

Faith in Community: Interracial Discussions and Ecumenical Protestantism, 1945-1960

Connor S. Kenaston  
Beckley, West Virginia

B.A., Yale University, 2014

A Master's Essay presented to the Graduate Faculty  
of the University of Virginia in Candidacy for the Degree of Master of Arts

Corcoran Department of History

University of Virginia  
May, 2018



## Introduction

Dorothy Height of the Young Women's Christian Association and J. Oscar Lee of the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America published their co-authored book, *The Christian Citizen and Civil Rights: A Guide to Study and Action*, in December of 1948.<sup>1</sup> At its most basic level, *The Christian Citizen and Civil Rights* served as a condensed version of *To Secure These Rights*, the one hundred seventy-seven-page report of President Truman's Committee on Civil Rights.<sup>2</sup> Summarizing many of the findings of *To Secure These Rights* and supplementing them with anecdotes and social science research, Height and Lee outlined various civil rights issues such as poll taxes, housing discrimination, segregation of the army, and police violence. They also provided theological and philosophical reasons for why an American Christian had "a responsibility both to the Christian tradition and to his democratic heritage [sic]" to work for civil rights.<sup>3</sup> *The Christian Citizen and Civil Rights* served as an important conduit through which leaders in churches and Christian Associations could understand *To Secure These Rights*.

Height and Lee informed users that, "Study of the [Civil Rights Committee's] Report requires more than reading it," advice that also applied to *The Christian Citizen and Civil Rights*.<sup>4</sup> Published just after the United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Height and Lee's work was an interactive guide which encouraged small group discussions in which readers could process civil rights issues.<sup>5</sup> According to Height and Lee, the creation of "some smaller group" was necessary because, "Everybody's business is nobody's business."<sup>6</sup> The small group format helped facilitate discussion and raised the accountability of participants. The authors provided "questions for use in discussion groups" that enabled participants to reflect on civil rights issues in their communities.<sup>7</sup>

Height and Lee underscored that small group study was not, however, “an end in itself, studying merely for the sake of study.”<sup>8</sup> Similarly, the conversations they encouraged were not simply a chance to “continue the discussion in academic fashion.”<sup>9</sup> Rather, discussions—ideally interracial—were simply part of the process that combined reading with conversation and action steps.<sup>10</sup> After presenting the facts about an issue, the authors included a section in bold print titled, “Things to Read, Discuss or Do,” related to that issue. The goal of discussion was to stimulate reflection and inspire action. As Height and Lee wrote, “It is not enough to have fun discussing things; get everyone present to begin to act by sending letters...to the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of the Army...to the President...to the special committee.”<sup>11</sup> They frequently suggested meeting with local public officials.<sup>12</sup> The authors ultimately hoped that the small groups’ discussions and activities would act as “a little leaven in the whole organization or movement...to bring about the widest possible interest and the most effective action on the part of the whole.”<sup>13</sup> Height and Lee hoped that discussion groups that combined social science facts with Christian and democratic principles would create ripples of activism in churches and Christian Associations all across the country.

*The Christian Citizen and Civil Rights* was one of many examples of how black leaders in predominantly white ecumenical organizations in the 1940s and 1950s built upon a legacy of interracial conversations in order to eliminate prejudice and expand democracy.<sup>14</sup> While their particular methodologies varied, black ecumenical leaders who created interracial discussions drew heavily upon three sources of authority: new research in social science, Christian theology and rhetoric, and the principles of democracy. Black leaders in predominantly white ecumenical organizations adopted a traditional white Protestant approach to race relations that combined education, creation of opportunities for interracial exchanges, and discussions. However, by

pairing new research in anthropology, sociology, and psychology with Christian and democratic principles, black ecumenical leaders adapted these traditions and transformed them into more direct forms of activism. In this way, black leaders both extended and subverted predominantly white Protestant ecumenical groups' long tradition of small groups and discussions about race. Unlike the extremely paternalistic interracial discussions during the so-called Progressive Era, these conversations were not opportunities for white Christians to uplift black Christians. Instead, black leaders employed conversations to encourage white people to face their contradictions, rethink their assumptions, and live their religion and patriotism. Because of this work by black leaders, *The Christian Citizen and Civil Rights* was not simply a study guide, it was a *Guide to Study and Action*.

The black leaders that reshaped interracial discussions—men and women like Dorothy Height of the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), J. Oscar Lee and his predecessor George Haynes at the Federal Council of Churches (FCC), Leo Marsh of the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), and L. Maynard Catchings of the university-based Student YMCA-YWCA—were major figures in their time.<sup>15</sup> George Haynes co-founded the National Urban League, for example, and was the first African American to receive a PhD from Columbia University.<sup>16</sup> Dorothy Height became the President of the National Council of Negro Women in 1957 and was known as one of the “Big Six” of the Civil Rights Movement.<sup>17</sup> Though perhaps not as renowned as Haynes and Height, J. Oscar Lee and Leo Marsh were also well respected members of the black elite.<sup>18</sup> Even Maynard Catchings, by far the least well-known, was featured regularly in black and white-owned newspapers.<sup>19</sup>

These black ecumenical leaders have largely been marginalized by historians, however, for two primary reasons. The first is simply that the rapid decline of numbers, prestige, and

power of mainline Protestantism in the United States has rendered it difficult for scholars to fully grasp the authority of ecumenical Protestantism during the mid-twentieth century.<sup>20</sup> The second factor is that the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements demonstrated the shortcomings of the black elites' strategies during the postwar period. When compared to predominantly white ecumenical organizations' more forthright racial justice work after Martin Luther King Jr.'s "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" in 1963, the postwar period's efforts seem half-hearted. Historians have described them as "tepid," "rather naïve," or "conciliatory."<sup>21</sup> The post-civil rights movement and black power movement critiques of this era have merit. Ecumenical activism in this period was more focused on prejudice and discrimination than equality or economics; it relied heavily upon what historian Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham has termed "respectability politics," burdening black Americans with speaking truth to power in a polite, calm manner.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, ecumenical leaders—black and white—operated in a mode of liberal consensus, a consensus that would be shattered in the coming decades.<sup>23</sup>

While historians' descriptions of the racial justice activism of predominantly white ecumenical organizations in the 1940s and 1950s as "tepid" and "conciliatory" are generally correct, shifting the analysis from the organizations themselves to the black leaders within those organizations suggests that previous scholars have missed how black leaders transformed the practice of interracial dialogue into a tool of activism. The African American leaders examined here certainly did not predict all of later generations' critiques, but they did anticipate many potential problems in their approach. As a result, they worked to rid these conversations of what Howard Thurman described as an "abundance of sentimentality masquerading under the cloak of fellowship" and replace it with true fellowship and reconciliation that required that conversations be not the last step but the first.<sup>24</sup> The shift from "Study" to "Study and Action" required great

courage because these leaders were often the only African American national staff members in their organizations.<sup>25</sup> Despite the limits of their methods, their activism provided an important precedent that made ecumenical Protestantism's more forthright stands of the 1960s possible.

Inspired by Aldon Morris's insistence in 1984 on "the central and overpowering role that the church played," scholarship on religion and civil rights has grown significantly in the last few decades.<sup>26</sup> Much of the scholarship on mainline Protestantism has been defined by institutional studies that have either ended in the 1940s or focused primarily on the 1960s.<sup>27</sup> Scholars who have written these works have made important contributions. Yet, the connections and intersections of these organizations, however, reveal how lives and relationships cut across institutional lines.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, focusing primarily on the 1960s, intellectual historians of religion and civil rights have rightly emphasized the centrality of the "prophetic" and "authenticity and existentialism."<sup>29</sup> Examining black leaders in ecumenical Protestant organizations in the 1940s and 1950s, however, shifts the theological framework to the twin yet sometimes contradictory principles of "community and freedom."<sup>30</sup> Infused with both religious and political meanings, these broad terms suggested a collection of people seeking to empower the oppressed while not abandoning the possibility of a relationship with the repentant oppressor.

The three streams of social science, Christianity, and democracy that shaped the conversations will also shape this article's structure. During the Progressive era, Protestants embraced both interracial conversations and new research in psychology.<sup>31</sup> While African American leaders built on those legacies, they made several key changes. They incorporated new sociological and anthropological facts that provided support for integration, and they insisted that conversation was not the end of the effort to improve race relations, but the beginning. Black leaders employed ideas about the therapeutic to eliminate the psychological aspects of

discrimination and segregation. Explicit articulations of Christianity also helped combat segregationists' moral and scriptural arguments. Leaders used democracy as a common ground, a language shared by Christian and non-Christian Americans interested in integration.

Furthermore, by emphasizing the Christian and democratic nature of the conversations they facilitated, black leaders acquired space to operate within a Cold War context in which racial justice efforts were frequently hampered by allegations of communism. By the mid-1950s, the three strands of social science, Christianity, and democracy fused into an ideology of what Maynard Catchings called a "Community of Acceptance."<sup>32</sup> This community generated a crisis of faith for Christians who believed God ordained segregation, but it also provided a forgiving, supportive space for these students after they had experienced the crisis. An evaluation of the efficacy of black ecumenical leaders' activism sheds light on the long historical shadow cast by the idea that conversation serves as the first step in working toward community and freedom.

### Interracial Conversations and Social Science

Protestant conversations about race—often referred to as the "negro problem"—became increasingly common with the rise of the Social Gospel during the early 1900s.<sup>33</sup> Many white Protestant college students, for instance, organized small groups to discuss Student YMCA Secretary Willis Duke Weatherford's 1910 book, *Negro Life in the South: Present Conditions and Needs*.<sup>34</sup> A Southern liberal and a pioneer of the Commission on Interracial Cooperation, Weatherford wanted to uplift African Americans, but, like many white Social Gospel reformers, his efforts were colored by paternalism and segregation.<sup>35</sup> Like other Progressive-era Protestant leaders organizing race-based conversations, Weatherford believed psychology did not have an antagonistic relationship with religion but could be incorporated to advance religious goals and



purposes.<sup>36</sup> For instance, psychological research provided explicit instructions about how to more effectively lead group discussions. Harrison Sacket Elliot's 1923 pamphlet *The Why and How of Group Discussion*, designed to accompany Sophia Lyon Fah's *Racial Relations and the Christian Ideal: A Discussion Course for College Students*, instructed readers how to phrase questions, encourage participation, and use a blackboard effectively.<sup>37</sup> Group discussion was not only an effective way to learn, according to Elliot, it was a "democratic process of deliberation."<sup>38</sup> The legacies of discussing race using psychological principles and of casting group discussion as a distinctly democratic process would provide important historical precedent for the ecumenical interracial conversations of the 1940s and 1950s.

And yet, while mid-century conversations clearly built on progressive-era legacies, black leaders in predominantly white ecumenical organizations also made important adjustments. For one, they attempted to push conversations past merely studying and discussing the issues to addressing racial justice in more concrete ways. In response to the race riots in Detroit and around the country during World War II, George Haynes of the FCC designed "Interracial Clinics" to bring together "leaders of the religious, social, labor, business and civic agencies of the community" in order to "have full discussion of topics and to seek a consensus of judgement on what should be done."<sup>39</sup> For Haynes, interracial discussion was important, but it had to lead to something else. He described the clinics as the "*beginning of a process aiming to end in social action.*"<sup>40</sup> To ensure this, Haynes encouraged each interracial clinic to create "an action program" and designate an agency to follow through on that program.<sup>41</sup> Writing during the middle of the Montgomery bus boycott, L. Maynard Catchings urged the Student YMCA-YWCA "Toward a new strategy in race relations" because the "social climate and conditions... [had] vastly changed." Catchings believed the organization should "continue the older strategy

but add to it.” According to Catchings, interracial conferences and discussions ought to lead to “day-by-day relationships,” increased coordination with other student groups working for integration, and especially attempts by “student Associations to influence the power structures.”<sup>42</sup> Thus, black ecumenical leaders like Catchings did not abandon the legacy of interracial conversations, but, unlike their Progressive-era predecessors, they insisted interracial discussion and interaction was merely one-step in the long process of eliminating racial prejudice.

Similarly, while Protestants had a long tradition of studying “the facts” about race relations, black ecumenical leaders in the postwar era built on that legacy but intentionally subverted its gradualist and sometimes racist tendencies. Progressive-era race initiatives focused primarily on gathering facts. In 1950, members at the first meeting of the YMCA’s Commission on Interracial Practices noted the YMCA’s preference to gather facts and study the problem as opposed to taking action.<sup>43</sup> According to Dorothy Height in her 1946 pamphlet *Step by Step with Interracial Groups*, white people were often the ones who preferred to seek information: “This is one reason for what often seems to be impatience in racial minorities...the minority has been realizing its sufferings from earliest childhood when often the majority is only thinking about ‘studying the problem.’”<sup>44</sup> Height’s quotation marks around the phrase “studying the problem” demonstrates her skepticism of people who called for additional study. In her mind and in the minds of many mid-twentieth century black leaders, “studying the problem” was simply a stalling tactic. While white Protestants may have preferred to continue studying, African Americans leaders ensured this would no longer be the sole objective.

