain, 22 February 1962, 3, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:351:01112.

a definite body of opposition has developed within the local chapter. This opposition does not consider that CORE's reputation has been seriously jeopardized in the community by integrated social activities, or that CORE needs to strive for the good opinion of such people as the writer of the article in the Louisiana Weekly. They consider that in ordering the suspensions the membership committee was simply carrying out orders from the chairman, not acting on its own initiative; and that the chairman wanted the suspensions partly for personal reasons, part[ly] to frighten the group.⁶⁴

Other evidence supports the explanation provided by Carlene Smith as to why the chapter experienced internal conflict during the winter of 1962. Although a few members might have rejected social integration in itself, the tactical implications of interracial socializing, a disagreement over the division of power within the organization and the memberships' inability to resolve the conflict caused the community to disintegrate. A confirmation of Smith's explanation of the 1962 crisis derives from both contemporary and retrospective sources.

A scholar interacting with the membership of New Orleans CORE during the summer of 1962 explained the altercation as dissension over the impact of integrated social activities on CORE's relationship with the black community. An anonymous statement defending the black women criticized by Maguella Williams establishes the importance of social integration to the expelled group and their allies. The memories of CORE member William Harrell explore the process of decision-making in the chapter and its transformation from participatory democracy to a more authoritarian style. The leadership of Jerome Smith and Oretha Castle gravitated toward unilateral decision-making and the election of Ed Clark as vice chairman of the affiliate in January, 1962 threatened the established power structure. A description of the 1962 crisis

⁶⁴Carlene Smith to Jim McCain, 22 February 1962, 3 and 4, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:351:01112.

written in the mid-1970s by Ed Clark blames the disunion on differences over social integration as a tactic of direct action and the dominance of Oretha Castle in the affiliate. Finally, Richard Haley, a representative of national CORE, recommended basic constitutional changes as a way to create a more democratic organization and to resolve the internal problems of New Orleans CORE.

During the summer of 1962 sociologist Inge Powell Bell observed, interviewed and interacted with members of New Orleans CORE. Learning about the internal conflict over interracial socializing of the previous winter, she explained it as a tactical dispute. Embroiled in the lunchcounter campaign, the leadership of New Orleans CORE labored to broaden community support for their desegregation efforts during the winter of 1961-62. The Louisiana Weekly letter disturbed the officers and other members of the group because it threatened the relationship between New Orleans CORE and African Americans in both the middle and lower classes.⁶⁵

In her chapter on "Southern City" CORE Bell examines the normally acrimonious relationship between CORE and the "Negro establishment" in New Orleans. CORE members held little respect for the conservative "so-called" leaders and black bourgeoisie, but during December 1961 they had convinced several ministers to join their picket lines. In the following month the leadership of CORE tried to court the support of middle-class African Americans by gaining the endorsement of more black churches and the Coordinating Council of Greater New Orleans, a "newly formed organization" of one hundred black leaders representing various community groups. At the publication of the article condemning white male-black female romances, Bell reported, "the ministers withdrew their support, and the newly formed organization decided to withhold its

⁶⁵Bell, 96.

endorsement of the picketing."⁶⁶

Because of its sometimes contentious relationship with the leaders who represented the black middle class, CORE recruited support and members among lower class blacks. Bell noted, "The commitment to interracial groups was the one radical value of national CORE that conflicted directly with the inclination of the lower class Negro community and the black nationalists." Since New Orleans CORE needed to appeal to the working-class black citizens, Bell explained, "This was also the one radical value that was most expendable to Negro leaders of Southern City's CORE, as was indicated by the reaction of Negro members to the letter in which the local Negro paper criticized CORE members for interracial dating." While some members insisted "interracial socializing was central to CORE's goals," others "felt that this was peripheral and expendable if it hurt the group's standing in the Negro community."⁶⁷

A white male member of CORE who worked closely with the African American female members of the group wrote a defense of the women libeled by Maguella Williams as stupid whores. The statement, sent to the national office of CORE, takes issue with the arguments presented by Williams and establishes the importance of interracial social activity to the expelled members. Regardless of Williams' opinion, he began, white male activists have proven their commitment through complete involvement in direct action projects and acceptance of the consequences including arrest, imprisonment and brutal treatment. White men and black women socialize interracially more than black men and white women because many more black women participate in the movement than black men. The author continued, southern taboos and ideas make it harder for

⁶⁶Bell, 96 and 97; "100 N.O. Leaders Organize For Dignity-Freedom Fight," The Louisiana Weekly, 11 February 1961, 3.

⁶⁷Bell, 99 and 100-101.

black men and southern white women to interact. While white women are taught to fear black men as sexually dangerous, southern society teaches black men to fear any social contact with white women as potentially deadly. These psychological pressures, the writer explained, causes fewer white women to attend integrated social events and dissuades some black men from asking white women to dance.⁶⁸

Throughout his statement the anonymous writer praised the efforts of these black women and challenged those critical of them. He wrote,

The contribution of young Negro women to the movement demands universal recognition. These young ladies, some of them still teen-agers, have been willing to cut themselves off from social life, job opportunities, higher education, even from family life and the possibility of marriage, in order to devote themselves to the cause of setting man free and of bringing about the reign of justice and of human rights within these United States. . . . These young women have taken upon themselves the suffering of twenty million American citizens.

Any person unwilling to go to jail, take a freedom ride, sit-in, carry a picket sign or submit themselves to white harassment and violence has no right to criticize these superb women, their admirer argued.⁶⁹ He declared,

If any Negro wants to censure any of these young women for the way they act on such social occasions as those described above, let him first make such sacrifices in the cause of justice as will entitle him to speak with them on a level of equality. Those who share the same suffering and the same cause are free to criticize each other without reservation. Those who have not paid the price of suffering and sacrifice in a cause intended to establish their own dignity as persons should remain silent in the face of those who have paid this price for them, and who will pay it again and again until the cause is won.⁷⁰

⁶⁸[white male CORE member], statement, [February 1962], 1-2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:351:01122.

⁶⁹[white male CORE member], statement, [February 1962], 2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:351:01122.

This sacrifice entitles them to relax with their fellow activists and to build their goal of an integrated society among themselves, their defender added. He declared, "We are fighting for an integrated society; we are building this integrated society now, by integrating ourselves with one another. People who are willing to work and suffer together have a right to relax and enjoy each others company free from constraint of prejudice.[sic]"⁷¹

William Harrell, an activist in New Orleans CORE between 1960 and 1961, remembered the centrality of building an interracial community to the membership of the organization. "We kind of understood that the revolution was in the revolution," Harrell recalled. In other words, the CORE community needed to reflect the integrated and democratic society the activists wanted to create. By building interracial relationships and living the way of life they envisioned for the citizens of New Orleans, New Orleans CORE progressed toward its goal of black equality. Harrell learned that many members of CORE got very upset in February 1962 because the tactical dispute over interracial socializing challenged this belief.⁷²

During the 1961-1962 academic year, William Harrell worked on his Ph.D and taught full time as an instructor at Tulane University. Because of these commitments he stayed in contact with members of CORE but seldom participated in activities or meetings. Robert Heller, a white member irate at Oretha Castle's reaction to Maquella Williams' editorial and his expulsion, shared his perspective of what happened with William Harrell. Very upset, the undergraduate student talked with

⁷⁰[white male CORE member], statement, [February 1962], 3, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:351:01123.

⁷¹[white male CORE member], statement, [February 1962], 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:351:01122.

⁷²Harrell, Interview by author, side one.

Harrell in the Union Building of Tulane University on the morning following the explosive February meeting.⁷³

The cause of the dislocation did not surprise Harrell. The membership had discussed the issue since 1960, but usually to recognize the fears of the black community and to ignore them. In 1960 and 1961 CORE members learned of community concerns about black and white mixing, especially the argument that it provoked the hostility of segregationist whites. We acknowledged their anxiety, Harrell explained, but just ignored their criticism of fraternization since our whole goal was to confront and defuse white violence. In 1962 Heller and Harrell talked about the issue in similar terms, characterizing the criticisms as the old, conservative NAACP thing.⁷⁴

Harrell understood why disapproval from the black community over integrated social activities increased by the winter of 1961-1962. The white members of 1960-1961 were older graduate students, many of them married, while the white members of 1961-1962 more closely matched the age of the African American students involved with CORE. As peers, the white and black undergraduate-aged students socialized more. Although fears about the danger and negative impact of interracial dating might have hurt the movement tactically, Harrell and Heller believed an integrated CORE community to be more important. "[T]his was what it was about, about creating a black and white community, about people developing relationships on the basis of mutual need, understanding and what have you. [We were] not talking about a political tactic, a political strategy, we were talking about the type of community that we want[ed] to create," Harrell explained.⁷⁵

⁷³Harrell, Interview by author, side one.

⁷⁴Harrell, Interview by author, side one.

⁷⁵Harrell, Interview by author, side one.

Beyond dissension over the impact of integrated social activities on the mission and methods of the organization, Harrell attributed some of Bob Heller's agitation to how the leadership of New Orleans CORE handled the dispute. "Apparently they saw Oretha as being very arbitrary and very hostile and finally just saying no to more debate, this is it, the decision is made and they were booted. And they were very upset," Harrell described. Because the two sides of the conflict battled over the process of decision-making and the division of power in the organization as well as tactical differences, Harrell believed the internal conflict of 1962 also represented the abandonment of the "spirit" of participatory democracy in New Orleans CORE.⁷⁶

In order to be the community they wanted to create, William Harrell explained, the members of New Orleans CORE not only lived in an integrated fashion, but also made decisions democratically. "The goal or end is not attainable," Harrell expressed, "unless the end or goal is contained in the process. And the process had to be democratic."⁷⁷

The most striking memories of Bill Harrell surrounded the CORE meetings. The meetings between 1960 and 1961 lasted a very long time as group members discussed CORE business, tactics and ideas at length and tried to reach consensus on every decision made. They were not satisfied at a formal, brief debate and a majority vote of fifty percent plus one, Harrell remembered. Instead, he continued,

There was this Quaker notion, this anarchist notion, this notion of democracy in which the object was to find out what everybody's interests were, what everybody's ideas were, and even if you had an 80% majority and there was still someone who was arguing strongly for a position you would listen to it and try to accommodate it. This drove us absolutely . . . bonkers. [laughs] We really all took that very seriously and we tried very hard to do it.⁷⁸

⁷⁶Harrell, Interview by author, side one.

⁷⁷Harrell, Interview by author, side one.

After one particularly long session, he, Rudy Lombard and a few others concluded they needed to find an easier way to reach decisions. "So the much dreaded Roberts Rules of Order came," Harrell recalled. As the vice chair and an older member, Harrell got the job to try to institute the use of parliamentary procedure. Everyone praised the idea as good, but everyone hated the rules by the end of the first meeting of their application. Because "the whole notion of participation was strong at the gut level," the group abandoned Roberts Rules of Order after one meeting. Although they did not label it participatory democracy at the time, Harrell stated, the membership possessed a radical democratic orientation. "It was not very well developed in our minds at the meetings, but there was this kind of radical sense of democratic participation," he summarized.⁷⁹

Rudolph Lombard led the organization during the period of time Harrell describes as very democratic. The organization needed to elect a new chairperson in the late summer of 1961 when Rudolph Lombard moved to Syracuse, New York to attend graduate school at Syracuse University. The new officers selected by the membership belonged to the small group brought tightly together by the freedom rides. At the forefront of action, these individuals became the nucleus of the affiliate during the summer and dominated leadership positions, decision-making and CORE organizational machinery. The officers included Jerome Smith as chair, vice chair Oretha Castle, project chair Doris Castle, Betty Daniels as membership chair and Dorothea Smith as the financial secretary. They headquartered the group at 917 North Tonti Street, the home of the Castle sisters. Since Jerome Smith spent a good portion of the fall of

⁷⁸Harrell, Interview by author, side one.

⁷⁹Harrell, Interview by author, side one.

1961 in a Jackson, Mississippi jail for freedom riding and worked in Baton Rouge for national CORE during December, Oretha Castle exercised leadership. At the end of December she officially became the president of New Orleans CORE after the national office hired Jerome Smith as a field secretary.⁸⁰

Because of Jerome Smith's involvement in the civil rights movement beyond New Orleans, the impact of his leadership style on New Orleans CORE is unclear. But evidence indicates his leadership style differed from the participatory democracy encouraged during the tenure of Rudolph Lombard. Still a field secretary for the national organization in the winter of 1962-63, Smith directed its North Carolina project and supervised the community organizing efforts of several task force workers. In assessing the project, Gordon Carey, the Program Department Director, determined that CORE's work in North Carolina suffered from disorganization, the absence of planning and poor leadership. Although the lack of finances and an overall plan on the part of national CORE contributed to the problems in North Carolina, the leadership of Jerome Smith also hindered the success of the project. Smith made decisions unilaterally and failed to encourage group decision-making. Gordon Carey reported to the National Director James Farmer,

Unfortunately, much of the above confusion, is, I believe, due to Jerome's lack of organizational ability. While he himself is a good organizer and works well in a community, he does not seem at present to have the know-how to organize a staff of people under

⁸⁰"CORE Pickets ICC," photo caption, The Louisiana Weekly, 15 July 1961, 1; Marvin Rich to CORE Groups, Leaders, memorandum, 15 September 1961, 3, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:295:01074; "3 Members of CORE 'Guilty' Of Picketing," 25 November 1961, 1; "Education Unit Strikes At CORE," The Times-Picayune, 17 December 1961, 33; "Earn Equality, Speaker Says," The Times-Picayune, 2 January 1962, section 3, 2; "Protest S.U. Situation," photo caption, The Louisiana Weekly, 27 January 1962, 1; Oretha Castle to Gordon Carey, [1961 letterhead], 28 May 1962, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:494:00115; "15 Plead Innocent In Police 'Sit.In' Trial," The Louisiana Weekly, 16 December 1961, 1.

him. . . . During the time that Jerome was ill and in Louisiana, Isaac Reynolds was in charge of the group. There was no visible improvement during that time either. Both Jerome and Isaac seem to have difficulty in getting those under them to cooperate in decision-making and taking responsibility. Too often all of the ideas are from their heads and all of the decisions are made by them and simply passed down to the others. Some of the field workers have even complained that they are given jobs to do without having any idea what the general scheme of things are or what role their job plays in an overall program.[sic]⁸¹

The complaints of CORE members presented to national CORE by Carlene Smith concerning Oretha Castle's authoritarian leadership style indicate that Oretha Castle tended toward unilateral decision-making as well. As illustrated earlier, some members of New Orleans CORE criticized Castle for making every chapter decision and ignoring the participation of others in the process of decision-making.⁸² Her personality contributed to her power in New Orleans CORE. Oretha Castle was a strong and charismatic woman. She engendered strong memories in those who knew her.

Her sister, Doris Jean Castle, characterized Oretha Castle as a natural leader. Her physical presence overwhelmed others because she radiated an air of command and handled herself in an intimidating way. Oretha consciously cultivated an image or style that helped her to accomplish her goals. She presented the impression that she knew her identity, what she wanted and how to achieve it. She came off as arrogant, domineering, abrasive, callous and tactless. Yet she knew how to motivate and bring people together. No one could meet her, her sister remembered, and not think of her as a leader. Although she

⁸¹Gordon Carey to James Farmer, 14 January 1963, 1-2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:464:01059; Gordon Carey to Jerome [Smith], 4 January 1963, 1-2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:268:01084.

⁸²Carlene Smith to Jim McCain, 22 February 1962, 2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:351:01111.

remembered her sister as all of these things, the real Oretha Castle was soft, timid and vulnerable. In CORE Doris and Oretha played complementary roles. The former excelled at making things happen, while the latter was a master at planning, strategy and negotiation.⁸³

The co-workers of Oretha Castle also praised her character and leadership. Alice Thompson looked to Oretha Castle as a mentor because of her strength and because she knew that Castle would not lead the group astray.⁸⁴ Dorothea Smith Simmons walked into the explosive February meeting over interracial dating late, and therefore could not quite follow the debate. "But [I] felt if Oretha said it [was] wrong, than its wrong and she [was] justified doing what she [was] doing," Smith Simmons recalled.⁸⁵

Oretha Castle impressed William Harrell. Harrell recollected, "Oretha was this kind of silent, pillar of strength. She didn't say much, she was always there and when she had something to say she usually said it briefly and quietly and it usually was just . . . right on."⁸⁶ Matt Suarez attributes his involvement in nonviolent direct action and commitment to the movement to the influence of Oretha Castle. As a "super intelligent" woman who knew about everything and anything, Castle spent an entire year talking with Suarez to convince him to become engaged in the movement beyond support activities such as preparing picket signs and transporting demonstrators. After many evenings of long discussion, Suarez came to adopt Castle's "humanitarian philosophy." She convinced him to become involved with a serious, total commitment and to accept that he had a responsibility for the rest of

⁸³Doris Jean Castle-Scott, Interview by Rogers, side 1 and 3.

⁸⁴Alice Thompson, Interview by Rogers, side 1.

⁸⁵Dorothea Smith Simmons, Interview by Rogers, side 1.

⁸⁶Harrell, Interview by author, side 1 and 2.

the world, not just for himself.⁸⁷

As a result of this powerful personality and inclination toward strong, independent leadership, Oretha Castle probably perceived the election of Ed Clark as vice chairman in January, 1962 as a threat to her dominance in the organization. A white, undergraduate at Tulane University and native of Tennessee, Ed Clark associated with those members who enjoyed integrated social activities, defined interracialism as central to the mission of CORE and wanted greater democracy in the organization. Clark actively participated in the intense campaign to desegregate lunchcounters in November and December, 1961. White hoodlums doused him with acid during a sit-in and police arrested him along with 292 other demonstrators for marching in support of the activism of students at Southern University-Baton Rouge. When Oretha Castle replaced Jerome Smith as chairman, the membership easily elected Clark to replace her as vice chairman.⁸⁸

In a letter written in the mid-1970s Ed Clark provided his explanation for the internal conflict of 1962. Like Carlene Smith, he blamed the dissension on a tactical dispute over interracial socializing and the dominance of Oretha Castle in the organization. Clark remembered that the infighting of 1962 began in response to the intense activism organized by New Orleans CORE in December 1961 which included "Operation Freezout" against the Woolworth and McCrory variety stores and the Southern University-Baton Rouge support march. The arrest and legal expenses of 292 students engendered opposition to the continued

⁸⁷Suarez, Interview by Rogers, side 1.