While they discouraged fact-finding as a stall tactic, black leaders did use social science facts to shape discussions. In her 1951 pamphlet *Taking a Hand in Race Relations*, Dorothy

Height wrote, “Wherever we begin we must put getting the facts first on the list—for more harm than good can be done if we do not know the facts.”<sup>45</sup> As demonstrated by Height’s earlier skepticism regarding “studying the problem,” she was not calling for a slow process of gathering facts. Rather, she meant that discussion participants ought to be made aware of new research in anthropology, sociology, and psychology. Selecting which facts to use was key. Seemingly objective facts could appear to confirm racist assumptions about black inferiority.<sup>46</sup> Through carefully cultivated bibliographies, suggestions for further reading, or sometimes movies or short films, mid-century black leaders insisted upon social science facts that debunked racial myths or shed light on discrimination. George Haynes wrote that local leaders needed to “face the facts...about local employment, housing, schools, religious barriers, leisure-time or other situations.”<sup>47</sup> Framing a conversation with the right facts was crucial because, according to Haynes, “It often happens in discussion of race relations that opinions and prejudices instead of facts are used and too much heat and too little light are generated.”<sup>48</sup> These types of facts led one participant at a Maynard Catchings-led integration workshop in Oregon in 1956 to declare, “I had always thought that integration in housing was possible but had never known the facts about real estate values. Now I can go home and speak and work for integration.”<sup>49</sup> Another student commented, “The freedom of all those at the workshop to discuss [segregation] was an amazing experience for me.”<sup>50</sup> According to those students, social science facts combined with discussion could be a powerful combination that encouraged further action.

Due to the primacy of sociology to black intellectual life and reform in the twentieth century, many black ecumenical leaders drew heavily on sociologists.<sup>51</sup> Swedish sociologist Gunnar Myrdal was especially important. Black leaders frequently cited Myrdal’s popular 1944 book *An American Dilemma* where he described the contradiction between America’s creed and

its racial realities.<sup>52</sup> Even without formal training in sociology, Dorothy Height suffused her writings with sociological findings and terms.<sup>53</sup> Other black ecumenical leaders like George Haynes and Maynard Catchings were formally trained in sociology. A mentee of Du Bois, Haynes earned a PhD in sociology at Columbia University and founded the Department of Social Science and Social Work at Fisk University.<sup>54</sup> Years later, L. Maynard Catchings worked in the same department at Fisk, and even travelled to Pittsburgh and Minneapolis working for Fisk President Charles S. Johnson's Institute of Race Relations.<sup>55</sup>

Black ecumenical leaders leaned on the work of anthropologists to counter biological racism. They repeatedly encouraged discussion participants to read the 1943 pamphlet *The Races of Mankind* by anthropologists Ruth Benedict and Gene Weltfish or watch the 1946 animated short film, *The Brotherhood of Man* that was based on the pamphlet.<sup>56</sup> Both former students of Franz Boas and professors at Columbia University, Benedict and Weltfish claimed, "The races of mankind are what the Bible says they are—brothers. In their bodies is the record of their brotherhood."<sup>57</sup> Appealing to Americans' growing sense of science as the most modern form of authority, Benedict and Weltfish wrote, "In any great issue that concerned the war we turned to science... We need the scientist just as much on the race front."<sup>58</sup> In other words, because American military victories were seeming to prove Americans' scientific superiority, Benedict and Weltfish hoped that Americans' trust in science would extend to new research on race conducted by Boasian anthropologists.<sup>59</sup>

In addition to drawing on sociology and anthropology, some black ecumenical leaders like George Haynes also incorporated findings from psychology.<sup>60</sup> Haynes thought that a "clinic" was needed due to his belief that "racial prejudice and hostile behavior patterns were social ills" or "mental ills."<sup>61</sup> For Haynes, the term "mental" was not intended to negate the social

dimension of prejudice, however; cultural mores that control behavior “are mental forces; they are moral; they are religious. They apply to people—individuals and groups.”<sup>62</sup> These “mental-social ills” required “effective remedies.”<sup>63</sup> The clinic aimed to analyze and make “a ‘diagnosis,’ of the tensions and conflicts of given local problems” through a mix of conversation, self-surveys, and facts presented by “a *resource leader*... with special knowledge and experience on the topic under discussion.”<sup>64</sup> The goal of “[curing] these mental phobias” was to “produce *mental health*” for both the individual and the broader community.<sup>65</sup> Haynes’s suggestion that the interaction of people with “different psychological conditionings” could eliminate racial prejudice anticipated psychologist Gordon Allport’s contact hypothesis in his landmark 1954 book, *The Nature of Prejudice*.<sup>66</sup>

By the 1950s, as psychologists were continuing to publish on psychotherapy, ecumenical Protestants increasingly understood interracial conversations and interactions as a way to ameliorate mental health difficulties.<sup>67</sup> For example, a 1950 YMCA manual posed the discussion question, “To what extent does modern psychology consider exclusion and not belonging as the cause for psycho-neurotic personality difficulties?”<sup>68</sup> Even though they did not abandon legislation—Dorothy Height said in 1951, “while laws are not the whole answer, good ones help”<sup>69</sup>—many ecumenical Protestants came to see the persistence of residential segregation in areas without Jim Crow laws as a matter of psychology.<sup>70</sup> According to a subgroup of Maynard Catching’s National Council of the Student YMCA-YWCA, “With the break-through in the segregated social structure, the frontier in integration is fast coming to rest in psychology. Experimental programs in group therapy are needed.”<sup>71</sup> Particularly after the Supreme Court ruled against the segregation of public schools in 1954 in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, liberal Protestants believed psychology and therapy were necessary because simply

outlawing segregation was not enough to achieve true integration. In a 1955 letter, Catchings described how discussions could serve as group therapy. He wrote:

These sessions proved therapeutic in that they aided the student to discover his own attitudes and to evaluate them in the light of his faith, or to reexamine his faith in the light of his attitudes. Often students who attended interracial projects or student conferences testified that their personal growth in this area was directly related to their experiences in a community of acceptance. Through these expressions many students were able to see new ways in which they might discover the true vitality of the Christian faith.<sup>72</sup>

Catchings' "therapeutic" sessions were not intended to make participants feel good. Instead, they were supposed to provoke a student's reexamination of his or her faith in order to cure what Haynes called "mental-social ills." While Catchings' statement evinces the growing understanding of therapy as "personal growth," it also shows how the therapeutic still had both collective and individual dimensions in the postwar era. Catchings' letter also demonstrates the interconnectedness between the therapeutic and the "vitality of the Christian faith."

### Interracial Conversations and Christianity

In February of 1956, as segregationist politicians were crafting the Southern Manifesto, Maynard Catchings led a workshop on integration in Portland, Oregon.<sup>73</sup> Gladys Lowther began her report of the workshop by writing, "'You've got to have the facts, ma'am.' Yes, and you must also feel the impact of those facts. Students in the Pacific Northwest need experience, as well as knowledge, to help them understand a problem like integration which is more subtle here."<sup>74</sup> Facts were vital to shaping interracial conversations, but, as noted by the Leo Marsh-led YMCA Interracial Study Commission, "facts alone will not remove prejudices."<sup>75</sup> Black ecumenical leaders targeted participants' emotions by turning to psychology and the therapeutic. Just as frequently, and occasionally even at the same time, black ecumenical leaders turned to

religion. To make participants “feel” the facts, they promoted liberal Christian theologies and employed Christian practices that appealed to participants’ emotions and spirituality.

The blending of social science and religion was not new. At first glance, mid-century interracial conversations may appear to be completely secular endeavors. The same could be said for the ecumenical organizations themselves. But black ecumenical leaders did not see it that way. Rather, social science and religion coexisted together in a grey space between the secular and the sacred.<sup>76</sup> Dorothy Height, for instance, remarked that leaders should “make better use of more advanced materials in sociology, psychology, anthropology, religion together with... recent experiments in interracial education.”<sup>77</sup> Countering assumptions about the conflict between religion and science, George Haynes wrote, “Religious leaders were the first social scientists. They were emphasizing the fact of man’s social and moral nature. Religionists have sought through knowledge, wisdom and revelation to apply the dynamic of the inner, emotional, personal growth to social life.”<sup>78</sup> Haynes emphasized the connections between religion and social science again in 1946 when he wrote that the interracial clinic “has both scientific and religious foundations.”<sup>79</sup>

Black ecumenical leaders were not naïve about the drawbacks of the clinic’s religious foundation. They knew white Christians and their churches had used scripture to provide religious sanction for white supremacy.<sup>80</sup> During the civil rights era, many white Christians insisted that God had intentionally separated the races.<sup>81</sup> Even non-segregationists argued against political action and disruption.<sup>82</sup> Height and Lee noted in *Christian Citizen and Civil Rights*, for example, that they often heard Christians express fear about becoming “involved in the ‘dirty matters of politics.’”<sup>83</sup> In 1950 during the first meeting of the YMCA’s interracial commission, Leo Marsh recorded that Prather Hauser of the Detroit YMCA said, “we hesitate to make

pronouncements, sign petitions, and go to court, because of the ‘Christian’ in Young Men’s Christian Association.”<sup>84</sup> White Christians from across the theological spectrum frequently prioritized order over justice.

This emphasis on order helped shape interracial conversations. Interracial conversations, particularly those organized by Charles Johnson and George Haynes in the aftermath of the race riots and uprisings during World War II, could be understood as a way to channel black rage. They forced men and women of color to engage in polite conversation about the racial terror and discrimination that affected their communities. Clearly, interracial conversations could be used as a conservative tactic.

Yet, even as they adopted this tactic, black leaders in predominantly white ecumenical organizations sought to rid it of its conservative tendencies by actively promoting understandings of scripture that suggested the Christian faith demanded working for racial justice and reconciliation. In 1945, George Haynes wrote that Christian churches were tasked with, “Setting forth the moral and spiritual values in human relations and fostering the social action to apply those values.”<sup>85</sup> Similarly, Maynard Catchings promoted a theology of integration in the Student YMCA-YWCA. He wrote in 1955 that he was tasked “to delineate the meaning of the Christian faith...for intergroup relations and for social concern and action.”<sup>86</sup> Catchings’ attempt to delineate Christianity and racial justice was not simply for students’ self-betterment. Rather, it was a way to combat the harmful ideologies and theologies of segregationists. In addition to prioritizing explicit activism, a 1958 Study and Action Guide called for bible study because “Christian students should know their Bibles, and be able to refute unworthy statements attributed to it” by “segregationists...constantly try to find a basis for their position in scripture.”<sup>87</sup> What scholar Charles Marsh has called a “complex theological drama,” did not take



place solely between movement leaders—sometimes the drama’s actors were intimate acquaintances.<sup>88</sup> In 1956, Catchings relayed a story told to him by a white student from a southern white campus: “I told my folks I was going to attend an interracial conference and at breakfast Mom said to Dad, ‘Don’t ask grace this morning – it won’t be heard because our daughter has decided to do something which is an affront to God.’”<sup>89</sup> In addition to providing positive interracial experiences, interracial conferences and workshops had to equip participants to return home with the tools to combat arguments made by friends and families.

The idea that all human beings, regardless of race, had the same relationship to God stood at the heart of the theology that black ecumenical leaders promoted. George Haynes described it as the insistence upon “infinite worth of each human being and equality of all men as children of God.”<sup>90</sup> While not necessarily new, this language of “infinite worth” and “children of God” was used repeatedly by black ecumenical leaders.<sup>91</sup> Sometimes they employed a Christocentric theology. For example, Haynes wrote that Christians should not accept a defeatist mentality about racism, but hold fast to the belief that the “dynamic power of the life, work, and teachings of Jesus and all the traditions of faith, hope, and love of Christ...can solve race problems.”<sup>92</sup> By emphasizing the teachings and love of Christ and that people of all races are children of God, black ecumenical leaders provided Christians with religious arguments to counter the theologies of segregationists and to work for integration.

While the inclusive, action-oriented theologies that black ecumenical leaders promoted certainly built on the historical legacies of the Social Gospel, they also differed in important ways. Maynard Catchings wrote that students “who are able to work through their theology to an active concern for social issues feel a tremendous spiritual support for their efforts in social action.”<sup>93</sup> Catchings’ insistence that students had to “work through their theology” indicates the

new theological emphasis of the Student YMCA-YWCA. He related how one student put it: “The new theology provides a firmer foundation for social action than the old social gospel. We know we must act out of partial knowledge. We do not expect the millennium. Having found a new life in Christ, our social action becomes an ‘earnest of our faith.’”<sup>94</sup> The Christian theologies promoted by black ecumenical leaders in discussion-oriented workshops, clinics, and conversation guides provided an important religious rationale for why Christians should engage in social action.

In addition to providing theological arguments for why Christians must work for civil rights, mid-century black ecumenical leaders also turned to religion because of its authority over the supposed non-rational elements of life. George Haynes, for instance, thought churches should partner with the government, schools, businesses, and social agencies so that “the Christian ethical and spiritual forces will be applied.”<sup>95</sup> According to Haynes, “spiritual forces” had a part to play in combatting intellectual and emotional resistance to integration. Haynes wrote that Christian values that supported integration “need to be repeated and repeated through all the means of religious education for the children, the young people, and adults. This should be not only an intellectual exercise but also an emotional experience in mass contact of the races.”<sup>96</sup> According to Haynes, under the right circumstance, interracial interaction could provide that emotional experience.

Formal worship services were such a circumstance.<sup>97</sup> Haynes encouraged local organizers to hold formal worship services to open or close the interracial clinic sessions.<sup>98</sup> Similarly, in 1958 after a day of “good intergroup experiences in discussion, recreation, eating together, informal conversation” and a film to bring facts to prompt discussion, Catchings and the Student YMCA-YWCA closed with “Worship [to tie] the day into a unit of Christian concern.”<sup>99</sup>

Christian worship services functioned on two levels: they served as spiritual and emotional experiences that could more fully convict participants of facts and they framed seemingly political practices and discussions as faith practices.

Through worship and other religiously-motivated spiritual and emotional experiences, ecumenical Protestants believed Christians could transcend and transform society's racist values. For example, a 1955 Student YMCA-YWCA document suggested that "although man tends to reflect the customs of his environment, it is possible through an inner spiritual experience for him to transcend the particular environment in which he lives, in terms of his values and attitudes."<sup>100</sup> Ecumenical Protestants believed it was indeed possible for a white Christian in the Jim Crow South to "transcend" the racist culture by means of a "spiritual experience." According to George Haynes in 1945, "Psychologists and psychiatrists believe there is widespread evidence of distorted personalities among the White population of the United States" due to the "moral effects of the caste system," but that this "will not be changed unless religion applies its healing dynamic."<sup>101</sup> Partly deriving from spiritual and emotional experiences and partly deriving from the financial and organizational capacity of institutional religion, this healing dynamic was both individual and social.<sup>102</sup> Haynes concluded that the "task of the churches is social action on the widest scale," but he also wrote that "the commitment and zeal of the individual... is the bedrock on which group action must build."<sup>103</sup> Through religious rhetoric, arguments, and worship, black ecumenical leaders attempted to provide spiritual and emotional reasons to eliminate prejudice within individual discussants and broader society.

### Interracial Conversations and Democracy

Mid-century organizers of race-based discussions drew on the language of democracy significantly more than their Progressive-era predecessors.<sup>104</sup> In 1945, only a few months after the surrender of Nazi Germany to Allied forces, George Haynes wrote about the dangerous effects of rearing children “under conditions where the idealism of Christianity and the principles of democracy are loudly preached but hypocritically practiced.”<sup>105</sup> Like many YWCA staffers, Dorothy Height relied heavily on the language of democracy.<sup>106</sup> She described interracial groups as “a laboratory for democratic living” in 1946, and in 1951 she wrote, “It is our job to make real the promise of democracy.”<sup>107</sup> Maynard Catchings and the Student YMCA-YWCA also embraced the language of democracy in the mid-1950s. Catchings wrote, “Every attempt must be made to advance pro-democratic attitudes among college students if we are to insure the continuation and strengthening of our democratic way of life. To establish democratic attitudes among students, it is essential that democratic goals and practices become their normal experience during their college years...the task ahead is clear.”<sup>108</sup> For these black leaders, “democracy” was synonymous with integration and the inclusion of all voices, regardless of a speaker’s skin color.<sup>109</sup> In this way, democracy became an everyday practice, prefiguring the participatory democracy and social action of the 1960s.

During World War II and the Cold War, the familiar language of democracy appealed to white Americans’ patriotism. Democratic language helped black leaders position their conversations and activism as quintessentially American. Unlike segregationists, they were helping make what Gunnar Myrdal called the “American Creed” a reality.<sup>110</sup> In 1951, a subcommittee of the YMCA’s Study Commission on Interracial Practices wrote, “In this period when the battle to win the allegiance of men’s minds is at its height, those who believe in

Christian democracy may not postpone the minimum requirement that the practices of these Associations, which claim to be Christian, should at least show no greater racial bias than those adhering to Communism, who not only preach but practice racial equality.”<sup>111</sup> Writing two weeks after Chinese and North Korean forces captured Seoul during the Korean War, members of the YMCA Study Commission knew the stakes of the war against communism.<sup>112</sup> They could not risk domestic policy negatively affecting foreign policy. In *Taking a Hand in Race Relations*, Dorothy Height emphasized the “International Reason” for supporting civil rights. According to Height, other countries “hear our words about democracy at the same time that they feel the pull of communism... How can our love of democracy be real, they ask, when we will not practice it at home? Show us democracy, don’t tell us about it, they seem to be saying.”<sup>113</sup> By positioning their projects as a defense of democracy’s moral integrity, Height and others provided an additional reason why white Americans should join them. Even if they were deaf to black Americans’ cries of injustice, white Americans might listen to patriotic appeals to American superiority and exceptionalism.<sup>114</sup>

The language of democracy gave black leaders space to operate during the Cold War, an era suspicious of all things radical. Dorothy Height later recalled, “a few years before, when we were more of an open society... a Republican, a Communist, a Socialist, a Democrat, whoever else could all sit down together.” Collaboration across the political spectrum was no longer possible. Height also lamented, “if you protested against the lack of jobs or against discrimination, immediately you were considered a Communist. You were considered unpatriotic.”<sup>115</sup> In 1948, just a few months after Whittaker Chambers accused Alger Hiss of running a spy ring within the U.S. State Department, Joseph Kamp claimed that communists had infiltrated Height’s organization in his booklet *Behind the Lace Curtains of the YWCA*.<sup>116</sup>

Students also feared being labelled communists. Writing in 1956, Maynard Catchings quoted a white male college student from the Midwest as saying, “I believe I would like to do something about improving race relations but on our campus anybody who wants to change things is considered a ‘radical’ and to many people a ‘radical’ means a communist and I don’t do anything along this line for I don’t want to be branded as a ‘radical.’ It would severely handicap my opportunities for getting a good position in industry when I get my engineering degree.”<sup>117</sup> The fear of being labelled a radical did not paralyze everyone, but it certainly was felt—to some degree or another—by people of all races.

Even though they were no longer able to freely collaborate across the political spectrum, Americans were, for the most part, increasingly able to collaborate across the religious spectrum. As historian Kevin Schultz has argued, the postwar era became largely defined as a “Tri-Faith America” that included both Catholics and Jews, as well as Protestants.<sup>118</sup> Liberal Protestant ecumenical groups increasingly formally partnered with non-Protestant organizations. Sometimes this happened on a local level. In Louisville, Kentucky, in December 1945, the Young Men’s Hebrew Association, YMCA, YWCA, a Catholic youth group, and students from the all-black Central High school united to hold conversations about “interracial and interfaith relations.”<sup>119</sup> These connections were even more prevalent on a national scale. The Student YMCA-YWCA encouraged students to subscribe to Catholic literature, including *The Catholic Interracialist*, renamed *Community Magazine* in 1955.<sup>120</sup> Black ecumenical leaders also maintained a close alliance with liberal Jews.<sup>121</sup> For example, a 1956 Student YMCA-YWCA document listed the National Conference of Christians and Jews second under a heading “Cooperation with Similar Programs of Other Organizations.”<sup>122</sup> In addition, many of the discussion and action guides referenced material produced by the Jewish-affiliated Anti-

Defamation League.”<sup>123</sup> While not specifically about race, the Anti-Defamation League’s pamphlet “Group Dynamics and Social Action” described a fictional liberal group called “Society for Democracy” and how its group conversations were an expression of how to use “democratic methods to create the good society.”<sup>124</sup>

Black ecumenical leaders used democracy as a common ground, a language shared by both Christians and non-Christians interested in integration. While the YWCA had used the language of democracy and citizenship for a long time, Dorothy Height’s reticence to use explicit Christian language may have also been rooted in a personal experience. After attending several communist meetings before the war, a young communist told her, “Dorothy, I wish you would stop bringing in all that Christian stuff.” While Height responded in the moment by defending her faith, the young man’s statement may have had a lasting impact on her. Even though that experience convinced her she was not a communist, she continued to attend their meetings. She later recalled, “Many of us discovered among Communists new angles on ways to make our democracy work better.”<sup>125</sup> One of those new angles may have been avoiding language that excluded potential allies.

The adoption of democratic and civic rhetoric did not mean an abandonment of the religious nature of their work, however. Most black leaders believed religion and democracy were the roots that undergirded action. For instance, Height wrote in 1946 that leaders should “*have some dynamic for moving ahead—rooted in religion and democracy.*”<sup>126</sup> While they acknowledged that “Christianity and democracy cannot be made identical,” Height, Lee, and other black leaders often blurred the distinctions between the two, such as in their titular phrase “Christian Citizen.”<sup>127</sup> Many leaders were unfazed by this blending because they believed that democracy was steeped in the religious principles of Judaism, Catholicism, and Protestantism.

For instance, Height and Lee wrote, “many of the characteristics which are so important in determining the spirit and form of American life are rooted in Judeo-Christian tradition.”<sup>128</sup>

According to Height and Lee, “both Christian teaching and our democratic heritage affirm the intrinsic worth of man.”<sup>129</sup> For many black leaders, the only rhetorical difference between describing a Christian society and a democratic society was whether one included the phrase “as a child of God” after affirming a person’s worth.<sup>130</sup> To create a society that affirmed the worth of all persons was thus an American Christian’s “responsibility both to the Christian tradition and to his democratic heritage [sic].”<sup>131</sup>

Black ecumenical leaders employed what Maynard Catchings called “democratic student discussion” as a way to help American Christians fulfill that responsibility.<sup>132</sup> Dorothy Height recalled, “Too often, people in Christian groups babbled on about how ‘all men are created equal’ or ‘we’re all children of God,’ but if you asked them what line they were going to pursue to make those ideas reality, their convictions seemed to crumble... They’d always have some excuse for not taking direct action.”<sup>133</sup> Discussion questions forced participants to think about how democratic-Christian principles could be applied in their own community. For example, after the section describing the commission’s findings regarding “The Safety and Security of Persons” and “police brutality,” Height and Lee asked groups to discuss questions such as: “What do you know about your local police situation?” or “Is your police force representative of the various racial groups who live in the community?” or “In what ways could your police department assure a personnel equally sympathetic with all people? Is there a police training course which includes some interpretation of the complex social problems involved in interracial relations?”<sup>134</sup> Sometimes leaders paired questions with suggestions for action; in this case, Height and Lee encouraged participants to contact their local police department to discuss



implementing training methods regarding racial justice.<sup>135</sup> Thus, discussion questions encouraged participants to see themselves as what Height called “the people behind the lawmakers,” who had both the capacity and the responsibility to work for a society that respected the worth of all people.<sup>136</sup>

### The Struggle for Community and Freedom

On June 10, 1949, eleven months after liberals at the Democratic National Convention in Philadelphia overcame Dixiecrat opposition to pass a civil rights platform, YMCA leaders came together for a two-day interracial conference in the same city.<sup>137</sup> Conference participants listened to lectures like “Racial ‘Myth-takes’” by anthropologist Ethel Alpenfels before discussing how “each person can individually work for interracial advance.”<sup>138</sup> The conference workbook opened with a letter entitled “Around the Conference Table” by African American educator, Leslie Pinckney Hill. Hill wrote, “Everybody is seeking light and wisdom and deep understanding. Everybody is forgetting himself that the inward eyes of his spirit may be opened to his neighbor’s need.”<sup>139</sup> The delegates were not simply talking—they were participating in a group discussion prompted by social scientists, guided by democratic principles, and inflected with religious meaning. Later in his letter, Hill called on the delegates of the conference to create “a courageously democratic community following unafraid the banner of our Lord, Jesus Christ.”<sup>140</sup> The language of “community” linked democratic practices, Jesus Christ, and, though Hill did not mention it directly, the social science facts that framed the conversations.