⁸⁸"CORE Sit-ins Harasses On Canal Street: Doused With Acid After New Technique," The Louisiana Weekly, 30 December 1961, 2; New Orleans Department of Police, "Arrest Book, First District, A-608," 18 November 1961 - 18 December 1961, 289, City Archives, Louisiana Division, New Orleans Public Library, New Orleans, Louisiana; "Ousted Tulane Student's Motion Under Advisement," The Louisiana Weekly, 2 June 1962, 3; Ed [Clark] to Hugh [Murray], [mid-1970s], 7, Box 1, Folder: Correspondence, 1970-1974, Murray Papers.

use of direct action in the city and many individuals desired a cooling off period. Clark wrote,

Resistance to direct action - almost certain to be policed and suppressed - developed very quickly among those who had to take responsibility for the consequences. These were in large part the lawyers . . . the preachers . . . the civil rights organizations' workers locally and in New York - at least for CORE [-] and perhaps others in the community.⁸⁹

In the face of mounting outside pressure, the membership of New Orleans CORE divided into two factions over whether to continue activism immediately or to embrace a cooling off period. Clark stated,

As vice chairman I lasted about 1 or 2 meetings (2 weeks?) at which we hashed out the problem of activism. They felt it got nowhere - we felt that if we were willing to do it, and we got exposure (i.e., impinged on a sufficient number of people), then we/CORE should do it.⁹⁰

Clark linked this general debate over activism during January, 1962 to the issue of interracial socializing. He suggested that his faction saw integrated social activities as a form of CORE direct action. He wrote, "Basically it [activism] cooled off in January. But we didn't. Our group . . . continued to roam N.O., anywhere by day, but not out of the black district by night, except to drive. We were safe in cars at night in the city."⁹¹ The mixed group not only enacted their vision of an interracial society, but stayed out of trouble and developed a good relationship with the African American community. Ed Clark remembered,

⁸⁹Ed [Clark] to Hugh [Murray], [mid-1970s], 3, Box 1, Folder: Correspondence, 1970-1974, Murray Papers.

⁹⁰Ed [Clark] to Hugh [Murray], [mid-1970s], 7 and 4, Box 1, Folder: Correspondence, 1970-1974, Murray Papers.

⁹¹Ed [Clark] to Hugh [Murray], [mid-1970s], 4, Box 1, Folder: Correspondence, 1970-1974, Murray Papers.

The black community either welcomed us or were polite and courteous. There were two or three bars we went to, not counting the Greyhound Lounge, several churches, several schools, several neighborhoods, and lots of friends. We/Group made friends easily with liberal blacks (e.g. teachers), party blacks, workers, church people, kids, and others. . . . We paid our own way, and looked after ourselves. And we had a good time and stayed out of trouble.⁹²

This activity, in combination with the activism of the previous December, created "hostility" toward New Orleans CORE from some members of the black community. This made Oretha Castle and "the five or six black people who supported her" upset with the social integration practiced by the CORE membership. Clark explained, "They felt that we were inflaming the black community against us, but for the most part we were happiest when in the black community and our happiness was (much) more often than not returned."⁹³

According to Clark, his interracial faction possessed a numerical majority over the all black faction led by Oretha Castle. Despite their greater numbers, Castle controlled the CORE chapter and access to the national office. As chair, Clark believed Castle intended to "keep us in line." In disagreements with his faction over plans for action she told him, "'if you do it you're not CORE. I'm CORE, and I'm not doing it and CORE's not doing it either.'" He added, "We felt that Oretha wished to deactivate us, both within CORE and without in the community." In Clark's opinion, Castle's power in the organization enabled her to suspend his group and her access to the national organization prevented any real challenge to her authority.⁹⁴

⁹²Ed [Clark] to Hugh [Murray], [mid-1970s], 5, Box 1, Folder: Correspondence, 1970-1974, Murray Papers.

⁹³Ed [Clark] to Hugh [Murray], [mid-1970s], 6, Box 1, Folder: Correspondence, 1970-1974, Murray Papers.

⁹⁴Ed [Clark] to Hugh [Murray], [mid-1970s], 2, 6 and 7, Box 1, Folder: Correspondence, 1970-1974, Murray Papers.

An officer from national CORE did journey to New Orleans to help the group solve its problems. The recommendations offered by Richard Haley, Assistant to the National Director, emphasized organizational procedures to make the group more democratic and entreated members to improve "personal relations among certain individuals and sub-groups." Haley's directives provide credence to the conclusion that disagreements over means and methods caused the 1962 factionalism; his suggestions targeted the personal animosity among CORE activists and tried to reform the decision-making process.⁹⁵

To clarify organizational procedure and to improve efficiency, Haley suggested four amendments to their constitution. These amendments allowed greater membership participation in decision-making and curbed the power of the chapter chair. First, Haley encouraged the chapter to establish an executive committee composed of the officers, permanent committee chairmen and two members-at-large. The body would prepare an agenda for each meeting, hear and solve grievances, recommend suspensions and expulsions, act in emergencies and provide advice to the general membership in matters of CORE policy. Although the general membership could veto or accept every council decision, the chairman could vote only in the case of an Executive Committee tie. The other three amendments established rules to govern suspensions, expulsions and the promotion of individuals to active membership.⁹⁶

He also encouraged the membership to repeal the recent suspensions, stressed that every CORE activist should contribute to the development of new projects and declared that every discussion and

⁹⁵Richard Haley, [Recommendations to New Orleans CORE], 13 March 1962, 1-3, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:351:01114-01115.

⁹⁶Richard Haley, [Recommendations to New Orleans CORE], 13 March 1962, 2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:351:01114.

decision must follow CORE Rules for Action. He reminded them, "If the action gets 'bogged down', look again for the personal factor!"⁹⁷

Finally, Richard Haley commented on the issue that triggered the breakdown of the New Orleans CORE community. He tried to address the concerns and beliefs of each side when he wrote,

There is no question in my mind that interracial social exchange is an essential part of CORE discipline. Frequently those who are fighting discrimination have been no more exposed to interracial contacts than the segregationists they oppose. Such persons cannot be sure whether their rejection of segregation extends any further than an intellectual commitment, until they meet the actuality in social situations.

Yet there must be strict individual discipline in this regard. If our own practices leap too far or too quickly beyond current general acceptance, then CORE risks being identified by this specific 'extreme' rather than by our larger objective. In such a case the specific practice becomes a totally negative value.⁹⁸

No conclusive evidence shows whether or not the affiliate implemented Richard Haley's suggestions. In retrospect, Clark characterized Haley's efforts as futile, "since we, not O.C., were alone willing to follow his advice (love one another!), it didn't work."⁹⁹

The preceding evidence persuasively argues that the disintegration of the New Orleans CORE community in the winter of 1962 occurred as a result of differences over means, methods and power and not philosophy. Two factions developed in this affiliate around the tactical implications of social integration, the division of power in the

⁹⁷Richard Haley, [Recommendations to New Orleans CORE], 13 March 1962, 1 and 3, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:351:01114 and 01115.

⁹⁸Richard Haley, [Recommendations to New Orleans CORE], 13 March 1962, 3, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:351:01115.

⁹⁹Ed [Clark] to Hugh [Murray], [mid-1970s], 2, Box 1, Folder: Correspondence, 1970-1974, Murray Papers.

organization and the process of decision-making. A few pieces of evidence, which characterize these internal problems as the result of black nationalism, co-exist with the evidence already presented. Retrospective in nature, all three explanations came into being after Black Power transformed the meaning of the civil rights movement and shaped the memories of many of its participants. Although racial dissension might have played a slight role in creating the problems of 1962, more evidence indicates that these people agreed philosophically about the centrality of interracialism to their goals and the composition of the chapter community. The evidence attributing the factionalism of 1962 to black nationalism presents a weak argument because of the bias of the oral histories and because black nationalism did not shape the membership, policy and program of New Orleans CORE in the years following the expulsions.

Two of the oral histories contained in the Ralph Bunche Oral History Collection at Howard University identify the internal problems of New Orleans CORE in the winter of 1962 as an episode of black nationalism. Interviewers spoke with Oretha Castle Haley and Matt Suarez in 1970 and 1969, respectively.¹⁰⁰ Howard University employees completed over 300 interviews during the late 1960s and early 1970s. Both the questions of the interviewers and the responses of the participants reflect the drastic transformation of the black struggle for racial equality taking place during that period. Many of the interviewees focused on their problems with the goals and principles of the early 1960s and how they came to embrace Black Power. Others expressed their disillusionment with the movement, their hatred of whites or their bitterness at being forced out of the struggle by black

¹⁰⁰Oretha Castle Haley, Interview by James Mosby, 26 May 1970, transcript, Bunche Collection. Matteo Suarez, Interview by Robert Wright, 11 August 1969, transcript, Bunche Collection.

nationalism. This slant does not negate the use of this oral history collection, but it does caution the scholar to use it carefully. An explanation of the problems in 1962 as an early incident of black nationalism initially makes sense given the tenor of the time and the general tone surrounding the interviews themselves. However, the lack of persuasive contemporary evidence supporting this theory serves to remind the reader that memory and history are not synonymous.¹⁰¹

In her remarks to James Mosby of the Civil Rights Documentation Project, Oretha Castle Haley described the events of the winter of 1962 as a mixture of tactical disagreements, white arrogance and black separatism. Although interracial social gatherings triggered the expulsion of the white members of the group, Oretha Castle Haley thought the underlying cause of the affair was friction between the white and black members of the organization. Castle blamed the problems on the better educated, white, rich youth from Tulane University who told the working-class, black students of Southern University-New Orleans what to do and how to do it. It started in 1960 but got worse as increasing numbers of white males from Tulane University joined the group.¹⁰²

According to Castle, interracial dating just "broke the camel's back."¹⁰³ The membership started to attend interracial parties after long days of picketing and sit-ins, but in Castle's opinion chapter activists began to engage in too much fun. She stated,

¹⁰¹These conclusions are based on the reading of 34 interviews taken with CORE members and community activists in Washington, Detroit, New Orleans and Syracuse. I also consulted 19 of the oral histories in 1991 while working on women and feminism in the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. Ralph Bunche Oral History Collection, Manuscript Division, Moorland Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C.

¹⁰²Oretha Castle Haley, Interview by Mosby, 9-12, 14-15.

¹⁰³Oretha Castle Haley, Interview by Mosby, 16.

[A]fter a while it seemed as though the CORE chapter--and this of course is my own subjective judgement--was the place if you were white and you wanted to get some black meat, that was where you were to come especially [if] you were male and wanted to get next to a black female. . . .

Now, Oretha didn't really appreciate none of that shit from the very beginning, but you know, well people made me believe and I agreed to the fact that what we were fighting and what the struggle was all about [was] for people to be able to do whatever they wanted to do. Though I didn't see what was different about black women shacking up with white men because this had been going on ever since we'd been here. But at any rate this is what people said it was all about. All about, I mean, people having the opportunity to engage in whatever kind of activity they wanted to with whoever they wanted to do so.[sic]¹⁰⁴

Although Castle did not personally accept with her co-members' social activities, she did not act against it until it began to effect CORE's relationship with the outside community. She remembered being concerned about police surveillance and raids on these interracial parties. After one particularly rowdy party she and the all black membership committee decided to solve this image problem. She explained, "We held a membership committee meeting and we decided that as far as we were concerned that wasn't what the struggle was all about. So what it amounted to [--] we put every last one of the white people out. Every last one of them."¹⁰⁵ As a result of her growing frustration over whites trying to dominate the movement, she also concluded, "I was for [an] all black CORE at that point."¹⁰⁶

Castle's account combines factors of a tactical dispute with elements characteristic of black nationalism including whites assuming leadership, insincere white men wanting sex with black women and hints of separatism. The comments of Matt Suarez to Robert Wright in 1969

¹⁰⁴Oretha Castle Haley, Interview by Mosby, 17.

¹⁰⁵Oretha Castle Haley, Interview by Mosby, 17 and 18.

¹⁰⁶Oretha Castle Haley, Interview by Mosby, 19.

stress these same elements. He argued that black and white students possessed different priorities. For example, the whites wanted to expend too much CORE energy on the integration of Tulane University. Suarez contended that white men joined CORE for the sole purpose of dating black women. Finally, he blamed the demise of the organization on whites who, he inaccurately remembered, first became involved with CORE in 1962. "What I think ultimately caused the down fall of the CORE chapter was [the] integration of the CORE chapter," began his rendition of the 1962 crisis in New Orleans CORE.¹⁰⁷ Although Suarez raised the issue in his 1969 interview with some vivid memories, the factionalism of 1962 never came up in his 1988 conversation with scholar Kim Lacy Rogers.¹⁰⁸

While Oretha Castle presented an account of this affair which reflects the ideology of black nationalism, her 1970 interview also substantiates the explanation presented earlier. Interracial socializing injured CORE's image in the community and therefore needed to end. She admitted she made the mistake of not following democratic procedure, thus enabling national CORE to force her to re-admit the expelled whites. Although most of those whites drifted away, she conceded that the group remained interracial and welcomed other whites.¹⁰⁹

Expelled member Ed Clark returned to New Orleans CORE and remained vice chairman at least through the summer of 1962. When Tulane University suspended him for inviting African American CORE members to dine with him in the cafeteria, other white Tulane students staged two sit-ins that forced the administration to rescind his suspension.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷Matteo Suarez, Interview by Wright, 8 and 9.

¹⁰⁸Matt Suarez, Interview by Rogers, 20 June 1988.

¹⁰⁹Oretha Castle Haley, Interview by Mosby, 17-18, 19-22.

¹¹⁰"University Reinstates CORE Leader," national CORE press

Other white persons worked with New Orleans CORE in the years following 1962. For example, a Tulane University student, Alfred Sheperd, joined New Orleans CORE in 1963. After participating in a sit-in with two African American CORE members, he wrote a letter to The Louisiana Weekly that praised their efforts in the black struggle. The tone of the letter also indicates positive relationships between blacks and whites continued to develop in CORE. Sheperd wrote of his co-workers,

The young Negroes of my generation have shown splendid courage and generosity. . . . People like Doris and Marvin are the promise of a new generation. They are a living consolation for all that both races might sacrifice for social justice. The new Negro is courageous and proud. Like Marvin he laughs at danger and like Doris he endures suffering patiently and heriocrally.[sic] These two are typical of the kind of Negro who will increasingly take his place beside the Jeffersons, Lincolns and Thoreaus of our great American past. The devotion of these men to humanity and justice is being equalled and outstripped by such colored citizens as these.¹¹¹

As an interracial organization, New Orleans CORE failed as a black nationalist group. Even members of the nucleus CORE group headed by Oretha Castle continued to espouse an integrationist philosophy. On their task force applications in 1962 and 1963 George Raymond and Jean Thompson identified their race as "Human."¹¹² Frank Nelson, the white freedom rider who experienced a brutal beating in New Orleans and became

release, 20 April [1962], The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00926; "Ousted Tulane Student's Motion Under Advisement," The Louisiana Weekly, 2 June 1962, 3; Gordon Carey to Oretha Castle, 26 September 1962, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:494:00380.

¹¹¹Alfred Sheperd, "Our Readers Write -- Splendid Courage," The Louisiana Weekly, 16 March 1963, 11; Alfred Sheperd, "Our Readers Write," The Louisiana Weekly, 6 July 1963, 11.

¹¹²George Raymond, Jr., "Application for Field Worker in CORE Task Force," 13 May 1962, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:261:00696; Jean Thompson, "Application For Summer Field Worker in CORE Task Force," 25 July 1963, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:468:00088.

tightly bonded with African American CORE members while testing the ICC desegregation ruling during the fall of 1961, remained in New Orleans CORE after the February suspensions. In fact, he and African American CORE member Patricia Smith married during the spring of 1962.¹¹³ Finally, no evidence has surfaced placing the ideology of black nationalism in the philosophy of the New Orleans CORE community between 1962 and 1966.

Even the memories of Oretha Castle Haley had lost their blatantly black nationalist perspective by 1978. Although she maintained her personal disapproval of interracial dating, she emphasized the problems it created for the organization within the black community. As a matter of strategy, she and her followers wanted to curb the social integration of CORE members. They had no problem if one person wanted a relationship with another, as long as he or she kept it private. If that activity entered the public realm, they became concerned because of the "image it would suggest publicly about what we were about." So, Castle Haley concluded, we put both the white males and black females out of the organization.¹¹⁴

Beyond the memories of Oretha Castle Haley and Matt Suarez, only one other source interprets the 1962 crisis as a product of black nationalism. Hugh Murray, a founding New Orleans CORE member and a white person, has argued since the early 1970s that the internal conflict of New Orleans CORE indicates one of the first and earliest examples of black nationalism in the civil rights movement.¹¹⁵ His

¹¹³Frank Nelson, "Freedom Highway Application Blank," [June] 1962, 1-2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:494:00177-00178; Patricia Smith Nelson, "Freedom Highway Application Blank," [June] 1962, 1-2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:494:00176-00177; Gordon Carey to Mr. and Mrs. Frank Nelson (Pat and Frank), 19 June 1962, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:494:00175.

¹¹⁴Oretha Haley, Interview with Rogers, side 2.

explanation of the internal conflict of 1962 deviates from all other sources on two counts. He suggests that as openly radical individuals, Ed Clark and other white Tulane students alienated more conservative African Americans in the organization. Murray wrote to a friend in 1970,

By '62 Ed Clark, Paul Feitelson and other open radicals were in CORE. I still suspect their openness [sic] of being the cause of friction and final split very much on racial lines, between the Oretha Castle group and white Tulanians--Between black power and white radicalism[.] Thereafter CORE was black in NO--even before SNCC followed a similar path.¹¹⁶

Murray also contends that Oretha Castle suspended the Clark group because Clark challenged her position as chair of the affiliate. In a 1988 article he stated, "A White radical defeated a Black woman in the election, but national CORE refused to recognize the election results. Most whites then withdrew, and New Orleans CORE became one of the first nationalist CORE chapters in the nation."¹¹⁷

No longer a participant in New Orleans CORE after June 1961, Murray drew these conclusions as an observer.¹¹⁸ No other evidence corroborates this account of the affair. Even the response of Ed Clark to Hugh Murray's inquiry concerning the racial nature of the 1962

¹¹⁵See, for example, Hugh [Murray] to Bob [Dr. Robert Reinders], 23 March 1970, Box 1, Folder: Correspondence, 1970-1974, Murray Papers; Hugh Murray, "Autobiography," [mid-1970], 106, Box 2, Folder: Autobiography, Chapter 3, Murray Papers; Hugh Murray, "Change in the South," Journal of Ethnic Studies 16:2 (Summer 1988): 119-136; Hugh Murray, "To Win These Rights," The Virginia Quarterly Review 72:1 (Winter 1996): 183-188; Hugh Murray to the Editor, Society (July/August 1996): 10-11.