Building on earlier emphases of “brotherhood” and “sisterhood,” mid-century liberal Protestants increasingly articulated their faith as it related to racial justice through the language of “community.” While Haynes and other 1940s leaders made occasional references to a

religiously infused “democratic community,” the Student YMCA-YWCA wholeheartedly embraced the language of community in the mid-1950s, as indicated by the April 1956 issue of the organization’s magazine, *The Intercollegian*.<sup>141</sup> The issue, entitled “...toward community,” focused solely on race, integration, and civil rights. As aptly demonstrated by the striking abstract cover artwork by Ken Nishi, “community” expressed integration and the love of Christ, and could only occur after the elimination of segregation.<sup>142</sup> In his article “they parted with prejudice,” Maynard Catchings described four examples of how “face-to-face conversation” between people of different races led to the elimination of prejudice.<sup>143</sup> Again, interracial Christian worship could also help in this process. According to Catchings, a Southern white student who had fallen in love with a black American at an international Student YMCA-YWCA conference noted “feeling the warmth of community during communion” and returned to his college and began working for the removal of racial discrimination and integration.<sup>144</sup> Once free of racial prejudices, Christians were, as one student described, “able to live out [their] faith.”<sup>145</sup>

A few pages later, Robert McAfee Brown, a white activist and theologian at Union Theological Seminary, argued that the “*divine community*” was Christians’ best resource for resolving the tensions between the “unequivocal...demands” of the gospel and current racial realities.<sup>146</sup> According to Brown, “it is only within that community that the judgment of God can be proclaimed at the same time that the mercy of God is exemplified. Within the community Christians can be free to speak the truth in love. It may be harsh truth, but it can be spoken in accents of compassion.” For Brown, the “divine community” was both an ideal and a reality. Brown openly acknowledged that divine community “may seem a preposterous way to describe the Christian church as we know it,” but he insisted that it is in “the divine community—the

redemptive fellowship through whom, in however broken a way, God's will is done—that we have an ultimate resource for meeting the problem of the Christian and the race issue.”<sup>147</sup>

Yet, writing several months later, Maynard Catchings pointed out that striking the proper balance between judgement and mercy remained a difficult challenge for advocates of “community.” Catchings often used the phrase “Community of Acceptance,” but as he himself noted, this phrase could cause confusion. Under his section entitled “The Theological Dilemma,” Catchings argued that many Christian students’ “devotion to an idea of community which includes those who believe in racial segregation as well as those who oppose it, makes it difficult for one to make an incisive thrust toward racial integration.” Part of the problem was the idea that all Christians were equally in need of God's salvation. Catchings wrote, “With all standing in need of salvation, who is he to attack others, however wrong their positions may be.”<sup>148</sup> Even if they personally believed in integration, white liberal Christian students often failed to provide a salient critique of segregationist Christians—they preferred to quietly, passively oppose segregation.<sup>149</sup> Thanks to brave activists around the country, Protestant students were finding the gradualist position, the “clear middle ground...cut from beneath them.”<sup>150</sup> Developments such as the Supreme Court case *Brown v. Board of Education*, the publication of the “Southern Manifesto,” the brutal murder of Emmett Till, and the Montgomery bus boycott meant that lines were being drawn on both sides, and the middle ground upon which many white Christian students wanted to stand was quickly becoming untenable.

The key to Catchings’ “Community of Acceptance” was that forgiveness was offered at the end, not the beginning. In fact, part of the community's purpose was, as described by the Student YMCA-YWCA National Council in 1958, to demonstrate “the contradiction between the Christian faith and race prejudice.” Often, this conflict caused a “real crisis of faith.” Rather than

run away from the crisis, the Student YMCA-YWCA declared it their goal to “bring about this crisis in the lives of students, but also [be a] supporting and forgiving community, which can mediate the redemptive power of God’s love.”<sup>151</sup> For a community to embody the best of social science, democracy, and Christianity, acceptance had to occur after the crisis of faith.

According to Catchings, forgiveness after—not before—the crisis was integral to ensuring that freedom played a role in a community of acceptance. During a discussion with Student YMCA-YWCA leaders at the University of Texas in 1955, Catchings said, “The problem comes down to the question of having an actual community in which racial distinction disappears... Just because people of different racial backgrounds come together on the same campus is no sign that a real community will ensue.”<sup>152</sup> For Catchings, “actual” or “real” community was the goal. He proposed the following questions to Student YMCA-YWCA leaders in 1956: “How [do we] best provide experiences which remove students from the rigid ‘dead-center’ position on race, and release them for self-acceptance and the acceptance of others? / How do we maintain community between those who have overcome racial prejudice and those who have come only part way?”<sup>153</sup> Catchings later summed up this two-pronged approach of encouraging acceptance and maintaining relationships as “the struggle for community and freedom in the U.S.A. and abroad.”<sup>154</sup>

The language of community continued to be used by liberal Protestants throughout the 1950s and into the 1960s. Brown’s “divine community” and Catchings’ “Community of Acceptance” never gained significant traction within the American lexicon, but one articulation of community did. Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. first adopted Josiah Royce’s “beloved community” in December 1956, while speaking to a crowd in Montgomery, Alabama, about the end of the bus boycott. For King, official desegregation was not the end. A future in which

society was ordered according to a fusion of the best of science, religion, and democracy awaited. Speaking eight months after the April 1956 edition of the *Intercollegian*, King declared, “the end is reconciliation; the end is redemption; the end is the creation of the beloved community.”<sup>155</sup>

### Conclusion

Black leaders in predominantly white ecumenical organizations were sometimes successful at inspiring liberal Protestants to move, as suggested by Height and Lee in *Christian Citizen and Civil Rights*, “From study to action.”<sup>156</sup> George Haynes’ interracial clinic produced concrete proposals for integrated housing, community organizations, and unions, hiring minority teachers and fair employment more broadly, and assisting displaced Japanese families.<sup>157</sup> Haynes and J. Oscar Lee’s work at the FCC and its successor organization, the National Council of Churches, provided precedent for the more forthright stands of the 1960s. Dorothy Height’s activism ultimately helped center anti-racist work as one of the YWCA’s primary tasks.<sup>158</sup> Having taken the initial steps toward racial justice activism under Maynard Catchings’ leadership in the 1950s, the Student YMCA-YWCA became even more involved during the 1960 student sit-ins.<sup>159</sup> While his claim should not be taken at face value, one reporter supposedly griped, “The NAACP did nothing, the XYZ and Etcetera sat around and did nothing. Who did something? The damn YMCA...the YMCA started the whole sit-in movement.”<sup>160</sup> Ultimately, ecumenical Protestant organizations spawned numerous leaders in the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, the Student Interracial Ministry, the New Left, and various anti-war and women’s movements.<sup>161</sup>

A willingness to critique their own organization, adopt a multi-racial approach, focus on racial injustices beyond the South, and imagine a different kind of world were four key strengths of black leaders in predominantly white ecumenical Protestant organizations in the 1940s and 1950s. Even though it may have put their jobs at risk, black leaders did not shy away from critiquing their organizations. Catchings' critique of the Student YMCA-YWCA helped him chart "a new strategy in race relations" and refine his "Community of Acceptance" model.<sup>162</sup> Historian David Hollinger has described the "self-critique carried out by the intellectual leadership of mainstream liberal Protestantism during the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s" as "One of the most neglected features of twentieth-century American history."<sup>163</sup> Furthermore, while black leaders focused primarily on black-white relations, they also included other races, particularly Asian Americans.<sup>164</sup> For instance, Height wrote in *Step by Step*, "We must remember that our country has a number of racial minorities... *difficult problems face all minorities*."<sup>165</sup> Perhaps because there were few communities in the Deep South that took up their initiatives, New York-based black ecumenical leaders refused to let the North or upper South off the hook. Height and Lee, for instance, had an entire section in *Christian Citizen and Civil Rights* labelled, "it happens in all parts of the country."<sup>166</sup> Black leaders' emphasis on "facts" helped uncover the more hidden nature of racial prejudice and segregation in the north, as noted by a student in Portland, Oregon, who left Catchings' workshop saying, "Segregation, whether in the North or South, I learned, is the same thing, just a difference in the way it's done."<sup>167</sup> Finally, in spite of pervasive segregation, black ecumenical leaders were able to imagine and lead others to live into a new kind of community—one that welcomed people of all races, valued their intrinsic worth, offered them redemption, and transformed them into agents for freedom.<sup>168</sup>

Despite the important alterations black leaders made, the adoption of a discussion-based model had consequences. Discussion models required an abundance of courage, honesty, and self-control on the part of African Americans. As described by Gunnar Myrdal in 1944, “The conversation between whites and Negroes in the South is heavily regimented by etiquette.”<sup>169</sup> According to Benjamin Mays, Morehouse President and the Vice President of the Federal Council of Churches at the time, “the desire to please and the desire to be acceptable to the majority and well spoken [sic] of by them will be so strong that Negro Christian leaders will be inclined to do and say what they think may prove most acceptable to the White majority.”<sup>170</sup> While Mays acknowledged the very real pressures and constraints on black Americans to tell white Americans what they wanted to hear, he insisted that black Christians must ignore that desire and always tell the truth.<sup>171</sup> He also noted the need to suppress and channel valid black anger because calm, constructive criticism is likely to “be more effective” than a “tongue lashing.”<sup>172</sup> The inclusion of social science facts by black leaders eased the burden on black discussion participants somewhat—they did not have to prove to their white counterparts what could be proved by science—but the need remained for African Americans to be courageously honest and calm.

The most glaring weakness of black ecumenical leaders’ activism was that it dealt primarily with the removal of prejudice, perhaps a worthwhile goal but not one that will necessarily lead to equality. Relying on “the best Negro” or someone with “attractive personalities” to change white people’s minds, a form of respectability politics, may have made whites less prejudiced against middle-class, educated African Americans, but it did less to alter a middle-class, educated white person’s interactions with a poor person of color.<sup>173</sup> Furthermore, interracial discussions did little to change systemic, structural racism. This was in part due to

black ecumenical leaders' reliance upon individuals as the most effective way to make change. Height and Lee wrote, "There can be no miraculous overnight conversion of the public. One by one, individuals are enlightened."<sup>174</sup> Perhaps due to Protestant notions of individualism and Cold War fears of collectivism, black leaders' focus on individuals made it difficult to address injustices that involved more than conscious racial bias.<sup>175</sup> Black ecumenical leaders rarely, if ever, advocated for the redistribution of wealth or other solutions for economic injustice. Moreover, even though black leaders attempted to "provide within their framework channels for effective action," the emphasis on individuals rendered this slow work.<sup>176</sup> The activism of black leaders in predominantly white ecumenical Protestant organizations would never have succeeded on its own. It needed to be accompanied by more direct forms of activism and agitation. Nevertheless, diverse forms of activism do not have to be in opposition—they can also complement each other.<sup>177</sup>

Despite its shortcomings, the activism of black leaders in predominantly white ecumenical Protestant organizations in this period was important. These black men and women were under enormous constraints. Not only were they under the strain of being one of few, if any, black people in their work environment, but their actions were severely hampered by McCarthy era red-baiting.<sup>178</sup> Nevertheless, they persevered. They took the legacies of these Protestant ecumenical organizations' use of small groups and discussions about race and transformed them. By pairing new research in social science with Christian and democratic rhetoric, black leaders attempted to combat white peoples' prejudices on mental, spiritual, and emotional levels. They framed conversations with facts and research and repeatedly suggested actions that could bring about change. Moreover, their insistence that discussion-based racial justice seminars were reflections of Christian and democratic ideas of community gave them



more space to operate than they would have had otherwise. Their work provided a precedent for predominantly white ecumenical Protestantism's more forthright activism of the 1960's and helped chip away at the moral and theological arguments employed by Protestant segregationists.

The rediscovery of the activism of women and men like Dorothy Height, Maynard Catchings, and George Haynes has numerous implications for scholars, liberal religious practitioners, and activists. First, it demonstrates how religion and ideas of the therapeutic have co-existed and been politically engaged. Second, by pushing a progressive and multicultural agenda and intentionally creating crises of faith through a quasi-religious community, black ecumenical leaders may have provided the framework for ecumenical Protestantism to later serve as what David Hollinger has described as "a commodious halfway house to... post-Protestant secularism."<sup>179</sup> Third, it historicizes the still prevalent suggestion—from the White House to churches to corporations—that interracial dialogue is the first-step to solving injustice.<sup>180</sup> The mid-century discussion-based study to action model was developed under severe constraints, and despite its strong emphasis on facts and action, there are other, more direct options.<sup>181</sup> Fourth, it demonstrates the truth of a statement often attributed to Dorothy Height: that humans should not be "measured by what a man or woman accomplished, but by the opposition he or she has overcome to reach his goals."<sup>182</sup> Black leaders in predominantly white ecumenical organizations in the 1940s and 1950s no doubt wanted their employers to do more regarding the elimination of racism and inequality. But end results do not tell the whole story. Focusing solely on evaluating the ecumenical organizations misses the crucial ways that black leaders both continued and subverted the tradition of race-based discussion groups. By assessing both end results and the opposition that individuals have had to overcome, historians will continue to recognize the hidden contributions of people who "struggle for community and freedom."

---

\* Cover Page photograph: “L. Maynard Catchings meeting with the Southern Regional Student Conference at Blue Ridge. Work group on the Christian amid racial and cultural tensions. 1952 – first year both YMCA and YWCA held only official regional conferences at Blue Ridge,” by Edward L. DuPuy, Kautz Family YMCA Archives, University of Minnesota, accessed April 18, 2017, [www.lib.umn.edu/ymca](http://www.lib.umn.edu/ymca). I would like to thank the University of Minnesota’s Elmer L. Andersen Research Scholars program which helped fund much of my research for this essay. I would also like to thank my advisor, Grace Hale.

<sup>1</sup> Dorothy I. Height and J. Oscar Lee, *The Christian Citizen and Civil Rights: A Guide to Study and Action* (New York: The Woman’s Press, 1948).

<sup>2</sup> Steven F. Lawson, ed., *To Secure These Rights: The Report of President Harry S. Truman’s Committee on Civil Rights* (Boston: Bedford-St. Martin’s, 2004).