¹¹⁶Hugh [Murray] to Bob [Dr. Robert Reinders], 23 March 1970, 3, Box 1, Folder: Correspondence, 1970-1974, Murray Papers.

¹¹⁷Hugh Murray, "Change in the South," Journal of Ethnic Studies 16:2 (Summer 1988): 127.

¹¹⁸Hugh Murray, "Autobiography," [mid-1970], 105, Box 2, Folder: Autobiography, Chapter 3, Murray Papers.

conflict refutes the contention that it came about because of black nationalism. Although Ed Clark agreed with Murray that "the split developed along white/black vs. black lines," his nine page account of the incident does not indicate the members battled over philosophical differences regarding the role of whites in the movement or ideas associated with Black Power. In fact, Clark asserted that black nationalism did not motivate the actions of the Oretha Castle faction. Although black nationalism did not intentionally influence the events of 1962, he asserted, the results--the suspension of fifteen black and white members over interracial socializing--certainly reflect later incidents of Black Power. He expressed these ideas in the following,

The issue wasn't (a non existent) community hostility, nor[?] interracial mixing to my mind, nor certainly black power strategy or tactics. But it was black power in fact. . .

At the time we did not understand anything more than that Oretha wanted to run the show and we stood in the way. We thought that her benefactors. . . had pretty much told her to keep the lid on, and we wanted to let off steam. I still think thats what probably happened. No cogent or even mildly persuasive reason was ever offered us, either by O.C. or the mediator - except that we should shut up - with or without love.[sic]¹¹⁹

Along with arguing in this letter that Black Power did not cause the disintegration of the New Orleans CORE community in 1962, Ed Clark contended that this failure of community signaled the onset of the decline of New Orleans CORE. Following the February crisis, Ed Clark and many of the members he bonded with slowly left the chapter. They remained friends but New Orleans CORE became "a dead issue." "In fact," he concluded, "NO CORE committed suicide."¹²⁰ Two years later when

¹¹⁹Ed [Clark] to Hugh [Murray], [mid-1970s], 8-9, Box 1, Folder: Correspondence, 1970-1974, Murray Papers.

¹²⁰Ed [Clark] to Hugh [Murray], [mid-1970s], 2 and 8, Box 1, Folder: Correspondence, 1970-1974, Murray Papers.

field secretary Mary Hamilton tried to re-invigorate New Orleans CORE, she also suggested that the internal conflict of 1962 was still creating problems for the affiliate. She reported to national Field Director James McCain, "The chapter has no one in it who is willing to take some of the responsibilities from Oretha. Hard feelings still exist from the purge of, I believe[,] a couple of years ago."¹²¹ Regarding the impact of the 1962 factionalism on New Orleans CORE, scholars August Meier and Elliot Rudwick concluded, "But the damage had been done, and the chapter never regained its earlier vigor."¹²²

During 1962 New Orleans CORE did begin a slow demise. After its 1962 lunchcounter victory it never mounted another major local campaign and often cooperated with other organizations using negotiation instead of direct action to achieve its goals. CORE remained dominated by the small group of friends led by Oretha Castle and because of their lack of activism recruited very few new members. The vibrancy of the New Orleans affiliate also suffered when individuals from the small New Orleans CORE nucleus went to work for national CORE and became involved in the national movement. Personnel, money and support from the national organization helped sustain and maintain the New Orleans affiliate between 1962 and 1966. Although the efforts of the national organization prevented the death of New Orleans CORE for many years, the affiliate disappeared permanently as a result of projects initiated by the staff of national CORE and designed to organize indigenous communities.

¹²¹Mary Hamilton to James McCain, "Activities in Plaquemines Parish, La., New Orleans and Jackson, Miss.," 12 January 1964, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, F:2:59:0310.

¹²²August Meier and Elliot Rudwick, CORE: A Study in the Civil Rights Movement (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1975), 169.

Chapter 7

"'The House I Live In': The Core Community, Missionary Work and Community-Organizing in the Demise of New Orleans CORE, 1962-1966"

The House I Live In

(Earl Robinson)

What is America to me[?] a name, a map, the flag I see
A certain word, "Democracy", What is America to me?

The House I live in, a plot of earth, a street,
The grocer and the butcher and the people that I meet;
The children in the playground, the faces that I see;
All races, all religions, that's America to me.

The place I work in, the worker at my side
The little town or city where my people lived and died,
The "howdy" and the handshake--the air of feeling free,
The right to speak my mind out, that's America to me.

The things I see about me--the big things and the small,
The little corner newsstand and the house a mile tall;
The wedding and the churchyard, the laughter and the tears,
The dream that's been a growin for a hundred fifty years.

The words of old Abe Lincoln, of Jefferson and Paine,
Of Washington and Jackson, and the tasks that still remain,
The little bridge at Concord, where Freedom's fight began,
Our Gettysburg and Midway, and the story of Bataan.

The house I live in, the goodness everywhere,
A land of wealth and beauty with enough for all to share,
A house that we call Freedom, the home of Liberty,
And a promise for tomorrow, that's America to me.

Jimmy McDonald, ed., CORE: Sit-In Songs, [1962], 19, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, Microfilm Edition (Sanford, N.C.: Microfilming Corporation of America, 1982), A:I:89:0547.

Despite Richard Haley's suggestions concerning the democratization of decision-making in New Orleans CORE, the core of the CORE community remained dominant in the group after the internal problems of 1962. This tight-knit group of friends continued to control organizational machinery and positions of power. They also planned CORE projects and undertook most of the action. Although the individuals composing the CORE nucleus cared deeply for the cause of civil rights and continued to work diligently for African American equality, New Orleans CORE slowly and steadily declined between 1962 and 1966. Several factors contributed to the demise of the affiliate.

The CORE community contained a very small number of individuals and they remained focused on the desegregation of public accommodations. Because of a lack of manpower, the group sponsored relatively few direct action projects in the city after 1962. Consequently, the CORE chapter recruited very few new members. To make matters worse, the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 deprived the organization of its primary targets--segregated public facilities. CORE-sponsored activities in New Orleans declined even further when some of the chapter's most active members went to work for the national organization as field secretaries and volunteers.

Because national CORE wanted New Orleans CORE to survive as an entity, national staff persons continued to play a significant role in New Orleans and in sustaining the chapter. Therefore, the local organization and CORE movement in New Orleans did not completely disintegrate as a result of its internal problems. Ultimately New Orleans CORE disappeared as a community and as an organization because of a new definition of community adopted by civil rights workers in New Orleans and around the country.

Activists in New Orleans began to focus on community organizing in 1964, devoting an increasing amount of energy to the approach as the decade proceeded. Just as Washington CORE disappeared into the ghettos of the District of Columbia, New Orleans CORE disappeared into the poorest wards of the city. Increasingly, national CORE field secretaries and the small number of New Orleans CORE members still in the city worked to organize people in already existing communities, such as neighborhoods and public housing projects, around issues important to the residents. Although a new, exciting and important approach to building indigenous movements and achieving change, the emphasis on community organizing was the death knell of local CORE chapters. As members worked to organize pre-existing communities of people through community organizing, they no longer worked to build and maintain a separate community of civil rights activists. The demise of a group of people who saw themselves as a CORE chapter meant not only the end of the support network needed to sustain community organizing but also the loss of the local building blocks of a national movement.

When sociologist Inge Powell Bell spent several days with the membership of New Orleans CORE during the summer of 1962, she discovered an "active nucleus" at the center of the affiliate. Although the chapter counted about thirty members, only fifteen individuals made up the nucleus group. Ten were college students and three of the young adults worked in semi-skilled or service occupations. Their college careers interrupted, the other two lived at home and lacked employment. Most of these individuals lived with their parents and even the two married members with children remained at home. Their parents worked steadily in unskilled positions, while each of their children desired white collar and professional careers.¹

"In its internal structure," Bell noted, "it was a cross between a political organization and a college friendship clique or neighborhood gang." Although the organization possessed a formal structure and the entire membership could discuss and vote on chapter business at weekly meetings, the active nucleus made most of the decisions and completed most of the work. Bell observed, "the real work and day-to-day decision making was carried on by the active nucleus of officers plus a few other active members, all close personal friends who saw each other almost daily."² In her conversations with these individuals Bell discovered "the CORE bond" as the most important factor underlying the relationships of the group. Those in the active nucleus spent all of their non-work and non-school time on CORE activities, talked with one another almost exclusively about CORE matters and developed very close emotional bonds.³

One CORE member told Bell, "We feel we are one family. We have the closeness of a family. We ran from the same things together. We've been implicated in the same things--we're constantly in touch with each other."⁴ In 1962 Betty Daniels, a 22-year-old African American CORE activist who became a member of this family during the freedom rides, said of it, "[I] Have been active with the best CORE group in existence.(New Orleans CORE)."⁵ Throughout their lives, the individuals who comprised the active nucleus of New Orleans CORE continued to view themselves as a special entity. To scholar Kim Lacy

¹Inge Powell Bell, CORE and the Strategy of Nonviolence (New York: Random House, 1968), 88 and 89.

²Bell, 90.

³Bell, 91.

⁴Bell, 91.

⁵Betty Jean Daniels, "Freedom Highway Application Blank," 31 May 1962, 1 and 2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:494:00128-00129.

Rogers, who spoke with some of these people many years later, they identified one another as "the basic people," "the same handful of people [taking action] over and over again," "the closest knit" and "the core of CORE."⁶

Overwhelmingly, women comprised the CORE nucleus. In 1961 Jerome Smith praised the female members of New Orleans CORE for their efforts in the lunchcounter desegregation campaign. He wrote,

I have the highest esteem for the members of this Army of Freedom Fighters, but special honor and praise for the backbone of the outfit, I'm referring to the courageous Women, for whom I feel are Gems of The Cause. These Angles [Angels] of Freedom have proven to the world that no sacrifice is too great for the freedom of man.[sic]⁷

He remembered New Orleans women as strong and forthright. They accepted whatever happened and acted courageously. Jerome Smith recalled one incident in jail. Since he felt so tired he just wanted to get to his cell to lie down so he ignored the derogatory names directed at him by his jailer. One of the Thompson sisters challenged the guard, telling him to address Jerome properly. Although these women had experienced the same trials as he, their strength amazed and buoyed him. Their action brought him back to his senses and he refused to obey the guard until he corrected his behavior.⁸

Matt Suarez recalled the many women who made up New Orleans CORE.

⁶Alice Thompson, Interview by Kim Lacy Rogers, 25 July 1988, tape recording, side one, Rogers Collection; Doratha Smith Simmons, Interview by Kim Lacy Rogers, 27 July 1988, tape recording, side one, Rogers Collection; Doris Jean Castle-Scott, Interview by Kim Lacy Rogers, 19 January 1989, tape recording, side one, Rogers Collection; Oretha Haley, Interview Kim Lacy Rogers, 27 November 1978, tape recording, side two, Rogers Collection.

⁷Jerome Smith to the Freedom Fighters, 5 May 1960 [1961], The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00754.

⁸Jerome Smith, Interview by Kim Lacy Rogers, 26 July 1988, tape recording, side one, Rogers Collection; Jerome Smith, Interview by Kim Lacy Rogers, 8 July 1988, tape recording, side one, Rogers Collection.

The attractive women, he confessed, were one of the things that drew him into the organization. In response to the interviewer's surprise, he defended his motivations. Once involved with the CORE activists, he underwent "changes in the heart." He believed the women pulled more men into the chapter than did philosophical arguments and once involved they became philosophically bound to the group.⁹ It bothered Doratha Smith Simmons that so few males participated in their CORE chapter, but she did not understand why. Mostly women made up the nucleus group. "Women were the backbone of this chapter," Smith Simmons declared.¹⁰

Doratha Smith Simmons identified Oretha Castle as the person in the New Orleans movement whom she most admired. She thought "it was terrific" that Castle exercised leadership in CORE especially since most of the civil rights leaders at the time were men. After 1961, women held most leadership positions in New Orleans CORE.¹¹ Oretha Castle remained president of the affiliate through 1964. During 1963 and 1964 Ruthie Wells served as vice chairman and Doratha Smith as secretary. Smith chaired the chapter in 1965 when Oretha Castle went to work for national CORE as a field secretary. At the same time the CORE headquarters moved from the Castle residence to the home of Doratha Smith. Other officers during 1965 included Joyce Elbrecht as vice chairman, Linda Smith as secretary and financial secretary Alice Thompson.¹²

⁹Matt Suarez, Interview by Kim Lacy Rogers, 20 June 1988, tape recording, side one, Rogers Collection.

¹⁰Doratha Smith Simmons, Interview by Rogers, side one.

¹¹Doratha Smith Simmons, Interview by Rogers, side one.

¹²John Rousseau, "CORE Sec'y Says 'Conscience Is Clear' In Interview Here," 22 September 1962, The Louisiana Weekly, 7; Marvin Robinson to Marcia [McKenna], 3 January 1963, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:265:00919; Oretha Castle to Marvin Rich, [1963 letterhead], 9 January 1964, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00945; New Orleans CORE, Press Release, 22 February 1964, The Papers of the Congress of Racial

Although new individuals joined New Orleans CORE between 1962 and 1965, the same people--primarily women--exercised leadership, made decisions and undertook action projects. In the winter of 1963-1964 African American field secretary Mary Hamilton faulted this group dynamic for the problems of the chapter. The CORE affiliate lacked members and energy because the same, tired individuals continued to dominate the group. She reported to Field Director James McCain,

It is my feeling that nothing can be done with the present group of people. At this time they are all rather inept, having proved their usefulness [sic] in the past, seem now to be devoid of enthusiasm. This is not meant to criticize them at all, it is completely understandable in that this work does become trying at times, and for the most part, quite unrewarding considering the amount of energy it is necessary to use to get even the slightest thing done.

Hamilton wanted to revitalize New Orleans CORE by recruiting new people to the group. To accomplish this she organized an education committee to bring in new members by presenting lecturers and a forum for discussion. She also wanted to attract more college students through workshops held at various campuses.¹³

Several weeks later Hamilton admitted, "New Orleans CORE has turned out to be even a larger problem than I ever imagined at the Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00946; Oretha Castle and Doratha Smith, "Certification of Delegates, 1964 CORE National Convention," 2 July 1964, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, C:1:76:0735; New Orleans Congress of Racial Equality, "Chapter Questionnaire," 28 September 1964, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, F:2:59:0316; Doratha Smith to James McCain, 29 December 1964, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, F:2:59:0318.

¹³Mary Hamilton to James McCain, field report, "Activities in Plaquemines Parish, La., New Orleans and Jackson, Miss.," 12 January 1964, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, F:2:59:0310; August Meier and Elliot Rudwick, CORE: A Study in the Civil Rights Movement, 1942-1968, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 152.

first." In her work trying to draw "new blood" into the chapter, Hamilton received very little cooperation from the membership. In fact, conflict arose between her and the nucleus group. Hamilton reported,

I attempted on several occasions to discuss with Oretha what steps could be taken in getting the chapter back on its feet. I met nothing but a stone wall in this effort. I have found it quite difficult to work with this group. To me there seems to be a general atmosphere of un-cooperateness and a hostility towards anyone whose task it is to be assigned to them.[sic]¹⁴

Although her efforts brought some new individuals to CORE meetings and activities, she still faced the animosity of the active nucleus a few weeks later. "There is still considerable consternation between the 'in-group' of the New Orleans chapter and myself," Hamilton stated.¹⁵

This core group alienated potential members as well, the field secretary discovered. The experienced membership provided interested participants with little incentive to join the organization. Mary Hamilton explained,

I have spoken to anumber of people who were at one time planning to join New Orleans CORE, sincere, intelligent people who would have been an asset to the chapter. They all said the szme thing, :[']I received no encouragement to join the group, I was given nothing to do.' These people were either lost to the NAACP or are just doing nothing.[sic]¹⁶

Steve Rubin, a white instructor at Louisiana State University,

¹⁴Mary Hamilton to James McCain, field report, "Plaquemines Parish, New Orleans, La., Plans for Extension into Southwest La.," 1 March 1964, 2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, F:2:59:0309.

¹⁵Mary Hamilton to James McCain, field report, "Southern Regional Office, New Orleans CORE Chapter, Activity in New Orleans Area," 17 March 1964, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, F:2:59:0313.

¹⁶Mary Hamilton to James McCain, field report, "Plaquemines Parish, New Orleans, La., Plans for Extension into Southwest La.," 1 March 1964, 2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, F:2:59:0309.

maintained his affiliation with the CORE chapter despite the hostility he felt from the leadership. In a letter to the Community Relations Director of national CORE, Marvin Rich, he expressed his frustration at being an outsider. He wondered if financial contributors received a subscription to the CORE-lator, but feared asking Oretha Castle about it. Rubin commented, "I have the feeling that Oretha never forwarded my name to N.Y.C., but with New Orleans CORE as touchy as it is, I don't want to ask even, lest my asking be taken (as it surely would be) for some sort of criticism."¹⁷

A local advisor to the group, Attorney Lolis Elie, agreed with Mary Hamilton that the chapter needed revitalizing. Together they tried to work out a solution without alienating anyone or causing more problems.¹⁸ Mary Hamilton's relationship to the core of the CORE chapter continued to hamper her work with the group; Oretha Castle, in particular, disliked the field secretary since she seemed to represent a threat to her power in the organization. In the end, Mary Hamilton wished someone else better luck with New Orleans CORE. In her last report on New Orleans, Hamilton wrote,

I have a suspicion that Oretha feels I want to see her deposed. Exactly where she got this notion I am not sure. I know that I have not discussed this possibility with no one except Elie, and he brought it up. In the first place, I do think a new chairman will do a better job than Oretha. This is because Oretha has said herself that she is tired and wants to give up the office. And her exhaustion shows itself in the work that is not being done in New Orleans. What ever other reasons for the alienation between the group and myself I am not aware of, although they are most certainly there. I am hoping that Dick [Richard Haley] will be

¹⁷Steven Rubin to Marvin Rich, 7 March 1964, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00947.

¹⁸Mary Hamilton to James McCain, field report, "Plaquemines Parish, New Orleans, La., Plans for Extension into Southwest La.," 1 March 1964, 2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, F:2:59:0309.

able to get to the bottom of it and that the chapter will once more become a strong active group. [sic]¹⁹

In March, 1964 Richard Haley arrived in New Orleans to establish and direct national CORE's Southern Regional Office. Concerning the New Orleans affiliate, Haley encouraged membership growth through a vibrant action program. He identified one of the factors contributing to the inability of the organization to attract area African American college students as the "absence of any sustained, large-scale local program."²⁰ Not long after his arrival he wrote to the membership of New Orleans CORE, "You should also continue to give attention to increasing the active members. In this regard, my own feelings is pretty much the same as it has always been: the best way to secure active members is through an energetic direct action program.[sic]" His letter to the chapter concluded,

Finally, what I have seen of this city during the past month, does not impress me. I see very little action toward improving the lot of the Negro citizens. If we were to remove the CORE picket line and the Youth Council picket line, there will be nothing else of civil rights left in New Orleans, but a quiet conference or two. In a sense, you have an open field, take it.²¹

Mary Hamilton perceived the affiliate needed more than direct action, it needed action beyond the bounds of public accommodations.

¹⁹Mary Hamilton to James McCain, field report, "Southern Regional Office, New Orleans CORE Chapter, Activity in New Orleans Area," 17 March 1964, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, F:2:59:0313.

²⁰R. Haley, "Suggestions to the CORE Campus Worker in New Orleans," 27 October 1964, 1, in August Meier and Elliot Rudwick, eds., Congress of Racial Equality Papers: A Collection of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Part 2: Southern Regional Office, 1959-1966 (Frederick, MD: University Publications of America, 1983), 5:1:00050. [Hereafter cited CORE Papers, Part 2: Southern Regional Office, 1959-1966, reel:series:frame.]

²¹Richard Haley to New Orleans CORE, 16 April 1964, 1 and 2, CORE Papers, Part 2: Southern Regional Office, 1959-1966, 1:1:00091-00092.

Through her work on college campuses in New Orleans, Hamilton assembled a small, interracial group of people who wanted to work on voter registration. The interracial body contained white students from Tulane University, Louisiana State University and Loyola University, along with a few African American CORE members. The group focused on voter registration in the Eleventh Ward. Hamilton hoped that once the program became established, it could organize the voters around more basic issues such as garbage collection and in this way increase CORE's membership and activism in New Orleans.²² She explained to Jim McCain,

Voter registration is not the only project I have in mind for this area. I have discussed at considerable length the possibility of engaging in more fundamental issues than V.R. That is, once we have the people attending clinics and then proceed on to mass meetings, I hope to begin attacking issues such as street repa[i]r, sewerage, street lights and the like. I hope to be able to develop the people to [the] point where they will sit-in on their ward representatives for these much needed repa[i]rs. Through this method, perhaps we can begin to build a really grass-roots movement here in New Orleans.²³

To her frustration, Hamilton encountered the resistance of the chapter leadership who still seemed oriented toward the desegregation issues of 1961. In her opinion, this new program focus would energize the New Orleans movement and therefore should be pursued even if it

²²Mary Hamilton to James McCain, field report, "Activities in Plaquemines Parish, La., New Orleans and Jackson, Miss.," 12 January 1964, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, F:2:59:0310; Mary Hamilton to James McCain, field report, "Plaquemines Parish, New Orleans, La., Plans for Extension into Southwest La.," 1 March 1964, 2-3, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, F:2:59:0309-0310; Steven Rubin to Marvin Rich, 7 March 1964, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00947.

²³Mary Hamilton to James McCain, field report, "Southern Regional Office, New Orleans CORE Chapter, Activity in New Orleans Area," 17 March 1964, 2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, F:2:59:0314.

alienated the existing membership. Before this new approach would be possible, Hamilton argued,

a lot of work is required for re-orientation of the New Orleans chapter. Right now they are thinking in terms of 1961 rather than 1964. It is my feeling that the time for sit-ins at drug stores, picket lines at theaters, etc. are over, and that what we must begin [sic] to do now is attack fundamental issues if CORE is to survive. Elie feels that I am getting too far ahead of the game. He is afraid that the p[e]ople are not yet quite ready for this type of activity. I do not agree that the people are not ready, however, I do feel that the leadership is a bit backward in its analysis of [sic] the situation. It is not my intention to castigate the New Orleans chapter. I realize that to present such a program now would create further alianation[sic], however, at the same time I am working on getting in new people with the hopes that they can be developed to guide such a project.²⁴

Out of the seven individuals working on Hamilton's voter registration project during the first week of March, only two came from New Orleans CORE.²⁵ By April, the leadership of the affiliate seemed to be more amenable to the campaign. Richard Haley observed, "I am glad to see that the chapter as a whole has decided to come to grips [sic] with the problem of voter registration in New Orleans. Voter registration is certainly one of the keys to opening up greater opportunities for Negroes."²⁶ Although the affiliate embraced voter registration in 1964, its focus remained direct action programs aimed at the desegregation of public accommodations. During 1964, chapter members completed their campaign to desegregate movie theaters in New Orleans and tested the compliance of local businesses to the Civil

²⁴Mary Hamilton to James McCain, field report, "Southern Regional Office, New Orleans CORE Chapter, Activity in New Orleans Area," 17 March 1964, 2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, F:2:59:0314.

²⁵Steven Rubin to Marvin Rich, 7 March 1964, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00947.

²⁶Richard Haley to New Orleans CORE, 16 April 1964, 1, CORE Papers, Part 2: Southern Regional Office, 1959-1966, 1:1:00091.

Rights Act. During the previous year members targeted hotel desegregation and segregation in public places including Audubon Park, Ponchartrain Beach and the Municipal Auditorium.²⁷

When scholar Kim Lacy Rogers asked New Orleans CORE members to define their goals during the civil rights movement, they underscored their struggle against de jure segregation. Alice Thompson declared they just wanted integration--the ability to drink at water fountains, to eat at lunchcounters and to use restroom facilities on the highways. They demanded the tangible things, viewing the struggle for jobs as a fight for a later time.²⁸ Oretha Castle Haley wanted basic human dignity. New Orleans CORE helped African Americans achieve dignity by focusing on one barrier to this goal. They concentrated their fight on legal segregation, especially in public accommodations. At the time, Castle believed they had accomplished a great deal by destroying the visible forms of segregation and instilling a sense of identity in black people.²⁹

Later, Oretha Castle Haley came to believe that her group had addressed the surface problems, only symptoms of deeper issues. Doratha Smith Simmons felt the same way.³⁰ She experienced a great sense of accomplishment during her activities with CORE because they desegregated New Orleans. Later she realized they fell short of their goals because African Americans did not achieve economic power. Without money, she came to believe, a person could not go to a movie or eat at a restaurant. At the time Smith Simmons did not look at the problems of blacks in terms of economics. If she could repeat her experience with

²⁷New Orleans Congress of Racial Equality, "Chapter Questionnaire," 28 September 1964, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, F:2:59:0316.

²⁸Alice Thompson, Interview by Rogers, side one.

²⁹Oretha Haley, Interview by Rogers, sides one, two and three.

³⁰Oretha Haley, Interview by Rogers, side two.

CORE, she thought, she would focus on job discrimination first.³¹

In retrospect, Oretha Castle also blamed her organization's focus on the desegregation of public accommodations as a factor leading to the demise of New Orleans CORE. In 1970 James Mosby asked the long-time leader of the group the whereabouts of the CORE chapter. "Oh, gracious, inactive today, it hasn't been active for some time," she replied.³² Castle then cataloged the factors resulting in the decline of her group. In her opinion, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 contributed to the destruction of New Orleans CORE. Because the membership of the affiliate concentrated on the desegregation of public accommodations between 1960 and 1964, the passage of the Civil Rights Act deprived the group of its target. Oretha Castle stated,

CORE as a chapter really started on its demise, on its death, after the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. Up to that point almost all, really, of the activities that had been engaged in by the chapter dealt with things like--well, all of its activities were involved with issues that would [end] segregation that was legally enforced for the most part . . . It wasn't just lunch counters, but there was so much legal segregation in New Orleans. After the 1964 Civil Rights Act it was basically then a matter of the need for one or two persons who would be plaintiffs in a law suit for the lawyers to take the needed action where persons weren't complying."³³

She also faulted national CORE for the demise of the New Orleans chapter because its officers hired local activists to work in the national movement. When active members left the area, she explained, "the chapter just kind of folded in a way with people becoming involved in what they called the CORE task force."³⁴ Matt Suarez also

³¹Doratha Smith Simmons, Interview by Rogers, side one.

³²Oretha Castle Haley, Interview by James Mosby, 26 May 1970, transcript, 25, Bunche Collection.

³³Oretha Castle Haley, Interview by Mosby, 27.

³⁴Oretha Castle Haley, Interview by Mosby, 26.

attributed the death of the New Orleans affiliate to the role of local activists in the national movement. Although the contribution benefitted the Southern civil rights movement tremendously, it devastated the local movement. He stated in 1969,

I think that one thing you have to realize is everything that the civil rights movement had in the South, just about primarily everything came from either New Orleans or Nashville. All of the Nashville people that started the movement went to work for SNCC, all of the New Orleans people went to work for CORE. CORE had drained New Orlean[s] of all of it's current, SNCC drained Nashville, so there wasn't any people left here to keep a Movement going[,] they were all on Nashville [national] staff for CORE.[sic]³⁵

Between 1961 and 1965, many of the individuals who composed the nucleus of the New Orleans chapter went to work for the Congress of Racial Equality and became involved in the national movement. The national office hired a few as field secretaries who stayed away from New Orleans CORE permanently or for long periods of time, while other local activists worked intermittently between the local and national movements. Jerome Smith, David Dennis and Oretha Castle became field secretaries, while Jean Thompson, George Raymond, Thomas Valentine, Doris Jean Castle, Frank Nelson, Patricia Smith Nelson, Shirley Thompson, Matteo Suarez, Ruth Wells, Alice Thompson and Doratha Smith served as subsistence volunteers in programs sponsored by national CORE. The loss of these activists made it difficult for New Orleans CORE to sponsor direct action projects and to remain active in the city.

Because of this mobility and the contribution of New Orleans CORE activists to the national civil rights movement, chapter members gained national reputations and the respect of other young civil rights

³⁵Matteo Suarez, Interview by Robert Wright, 11 August 1969, transcript, 11, Bunche Collection.

activists. Jerome Smith recalled, "even nationally the chapter in New Orleans was well known, it was not seen as a regular CORE chapter. It was much more like a SNCC unit." Like the activists of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, Smith explained, they had the reputation of "always standing in the fire" and "folks whose feet were constantly in the dust." Although a portion of the New Orleans CORE membership developed a national orientation and the national organization drew them away, Smith remembered "our first commitment was always here."³⁶

The national office of CORE usually recruited its staff people and volunteers from local chapters. Rudolph Lombard, 1960-1961 president of New Orleans CORE, discovered this as he tried to make plans for his future during his last semester at Xavier University. After graduation he wanted to pursue a graduate degree in public administration. When he asked Marvin Rich for a reference, Lombard revealed his commitment to civil rights activity. He wrote,

Dont misunderstand me, for my first love will always be the Congress of Racial Equality. But, further education seems to be a necessity as well as a choice, my ultimate objectives being those for which CORE is in business. To change New Orleans is certainly a compelling challenge.[sic]

He jokingly concluded, "It is such a pity that everyone, the likes of me, cannot work for CORE."³⁷ In response, Rich indicated that Lombard could work for the national organization. The Community Relations Director stated,

You know of course, that it is possible for idiots like you to work for CORE. After all, I work for CORE. We are particularly interested in recruiting staff members from our local groups since

³⁶Jerome Smith, Interview by Rogers, 26 July 1988, side one.

³⁷Rudy [Lombard] to Marv [Rich], 15 February 1961, 2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00901.

this means that we have to spend less time in training them. If you really are interested let me know.³⁸

Instead Lombard decided to attend Syracuse University the next year, but he continued his involvement with CORE. He served as the vice-chairman of the national organization and he helped to organize a CORE affiliate in Syracuse, New York. During the summers of 1962 and 1963 Lombard returned to the South to work as a CORE staff member.³⁹

Although Rudolph Lombard declined Rich's offer of employment, the membership of New Orleans CORE supplied an unusually large number of staff members and volunteers to national CORE between 1961 and 1964. The members of New Orleans CORE first became involved in the national civil rights movement through the Freedom Rides of 1961 and the testing of the Interstate Commerce Commission desegregation order which followed. At least ten individuals took freedom rides to Jackson, while others supplied training, housing and food to the riders beginning their journey in New Orleans. A handful of members undertook bus trips throughout Louisiana, Texas and Mississippi to test the ICC desegregation decree, suffering imprisonment and violence. Following his involvement in this campaign and his volunteer efforts to organize a CORE chapter in his hometown of Shreveport, Louisiana, David Dennis decided to devote an entire year to the movement for black equality and joined the staff of national CORE as a field secretary.⁴⁰

Withdrawing from Dillard University where he attended as a scholarship student, the twenty-one-year-old African American went to

³⁸Marv Rich to Rudolph Lombard, 13 March 1961, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00900.

³⁹Rudolph Lombard, Interview by author, 14 June 1996, tape recording, side 1 and 2.

⁴⁰CORE Southern Regional Office, "Biography [of] David J. Dennis - CORE Field Secretary," [Fall 1964], 1-2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, E:1:2:0279-0280.

Baton Rouge to organize the students of Southern University. Dennis established a CORE chapter on campus and invited his New Orleans CORE colleagues to assist him in efforts to train the group in the philosophy and tactics of nonviolence. Jerome Smith, Doris Castle and Julia Aaron began to work with the Southern University students in late November, 1961 and drew upon their experiences in the lunchcounter campaign, freedom rides and ICC testing. David Dennis arranged to smuggle Doris Castle into the female dormitories to orient the students not allowed to leave campus at night. He applauded Jerome Smith for his skill in organizing the students.⁴¹ The membership of the Baton Rouge affiliate praised David Dennis as an "extremely proficient," "effective" and diligent worker. The officers wanted Dennis to remain in their city and pleaded to Field Director Gordon Carey, "The Baton Rouge Chapter of CORE feels that Dave has done a remarkable job here and transferring him now would only deal a heavy blow to our movement at the University, the boycott, and to our 'young' chapter."⁴²

National CORE kept David Dennis in Baton Rouge. In mid-December the students mobilized to sit-in, picket and march to desegregate public facilities and to increase job opportunities for blacks in twelve downtown stores. Mass arrests, the expulsion of students from the university and a federal injunction against CORE followed. The restraining order named not only Louisiana field secretary David Dennis and local CORE leaders, but New Orleans CORE members Jerome Smith, Julia

⁴¹David Dennis to Gordon Carey, 19 September 1961, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:245:00153; David Dennis to Marvin Rich, 13 October 1961, 1-2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:245:00154; David Dennis to Gordon Carey, 25 November 1961, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:245:00161; David Dennis to Marvin Rich, 26 November 1961, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:42:00571.

⁴²Executive Committee of Baton Rouge Chapter of CORE to Gordon Carey, 5 December 1961, 2 and 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:42:00573.

Aaron and Doris Castle as well. It outlawed the organizational efforts of these CORE representatives in Baton Rouge. Dennis and Smith each went to jail with the students and endured a beating while incarcerated. In the aftermath of the expulsions, Dennis focused student attention on organizing the wider community and voter registration. After this campaign Jerome Smith became a field secretary for the national organization and David Dennis developed the idea of a "non-violent army" or large group of very low paid workers to labor for CORE throughout the country on national projects.⁴³

His plans evolved into the CORE Task Force, first formed during the summer of 1962. Five members of New Orleans CORE--all part of the nucleus community--joined this virtually volunteer, nonviolent army of twenty-five individuals. Scholar Inge Powell commented on the number of New Orleans CORE activists involved in the program when she arrived in the city to observe and to interview the membership. In July she wrote, "I have run into difficulty getting enough student-type CORE people because so many are out of town this time of year -- and quite a few have gone to Freedom Highways." As a field secretary, New Orleans activist Jerome Smith helped to prepare for the Freedom Highways project and to carry it out. Rudolph Lombard supervised the campaign as one of three project leaders.⁴⁴

⁴³CORE Southern Regional Office, "Biography [of] David J. Dennis - CORE Field Secretary," [Fall 1964], 2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, E:1:2:0280; "Police Tear-Gas Non-Violent Students: State, Federal Judges Enjoin CORE from 'Demonstrating'," The Louisiana Weekly, 23 December 1961, 1 and 7A; "FBI Probing BR Beatings: 3 Members Of CORE Victims, Ask US Action," The Louisiana Weekly, 13 January 1962, 1; [Field Secretaries listed with starting date, salary and rank], n.d., The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:294:00997.

⁴⁴CORE Southern Regional Office, "Biography [of] David J. Dennis - CORE Field Secretary," [Fall 1964], 2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, E:1:2:0280; Gordon Carey, "Freedom Highways," CORE-lator, 97 (September [1962]): 4, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 6:1:00155; Inge Powell to Marvin

Organizers designed Freedom Highways to desegregate the public accommodations used by automobile travelers along major thoroughfares in the South. Although the program originally targeted roadways stretching from Florida to the District of Columbia, the CORE Task Force focused on major North Carolina highways. They also narrowed their attack, targeting the hotels and restaurants of Howard Johnson and Holiday Inn which refused to integrate. Additionally, national CORE personnel intended to use the campaign to organize local CORE chapters in communities along the Freedom Highways route. After two-weeks of intensive training, Task Force members traveled the roadways, demonstrated at segregated facilities and mobilized area townspeople during July and August, 1962.⁴⁵

Eight members of New Orleans CORE wanted to participate in the Freedom Highways program. Women dominated the group of five who ended up in North Carolina. The New Orleans contingent contained four African American women and one white male. It included Doris Jean Castle and sisters Shirley and Jean Thompson, all either 19 or 20 years of age. The only white of the group, 23-year-old Frank Nelson, accompanied his new, 18-year-old wife Patricia Smith Nelson. A civil engineer, he postponed a job opportunity in California to enlist in the Task Force. Two 20-year-old, African American males from New Orleans also wanted to

Rich, 17 July 1962, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00935; Gordon Carey to Norman Hill, memorandum, 5 June 1962, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:494:00131; Memorandum from the Program Department, 13 July 1962, 2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:128:00141.