<sup>3</sup> Height and Lee, *Christian Citizen and Civil Rights*, 9.

<sup>4</sup> Height and Lee, *Christian Citizen and Civil Rights*, 5.

<sup>5</sup> John Kenton, “Human Rights Declaration Adopted by U.N. Assembly,” *New York Times*, December 11, 1948.

<sup>6</sup> Height and Lee, *Christian Citizen and Civil Rights*, 6.

<sup>7</sup> Height and Lee, *Christian Citizen and Civil Rights*, 5. For example, after discussing racial discrimination in a hospital, the authors pose the following questions: “Could such an incident happen in your town? / Are there any hospitals under church auspices in your community? What racial policies do they follow? / What approaches might be made to secure reconsideration of hospital policies by their boards? / Why is it essential that all physicians have access to community medical facilities? / What are the practices in public health services? / If yours is a community with legal segregation, what provisions are made for the care and treatment of Negro and white patients?” Height and Lee, *The Christian Citizen and Civil Rights*, 41.

<sup>8</sup> Height and Lee, *Christian Citizen and Civil Rights*, 6.

<sup>9</sup> Height and Lee, *Christian Citizen and Civil Rights*, 63.

<sup>10</sup> While *Christian Citizen and Civil Rights* does not explicitly require one’s study group to be interracial, the authors emphasize the benefits of listening to racial minorities and forming interracial groups. Height and Lee, *Christian Citizen and Civil Rights*, 38, 64.

<sup>11</sup> Height and Lee, *Christian Citizen and Civil Rights*, 33.

<sup>12</sup> Height and Lee, *Christian Citizen and Civil Rights*, 21, 26, 32, 38, 44, 52.

<sup>13</sup> Height and Lee, *Christian Citizen and Civil Rights*, 6.

<sup>14</sup> I use “ecumenical” to refer to Christian organizations and initiatives that intentionally included Christians of various mainline Protestant denominations, particularly Methodists, Presbyterians, Baptists, Episcopalians, and Congregationalists. While this article focuses on the larger, whiter ecumenical organizations, key black ecumenical groups like the Fraternal Council of Negro Churches, Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and The National Conference of Black Christians have also played important roles in U.S. history. See Mary R. Sawyer, *Black Ecumenism: Implementing the Demands of Justice* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1994).

<sup>15</sup> The Federal Council of Churches (FCC) combined with other ecumenical bodies to create the National Council of Church (NCC) in 1950. While the YMCA and YWCA have frequently been confused, they were—and are—distinct organizations. They had different missions, boards, and strategies. They increasingly collaborated at the university level after the creation of the National Intercollegiate Christian Council in 1935 which became the National Student Council of the

YMCA and YWCA in 1951. The Student YMCA-YWCA was often the progressive thorn in its parent organizations' sides. I have separated it from its parent organizations for analytical reasons due to its distinctiveness. "Historical Note: Predecessor Organizations," YWCA of the U.S.A. Records, Student Work, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, accessed April 14, 2017, [https://asteria.fivecolleges.edu/findaids/sophiasmith/mnsss292rg7\\_bioghist.html](https://asteria.fivecolleges.edu/findaids/sophiasmith/mnsss292rg7_bioghist.html).

<sup>16</sup> "Haynes, George Edmund, 1880-1960," Folder 1, Box 86, Biographical Records, Kautz Family YMCA Archives, University of Minnesota (hereafter cited as "Biographical Records"). See also: Herbert M. Hunter, "The Clinical Sociology of George Edmund Haynes," *Clinical Sociology Review* 6 (1988): 42-50; Daniel Perlman, *Stirring the White Conscience: The Life of George Edmund Haynes* (PhD diss., New York University, 1972); Samuel Kelton Roberts, *Crucible for a Vision: The Work of George Edmund Haynes and the Commission on Race Relations, 1922-1947* (PhD diss., Columbia University, 1974).

<sup>17</sup> James Farmer, *Lay Bare the Heart: An Autobiography of the Civil Rights Movement* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1985), 215. Farmer remarked that Height and John Lewis were often left out of the press due to ageism and sexism. Height has recently started to receive more acclaim for her fundamental role in the movement, but it is still not commensurate with her contributions.

<sup>18</sup> For example, Lee had Truman's ear and Marsh was the first black president of the YMCA's National Association of Secretaries. Harry S. Truman to J. Oscar Lee, February 8, 1950, "Correspondence between J. Oscar Lee and Harry S. Truman," February 8, 1950, Official File, Truman Papers, accessed online March 28, 2017, [www.trumanlibrary.org](http://www.trumanlibrary.org); "Leo Marsh New Head of Y Directors," *Chicago Defender*, June 5, 1954. The YMCA was (and remains) significantly more conservative than the YWCA, FCC (later NCC). Perhaps for that reason, Marsh rarely published his own material. Consequently, in this article Marsh will feature less than Haynes, Height, Lee, or Catchings.

<sup>19</sup> See: "College Racial Program to Be Headed by Minister," *New York Times*, June 30, 1953; "Rev. Catchings to Talk on Europe Experiences," *Washington Post*, January 20, 1951; "L. Maynard Catchings gets YMCA post in Indonesia," *Afro-American*, January 27, 1958.

<sup>20</sup> Studies of mid-century Protestantism have also been hampered by what historian David Hollinger calls "Christian survivalism." According to Hollinger, historians have had difficulty asking questions of mainline Protestantism that are not shaped by a focus on how events have strengthened or weakened Christianity. David A. Hollinger, "After Cloven Tongues of Fire: Ecumenical Protestantism and the Modern American Encounter with Diversity," in *After Cloven Tongues of Fire: Protestant Liberalism in Modern American History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013), 19. The chapter was delivered as the Presidential Address to the Organization of American Historians in March of 2011 and was originally published in the *Journal of American History* 98, no. 1 (June 2011): 21-48.

<sup>21</sup> James F. Findlay, *Church People in the Struggle: The National Council of Churches and the Black Freedom Movement, 1950-1970* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1993), 4, 19; David W. Wills, "An Enduring Distance: Black Americans and the Establishment" in *Between the Times: The Travails of the Protestant Establishment in America, 1900-1960*, ed. William R. Hutchison (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 178-179. For a textual and historical analysis of King's letter, see Jonathan Rieder, *Gospel of Freedom: Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Letter from Birmingham Jail and the Struggle that Changed a Nation* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2013).

<sup>22</sup> Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993).

<sup>23</sup> Rejecting Charles Beard and Vernon Parrington's conflict-focused scholarship, Richard Hofstadter, Louis Hartz and others helped define the so-called "liberal consensus" from World War II until the mid-1960s before America's subsequent "right turn." For Hofstadter, this consensus was largely an ideological agreement about the role of government. Recent scholars like Molly Michelmore have demonstrated the limitations of understanding postwar America as an era of liberal consensus. Scholars have missed, however, how, while they may not have been successful, leaders worked to create consensus. Black ecumenical leaders' interracial conversations (particularly Haynes' interracial clinic) demonstrate how business, religious, and community leaders came together in an attempt to form consensus shaped by a mutual belief in liberal democracy and science, where faith served primarily as a means to those ends. The liberal consensus could not—or at least did not—hold as it became clear that to secure the rights of people of color would require sacrifices, financial and otherwise, on the part of white people. Molly C. Michelmore, *Tax and Spend: The Welfare State, Tax Politics, and the Limits of American Liberalism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012); Richard Hofstadter, *The Progressive Historians: Turner, Beard, Parrington* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf and Random House, 1968).

<sup>24</sup> Howard Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited* (orig. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1949; reprint with foreword by Vincent Harding, Boston: Beacon Press, 1996), 65. All subsequent citations refer to the 1996 edition. Thurman and Benjamin Mays "had sparkling careers on the lecture circuits of ecumenical organizations, especially the Student Christian Movement." Gary Dorrien, "Recovering the Black Social Gospel: The figures, conflicts, and ideas that forged 'the new abolition,'" *Harvard Divinity Bulletin* 43, no. 3 & 4 (Autumn 2015), <http://bulletin.hds.harvard.edu/articles/summerautumn2015/recovering-black-social-gospel>.

<sup>25</sup> During the early 1950s, J. Oscar Lee was the only African American on the professional staff (not including secretaries) of the National Council of Churches. Findlay, *Church People in the Struggle*, 19.

<sup>26</sup> Aldon Morris, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement: Black Communities Organizing for Change* (New York: The Free Press, 1984), xii. By bringing students to the forefront, Charles Payne, David Cline, Doug Rossinow, Sarah Evans, and Stephanie Hinnershitiz have emphasized the role of religion beyond clergymen and brick-and-mortar churches. For scholarship on students in the 1960s, see Charles Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995); David P. Cline, *From Reconciliation to Revolution: The Student Interracial Ministry, Liberal Christianity, and the Civil Rights Movement* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2016); Doug Rossinow, *Politics of Authenticity: Liberalism, Christianity, and the New Left in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998); Sara M. Evans, ed., *Journeys that Opened Up the World: Women, Student Christian Movements, and Social Justice, 1955-1975* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2003). Stephanie Hinnershitiz details Christian activism of Asian American students from 1900-1968. Stephanie Hinnershitiz, *Race, Religion, and Civil Rights: Asian Students on the West Coast, 1900-1968* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2015). For a specific analysis on "religious culture" as motivation, see: Johnny E. Williams, *African American Religion and the Civil Rights Movement* (Jackson, MS: University of Mississippi, 2003).

<sup>27</sup> To avoid adding to the already abundant literature regarding clergy, official pronouncements, and denominational histories, this article will focus on the ecumenical organizations that served as gathering points for a wide span of mainline Protestants. As institutions in their own right, national ecumenical Protestant organizations have also been subject primarily to intra-institutional histories. For ecumenical institutional histories ending in the 1940s, see: Nina Mjagkij, *Light in the Darkness: African Americans and the YMCA, 1852-1946* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1994), Judith Weisenfeld, *African American Women and Christian Activism: New York's Black YWCA, 1905-1945* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997); Nancy Marie Robertson, *Christian Sisterhood, Race Relations, and the YWCA, 1906-46* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2007). For ecumenical institutional histories focused on the 1960s, see: Findlay, *Church People in the Struggle*; Cline, *From Reconciliation to Revolution*; Mark Newman, *Divine Agitators: The Delta Ministry and Civil Rights in Mississippi* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2004). In her dissertation and corresponding essay, Abigail Sara Lewis addresses a similar time period as I do, but she focuses largely on the multiracial character and official positions and pronouncements of the YWCA. Abigail Sara Lewis, "'The barrier breaking love of God': The multiracial activism of the Young Women's Christian Association, 1940s-1970s" (PhD diss., Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, 2008); Abigail Sara Lewis, "Multiracial Activism in the Immediate Postwar Era" in *Freedom Rights: New Perspectives on the Civil Rights Movement*, ed. Danielle L. McGuire and John Dittmer (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 2011): 71-110.

<sup>28</sup> Sometimes the black leaders of these various ecumenical organizations collaborated directly, like with *The Christian Citizen and Civil Rights*. Other times, the connections were more social. The headquarters for the FCC, YWCA, YMCA, and Student YMCA-YWCA were all in New York. As such, many of the middle-class black leaders who shape this article—men and women like George Haynes and Dorothy Height—lived in Harlem. They had families and friends, in addition to civic and religious duties that cut across institutional lines. Both Catchings and Haynes married YWCA National Secretaries. Iris Carlton-Le Ney, "Elizabeth Ross Haynes: An African American Reformer of Womanist Consciousness, 1908-1940" *Social Work* 42, no. 6 (November 1997): 573-583; F.A. Jackson, "Mae Withers Weds L. Maynard Catchings in Ceremony at A.M. Pfeiffer Chapel," *The New York Age*, August 5, 1945. Catchings later worked as an executive for the FCC's successor, the National Council of Churches. "People," July 22, 1976, *Jet Magazine*, 40. In addition to collaborating with the FCC, Dorothy Height attended a number of events at YMCAs in New York. Dorothy Height, *Open Wide The Freedom Gates: A Memoir* (New York, PublicAffairs, 2009), 35, 45, 61, 121-122. While these activists sought to create experiences and guides for Christians all over the country, they were undoubtedly shaped by their location in the New York City. Telling a story focused largely on reformers in New York, I build on scholars who have emphasized the civil rights struggle beyond the South. See Martha Biondi, *To Stand and Fight: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Postwar New York City* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003); Shana Bernstein, *Bridges of Reform: Interracial Civil Rights Activism in Twentieth-Century Los Angeles* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2011); Thomas J. Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle for Civil rights in the North* (New York: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2009).

<sup>29</sup> Assessing the civil rights movement as religious revival, Dave Chappell argues for the centrality of the prophetic tradition. Doug Rossinow traces lines of continuity (particularly understandings of authenticity and existentialism) from the Christian Student Movement at the University of Texas to the New Left and Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). I hope to

connect the black intellectual streams of the social gospel that Gary Dorrien writes about to the activists who shape Rossinow and Chappell's 1960's-focused works. David L. Chappell, *A Stone of Hope: Prophetic Religion and the Death of Jim Crow* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Doug Rossinow, *Politics of Authenticity: Liberalism, Christianity, and the New Left in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998); Gary Dorrien, *The New Abolition: W. E. B. Du Bois and the Black Social Gospel* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2015).