⁴⁵The Program Department, "Report To The National Action Committee On Freedom Highways," 23 March 1962, 1-3, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:494:00032-00033; Memorandum from the Program Department, 13 July 1962, 1-2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:128:00141; CORE, "Summer Action Bulletin," 23 July 1962, 1, Memorandum from the Program Department, 13 July 1962, 2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:494:00329.

work in the program. Family problems kept Thomas Valentine at home, while George Raymond, Jr. did not become a Task Force worker in North Carolina until the winter of 1963. Betty Daniels also withdrew at the last minute.⁴⁶ National CORE almost lost the involvement of the other five New Orleans activists because they lacked the finances to get to North Carolina. After clearly reminding the program's director of the potential of their contribution, they received financial assistance from national CORE. The team argued,

As you know, there are quite a few volunteers for the Freedom Highways project from New Orleans. Unfortunately, due to the provision of the instructions requiring all participants to provide their own transportation to Greensboro for the training session, we have run into difficulties, mainly financial. . . . [the] expense [to you] is small compared to the value of having six volunteers with a great deal of experience in these matters in the south. Four of our volunteers were on the Jackson Freedom rides, all were involved in other Freedom Rides, and all have a

⁴⁶Shirley Thompson, "Freedom Highway Application Blank," [May 1962], 1-2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:494:00114-00115; Jean Thompson, "Freedom Highway Application Blank," [May 1962], 1-2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:494:00110-00111; Doris Jean Castle, "Freedom Highway Application Blank," [May 1962], 1-2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:494:00124-00125; Patricia Smith Nelson, "Freedom Highway Application Blank," [June 1962], 1-2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:494:00176-00177; Frank Nelson, "Freedom Highway Application Blank," [June 1962], 1-2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:494:00177-00178; Frank Nelson to Gordon Carey, 18 June 1962, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:494:00176; Thomas Valentine, "Freedom Highway Application Blank," [May 1962], 1-2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:494:00159-00160; George Raymond, Jr., "Freedom Highway Application Blank," [May 1962], 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:261:00696; Gordon Carey to Jon Schaeffer, 4 January 1963, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:267:01059; George Raymond, Interview by Robert Wright, 28 September 1968, transcript, 2-3, Bunche Collection; Betty Jean Daniels, "Freedom Highway Application Blank," 31 May 1962, 1-2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:494:00128-00129; [note card re Freedom Highways Campaign re Betty Jean Daniels], [June 1962], The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:494:00126. See acceptance letter from Gordon Carey to each person at 5:494:00109, 00113, 00123, 00127, 00155, 00158, 00175.

long record of Core participation. Without some form of financial aid from the national office we fear that some, or possibly all, of the New Orleans contingent will be unable to participate in the Freedom Highways project, however great their desire.[sic]⁴⁷

During the campaign, police arrested Doris Castle and Frank Nelson. Authorities sentenced Nelson to 60 days of hard labor for trespassing. He embarked upon a twenty-day hunger strike because his arrest served to bolster segregation, because police brutalized some of the CORE inmates and because prison administrators segregated him from the other integrationist prisoners. Officials transferred Nelson to the prison hospital after inmates threatened his life and the officials force-fed him to end his fast. By September 1, the official termination date of the Freedom Highways campaign, the Task Force succeeded in desegregating five of the twenty Howard Johnson Restaurants in North Carolina. Many of these low paid workers remained in the state to complete the job under the leadership of field secretary Jerome Smith. Of the New Orleans group, Frank Nelson continued to serve out his jail term and Jean Thompson stayed in the state until mid-October.⁴⁸

After the Freedom Highways campaign, decision-makers in national CORE decided to continue the use of Task Force workers. One staff person characterized these individuals as "mobile, hard-hitting

⁴⁷Shirley Thompson et al to Gordon Carey, 9 July 1962, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:494:00311.

⁴⁸CORE, "Police Brutality, Arrests Mark Mass Rally At Howard Johnson'," press release, 20 August [1962], 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:494:00345; CORE, "CORE Member Threatened in North Carolina Jail," press release, 29 August [1962], 1-2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:494:00351; James Farmer to CORE Group Leaders, memorandum, 31 August 1962, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:494:00352; James Farmer to CORE Chapters, memorandum, 11 September 1962, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:494:00354; Gordon Carey to Floyd McKissick, 17 October 1962, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:259:00557; Gordon Carey to Shirley Thompson, 10 December 1962, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:464:01056.

subsistence volunteers."⁴⁹ Over the next two years, many of the New Orleans CORE activists belonging to the nucleus group of the local affiliate worked across the country as CORE Task Force members. These individuals volunteered out of their commitment to the civil rights movement and because national office personnel consciously recruited them.⁵⁰ Seven served as task force workers during portions of 1963, while in 1964 eight people worked for national CORE in communities far from New Orleans.

The three Thompson sisters spent time in the Task Force during 1963 and 1964. They alternated time in New Orleans with time spent organizing other Louisiana communities. Jean Thompson, 21, served as a subsistence volunteer during the summer of 1963.⁵¹ Instead of attending school during the 1963 fall semester, Alice and Shirley Thompson, 24 and 20, worked on voter registration in Southern Louisiana. Alice remembered registering voters in Clinton, Paris and Hammond, Louisiana. Shirley returned to Southern University-New Orleans for one semester before re-enlisting in the Louisiana Task Force for the summer of 1964.⁵²

⁴⁹CORE, "Doris Jean Castle," [biography], [1964], The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, E:1:1:0278.

⁵⁰See, for example, Gordon Carey to Marvin Robinson, 29 May 1962, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:265:00863; Gordon Carey to Shirley Thompson, 10 December 1962, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:464:01056 and Marcia [McKenna] to Ronnie Moore, 11 May 1964, CORE Papers, Part 2: Southern Regional Office, 1959-1966, 1:1:00141. McKenna wanted Moore to recruit African American Southerners from local communities for the Task Force. She continued, "Also, can you speak to Haley about getting people from New Orleans. I'll call him too."

⁵¹Jean Thompson, "Application For Summer Field Worker In CORE Task Force," 25 July 1963, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:468:00088; James T. McCain to Jerome [Smith], 19 August 1963, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:268:01101.

⁵²Mary Hamilton to James McCain, field report, 14 October 1963, 5, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:251:00671; Mary Hamilton to James McCain, field report, 7 January

Ruth Wells, 22, and Thomas Valentine, 21, also worked on the Louisiana Task Force during 1963 and 1964. Although Wells divided her time between the Task Force and school at Southern University-New Orleans, Tom Valentine remained a low paid volunteer from the summer of 1963 throughout 1964. CORE assigned Valentine to communities across Louisiana including West Baton Rouge Parish, the Fifth and Sixth Congressional Districts and the town of De Ridder.⁵³ Doratha Smith volunteered for the Louisiana Task Force in the summer of 1964.

Although the twenty-one-year-old wanted to organize in other Louisiana communities with her CORE colleagues, the national office assigned her to the Southern Regional Office in New Orleans. Throughout the summer and fall of 1964, Smith undertook secretarial and clerical duties for other staff members. Often bored in the office, she sometimes snuck to the Louisiana towns where her friends worked, including Jonesboro,

1964, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:285:00558; Ronnie Moore to Jim [McCain], 19 January 1964, 2, CORE Papers, Part 2: Southern Regional Office, 1959-1966, 1:1:00036; James McCain to Shirley Thompson, 2 June 1964, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:466:01461; Shirley Thompson, "Application For Field Worker In CORE Task Force," [May 1964], 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:466:01462; Alice Thompson, Interview by Rogers, 1; "Given Police Escort After Tense Trial," The Louisiana Weekly, 18 November 1961, 1.

⁵³Mary Hamilton to James McCain, field report, 14 October 1963, 1 and 4, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:251:00669 and 00670; Ruthie Wells, "Application For Field Worker In CORE Task Force," 8 June 1964, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:466:01560; Thomas Valentine, "Application For Summer Field Worker In CORE Task Force," 5 July 1963, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:466:01569; Mary Hamilton to James McCain, field report, 7 January 1964, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:285:00558; Tom Valentine to Richard Haley, 17 March 1964, CORE Papers, Part 2: Southern Regional Office, 1959-1966, 1:1:00078; Marcia [McKenna] to Ronnie Moore, 16 July 1964, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:467:00033; Bruce Baines to Jim McCain, field report, 28 August 1964, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, F:2:57:0269; Richard Haley to James McCain, 1 September 1964, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:223:00367.

Monroe and Bogalusa.⁵⁴

Three other members of New Orleans CORE participated in the Mississippi Task Force during 1963 and 1964, while field secretary David Dennis directed their efforts. Dennis started to work in Mississippi in June, 1962 and remained in the state through September, 1964. One of the first civil rights workers to enter the state, Dennis registered voters, organized the first food relief program and helped to establish a quilt-making cooperative in Ruleville. With others he developed the community center program and founded the Council of Federated Organizations (COFO), an umbrella group designed to coordinate the activities of various civil rights organizations active in Mississippi. Dennis worked with COFO on the first Mississippi Freedom Ballot in November, 1963 and the 1964 Mississippi Freedom Summer Project. In cooperation with the Mississippi leadership of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, Dennis planned and administered the state-wide project.⁵⁵

Doris Castle, Matteo Suarez and George Raymond all began to work in Mississippi in 1963. Doris Castle registered voters in Clarksdale during the summer.⁵⁶ Matteo Suarez primarily worked in Meridian, Mississippi to register voters and to mobilize the community to action. George Raymond organized people in Ruleville and Canton. Although

⁵⁴Doratha Smith, "Application For Field Worker In CORE Task Force," 15 May 1964, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:466:01273; Richard Haley to James McCain, 5 June 1964, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:250:00554; [National CORE], "Field Staff Personnel," 8 September 1964, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, F:3:28:1200; Doratha Smith Simmons, Interview by Rogers, 1.

⁵⁵CORE Southern Regional Office, "Biography [of] David J. Dennis - CORE Field Secretary," [Fall 1964], 2-3, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, E:1:2:0280.

⁵⁶CORE, "Doris Jean Castle," [biography], [1964], The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, E:1:1:0278; Thomas Gaither to James McCain, 27 August 1963, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:249:00427.

Suarez and Raymond based their activities in Meridian and Canton during 1964, they operated throughout the state carrying out COFO projects including Mississippi Freedom Summer.⁵⁷ During the summer of 1964, Doris Castle moved to New York City and became a community relations assistant for national CORE. In this capacity, Castle tried to raise funds for the organization. The following year she worked as an assistant to the Associate National Director, George Wiley.⁵⁸

After the successful completion of Freedom Summer, CORE appointed Dennis the Southern Program Director. Stationed at the Southern Regional Office in New Orleans, Dennis tried to develop programs for the rest of the South based on what he had learned in Mississippi.⁵⁹ While Dennis returned to New Orleans, Oretha Castle, the long-term president of the local CORE affiliate, became a field secretary for the national organization. Upon graduating from college, Castle decided to spend one

⁵⁷Dave Dennis to Jim McCain, "Mississippi in Motion," 19 October 1963, 1-3, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:245:00163-00164; "CORE Staff Reference Sheet," 24 February 1964, 2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:297:01192; Miriam Cohen to Norm Hill, 12 March 1964, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:470:00149; [list of paid staff members in Mississippi], 21 September 1964, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:258:00490; Matt Suarez, Interview by Rogers, side one; George Raymond, Interview by Wright, 2-3, 5 and 6; George Raymond to Gordon Carey, 16 May 1963, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:262:00714; James McCain to George Raymond, 3 October 1963, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:262:00720; "Untitled," CORE-lator 104 (February 1964): 5, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 6:1:00171; Ed Hollander to Marvin [Rich], 23 April 1964, 1-2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:223:00296; Richard Haley to James McCain, 5 June 1964, 1-2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:250:00554; "Field Staff Personnel," 8 September 1964, 2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, F:3:28:1201.

⁵⁸Doris Jean Castle-Scott, Interview by Rogers, side six and seven; CORE, "Doris Jean Castle," [biography], [1964], The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, E:1:1:0278.

⁵⁹CORE Southern Regional Office, "Biography [of] David J. Dennis - CORE Field Secretary," [Fall 1964], 3, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, E:1:2:0280.

year working in the civil rights movement on a full-time basis. She left New Orleans for her one-year assignment in Northern Louisiana during the fall of 1964.⁶⁰ For the first time since the formation of the chapter, New Orleans CORE had to operate without Oretha Castle.

By the fall of 1964, many of the most active members of the chapter worked in other southern communities. Richard Haley, the 1964-1965 Director of the Southern Regional Office, remembered that good workers, but few leaders, remained in the CORE chapter. He stated in 1979, "There were some strong workers that were still here, but these were people who were not interested particularly in leadership; they were interested in work." Haley classified the Thompson sisters and Doratha Smith, the 1965 president of the chapter, as workers. He understood that they wanted someone else to set up a program for them to carry out. In 1964 and 1965, Richard Haley did take some initiative; he knew that the chapter needed revitalizing through a new program. In retrospect, Haley felt disappointed in his failure to do more to maintain the New Orleans affiliate. He found it difficult to know how much time to devote to the local movement while he worked as the Southern Director. In 1979, he wished he had focused more time on the local problems and programs.⁶¹

Despite the problems which plagued the New Orleans CORE community between 1962 and 1964, it survived because of the intervention of the national organization. Although New Orleans CORE possessed a small membership, recruited few new participants, focused its energies on the

⁶⁰Richard Haley to James McCain, 31 October 1964, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:223:00387; "2 Report Assault By 15 Whites in Monroe," The Louisiana Weekly, 12 December 1964, 1; Oretha Haley, Interview by Rogers, side 2; Oretha Castle to Richard Haley, 21 May 1965, 1, CORE Papers, Part 2: Southern Regional Office, 1959-1966, 1:1:00492.

⁶¹Richard Haley, Interview by Kim Lacy Rogers, 9 May 1979, tape recording, side two, Rogers Collection.

desegregation of public accommodations and lost many of its most active members to the national movement, the personnel of national CORE helped sustain and maintain the chapter. The national organization provided leadership, manpower, advice, ideas and financial support.

The New Orleans CORE community benefitted from the assistance of national CORE staff members and activists brought to the city by the national movement. For example, the Freedom Rides attracted many individuals to the area to attend the CORE training school before leaving on their bus journey to Jackson, Mississippi. Some participated in the local direct action projects of the New Orleans chapter, while a few others remained in the area permanently. Between her two bus trips to Jackson, Norma Wagner, a white housewife in her thirties and a member of Rochester CORE, sat-in at the train station and McCrory's drug store while in New Orleans. Police arrested Wagner and five other visiting freedom riders at the Calliope Housing Project while they distributed leaflets advertising a rally. Henry Schwarzchild of Chicago also worked on New Orleans CORE projects while in the South to complete a freedom ride.⁶²

Activists such as Frank Nelson and Isaac Reynolds remained in the city after the completion of the summer freedom rides. After his brutal beating by local police, Frank Nelson joined the affiliate, tested the ICC desegregation order and married local activist Patricia Smith. Isaac Reynolds, a 29-year-old African American member of Detroit CORE, also stayed in the New Orleans area after his experience on the freedom rides. A graduate of Wayne State University with a degree in

⁶²Norma J. Wagner, "Freedom Highway Application," [May 1962], 1-2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:494:00222-00223; "CORE Members Arrested," [photo caption], The Louisiana Weekly, 12 August 1961, 1; Sterling Stucky to Gordon Carey, [summer 1961], 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:443:01366.

accounting, Reynolds lived in an apartment at the home of Oretha and Doris Jean Castle. He participated in local direct action projects and periodically worked in the city after being hired as a field secretary for the national organization. By 1963, he used New Orleans as the base for his travels across the South and in 1966 became the director of the Southern Regional Office.⁶³

National CORE first opened its Southern Regional Office in New Orleans during the spring of 1962 under the direction of Marvin Robinson. Robinson, an African American who first became involved with CORE in 1960 after demonstrations at Southern University-Baton Rouge, helped James McCain establish the New Orleans CORE chapter two years earlier. National CORE wanted Robinson, as the director of the Southern Regional Office, to develop and serve CORE affiliates throughout the South.⁶⁴ On behalf of the national organization and in cooperation with other national CORE personnel, Robinson also devoted significant energy to the local movement for black equality. He provided program ideas, participated in demonstrations, kept national CORE informed of local activities and tried to keep the action moving.

During 1962 and 1963, Marvin Robinson and other national staff

⁶³Isaac Reynolds, "Freedom Highway Application," 29 May 1962, 1-2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:494:00318-00319; Isaac Reynolds, "Application For Field Worker in CORE Task Force," 29 November 1962, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:263:00729; Isaac Reynolds, Interview by James Mosby, 27 May 1970, transcript, 19 and 31, Bunche Collection; Ike [Reynolds] to Jim McCain, 26 December 1963, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:263:00740; New Orleans CORE, Press Release, 22 February 1964, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00946; [National CORE], "Field Staff Personnel," 8 September 1964, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, F:3:28:1200.

⁶⁴Jim McCain to Marvin Robinson, 6 March 1962, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:265:00853; "CORE Opens 1st Regional Office Here," The Louisiana Weekly, 19 May 1962, 1; Marvin Robinson to Fredricka Teer, 24 May 1962, 1-2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:265:00867.

persons suggested New Orleans CORE members help African American parents prepare for school desegregation, integrate the local Howard Johnson Restaurant and target police brutality.⁶⁵ After a meeting of the national governing body of CORE in New Orleans, National Director James Farmer worked with Marvin Robinson and the officers of New Orleans CORE to map a strategy for the city and to plan activities to combat segregation in 1963.⁶⁶ During that year, Robinson actively contributed to the success of several local projects.

Robinson's office coordinated local donations for impoverished blacks in Mississippi.⁶⁷ He also assisted the membership of New Orleans CORE in their Easter Boycott of downtown stores. CORE became involved in this Selective Buying Campaign as part of the Citizen's Committee, the coalition of area organizations who negotiated the desegregation of lunchcounters in 1962. This time the coalition sought non-menial job opportunities on Canal Street for African Americans.⁶⁸ During the same period, Robinson mobilized New Orleans CORE in support of the black employees of the Louisiana State University Medical School

⁶⁵Norman Hill to Marvin Robinson, 24 April 1962, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:499:01167; Gordon Carey to Oretha Castle, 26 September 1962, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:494:00380; Gordon Carey to Oretha Castle, 31 October 1962, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:494:00403; National CORE, press release, 27 December [1962], The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:351:01113; Oretha [Castle] to Marvin Rich, 26 March 1963, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00942.

⁶⁶"Map N.O. CORE Strategy," [photo caption], The Louisiana Weekly, 12 January 1963, 2.

⁶⁷Marvin Robinson to James McCain, "December Report," 17 January 1963, 1-2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:351:01124.

⁶⁸Jim McCain to Marvin Robinson, 25 March 1963, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:265:0949; Marv Robinson to Jim [McCain], 25 March 1963, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:265:00948; Steering Committee of the National Action Council, Minutes, 29 March 1963, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, C:1:63:0542; "Report Progress With Canal Street Stores," The Louisiana Weekly, 11 May 1963, 1.

Cafeteria who went on strike to protest the manager's refusal to serve an African American student visiting the institution. After their employer fired them, Robinson tried to broker a compromise which included an apology for the student, the reinstatement of the strikers and the desegregation of the facility. Robinson and local CORE members supported the employees with cafeteria sit-ins and picketing.⁶⁹

Although James McCain chastised Robinson for the money he expended on the campaign, Robinson defended his actions. He stated,

The expenses were incurred as a result of attempting to aid persons who could not or did not know how to carry out a program which they had initiated. Through the CORE office their objectives were realized and as a result we have 26 additional friends, average people, we have made inroads into the Motel, Hotel and Restaurant Local, we received and are still receiving publicity locally and nationally as a result of our aiding the workers.⁷⁰

Marvin Robinson and the resources of the national organization also played an instrumental role in the desegregation of the city's hotels. James McCain, the Director of Organization, initiated a lawsuit against the Royal Orleans Hotel for failing to honor his confirmed room reservation on November 27, 1962. The suit challenged the Louisiana law which mandated the separation of the races in rental housing. To bolster the legal challenge, Marvin Robinson and the membership of New Orleans CORE targeted a segregated public meeting and dinner at the Hotel Roosevelt hosted by the Foreign Relations Association of New

⁶⁹National CORE, "Sit-ins Close Cafeteria Which Refused to Serve Medical Student," press release, 3 April [1963], The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:351:01127; "Protest Bias In LSU Med School Cafe," The Louisiana Weekly, 6 April 1963, 1 and 6.

⁷⁰Marv [Robinson] to Jim [McCain], 15 April 1963, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:265:00956; Jim McCain to Marvin Robinson, 12 April 1963, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:265:00955.

Orleans. The forum featured the foreign correspondents of the National Broadcasting Company who reflected on U.S. efforts to combat communism around the world. Robinson cooperated in the planning of the project and picketed the event.⁷¹

The director of the Southern Regional Office believed the hotel desegregation project would benefit if New Orleans hotels and tourism suffered economic losses. He proposed that the national office engineer the cancellation of two major events, both planned for the same September weekend. The American Legion wanted to hold its national convention in the city and the National Football League scheduled two football games. If city businesses refused the legionnaires and football players integrated lodging and eating facilities, both events should be cancelled. Pressure from the national office and continued hotel segregation convinced the American Legion to re-locate its conference to Miami, Florida. When the three federal judges hearing McCain's lawsuit declared hotel segregation unconstitutional, they also admitted their ruling could not force the establishments to integrate. Despite the resistance of hotel owners, CORE negotiators and the underlying threat of direct action opened three of the major hotels to all guests.⁷²

⁷¹"2 Suits Challenge New Orleans Hotel Jim Crow," The Louisiana Weekly, 15 December 1962, 1 and 7; "Hotel Bars 2 From World News Forum: NBC Newsmen Ignore Racism But Rap U.S. Foreign Policy," The Louisiana Weekly, 12 January 1963, 1 and 7; Marvin Robinson to Marcia [McKenna], 3 January 1963, 1-2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:265:00919; Marvin Robinson to James McCain, "December Report," 17 January 1963, 3-5, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:351:01125-01126.

⁷²Marv [Robinson] to Jim [McCain], 18 April 1963, 1-2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:265:00962; National CORE, "Vow Action If Hotels Segregate During Legion Convention," press release, 18 April [1963], The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:351:01116; "Hotel Bias Ruled Invalid As Legion Cancels Convention," The Louisiana Weekly, 25 May 1963, 1; James Farmer to CORE Group Leaders, 31 May 1963, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:9:00910; "New Orleans Action Brings Two Key

Marvin Robinson believed his efforts significantly benefitted the New Orleans affiliate. When his supervisor, James McCain, suggested the Southern Regional Office should close because its successes paled in comparison to its costs, Robinson defended his record. He thought he did rather well given the fact his duties required him single-handedly to run the Southern Regional Office and to travel throughout the deep South to organize and serve chapters. In Robinson's opinion, the Southern Regional Office failed to live up to McCain's expectations because no one worked in it while he undertook field work. On the other hand, when he stayed in New Orleans the area benefitted from his presence. In response to McCain's decision to close the office Robinson wrote,

You cannot have an office without someone to staff it. When I am in New Orleans and start a project or attempt to coordinate activities for this area things are fine. As soon as I leave, the office is no longer an office. It isn't even used for much of anything when I'm gone, away. From my point of view unless there is a staff member, secretary or volunteer, which we haven't found, or some competent person to coordinate CORE activities in the area, there is no office, only a room.

Marvin Robinson believed New Orleans needed the Southern Regional Office, but only if someone could staff it all of the time. In the end, the office closed in July, 1963.⁷³

Rulings," CORE-lator, 101 (July 1963): 4, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 6:1:00163.

⁷³Marv [Robinson] to Jim [McCain], 18 April 1963, 1 and 2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:265:00966; James McCain to Marvin Robinson, 16 January 1962, 1-2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:265:00852-00853; Marv [Robinson] to Jim [McCain], 15 April 1963, 1-3, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:265:00956-00957; James McCain to Marvin Robinson, 17 April 1963, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:265:00958; Jim McCain to Lolis Elie, 5 July 1963, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:351:01129; Marv [Robinson] to Jim [McCain], 11 September 1963, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:265:00982.

Although Marvin Robinson thought he helped further the New Orleans' struggle for racial equality, he did not always enjoy a good relationship with the membership of New Orleans CORE. Problems between Robinson and the most prominent members of the chapter developed over the attitude of these local activists. Because they considered themselves a special group with close ties to the national organization, the membership of New Orleans CORE bypassed Robinson's authority and disregarded other rules established by national CORE. Richard Haley reported Marvin Robinson's concerns to Jim McCain after the two worked together at the 1962 Nonviolent Action Institute in Houston, Texas. Haley related,

Marvin is not altogether happy with the New Orleans group. He feels they consider themselves sort of the 'pet' of [the] national office, and consequently bypass him to deal directly with the office. I guess he's at least partly right, even though there's an element of prestige-consciousness in his complaint. After all, he's supposed to feed them information, not vice-versa.⁷⁴

A few weeks later Haley reported further, "Marvin Robinson is concerned about the 'direct line' from New Orleans CORE to national office. He feels it spoils the CORE-group, and also creates an awkward situation for him.[sic]"⁷⁵

Robinson informed Haley of this problem for a number of reasons, but primarily because Oretha Castle by-passed his responsibility by writing directly to the national office for money to extricate the CORE chapter from financial difficulties. She requested two-hundred and ten dollars to cover some checks that threatened to bounce. Haley sent the

⁷⁴Richard Haley to Jim [McCain], 14 August 1962, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:265:00890.

⁷⁵Dick [Richard Haley] to James McCain, 8 September 1962, 2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, F:2:71:0592.

money as a loan, not a donation. Robinson later told Haley the bank account actually contained enough money because of a recent benefit.⁷⁶ About eight months later Marvin Robinson reiterated his concerns over the attitude of this CORE affiliate. Although he repeatedly told the local CORE members not to use the office phone to make long distance calls, they continued to do so. "As I stated in previous correspondence[,], someone created a situation in New Orleans whereby persons are above the normal rules and regulations and so do not abide by such," Robinson opined.⁷⁷

The membership of New Orleans CORE did develop closer relationships with members of the national organization than most local activists. Beginning with the origins of the chapter and continuing through the freedom rides, national staff persons spent a great deal of time working in New Orleans. In addition, many New Orleans activists became employees and task force members of the national organization. Through this interaction many personal friendships developed. National personnel sometimes expressed this closeness.

In response to an invitation to speak on New Orleans, field secretary Genevieve Hughes wrote, "I always like to discuss this topic as it is very close to my heart."⁷⁸ Agreeing to send recommendations to graduate schools on behalf of Rudolph Lombard's application, Marvin Rich bantered, "I'm going to lie like hell and make is[t] sound like you're a realigood guy.[sic]"⁷⁹ Staff members often sent greetings to

⁷⁶Dick Haley to Oretha Castle, 2 August 1962, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:294:01003; Richard Haley to Jim [McCain], 14 August 1962, 1-2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:265:00890.

⁷⁷Marv [Robinson] to Jim [McCain], 18 April 1963, 2 and 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:265:00961.

⁷⁸Genevieve Hughes to Mark Dodson, 15 February 1961, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:254:00891.

⁷⁹Marv Rich to Rudy Lombard, 15 February 1961, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00896.

individuals in New Orleans through their correspondence. For example, James McCain conveyed the message "My warmest regards to the Castles!" through field worker Isaac Reynolds.⁸⁰ Prior to a national convention he wrote to Oretha Castle, "I[t] certainly will be a tonic to see you and the family. My warmest regards to the entire family."⁸¹ Oretha's grandmother stitched a quilt for Gordon Carey, the Director of the Program Department.⁸² Carey addressed Doris Jean Castle as "Sweetie" when he mailed her a recently produced pamphlet on the Freedom Highways campaign. He joked, "Naturally, I tried to get your picture in it, but Marvin overruled me!"⁸³ The Assistant Community Relations Director, Val Coleman, signed correspondence to Oretha Castle with "Love."⁸⁴

As well as bolstering the New Orleans CORE community with emotional support and friendship, national CORE provided the chapter with a great deal of financial assistance. In addition to paying the salaries of field secretaries who worked in New Orleans, the treasury of the national organization funded other aspects of the local CORE movement. National money sometimes purchased the supplies needed to produce picket signs and leaflets.⁸⁵ National personnel advanced the

⁸⁰James McCain to Ike [Reynolds], 15 July 1964, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:263:00792; Fredricka [Teer] to Jerome Smith, 2 May 1962, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:268:01080.

⁸¹James McCain to Oretha Castle, 30 April 1963, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:351:01128.

⁸²Gordon Carey to Oretha Castle, 12 May 1964, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, A:1:21:0497.

⁸³Gordon Carey to Doris Jean Castle, 10 December 1962, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:494:00457.

⁸⁴Val Coleman to Oretha Castle, 27 October 1964, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00955.

⁸⁵Nooker [James McCain] to Gordon [Carey], 21 December 1961, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:258:00360; Jim McCain to Marvin Robinson, 12 April 1963, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:265:00955; Marv [Robinson] to Jim [McCain], 15 April 1963, 1-2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:265:00956.

chapter money, such as two-hundred and ten dollars in 1962 to cover some checks that threatened to bounce and three-hundred and fifty dollars in 1963 to organize a benefit concert featuring Odetta.⁸⁶ Other fund raising opportunities provided by the national office included a visit by author James Baldwin and access to the film Louisiana Diary.⁸⁷

Besides this periodic financial assistance, the national body sustained the activities of the New Orleans affiliate by paying the group's legal bills. The membership of New Orleans CORE depended on the legal expertise of three African American lawyers. Nils Douglas, Lolis Elie and Robert Collins opened a law firm in 1960 and soon became CORE's primary attorneys in Louisiana. They began to work with the New Orleans affiliate after the first lunchcounter sit-ins. Between 1960 and 1965, Elie, Collins and Douglas provided legal defense, advice and leadership to the local CORE chapter. Since civil rights cases earned them very little money, they also handled criminal and civil cases for members of the local black community. Robert Collins recalled, "we had to scratch to make a living; we just eked out a very bare living in those days." Although national CORE paid them for their services and eventually placed the firm on retainer, their fees and expenses went unpaid for months. Elie commented in 1970, "CORE is indebted to us--well, I . . . certainly intended never to collect it. But CORE must owe us now like

⁸⁶Dick Haley to Oretha Castle, 2 August 1962, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:294:01003; Richard Haley to Jim [McCain], 14 August 1962, 1-2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:265:00890; Oretha [Castle] to Marv [Rich], 9 January 1964, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00945; Marv [Rich] to Oretha Castle, 28 January 1964, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00945.

⁸⁷Marv Rich to Oretha Castle, 30 January 1963, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00941; Richard [Haley] to Marvin Rich, 20 March 1964, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00949; "CORE Rally Slated At New Zion," The Louisiana Weekly, 18 April 1964, 1.

7,000."⁸⁸

The national organization also used its money and resources to gain national publicity for the New Orleans movement. Numerous stories in the CORE-lator and press releases issued by the national organization on the activities of New Orleans CORE helped attract national attention to the local situation. The staff of national CORE also invited local activists to share their experiences in a national forum. Frank Nelson and Jerome Smith participated in a set of hearings organized by Eleanor Roosevelt in 1962 to shed light on the violence encountered in the southern civil rights movement and the corresponding lack of law enforcement by local and federal authorities.⁸⁹ A year later, Smith and Oretha Castle shared the story of New Orleans CORE on a television program called Freedom Ride, produced by the New York City-based Educational Broadcasting Corporation.⁹⁰

⁸⁸Kim Lacy Rogers, Righteous Lives: Narratives of the New Orleans Civil Rights Movement (New York: New York University Press, 1993), 55, 51-55, 68, 105; Lolis Elie, Interview by James Mosby, 26 May 1970, transcript, 6, Bunche Collection; Lolis Elie to Gordon Carey, 5 December 1961, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:497:00888; Robert Collins to Carl Rachlin, 21 December 1961, 2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:4:00456; Collins, Douglas and Elie, "Resume of Services Rendered," March-April 1962, 1-2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00932; Carl Rachlin to Robert Collins, 2 May 1962, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:6:00587; Collins, Douglas and Elie to James Farmer, 7 May 1964, 1-3, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, F:3:25:1182-1183; Ed Hollander to Marvin [Rich], 5 August 1964, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00950; Clora Coleman to James Farmer, 23 October 1964, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:1:00247; Carl Rachlin to George Wiley, memorandum, 28 January 1965, 4 and 5, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:6:00744-00745.

⁸⁹Eleanor Roosevelt et al, "Commission of Inquiry into the Administration of Justice in the Freedom Struggle," Volume 1 of Testimony, 141-162, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:474:00371-00551; Marvin Rich, "Mrs. FDR's Committee Hears About 'Southern Justice,'" CORE-lator, 96 (June 1962): 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 6:1:00151.

⁹⁰Elinor Finklestein to James Farmer, letter and script outline, 5 June 1963, 1-5, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality:

Although field secretaries Isaac Reynolds and Jerome Smith had worked occasionally with the New Orleans affiliate after the Southern Regional Office closed in 1962, national CORE field staff permanently returned to the New Orleans area during the fall of 1963. To direct CORE efforts in Southern Louisiana and to re-vitalize the movement in New Orleans, national CORE assigned Mary Hamilton to the area.⁹¹ The following spring, the national body re-opened its Southern Regional Office in New Orleans.

The southern staff, including the field secretaries and task force workers in Louisiana and Mississippi, wanted a national CORE base in the South. They believed that decision-makers at national CORE headquarters in New York City were too far removed from the needs and concerns of the South. Their civil rights efforts might be more efficient if the national CORE hierarchy had more intimate knowledge of southern conditions and if a regional office staff assumed some of the duties which overburdened field secretaries. A group of Louisiana field workers informed the national office of their ideas. Their report stated,

It was the general feeling of the group that we (CORE) have lost some of our militancy in the southern region because of the great distance and the infrequent or too short of visits by people from the national office. The lack of having a office in the south prevents the national from feeling the needs and anxieties of the people that we must live and work with. In addition it puts the national office in the position of an absentee landlord of a revolution.[sic]⁹²

Addendum, 1944-1968, A:1:31:0812-0814.

⁹¹Mary Hamilton to James McCain, field report, 14 October 1963, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:251:00669; Mary Hamilton to James McCain, field report, 12 January 1964, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, F:2:59:0310.

⁹²Isaac Reynolds et al, field report, 18 October 1963, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:263:00780.

After a conference between Jim McCain and the southern staff, the gathered group echoed these recommendations. McCain reported to National Director James Farmer,

From our discussion with out[r] workers, it was unanimously agreed upon that there is a need for a Southern CORE office, which should be staffed by someone who would serve as coordinator for that section of the South where over 60% of our workers are now working. This coordinator would be able to help plan program[s], visit our workers, getting reports on their activities, helping to set up workshops on nonviolence for staff as well as for groups, see to it that reports of staff be sent to the National Office on time and have general overseeing of the activities and staff in that area.[sic]⁹³

Besides supervising CORE activity in the South, national CORE intended that the regional office and its staff would benefit the New Orleans affiliate and movement. CORE chose the city in part because "New Orleans CORE is the oldest CORE group in the deep South."⁹⁴ In a press conference announcing the opening of the office, the director, Richard Haley, emphasized the role the Southern Regional Office would play in local civil rights activity. Haley announced,

Since New Orleans is CORE's southern office we will take a sharp look of [at] the state of race relations in this city. . . . In this regard we expect to be able to lend the support and weight of the National Office to the work of New Orleans CORE, particularly, and also to civil rights organizations in the city generally.

In addition, the office would function as "a communications point" for the New Orleans affiliate. Besides Haley, the office staff included

⁹³James McCain to Jim Farmer, "Visit to Louisiana, South and North Carolina," memorandum, 23 November through 5 December 1963, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:258:00411.

⁹⁴"CORE Opens Southern Office," CORE-lator 105 (March-April 1964): 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 6:1:00172.