<sup>30</sup> L. Maynard Catchings, "American College Students and Racial Integration," 37, November 15, 1956, Folder: Interracial and Intercultural Relations, 1954-1957, Box 20, Student Work Records, Kautz Family YMCA Archives, University of Minnesota (hereafter cited as "Student Work Records").

<sup>31</sup> The standard narrative regarding religion and psychology has been that psychology's emphasis on personal well-being replaced a more socially-minded religious ethos. This article will join scholars like Rossinow, E. Brooks Holifield, and Stephanie Muravchik who argue for a greater sense of interconnectedness between religion and psychology. In ecumenical Protestant interracial discussions in the 1940s and 1950s, references to psychology and therapy vacillate between individual and social understandings and represent not a replacement of religion but the commingling of social science, religion, and democracy. Philip Rieff, *The Triumph of the Therapeutic: Uses of Faith After Freud* (New York: Harper and Row, 1966); Rossinow, *Politics of Authenticity*; E. Brooks Holifield, *A History of Pastoral Care in America: From Salvation to Self-realization* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1983); Stephanie Muravchik, *American Protestantism in the Age of Psychology* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

<sup>32</sup> Catchings, "American College Students and Racial Integration," 4.

<sup>33</sup> Much of the scholarship on the social gospel and race has focused on white reformers. See: Ralph E. Luker, *The Social Gospel in Black and White: American Racial Reform, 1885-1912* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1991); Ronald C. White Jr., *Liberty and Justice for All: Racial Reform and the Social Gospel, 1877-1925* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1990). For black social gospel reformers, see: Dorrien, *The New Abolition*.

<sup>34</sup> W.D. Weatherford, *Negro Life in the South: Present Conditions and Needs* (New York: Association Press, 1910). One such student was future Virginia gubernatorial and U.S. Senate candidate, Francis Pickens Miller. Francis Pickens Miller, *Man from the Valley: Memoirs of a 20<sup>th</sup>-Century Virginian* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1971), 19.

<sup>35</sup> W. E. B. Du Bois remarked that "Mr. Weatherford... is distinctly liberal toward the Negro and he believes in liberal Southern movements. But... old assumptions, old beliefs continually persist." As indicated by Du Bois reference to "old assumptions," Weatherford's liberalism was, as aptly described by civil rights leader and Morehouse College President Benjamin Mays, "trapped in the miasmatic tradition of a segregated 'Christian' society." L. Maynard Catchings, echoed this sentiment when he remarked with a laugh, "I would not say Weatherford was our most radical person." By insisting on uplift and segregation, Weatherford was a classic example of what historian William Link called the "paradox of Southern progressivism." W. E. B. Du Bois, review of the *Negro from Africa to America*, 1924, W. E. B. Du Bois Papers (MS 312), Special Collections and University Archives, University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries, [credo.library.umass.edu/view/full/mums312-b228-i019](http://credo.library.umass.edu/view/full/mums312-b228-i019) [Du Bois's highly critical review of Weatherford's book would be published in *The Nation*, 119, no. 3088, September 10, 1924]; Benjamin E. Mays, *Born to Rebel: An Autobiography* (New York: Scribner, [1971]; reprint, with a revised foreword by Orville Vernon Burton, Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2003),

126; Interview with L. Maynard Catchines [sic] by Dallas A. Blanchard, 13 August 1984 F-0009, in the Southern Oral History Program Collection #4007, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; William Link, *The Paradox of Southern Progressivism, 1880-1930* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1992). See also Andrew McNeil Canady, *Willis Duke Weatherford: Race, Religion, and Reform in the American South* (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 2016).

Written for the Student Volunteer Movement, Sophia Lyon Fah's 1923 book *Racial Relations and the Christian Ideal: A Discussion Course for College Students* is perhaps the most liberal discussion guide by a white author during the Progressive era. At the beginning of each chapter, Fah posed a series of discussion questions followed by a "Reference Material" section which included excerpts by other authors, including more radical reformers like W. E. B. DuBois and Mahatma Gandhi. Written during the author's time as the YWCA interracial education secretary from 1932-1940, Frances Williams's "Pudge series" provides another example of how pre-World War II ecumenical Protestantism's race efforts did not always fall into the same traps as Weatherford's work. A series of letters between a fictional young African American known as "Pudge," her cousin Sue, and a number of young white girls, the "Pudge series" sought to creatively demonstrate the value of interracial interaction and encourage young white women to discuss race and integration in the YWCA and American society. Sophia Lyon Fahs, *Racial Relations and the Christian Ideal: A Discussion Course for College Students* (New York: Committee on Christian World Education, 1923); Weisenfeld, *African American Women and Christian Activism, 197-198*; National Commission on Ethnic Minorities-National Intercollegiate Christian Council, "Interracial Program Exchange, Number 2," March 1940, Folder: Interracial and Intercultural Programs, Box 20, Student Work Records.

<sup>36</sup> Weatherford wrote, "psychology is simply showing us the manner in which God moves upon a human spirit." W.D. Weatherford, *Introducing Men to Christ: Fundamental Studies* (New York: Association Press, 1911), 11-12.

<sup>37</sup> According to Elliot, the goal of the discussion was not "to defeat the arguments of the opposing side," but to "learn from the experience and conviction of others." Harrison Sacket Elliot, *The Why and How of Group Discussion* ([New York?]: Frederick Harris, 1923), 6, Folder: Association Press Pamphlets n.d., 1915-1923, Box 2, YMCA Pamphlet Collection, Kautz Family YMCA Archives, University of Minnesota (hereafter cited as YMCA Pamphlet Collection); see also Heather A. Warren, *Theologians of a New World Order: Reinhold Niebuhr and the Christian Realists, 1920-1948* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1997), 27-28. For more on *Racial Relations and the Christian Ideal*, see note 35.

<sup>38</sup> Elliot, *Why and How of Group Discussion*, 7.

<sup>39</sup> George Edmund Hayes, "The Interracial Clinic," *The Journal of Negro Education* 14, no. 2 (Spring, 1945), 262.

<sup>40</sup> Emphasis in original. Haynes, "The Interracial Clinic," 262. For other similar arguments, see George Edmund Hayes, "Clinical Methods in Interracial and Intercultural Relations," *The Journal of Educational Sociology* 19, no. 5 (Jan. 1946), 325; Dorothy Height, *Step by Step with Interracial Groups* (New York: The Woman's Press, 1946), 11. Sometimes in *Step by Step*, Height encouraged only a "minimum of discussion beforehand," but at other times she suggested it must play a role: "Some of the modern Negro protest songs have proved excellent for stimulating discussion of present-day problems of the Negro... Some day, every group needs to move from the 'getting acquainted' stage to a realization of the life struggles of fellow Americans." Height, *Step by Step*, 11, 18. She embraced discussion more forthrightly in her later

publications such as her 1949 *Christian Citizen and Civil Rights*, 1951 *Taking a Hand in Race Relations*, and particularly her work in the 1960s with her initiative “Wednesdays in Mississippi.” See Debbie Harwell, *Wednesdays in Mississippi: Proper Ladies Working for Radical Change* (Jackson, MS: University of Mississippi, 2014).

<sup>41</sup> Haynes, “The Interracial Clinic,” 267.

<sup>42</sup> L.M. Catchings, “Toward a New Strategy in Race Relations,” *Interregional New Bulletin* 1, no. 2 (Spring 1956): 1-2, Folder: Committee on Interracial-Intercultural Relations, Interregional News Bulletin 1956, Box 62, Student Work Records.

<sup>43</sup> “Minutes of the First Meeting of the National Study Commission on Interracial Practices in the Y.M.C.A.” March 25, 1950, Folder 1, Box 2, YMCA Interracial Programs Records, Kautz Family YMCA Archives, University of Minnesota (hereafter cited as Interracial Programs Records). The YMCA put together numerous “study commissions,” but rarely empowered them to do anything about their findings. See National Board of the Young Men’s Christian Association, *Negro Youth in City YMCAs: A Study of YMCA Services Among Negro Youth in Urban Communities* (New York: Bureau of Records, Studies and Trends, National Council of Young Men’s Christian Associations, 1944); R. W. Bullock, *A Survey of the Work of the Young Men’s Christian Associations Among Colored Men and Boys* (New York: National Council of the Young Men’s Christian Association, 1938); Jessie Howell Atwood, *The Racial Factor in Y.M.C.A.’s: A Report on Negro-White Relationships in Twenty-Four Cities* (New York: Association Press, 1946).

<sup>44</sup> Height, *Step by Step*, 21.

<sup>45</sup> Dorothy Height, *Taking a Hand in Race Relations* (New York: Publication Services, 1951), 12.

<sup>46</sup> See Khalil Gibran Muhammad, *The Condemnation of Blackness: Race, Crime, and the Making of Modern Urban America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010); Elizabeth Hinton, *From the War on Poverty to the War on Crime: The Making of Mass Incarceration in America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016).

<sup>47</sup> Haynes, “Clinical Methods,” 317.

<sup>48</sup> Haynes, “Clinical Methods,” 322.

<sup>49</sup> Gladys C. Lawther, “Reporting – A Workshop on Integration,” 2, February 17, 1956, Folder: Interracial and Intercultural Programs, 1945-1957, Box 20, Student Work Records.

<sup>50</sup> Lawther, “Reporting,” 2.

<sup>51</sup> Many black intellectuals—W. E. B. Du Bois, E. Franklin Frazier, Charles S. Johnson, and even less well known intellectuals like Richard R. Wright, Jr. and Anna Julia Haywood Cooper—played an important role in shaping the field and bringing its findings to bear on American society. Aldon D. Morris, *The Scholar Denied: W. E. B. Du Bois and the Birth of Modern Sociology* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2015); Alfred A. Young Jr. and Donald R. Deskins, Jr., “Early Traditions of African-American Sociological Thoughts,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 27 (2001): 445-477.

<sup>52</sup> Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1944). See Height and Lee, *Christian Citizen and Civil Rights*, 48; “Limited Selected Bibliography,” Conference on the Role of the Young Men’s Christian Association in Intercultural and Interracial Advance Work Book, June 10-11, 1949, Folder 7, Box 1, Interracial Programs Records.

<sup>53</sup> See for instance her section titled “The Sociologists Have Words for It,” Height, *Taking a Hand in Race Relations*, 22-23.



<sup>54</sup> Morris identifies Haynes as a member of the “erased generation” of the Du Bois-Atlanta School of Sociology. Morris, *The Scholar Denied*, 65-66. Morris dates Haynes’ PhD graduation in 1911, but all other sources I’ve consulted indicate that he graduated in 1912. See “George E. Haynes, Sociologist, Dies” *New York Times*, January 10, 1960.

<sup>55</sup> Catchines [sic], Interview. Johnson’s discussion-oriented, fact-filled racial justice initiatives could have provided a model that Catchings would apply years later in his work with the Student YMCA-YWCA. See Katrina M. Sanders-Cassell, *Intelligent and Effective Direction: The Fisk University Race Relations Institute and the Struggle for Civil Rights, 1944-1969* (New York: Peter Lang, 2005); Keith W. Berry, “Charles S. Johnson, Fisk University, and the Struggle for Civil Rights, 1945-1970” (PhD diss., Florida State University, 2005); Patrick J. Gilpin, “Charles S. Johnson and the Race Relations Institutes at Fisk University,” *Phylon* 41, no. 3 (4rd Qtr., 1980): 300-311; Earl Wright II, “The Tradition of Sociology at Fisk University,” *Journal of African American Studies* 14, no. 1 (March 2010), 54.

<sup>56</sup> Ruth Benedict and Gene Weltfish, *The Races of Mankind* (New York: Public Affairs, 1943); Robert Cannon, *The Brotherhood of Man* (United Productions of America, 1946) film, Internet Archive, accessed March 7, 2017, [https://archive.org/details/6304\\_Brotherhood\\_of\\_Man\\_The\\_01\\_27\\_05\\_28](https://archive.org/details/6304_Brotherhood_of_Man_The_01_27_05_28). Either the *Races of Mankind* or *The Brotherhood of Man* was listed in almost every ecumenical discussion guide bibliography during this period. *Sense and Nonsense About Race* by anthropologist Ethel Alpenfels and Myrdal’s *American Dilemma* were the only other books that could rival *Races of Mankind* for number of citations. Ethel Alpenfels, *Sense and Nonsense About Race* (New York: Friendship Press, 1946).

<sup>57</sup> Benedict and Weltfish, *The Races of Mankind*, 5. Benedict and Weltfish originally wrote the pamphlet to be distributed by the USO to American troops abroad as a way to counter Nazi racist ideologies, but it was soon banned for being “too controversial.” Nonetheless, despite being spurned of its original target audience, the pamphlet sold over a million copies. “USO Bans Y Distribution of Race Relations Booklet,” *The Chicago Defender*, January 22, 1944; Tracy Teslow, *Constructing Race: The Science of Bodies and Cultures in American Anthropology* (Cambridge UK, Cambridge University Press, 2014), 247.

<sup>58</sup> Benedict and Weltfish, *The Races of Mankind*, 3.

<sup>59</sup> The argument for American scientific exceptionalism is slightly ironic considering that Weltfish, Alpenfels, and Boas were all German Americans. See also John Hamm, “Race Experts Speak on Comparative Intelligence,” Illustration, in *Interregional News Bulletin* 1, no. 2 (Spring 1956), 7, Folder: Committee on Interracial-Intercultural Relations *Interregional News Bulletin*, 1956, Box: 62, Student Work Records.

<sup>60</sup> According to the definition outlined by Jonathan Freedman, Haynes’ work was a quintessential example of “clinical sociology.” Jonathan A. Freedman, “Defining Clinical Sociology” *Sociological Practice* 7, no. 1 (January 1989), 55.

<sup>61</sup> Haynes, “Interracial Clinic,” 262; Haynes, “Clinical Methods,” 317. The debate of whether or not racism should be termed a mental illness continues. See Sander L. Gilman and James M. Thomas, *Are Racists Crazy?: How Prejudice, Racism, and Antisemitism Became Markers of Insanity* (New York: New York University Press, 2016).

<sup>62</sup> Haynes, “Clinical Methods,” 316.

<sup>63</sup> Haynes, “Clinical Methods,” 318; Haynes, “The Interracial Clinic,” 262.

<sup>64</sup> Haynes, “Clinical Methods,” 318; Haynes, “The Interracial Clinic,” 266.

<sup>65</sup> Emphasis in original. Haynes, “Clinical Methods in Interracial and Intercultural Relations,” 317.

<sup>66</sup> Gordon Allport, *The Nature of Prejudice* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1954), 281.

<sup>67</sup> See Carl R. Rogers, *Client-Centered Therapy: Its Current Practice, Implications, and Theory* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1951); Frederick S. Perls, Ralph Franklin Hefferline, and Paul Goodman, *Gestalt Therapy: Excitement and Growth in the Human Personality* (New York: Julian Press, 1951).

<sup>68</sup> Unlike in Haynes’ example, in the YMCA’s example, mental health difficulties due to racial prejudice were borne by the excluded, not the excluder. National Study Commission on Interracial Practices, *Interracial Practices in the YMCA: A Guide for Officers and Leaders of Local YMCA’s* (New York: Association Press, 1952), 73.

<sup>69</sup> Height, *Taking a Hand in Race Relations*, 29.

<sup>70</sup> While psychological reasons surely helped produce so-called “de facto” segregation, local and federal governments also shaped the urban-suburban racial landscape. See Kenneth Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1985); Kevin M. Kruse, *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005); Matthew D. Lassiter, *The Silent Majority: Suburban Politics in the Sunbelt South* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006).

<sup>71</sup> National Student Councils of the YMCA and YWCA, “Report of Movement Responsibility Group,” August 27 – September 4, 1957, 4, Folder: Interracial and Intercultural Relations, 1954-1957, Box 20, Student Work Records.

<sup>72</sup> The following quotation was listed under the heading, “Discussions with Total Membership of the Christian Association on the Campus.” L. Maynard Catchings to General Service Foundation, c/o Mr. John M. Musser, 9, letter, July 1, 1955, Folder: Interracial and Intercultural Programs, 1954-1957, Box 20, Student Work Records.

<sup>73</sup> Anthony Badger, “The South Confronts the Court: The Southern Manifesto of 1956,” *The Journal of Policy History* 20, no. 1 (2008), 128.

<sup>74</sup> Emphasis in original. Lawther, “Reporting,” 2.

<sup>75</sup> National Study Commission on Interracial Practices in the YMCA, *Interracial Practices in the YMCA: A Guide for Officers and Leaders of Local YMCA’s* (New York: Association Press, 1952), 74.

<sup>76</sup> This blending of the sacred and the secular had deep roots. See Robertson, *Christian Sisterhood*; Weisenfeld, *African American Women and Christian Activism*; Wallace D. Best, *Passionately Human, No Less Divine: Religion and Culture in Black Chicago, 1915-1952* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005); Josef Sorrett, *A Religious History of Racial Aesthetics* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2016).

<sup>77</sup> Height, *Step by Step*, 3.

<sup>78</sup> Haynes, “Clinical Methods,” 320.

<sup>79</sup> Haynes, “Clinical Methods,” 318. These were also Haynes’ personal foundations. He initially planned to pursue ordination before Du Bois convinced him he could make a greater impact as a social scientist. Morris, *Scholar Denied*, 65.

<sup>80</sup> White Protestants often used scripture to justify slavery. Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited*, 20; Stephen R. Haynes, *Noah’s Curse: The Biblical Justification of American Slavery* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2002).

<sup>81</sup> For example, in his 1965 ruling against Richard and Mildred Loving, Judge Leon M. Bazile wrote, “Almighty God created the races white, black, yellow, malay and red, and he placed them on separate continents. . . . The fact that he separated the races showed that he did not intend for the races to mix.” Bazile’s ruling was overturned by the Supreme Court in 1967. “Opinion of Judge Leon M. Bazile,” January 22, 1965, accessed April 19, 2017, [www.encyclopediavirginia.org/Opinion\\_of\\_Judge\\_Leon\\_M\\_Bazile\\_January\\_22\\_1965](http://www.encyclopediavirginia.org/Opinion_of_Judge_Leon_M_Bazile_January_22_1965).

<sup>82</sup> For how white progressives and the discourse of civility stymied more radical racial equality, see William H. Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights: Greensboro, North Carolina, and the Black Struggle for Freedom* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1980). While arguments against religion’s involvement in politics in the 1940s and 1950s were primarily aimed at liberal Christians, conservative evangelical Christians became increasingly involved in politics over this period and the rest of the twentieth century. See Darren Dochuk, *From Bible Belt to Sun Belt: Plain-Folk Religion, Grassroots Politics, and the Rise of Evangelical Conservatism* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2011). Writing about a contemporary organization, “Mission Mississippi,” scholar Peter Slade argues that the organization’s shortcomings stem primarily from Southern Presbyterianism’s spirituality and the church doctrine, not its emphasis on individual relationships. Peter Slade, *Open Friendship in a Closed Society: Mission Mississippi and a Theology of Friendship* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2009), 119.

<sup>83</sup> Height and Lee, *Christian Citizen and Civil Rights*, 62.

<sup>84</sup> Leo Marsh, “Minutes of the First Meeting of the National Study Commission on Interracial Practices in the Y.M.C.A.,” March 25, 1950, Folder 1, Box 2, Interracial Program Records.

<sup>85</sup> George Edmund Haynes, “The Unfinished Interracial Task of the Churches,” *The Journal of Religious Thought* 2, no. 1 (Autumn-Winter 1945), 53.

<sup>86</sup> Catchings to General Service Foundation, Student Work Records.

<sup>87</sup> National Student Councils of the YMCA and YWCA, “A Study and Action Guide for the Sixth National Student Assembly on Our Concern for Interracial Relations,” May 28, 1958, Folder: Interracial and Intercultural Relations, 1954-1957, Box 20, Student Work Records; see also L. Maynard Catchings, “A Study Group Proposal and Program Suggestions for Work on Racial Desegregation and Integration,” December 14, 1956, Folder: Interracial and Intercultural Relations, 1954-1957, Box 20, Student Work Records.

<sup>88</sup> Charles Marsh, *God’s Long Summer: Stories of Faith and Civil Rights* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 3.

<sup>89</sup> Catchings, “American College Student and Racial Integration,” 8.

<sup>90</sup> Haynes, “Unfinished Interracial Task of the Churches,” 59.

<sup>91</sup> Howard Thurman also employed this language: “The awareness that a man is a child of the God of religion, who is at one and the same time the God of life, creates a profound faith in life that nothing can destroy.” Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited*, 45.

<sup>92</sup> Haynes, “Unfinished Interracial Task of the Churches,” 56.

<sup>93</sup> Catchings, “American College Student and Racial Integration,” 6.

<sup>94</sup> Catchings, “American College Student and Racial Integration,” 6.

<sup>95</sup> Haynes, “The Unfinished Interracial Task of the Churches,” 58.

<sup>96</sup> Haynes, “The Unfinished Interracial Task of the Churches,” 56.

<sup>97</sup> See also Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited*, 88.

<sup>98</sup> Haynes, “The Interracial Clinic,” 265.

<sup>99</sup> National Student Councils of the YMCA and YWCA, “A Study and Action Guide,” 6.

<sup>100</sup> “National Committee on Interracial Relations: Proposed Functions and Structures,” July 1, 1955, Folder: Interracial and Intercultural Relations, 1954-1957, Box 20, Student Work Records.

<sup>101</sup> Haynes, “The Unfinished Interracial Task of the Churches,” 55-56.

<sup>102</sup> Due to the respect, finances, and the organizational capacity of their respective organizations, Haynes was able to hold over thirty interracial clinics across the U.S. and distribute information to 140,000 pulpits, Height was able to publish and distribute a wide variety of pamphlets, and Catchings was able to demand the ear of white university presidents. Haynes, “Clinical Methods in Interracial Relations,” 321; “Haynes, George Edmund,” *The National Cyclopaedia of American Biography*, vol. XLIV (New York: James T. White and Company, 1962), 463; Jean Meegan, “Churches Start Racial Amity Campaign Today,” *Los Angeles Times*, February 10, 1946; Catchings to Musser, Student Work Records.

<sup>103</sup> Haynes, “The Unfinished Interracial Task of the Churches,” 56, 58.

<sup>104</sup> For example, the word “democracy” never appears in Weatherford’s *Negro Life in the South* and only a few times in the text of Fah’s *Racial Relations and the Christian Ideal*.

<sup>105</sup> Edward Kennedy, “Germans Capitulat on All Fronts,” *New York Times*, May 8, 1945; Haynes, “The Unfinished Interracial Task of the Churches,” 55.

<sup>106</sup> The YWCA had long used the language of democracy, particularly expressed through the phrase “Christian citizenship.” It was not until after World War II, however, that the language of democracy began to signify integration. Lewis, “Barrier Breaking Love of God,” 2.

<sup>107</sup> Height, *Step by Step*, 8; Height, *Taking a Hand in Race Relations*, 28. While she was following the lead of *To Secure These Rights*, under the section labelled “The Moral Reason,” Height did not look to God or the Bible but instead focused on the Declaration of Independence, Constitution, and Bill of Rights.

<sup>108</sup> Catchings, “American College Student and Racial Integration,” 35. Another example was the two-day workshop at Washington University in St. Louis in October of 1956 called “Integration: Toward Campus Democracy.” At this workshop, Sociology and Anthropology Professor Ralph Patrick noted the university’s “YM-YWCA is the only organization [on campus where] Negroes play an active leadership role.” “Catchings YMCA Confab Speaker,” *The St. Louis Argus*, October 12, 1956.

<sup>109</sup> For example, under the heading “Democratization of College Fraternities,” Catchings wrote: “Materials to be mailed to all Associations with recommendations that fraternity members of the Association utilize materials and resources for having the fraternities face the question of desegregation.” L. Maynard Catchings, “Working Paper for Work Group on Interracial Intercultural Program,” 2, for YMCA-YWCA National Student Staff Meeting, January 17-26, 1956, Pawling, New York, Folder: Interracial and Intercultural Relations, 1954-1957, Box 20, Student Work Records.

<sup>110</sup> Myrdal, *An American Dilemma*, xxii.

<sup>111</sup> “Statement by Study Commission on Interracial Practices, January 22, 1951, Folder 2, Box 2, Interracial Programs Records.

<sup>112</sup> Stan Swinton, “Allies Abandon Blazing Seoul; Reds Form for Final Assault,” *The Washington Post*, January 5, 1951.

<sup>113</sup> Height, *Taking a Hand in Race Relations*, 6-7. Again, Height is following the outline presented in *To Secure These Rights*.

<sup>114</sup> See Carol Anderson, *Eyes Off the Prize: The United Nations and the African American Struggle for Human Rights, 1944-1955* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Thomas Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global*

*Arena* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003); Mary Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, [2000] 2011).

<sup>115</sup> Dorothy Height, Columbia University Oral History Project, as quoted in Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty*, 110.

<sup>116</sup> C.P. Trussell, "Red 'Underground' in Federal Posts Alleged by Editor," *New York Times*, August 4, 1948; "Charge Y.W.C.A. is Honeycombed by Communists," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, October 18, 1948; Joseph P. Kamp, *Behind the Lace Curtains of the YWCA* (New York: Constitutional Educational League, Inc., 1948).

<sup>117</sup> Catchings, "American College Student and Racial Integration," 6-7.

<sup>118</sup> Kevin M. Schultz, *Tri-Faith America: How Catholics and Jews Held Postwar America to its Protestant Promise* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2011). According to an in-house history, this change was due to interfaith conversations organized by the National Conference of Christians and Jews (NCCJ). James E. Pitt, *Adventures in Brotherhood* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Company, 1955), 6.