Mary Hamilton, field secretary for Southern Louisiana, and Edward Hollander, a press relations worker for the South.⁹⁵

When decision-makers in the national organization decided to re-open the Southern Regional Office in New Orleans in 1964, they found their affiliate needed a rebirth. The chapter suffered from poor membership and sponsored little civil rights activity in the city. Field secretary Mary Hamilton and field director Richard Haley both wanted chapter projects to move from the desegregation of public accommodations and traditional forms of direct action to community organizing. Ultimately, this new program destroyed New Orleans CORE as an independent entity. The community of activists known as CORE in New Orleans ceased to exist as CORE members and staff focused on empowering already existing communities of people. By emphasizing indigenous communities rather than the CORE chapter itself, the CORE community disappeared as its membership dwindled and organizational structure faded away.

In 1970 Oretha Castle identified the community organizing approach as one of the factors that destroyed New Orleans CORE as an organization and community by 1964. In her opinion, the new program focus that followed the passage of the Civil Rights Act contributed to the dissolution of the chapter. When CORE in New Orleans began to engage in community organization, CORE staff persons worked in different areas of the city but no one concentrated on building the chapter itself. Castle remarked, community organization resulted in "a different kind of structure whereby there would be more community involvement as opposed to a chapter membership."⁹⁶

The new program envisioned by Mary Hamilton and Richard Haley in

⁹⁵"CORE To Open First Southern Office Here," The Louisiana Weekly, 28 March 1964, 1 and 10.

⁹⁶Oretha Castle Haley, Interview by Mosby, 27 and 28.

1964 emphasized projects which encouraged the citizens of New Orleans to act in the communities in which they lived. Through voter registration, field secretary Mary Hamilton wanted to mobilize community members around issues important to them. Once CORE workers registered and politicized citizens, they could organize the people around more basic issues like street repairs and garbage collection. In Hamilton's opinion, this method would not only attract membership to New Orleans CORE and strengthen the local affiliate, but truly build a grass-roots movement in the city. When she introduced the program during the winter of 1964, the membership of CORE resisted the new direction because they still focused on the desegregation of public accommodations. Hamilton explained to Jim McCain,

Right now they are thinking in terms of 1961 rather than 1964. It is my feeling that the time for sit-ins at drug stores, picket lines at theaters, etc. are over, and that what we must begin [sic] to do now is attack fundamental issues if CORE is to survive. Elie feels that I am getting too far ahead of the game. He is afraid that the p[e]ople are not yet quite ready for this type of activity. I do not agree that the people are not ready, however, I do feel that the leadership is a bit backward in its analysis of [sic] the situation.⁹⁷

When he became director of the Southern Regional Office, Richard Haley convinced the membership of New Orleans CORE to engage in voter registration. However, despite the voter registration activities of New

⁹⁷ Mary Hamilton to James McCain, field report, "Southern Regional Office, New Orleans CORE Chapter, Activity in New Orleans Area," 17 March 1964, 2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, F:2:59:0314; Mary Hamilton to James McCain, field report, "Activities in Plaquemines Parish, La., New Orleans and Jackson, Miss.," 12 January 1964, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, F:2:59:0310; Mary Hamilton to James McCain, field report, "Plaquemines Parish, New Orleans, La., Plans for Extension into Southwest La.," 1 March 1964, 2-3, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, F:2:59:0309-0310; Steven Rubin to Marvin Rich, 7 March 1964, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00947.

Orleans CORE activists during 1964, the rest of their strategy remained oriented toward the desegregation of public accommodations. During the year, Richard Haley and other members of the national staff helped the group carry out their direct action projects aimed at segregated public institutions. Two projects dominated the energies of New Orleans CORE during 1964: the desegregation of movie theaters and enforcement of the Civil Rights Act.⁹⁸

CORE specifically targeted three movie theaters in downtown New Orleans. When negotiations failed, they initiated picketing in November 1963.⁹⁹ During February and March they intensified their pressure on the theaters. Through telegrams to boxers Sonny Liston and Cassius Clay, the activists stopped the telecast of their fight in segregated theaters throughout the deep South.¹⁰⁰ The small group also used a stand-in and a "Freedom Ring" to compel an integration policy. Choosing Good Friday as a good day to dramatize "man's continuing intolerance of his fellow man," the demonstrators formed a ring around the ticket booth after the manager refused them service. When the police tried to arrest them for preventing other patrons from purchasing tickets, they sat down and forced the authorities to remove them.¹⁰¹

⁹⁸Richard Haley to New Orleans CORE, 16 April 1964, 1, CORE Papers, Part 2: Southern Regional Office, 1959-1966, 1:1:00091; James McCain to Marvin Rich, memorandum, 12 July 1964, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:136:00694; New Orleans Congress of Racial Equality, "Chapter Questionnaire," 28 September 1964, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, F:2:59:0316.

⁹⁹Newspaper clipping of rally announcement, photo and caption, [13? February 1964], The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, F:2:59:0307.

¹⁰⁰National CORE, "Liston Wins One Fight--Desegregation Of Telecast Showings," press release, 27 February 1964, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, F:2:59:0308.

¹⁰¹CORE Southern Regional Office, "Nine Arrested In New Orleans CORE Theatre Protest - In Jail For Easter," press release, 30 March 1964, 2 and 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:223:00291; Doris Castle, "CORE On Canal Street," [27? March 1964], 1-

During the course of this campaign the activists revealed their continuing commitment to the tactics and goals of 1960. Writing about the theater desegregation campaign, Doris Castle commented,

These days in this land are big days. Big fear, big anger, big impatience, big demonstrations. Looking back to 1960 some now say, 'The sit-ins and the other 'ins' ... these are tiny tools: today's big issues call for big pressures.' But the civil rights campaign of attrition pushes doggedly ahead, week after week, all across the South. The 'tiny tools' are used with telling effect.[sic]¹⁰²

The Southern Regional Office assisted New Orleans CORE with this campaign of attrition against the movie houses. National staff persons Isaac Reynolds and Ed Hollander arranged publicity by drafting press releases, taking photographs and contacting the local and national media.¹⁰³ Richard Haley helped the group conduct negotiations with the targeted theater chains.¹⁰⁴ With the passage of the Civil Rights Act, the cinemas admitted patrons without regard to race.¹⁰⁵

3, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00958-00959; Isaac Reynolds for New Orleans CORE, press release, 22 February 1964, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00946.

¹⁰²Doris Castle, "CORE On Canal Street," [27? March 1964], 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00958; Ed Hollander to Marv [Rich], 31 March 1964, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:223:00292.

¹⁰³Isaac Reynolds for New Orleans CORE, press release, 22 February 1964, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00946; Ed Hollander to Marv [Rich], 31 March 1964, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:223:00292; Edward Hollander to James McCain, "Field Report, April 1 - September 27, 1964," 19 October 1964, 1-7, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00951-00954.

¹⁰⁴Richard Haley to Bernard Diamond, 10 May 1964, 1-2, CORE Papers, Part 2: Southern Regional Office, 1959-1966, 1:1:00133-00134; Richard Haley to RKO Theatres Inc., telegram, 17 May 1964, 1-2, CORE Papers, Part 2: Southern Regional Office, 1959-1966, 1:1:00151-00152; Everett Erlick to Richard Haley, telegram, 20 May 1964, 1-2, CORE Papers, Part 2: Southern Regional Office, 1959-1966, 1:1:00136-00137.

¹⁰⁵National CORE, "Testing and Enforcement of the Civil Rights Act

After the completion of their theater project, the small CORE group focused on testing for compliance to the Civil Rights Act. They then used direct action and lawsuits to force conformity to the law. Their targets included Charity Hospital, the Louisiana Wild Life and Fisheries Building and the cafeterias of Schwegmann Brothers Giant Super Markets.¹⁰⁶ Richard Haley encouraged these efforts because the lives of African Americans seemed to change little in response to the new law. To the New Orleans chapter he wrote, "Even though the Civil Rights Bill is now a legal fact, there is no appreciable difference in the status of the New Orleans Negro. Progress, even small progress, will only result from systematic substance [substantial?] effort on our part."¹⁰⁷

Although Haley encouraged activities designed to desegregate public accommodations, by the fall of 1964 his ideas and program suggestions mirrored those offered by Mary Hamilton the previous winter. This program, oriented around community organization, took the group in a new direction in 1965. According to Richard Haley, the New Orleans movement needed a new strategy because the lives of African Americans had changed very little despite four years of CORE activism in the city and the passage of the Civil Rights Act. He admitted that the Civil Rights Law opened some downtown facilities to blacks who could afford to use them, but racism remained strong in New Orleans. "The city has made some steps, best described as puny, euphemistically described as token," of 1964," press release, 9 July 1964, 2, CORE Papers, Part 2: Southern Regional Office, 1959-1966, 1:1:00660.

¹⁰⁶Ed Hollander to Marvin [Rich], 5 August 1964, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:44:00950; Ed Hollander to Marvin [Rich], 18 July 1964, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:223:00327; "CORE Test Team Closes Schwegmann Cafeteria," The Louisiana Weekly, 25 July 1964, 1 and 8; "Action Groups Continue Tests Against Schwegmann Brothers," The Louisiana Weekly, 8 August 1964, 2.

¹⁰⁷Richard Haley to New Orleans CORE Members, 9 July 1964, 1, CORE Papers, Part 2: Southern Regional Office, 1959-1966, 1:1:00176.

Haley declared in October, 1964.¹⁰⁸

In contrast with the city of Memphis, Tennessee, which actually had achieved change, New Orleans lagged behind. Haley cataloged the successful reforms attained by civil rights activists in Memphis: a growing black electorate, African Americans in government office, progress in school desegregation, increased job opportunities for blacks and "a 'positive temper' in the city . . . one that looks for the means of solving local problems in human relation[s]." In Haley's opinion, New Orleans had accomplished none of these goals nor did the city's citizens possess the attitude necessary to attain change.¹⁰⁹ Later, the Southern Regional Director re-iterated this critique. In a January, 1965 press release, Richard Haley declared, "New Orleans is a city of token integration, and even that only in certain of its exposed portions. Housing, government, schools, employment policies, segregated unions---each gives its own evidence to support the damning fact. Now who, of these 600,000 souls, will take any single voluntary step to remove the vice?"¹¹⁰

The people of CORE intended to continue their fight against racism in New Orleans. In fact, the Southern Regional Office planned to concentrate on the problems of New Orleans beginning in December, 1964. Richard Haley turned his attention to the city, David Dennis returned to New Orleans as Southern Program Director and national CORE assigned five Task Force members to work in the area. Before explaining his new plan

¹⁰⁸Richard Haley to Raymond J. Brady, 31 October 1964, 2 and 1, CORE Papers, Part 2: Southern Regional Office, 1959-1966, 1:1:00245 and 00244; "Many Dixie Businesses Comply With New Law But Holdouts Remain," Wall Street Journal, 6 January 1965, 1 and 18.

¹⁰⁹Richard Haley to Raymond J. Brady, 31 October 1964, 1 and 2, CORE Papers, Part 2: Southern Regional Office, 1959-1966, 1:1:00244-00245.

¹¹⁰Richard Haley to Sir, press release, 12 January 1965, CORE Papers, Part 2: Southern Regional Office, 1959-1966, 1:1:00353.

for local activism Haley noted, "CORE is beginning to increase activity in the New Orleans area, because what happens here can be very influential in setting the tone of progress for other cities in this region."¹¹¹

Haley summarized the new direction he envisioned for the New Orleans movement; "We want to awaken the Negro to the advantages he can gain through using political strength, through economic advancement in employment and business enterprise [sic] and through better educational facilities." To achieve these goals Haley organized the CORE program around political education and activism, community centers, Freedom Schools and the implementation of existing federal government programs.¹¹²

To attain political strength, CORE workers proposed to register voters through door-to-door canvassing, mass meetings, leadership planning groups, voter registration classes and training for adult literacy. "After registration," Haley continued, "we would encourage the voters to organize, to develop improvement programs for the precinct and ward; to run candidates---Negro candidates---for local and parish offices." As a "central part of this kind of community planning," CORE intended to develop community centers. "The Center can be the place where registration classes are held, the place for political meetings, for adult literacy classes, for day-care of children of working mothers, for teen-age clubs, for still other community uses," Haley explained. In conjunction with community centers, CORE wanted to establish freedom

¹¹¹Richard Haley to Lionel Collins, 25 November 1965, 1, CORE Papers, Part 2: Southern Regional Office, 1959-1966, 1:1:00278; Richard Haley to James McCain, 31 October 1964, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:223:00387; "CORE Asks Probe of Bias in City's Public Housing," The Louisiana Weekly, 16 January 1965, 1.

¹¹²Richard Haley to Lionel Collins, 25 November 1965, 1 and 2, CORE Papers, Part 2: Southern Regional Office, 1959-1966, 1:1:00278-00279.

schools for area children. In addition to remedial training in basic subjects, Freedom Schools would teach students about Negro History, how government functions and how they could influence it and subjects of interest to them like art, philosophy and typing. Beyond the "things we can do for ourselves," Haley pledged CORE would help community members learn to take advantage of those opportunities offered by the federal government. He explained, "Programs exist for vocational education, job placement, purchase of property, business loans---we know these things; do we use them? CORE would like to help Negro communities learn how to take advantage of these and other government aids."¹¹³

During 1965, Richard Haley and other members of the national staff attempted to implement this community-organizing approach in New Orleans. New Orleans CORE members provided some assistance, but seemed to have played a small role in program initiatives. Only one source indicates the efforts of New Orleans CORE members in community organizing. The membership reported to the CORE Southern Regional Office their January endeavors to attain financial and material support, as well as a location, for a community center. In the same report, chair Doratha Smith and Secretary Linda Smith informed New Orleans CORE of their desperate organizational and financial straits. The officers wrote,

At present the group is very unorganized, and are trying to get organized. In the last report to the Southern Office we requested a Task Force worker to assist us in our work. Our request was filled, but we have had very little contact with the Task Force worker.

Our financial condition is worse than that of your office.[sic]¹¹⁴

¹¹³Richard Haley to Lionel Collins, 25 November 1965, 1 and 2, CORE Papers, Part 2: Southern Regional Office, 1959-1966, 1:1:00278-00279.

¹¹⁴Doratha Smith and Linda Smith to CORE Southern Regional Office, "Monthly Report," 6 February 1965, CORE Papers, Part 2: Southern

It is unclear whether or not New Orleans CORE--as an organization and community of activists--ever regained its viability. The other sources describing the activities of CORE in New Orleans between 1965 and 1967 emanate from national CORE staff. This evidence catalogs their project initiatives in the city and their efforts to mobilize area students to undertake the work. Interestingly, the documents identify the recruits as workers, never CORE members. Because community organizing efforts sought to empower and organize people in the communities in which they lived, these efforts did not rebuild chapter membership or repair its structure. Since community organizing de-emphasized the creation of a CORE community as a goal of activism, it actually hastened the final disintegration of the New Orleans CORE community.

To implement community organizing during 1965, national CORE personnel focused on issues designed to end racial discrimination in jobs and housing and embarked upon the New Orleans CORE Community Organizing Project. With the passage of the Civil Rights Act, Southern chapters turned to the issues which Northern chapters had focused on since the 1950s. Because of their sole concentration on de jure segregation, Southern staff persons and chapter members did not possess the expertise they needed to combat problems in housing, employment and education. To address this deficiency, field secretary Isaac Reynolds organized a workshop in December, 1964. Explaining the need for the training session, Reynolds wrote,

We have notice[d] that all the urban type cities from New Orleans to Oklahoma City have similar problems in the field of Housing, Employment and Education with a similar problem in voter registration.

We are also aware that field secretaries in the south have
Regional Office, 1959-1966, 1:1:00360.

not had to deal with these problems in the past, as a result we are lacking in know how in solving problems of the type mention[ed] above.¹¹⁵

Southern Regional Office personnel in New Orleans began to address some of these problems in 1965. For example, Program Director David Dennis pursued the elimination of segregation in federal public housing.¹¹⁶ Concerning racial discrimination at the job site, he and Isaac Reynolds worked with African American employees of Jax Brewing Company to improve their wages, advancement and opportunities for non-menial jobs.¹¹⁷

Job placement and skills training represented an important aspect of the New Orleans CORE Community Organizing Project conceptualized by CORE Task Force Workers Tom Ramsey and Matt Suarez.¹¹⁸ They tried to implement the multifaceted enterprise during 1965 using area college students recruited by fellow Task Force member Mary Lovelace. As the campus counselor for CORE, Lovelace worked to involve area students in local civil rights activity. She sponsored meetings between Dillard and Xavier University undergraduates, provided them with information about local problems and tried to motivate them to become part of the solution. She called the group a "students union" and labeled herself the coordinator; although she recruited them to work on a local CORE project, the students considered themselves an entity separate from New

¹¹⁵Isaac Reynolds to Rev. Earl Allen, 28 October 1964, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:223:00381; Isaac Reynolds to CORE Chapters in Oklahoma, Texas, Arkansas, New Orleans and Shreveport, La., memorandum, 6 November 1964, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:223:00388.

¹¹⁶"CORE Asks Probe Of Bias In City's Public Housing," The Louisiana Weekly, 16 January 1965, 1; "N.O. Housing Authority Adopts Policy 'Open Occupancy,'" The Louisiana Weekly, 10 April 1965, 1.

¹¹⁷David Dennis to Richard Haley & Edward Hollander, memorandum, 1 February 1965, CORE Papers, Part 2: Southern Regional Office, 1959-1966, 1:1:00392.

¹¹⁸Matt Suarez, "New Orleans," [winter 1965], 1-2, CORE Papers, Part 2: Southern Regional Office, 1959-1966, 5:1:00056-00057.

Orleans CORE. Matt Suarez planned a one-month orientation for the young people during the winter of 1965.¹¹⁹

At the same time Suarez tried to gain support for the New Orleans Project through contacts in the community and sought a central location "from which to operate the local project." Suarez and Ramsey identified their first goal as the registration of five-hundred African American voters and the subsequent election of an African American office holder. Suarez identified voter registration as the "first and most difficult step" of the New Orleans CORE Community Organizing Project, but recognized "knowing how to use" the vote as a more important endeavor. He explained his approach to political education: "An intensified voter education drive will be conducted through the community organization. . . . A block-by-block campaign is anticipated; eventually covering the city, to be done by local people."¹²⁰

Suarez labeled "the community organization" as the driving component of the overall campaign and defined the concept in the project's prospectus. He wrote,

[The] Community Organization would consist of people who have similar interests and are willing to work for civic, political and social change; it would serve to siphon programs of all sorts to [the] local community, provide impetus and direction to a core of already existing workers with tremendous potential of becoming completely independent of all dominant powers.

Suarez proposed using the poverty program and community centers as a way

¹¹⁹Mary Felice Lovelace to Haley, "New Orleans," field report, 14 December 1964, 2 and 1, CORE Papers, Part 2: Southern Regional Office, 1959-1966, 5:1:00053 and 00052; [Haley] to Lovelace, [November 1964], CORE Papers, Part 2: Southern Regional Office, 1959-1966, 5:1:00043; Mary Felice Lovelace, "Monthly Report New Orleans," 27 October-27 November [1964], 1-4, CORE Papers, Part 2: Southern Regional Office, 1959-1966, 5:1:00045-00048.

¹²⁰Matt Suarez, "New Orleans," [winter 1965], 2 and 1, CORE Papers, Part 2: Southern Regional Office, 1959-1966, 5:1:00057 and 00056.

to build a community organization. Since New Orleans received a grant from the Anti-Poverty program, Suarez wanted to use this money and the recruited college students to undertake "a community work program." This program would place in the black community a "permanent team of workers under trained supervision with a specific program that can develop leadership on a community level."¹²¹

While Anti-Poverty money funded the workers, CORE Task Force members envisioned the community center as the environment where the community organization evolved and programs began. Suarez wrote, "A community center will be developed where recreational enjoyment may be sought with encouragement of becoming active in civic responsibilities." "All programs emanate from the community center," he added.¹²² Mary Lovelace identified the community center as the key component of the New Orleans Project and the perfect task for her "students union" to work on. Lovelace wrote,

It seems to me that the community center would be the panacea to all the ills of the Negro community. The community center would provide a physical unit for all activities originating in the community. In terms of CORE it would provide a place to get over programs that we feel would be beneficial to the Negro community or community at large. In addition and most important it would provide a place to get over the programs that the community itself thinks important and wishes to institute. CORE could serve [sic] in the community center to stimulate the community and to act as an information bureau funnelling information out to the community on such things as federal programs, political programs being initiated by the civil rights movement, federal, education programs and all programs that the community along with CORE deem important. It seems to me that it would also be the job of the community center to provide wholesome recreation not only for its children but also for its adults.

¹²¹Matt Suarez, "New Orleans," [winter 1965], 1, CORE Papers, Part 2: Southern Regional Office, 1959-1966, 5:1:00056.

¹²²Matt Suarez, "New Orleans," [winter 1965], 1, CORE Papers, Part 2: Southern Regional Office, 1959-1966, 5:1:00056.

Lovelace viewed her student volunteers as trainable "experts" and "counselors" able to provide guidance to neighborhood residents. Essentially they would act as community organizers, mobilizing the community around issues important to them.¹²³

Besides forming themselves into an independent association and initiating changes on issues important to them, Matt Suarez believed the citizens of New Orleans would provide this campaign with financial and material support. Suarez asserted, "New Orleans, once established as a project, may be drawn upon for resources in almost any area, such as finances, office supplies, food, clothing and personnel." For example, Tom Ramsey, the CORE staff person working on obtaining jobs and training for area African Americans, turned to local corporations to provide employment opportunities and on-the-job training programs.¹²⁴

Although CORE Task Force Workers planned the New Orleans CORE Community Organizing Project and began rudimentary steps to implement it, it is unclear how developed the program became. After the winter of 1965, the record of CORE in New Orleans dissolves. The evidence presents occasional glimpses of the dwindling CORE movement in the city and provides no information on the status of New Orleans CORE as a community of activists. The last gasps of CORE activity in the city included a proposal to establish three Freedom Schools in conjunction with the New Orleans Project and hurricane disaster relief.¹²⁵ In response to the devastation caused by Hurricane Betsy, CORE distributed

¹²³Mary Felice Lovelace to Haley, "New Orleans," field report, 14 December 1964, 1, CORE Papers, Part 2: Southern Regional Office, 1959-1966, 5:1:00052.

¹²⁴Matt Suarez, "New Orleans," [winter 1965], 2, CORE Papers, Part 2: Southern Regional Office, 1959-1966, 5:1:00057.

¹²⁵Lon Clay Hill, "Freedom Schools for New Orleans, Louisiana," 28 May 1965, 1-3, CORE Papers, Part 2: Southern Regional Office, 1959-1966, 5:1:00073-00075.

clothing, staff members investigated the discriminatory nature of relief efforts, field secretary Jerome Smith provided ice to families without electrical power and Southern Program Director David Dennis mobilized area high school students to help storm victims clean their homes and yards.¹²⁶

The Southern Regional Office remained open throughout 1966 and into 1967, although it operated with a reduced staff and fewer resources. A flyer reprinted in April 1966, October 1966 and January 1967 indicated that Isaac Reynolds now directed the Southern Regional Office in New Orleans. This report of CORE activities noted, "In two parishes of that state, CORE presently is active in organizing communities around voter registration and political action. These parishes include Clinton, Tallulah, Ferriday, Greensboro, Monroe, Minden, Opelousa, Jonesboro and New Orleans."¹²⁷

New Orleans CORE still existed in some form in January, 1967. The Louisiana CORE CORE-lator, a broadside put out by the Southern Regional Office, announced, "New Orleans CORE now meeting at the CORE Office on Dryades Street."¹²⁸ A few months later the chapter had disappeared permanently. Associate National Director Lincoln Lynch announced at a meeting of the National Action Council in April, 1967, "the only functioning chapter in the South (South Central Region) is the Lexington Chapter and the Project in Louisiana which is the Sweet Potato Coop."

¹²⁶"CORE To Issue Clothing To Needy Families," The Louisiana Weekly, 18 September 1965, 1 and 12; "CORE Help Project To Continue," The Louisiana Weekly, 16 October 1965, 4.

¹²⁷"What Is CORE Doing Now?" CORE-lator, [January 19]67, 2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, A:2:24:0333; "NAC Meeting - March 18, 19, and 20 - Harlem YMCA," minutes, [1966], 4, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, A:1:66:0687.

¹²⁸Southern Regional Office, "Bits and Pieces," Louisiana CORE CORE-lator, 28 January 1967, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, A:2:24:0350.

His investigation indicated that although the records of the national office identified 156 chapters still affiliated with CORE, very few existed in reality. Less than twenty-five percent of the affiliates responded to the national office's request for information and Lynch found very few functioning chapters during his nation-wide fact finding trip. Upon his return Lynch concluded, "we are in trouble in terms of the viability of these chapters and also member participation."¹²⁹

Lynch thought the War on Poverty contributed to the demise of local CORE chapters. The NAC meeting minutes summarized his position: "He also stated that the War on Poverty is a great deal responsible for the deteriorating conditions. He stated that chapters appear unclear in their thinking as to their own direction with regard to working with the people in the ghetto."¹³⁰ But even before the implementation of the War on Poverty in 1965, national CORE staff persons understood the debilitating effect of community organization on the recruitment of members into CORE chapters and on the development of a lasting organizational structure.

During the fall of 1964, Louisiana field secretaries conceptualized and planned the 1965 Louisiana Project. The program emphasized community organization to achieve political power. Ronnie Moore, Senior Louisiana Field Secretary, defined these objectives:

The Louisiana project is primarily centered around voter registration with emphasis on politically oriented community organization. Communities are being organized through freedom schools, voter registration drives, clothing distribution, implementation of the new civil rights law, attainment of fair hiring and labor union practices and through general endeavors to

¹²⁹"Minutes of the NAC Meeting Held in Cleveland, Ohio at the Glennville YMCA, April 22 and 23, 1967," 2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, C:1:115:1052.

¹³⁰"Minutes of the NAC Meeting Held in Cleveland, Ohio at the Glennville YMCA, April 22 and 23, 1967," 2, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality: Addendum, 1944-1968, C:1:115:1052.

meet the immediate needs of the community involved.

Permanent organization is the product of a program that is meaningful not only to our staff, but to the people. We are organizing people around their every day needs and at the same time we are attempting to direct such organization toward a long range goal of political recognition and representation.¹³¹

Although the Louisiana staff intended to produce organizational entities which eventually operated independently of CORE assistance, they did not expect these new groups to be CORE chapters. To decision-makers in national CORE Moore commented,

I readily agree that the year round project approach to the problems of various communities may not produce CORE chapters designed for the purpose of extending the structure of National CORE. Community units set up by the project may not be labeled CORE, but their objectives and accomplishments are those of CORE.¹³²

Moore's comments and the Louisiana Project indicate that the program initiatives carried out by national staff members working in New Orleans paralleled the methods of field secretaries working in rural communities throughout Mississippi and Louisiana. Field secretaries tried to endow people with a sense of empowerment, organized community members around issues important to them, engaged in voter registration and sponsored community centers and freedom schools. Although these workers caused change, very seldom did the work of CORE southern field secretaries result in permanent CORE chapters.

Marvin Rich identified the inability of CORE to create permanent organizational structures in the South as one of the organization's biggest mistakes during the Civil Rights Movement. The national CORE

¹³¹Ronnie Moore, "Field Report," 19 January 1965, 1, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:285:00593.

¹³²Ronnie Moore, "Field Report," 19 January 1965, 4, The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1941-1967, 5:285:00594.

Community Relations Director between 1959 and 1965 differentiated between the CORE movement in the North and in the South. While local communities in the North created CORE chapters and petitioned the national office for affiliation, CORE activism in the South relied upon the efforts of paid staff persons. As a result, CORE grew in the North and CORE chapters rarely survived independently in the South. Rich explored these ideas while talking with James Mosby in 1969,

Our growth was more in the North than in the South. We appealed to the South to a band of youngsters who were willing to join the staff at low wages and to do things and to help organize a community. But in fact, we left very little behind us, when those youngsters moved out . . . You can't sustain the high pitch of activity month after month, after awhile people get tired and they go back to other activities for a bit, then come back. . . . In the South we were [an] organizing movement and not chapters and the movements would disappear. I would say we organized 10 chapters in the North for every chapter we organized to the South. . . . the CORE presence in the South was the paid staff. The CORE presence in the North was the local chapter that [worked?] month after month after month. And that was a fundamental mistake.¹³³

Richard Haley also remembered the difficulties of building CORE chapters in the South; besides St. Louis, New Orleans, Miami and "others in scattered places," "CORE never did get a strong foothold in the South." Eventually, he recalled, "we began to lean either toward the SNCC idea of simply having organizers who would go in the town and work with the community and--without attempting to build the CORE chapter."¹³⁴

Because of its lack of affiliates in the South, national CORE worked very hard between 1960 and 1964 to keep its chapter in New Orleans viable. Because the national body provided the membership of

¹³³Marvin Rich, Interview by James Mosby, 6 November 1969, transcript, 16-2, Bunche Collection.

¹³⁴Richard Haley, Interview by Robert Wright, 12 August 1969, transcript, 2, Bunche Collection.

New Orleans CORE with staff assistance and financial support, it helped to sustain the chapter despite the problems created by severe white oppression, black apathy, low membership, inactivity and the loss of its most active members to the national movement. When national field secretaries began to apply the community organizing approach to the New Orleans area, they no longer worked to build CORE membership or to strengthen New Orleans CORE as an organization. Although the New Orleans CORE community began its slow demise in 1962, the New Orleans CORE Community Organizing Project caused the final dissolution of the group. Despite the changes possible as a result of community organization, the approach proved detrimental to traditional civil rights activism. The community organization approach used a few civil rights workers to mobilize already existing communities of people. While one CORE worker might organize a tenement building or neighborhood to create change in their lives, CORE--as a community of activists--ceased to exist.

Conclusion

When an interviewer asked Oretha Castle Haley, president of New Orleans CORE between 1961 and 1964, to list the people "most valuable in securing your objectives in New Orleans," Castle first identified the leaders of the New Orleans civil rights movement. But in addition to the local leadership, Castle attributed the victories of New Orleans CORE to "the unsung heros" of her group. After a few minutes thought she added, "but also . . . other people whose names you do not even hear, know or whatever who really made the kinds of things happen that did happen."¹

Making a Movement: The Meaning of Community in the Congress of Racial Equality, 1958-1968 tells the story of many of the people who worked through the New Orleans and Washington, D.C. chapters of the Congress of Racial Equality to eradicate racism in their hometowns. It took the courage of people like Reginald Webb, Ethelbert Haskins, Anna Holden, Doris Jean Castle, Alice Thompson and William Harrell to battle the racial discrimination and segregation still pervasive in American society during the 1960s. The people who joined the Washington and New Orleans CORE chapters forged communities of civil rights activists. These communities united the membership and enabled them to fight racism not as individuals but as a powerful group. Their communities underwent continuous evolution; they evolved, dissolved, re-formed and eventually disintegrated permanently. In the end, the civil rights movement came about because these communities of ordinary people flourished across the United States.

By learning about these little-known people who battled racism and

¹Oretha Haley, Interview by Kim Lacy Rogers, 27 November 1978, tape recording, side 3, Rogers Collection.

created change in their own lives, we learn more about the struggle for black equality itself. Our understanding of the civil rights movement continues to evolve as scholars complete more and more studies on local communities and grassroots organizations. These new studies are the building blocks to a fuller and more complex interpretation of the civil rights movement.

The experience of the New Orleans and Washington CORE communities question some of our current assumptions about the black freedom struggle and highlight new areas of inquiry. Their story reveals three important findings: ideology played no significant role in the conflicts of the affiliates; the shift from nonviolent direct action to the organization of ghetto communities contributed to their demise; and the national organization interacted extensively with these local communities. By themselves, these discoveries cannot transform our synthesis of the Congress of Racial Equality or the civil rights movement overall; but historians need to pursue these issues as they research additional CORE chapters and the affiliates of other national civil rights organizations.

After reading Civilities and Civil Rights: Greensboro, North Carolina and the Black Struggle for Freedom by William Chafe, one of the first books to study the struggle for black equality from a local perspective, historian William Harris wrote,

His is the kind of history we need from cities and towns across the country if we are to be able to complete the picture of the countless men and women, most of whose names we will never know, through whom the Civil Rights Movement succeeded.²

²William H. Harris, "Trends and Needs in Afro-American Historiography," The State of Afro-American History: Past, Present, and Future, ed. Darlene Clark Hine (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1986), 148; William H. Chafe, Civilities and Civil Rights: Greensboro, North Carolina and the Black Struggle for Freedom (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980).

By narrating the experiences of the "ordinary, flawed, everyday sorts of human beings" who made up the New Orleans and Washington, D.C. chapters of CORE and transformed their localities, Making a Movement: The Meaning of Community in the Congress of Racial Equality, 1958-1968 contributes one piece to this fuller and more complex picture of the civil rights movement.³

³Charles Payne, I've Got the Light of Freedom; The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 440.

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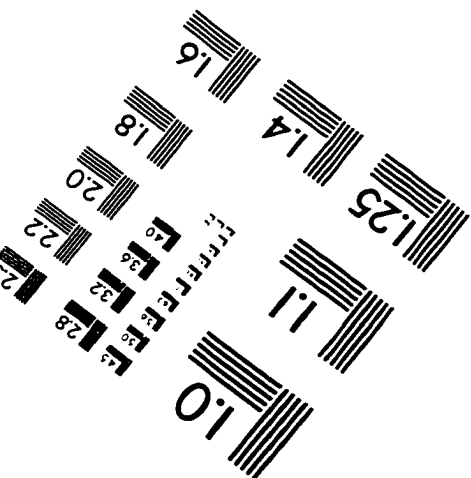
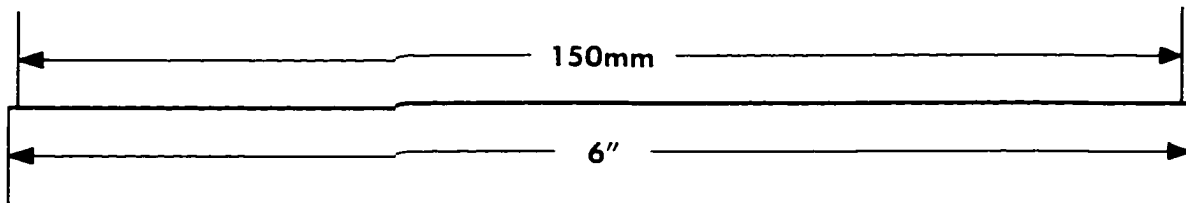
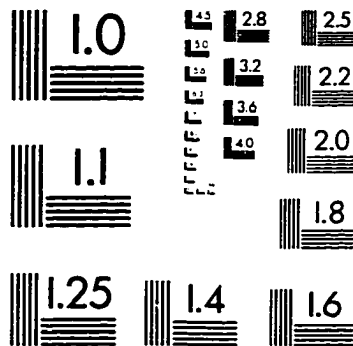
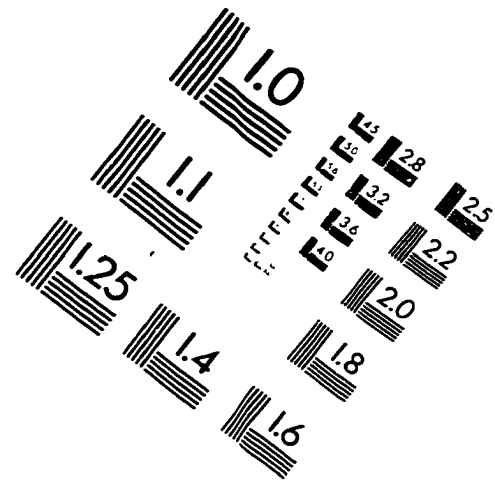
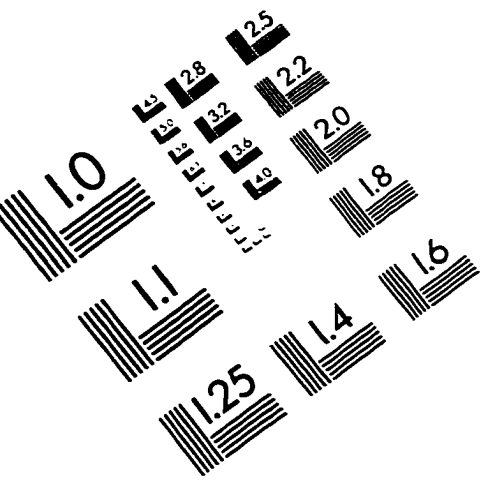
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