<sup>119</sup> "Youths of Varied Faiths Plan Forum," *Louisville Defender*, December 16, 1945 and "Youth in Action Eager to Boost Democracy," *Louisville Courier-Journal*, January 27, 1946, as quoted in Tracy E. K'Meyer, *Civil Rights in the Gateway to the South: Louisville, Kentucky, 1945-1980* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2009), 21. The Student YMCA at the University of Virginia also supported Catholic and Jewish student groups and speakers. "Religious Affairs in the University of Virginia Community," [1956?], Folder: YMCA – General Life, Box: 1, S. Vernon McCasland Papers; "University of Virginia Young Men's Christian Association, 1954-1955," Folder: YMCA – General Life, Box: 1, Papers of Vernon S. McCasland, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, VA.

<sup>120</sup> National Student Councils of the YMCA and YWCA, "A Study and Action Guide," 6; Albert Schorsch, III, "'Uncommon Women and Others': Memoirs and Lessons from Radical Catholics at Friendship House," 9, no. 4, *U.S. Catholic Historian* (Fall, 1990), 375.

<sup>121</sup> According to longtime YMCA Senior Secretary for Colored Work, Channing Tobias, this was due in part to Jewish philanthropist Julius Rosenwald who provided funds for numerous black YMCAs and YWCAs across the country. Channing H. Tobias, "Two Decades of Y.M.C.A. Work Among Colored Men and Boys in America: A Record of Achievement, An Evaluation of the Present Program, Suggestions for the Future," March 14, 1934, New York, Folder 1, Box 1, Interracial Programs Records.

<sup>122</sup> Catchings, "Working Paper for Work Group on Interracial Intercultural Program," 3.

<sup>123</sup> National Student Councils of the YMCA and YWCA, "A Study and Action Guide," 7.

<sup>124</sup> Kenneth D. Benne, Leland P. Bradford, and Ronald Lippitt, *Group Dynamics and Social Action* ([New York?]: Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, 1950), 3, insider cover; Folder: Group Dynamics, Box 10, YMCA Work with Related Organizations, Kautz Family YMCA Archives, University of Minnesota.

<sup>125</sup> Height, *Open Wide the Freedom Gates*, 62.

<sup>126</sup> Emphasis in original. Height, *Step by Step*, 25.

<sup>127</sup> Height and Lee, *The Christian Citizen and Civil Rights*, 9. See also Robertson, *Christian Sisterhood*, 174.

<sup>128</sup> Height and Lee, *The Christian Citizen and Civil Rights*, 9.

<sup>129</sup> Height and Lee, *The Christian Citizen and Civil Rights*, 9.

<sup>130</sup> For instance, Height and Lee wrote the following about democracy: “democratic way of life rests on the premise that each person has an essential worth and dignity which must be respected.” Later, they expressed an almost identical sentiment about why Christians should support democracy: “The Christian must then adopt those means which best express...the Christian teaching of love and justice in order to create the kind of society which safeguards the intrinsic worth of every person as a child of God.” Height and Lee, *The Christian Citizen and Civil Rights*, 8, 9-10.

<sup>131</sup> Height and Lee, *The Christian Citizen and Civil Rights*, 9.

<sup>132</sup> Catchings, “Toward a new strategy in race relations,” 2.

<sup>133</sup> Height, *Open Wide the Freedom Gates*, 63.

<sup>134</sup> Height and Lee, “Christian Citizen and Civil Rights,” 20-21. Naomi Murakawa argues that this right to safety helped lay the groundwork for mass incarceration. Naomi Murakawa, *The First Civil Right: How Liberals Built Prison America* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2014), 2-3.

<sup>135</sup> Questions like these could make white women uncomfortable. During an interracial conversation about restricted covenants, “a woman asked, ‘Why do they have to bring out these questions?’ ...She felt ill at ease in discussing a subject which aroused conflicting emotions on the part of Negro and white women.” Dorothy Sabiston and Margaret Hiller, *Toward Better Race Relations* (New York: Woman’s Press, 1949), 87.

<sup>136</sup> Height, *Step by Step*, 8; Height, *Taking a Hand in Race Relations*, 26.

<sup>137</sup> Carolyn Dixon and Carl Lawrence, “Civil Rights Program Wins,” *New York Amsterdam News*, July 17, 1948.

<sup>138</sup> Leo B. Marsh, “Summary of Conference on the Role of the Y.M.C.A. in Interracial Advance,” [1949], 4-5, Folder 7, Box 1, Interracial Programs Records; “Agenda,” Conference on the Role of the Young Men’s Christian Association in Intercultural and Interracial Advance Work Book, June 10-11, 1949, Folder 7, Box 1, Interracial Programs Records; “Bigotry Blasted in YMCA Policies,” *New Journal and Guide* [Norfolk, VA], June 25, 1949.

<sup>139</sup> Leslie Pinckney Hill, “Around the Conference Table,” Conference on the Role of the Young Men’s Christian Association in Intercultural and Interracial Advance Workbook, June 10-11, Folder 7, Box 1, Interracial Programs Records.

<sup>140</sup> Hill, “Around the Conference Table.”

<sup>141</sup> Haynes’ next sentence is a near parallel, but he replaces “democratic community” with “family of God.” Haynes, “Unfinished Interracial Task of the Churches,” 55.

<sup>142</sup> Relying upon straight lines and a striking mix of black, white, and red throughout, Nishi divided the painting into two parts. On the left, the lines crisscross chaotically, almost violently, representing “the fragmenting effect of segregation” according to the inside cover. Representing community, the colors and lines on the right-side of the image align harmoniously, resembling a stained-glass gothic window as if in a church. Black and white crosses ascend the painting, floating through the integrated community. Ken Nishi, “...toward community” [cover art], *The Intercollegian: A Journal of Christian Encounter* 73, no. 8 (April 1956), 3, Folder: Interracial and Intercultural Relations, 1954-1957, Box 21, Student Work Records.

<sup>143</sup> Maynard Catchings, “they parted with racial prejudice,” *The Intercollegian: A Journal of Christian Encounter* 73, no. 8 (April 1956): 4; Folder: Interracial and Intercultural Relations, 1954-1957, Box 21, Student Work Records.

<sup>144</sup> Catchings, “they parted with prejudice,” 5.

<sup>145</sup> Catchings, “they parted with racial prejudice,” 4.

<sup>146</sup> Emphasis in original. Robert McAfee Brown, “moving beyond platitudes,” *The Intercollegian: A Journal of Christian Encounter* 73, no. 8 (April 1956), 11, 9; Folder: Interracial and Intercultural Relations, 1954-1957, Box 21, Student Work Records.

<sup>147</sup> Brown, “moving beyond platitudes,” 11.

<sup>148</sup> Catchings, “American College Students and Racial Integration,” 4.

<sup>149</sup> White liberal Protestant students’ preference for a quiet, gradualist approach was likely shaped by two factors: an optimistic outlook about the improvement of race relations inspired by Myrdal and what Catchings referred to as “The Social Pressures” that discouraged involvement. Myrdal, *An American Dilemma*; Catchings, “American College Students and Racial Integration,” 6. See Chappell, *Stone of Hope*, 37.

<sup>150</sup> Catchings, “American College Students and Racial Integration,” 5.

<sup>151</sup> Emphasis in original. National Student Councils of the YMCA and YWCA, “A Study and Action Guide,” 9.

<sup>152</sup> Edgar Watkins, “Key Racial Issue is Accepting Humans,” *The Daily Texan*, February 10, 1955.

<sup>153</sup> Catchings, “Working Paper for Work Group on Interracial Intercultural Program,” 3. See also Catchings, “American College Students and Racial Integration,” 39.

<sup>154</sup> Catchings, “American College Students and Racial Integration,” 37.

<sup>155</sup> Martin Luther King, Jr., “Facing the Challenge of a New Age,” December 3, 1956, in *The Papers of Martin Luther King Jr.* Vol. 3., ed. Clayborne Carson, Stewart Burns, Susan Carson, Peter Holloran, Dana L.H. Powell (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1992), 458. Interracial discussions may have also played a minor role in shaping King’s beloved community. During his time at Morehouse and over the opposition of his father, King participated in formal discussions with white students from Emory. Reflecting on his monthly meetings with the Intercollegiate Council, King recalled “I was ready to resent all the white race. As I got to see more of white people, my resentment was softened, and a spirit of cooperation took its place.” *The Papers of Martin Luther King Jr.* Vol. 1., ed. Clayborne Carson, Ralph E. Luker, and Penny A. Russell (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 45n.

<sup>156</sup> Height and Lee, *Christian Citizen and Civil Rights*, 67.

<sup>157</sup> “Interracial Clinic Held in Akron,” *Afro-American* [Baltimore, MD], June 16, 1945; “6 Point Plan Mapped as Aid to Negroes,” *New York Times*, September 14, 1944; Height and Lee, *Christian Citizen and Civil Rights*, 66-68; Randi J. Walker, *Religion and the Public Conscience: Ecumenical Civil Rights Work in Seattle, 1940-1960* (Winchester, UK: Circle Books, 2012), 95.

<sup>158</sup> During the 1960s, Height utilized tactics she had honed the previous decade to create “Wednesdays in Mississippi,” mentored countless young women activists like Nancy Richardson, Valerie Russell, Renetia Martin, and Frances Kendall, and was a driving force behind the YW’s One Imperative plan in 1970 to “[eliminate] racism where it exists and by any means necessary.” Eliminating racism and empowering women remains the YWCA’s primary focus. Harwell, *Wednesdays in Mississippi*; Evans ed., *Journeys that Opened Up the World*, 226-261; Lewis, “Barrier Breaking Love of God,” 10; “Mission & Vision,” Young Women’s Christian Association, accessed April 20, 2017, [www.ywca.org](http://www.ywca.org).

<sup>159</sup> For example, Mae King, the co-chairman of the National Student Council of the YMCA and YWCA, was arrested for helping lead Wiley and Bishop College students in a sit-in Marshall, Texas, in 1960. James A. Aull to Members of the National Student Councils of the YMCA and YWCA, April 11, 1960, Folder: Interracial and Intercultural Programs, Box 20, Student Work Records. Catchings remained with the Student YMCA-YWCA until the end of 1958. “L.

Maynard Catchings gets YMCA post in Indonesia,” *Afro-American* [Baltimore], December 27, 1958.

<sup>160</sup> Pete Weimer to Bruce Maguire, May 19, 1960, Folder: Civil Rights, Box 5, Student Work Records.

<sup>161</sup> See Rossinow, *Politics of Authenticity*; Cline, *From Reconciliation to Revolution*; and Evans, ed., *Journeys that Opened Up the World*. Catchings had a direct influence on Rosalie Oakes, the “behind-the-scenes driving force for sit-ins, protests, and the women’s movement” who mentored SNCC and SDS activist Casey Hayden and many others. Catchings and Oakes interacted throughout the mid-1950s because Oakes was the leader of the Student YWCA at the University of Texas, one of the sites of Catching’s pilot program. Christine Miller Ford, “Memorial planned for activist Rosalie Oakes,” *The Winchester Star*, September 30, 2008; Rosalie Oakes, “Summary of Interviews, Conferences and Meetings during Maynard Catchings’ Visit, November 2 – 4, 1955,” April 5, 1956, Folder: Interracial and Intercultural Relations, 1954-1957, Box 20, Student Work Records.

<sup>162</sup> See also Height, *Taking a Hand in Race Relations*, 38; “Bigotry Blasted in YMCA Policies,” *New Journal and Guide* [Norfolk, VA], June 25, 1949.

<sup>163</sup> Hollinger, “After Cloven Tongues of Fire,” 23.

<sup>164</sup> See Hinnershitz, *Race, Religion, and Civil Rights*; Lewis, “Barrier Breaking Love of God.”

<sup>165</sup> Emphasis in original. Height, *Step by Step*, 3. See also Catchings, “they parted with prejudice,” 4; Haynes, “Unfinished Interracial Task,” 53, 55.

<sup>166</sup> Height and Lee, *Christian Citizen and Civil Rights*, 22.

<sup>167</sup> Lawther, “Reporting,” 2.

<sup>168</sup> My understanding of prefigurative politics is informed by Wini Breines’ analysis of SDS and the New Left. Wini Breines, *Community and Organization in the New Left: 1962-1968: The Great Refusal* (South Hadley, MA: J.F. Bergin Publishers, Inc., 1982).

<sup>169</sup> Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma, Volume 2: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1944; reprint with a new introduction by Sissela Bok, New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2009), 610.

<sup>170</sup> Benjmain E. Mays, “Obligations of Negro Christians in Relation to an Interracial Program,” *Journal of Religious Thought* 31 (1945), 42; Mays, *Born to Rebel*, 148.

<sup>171</sup> Height and Thurman make a similar point. Thurman believed deception by the disinherited perpetuated the caste system. Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited*, 62; Height, *Step by Step*, 27.

<sup>172</sup> Mays, “Obligations of Negro Christians,” 46.

<sup>173</sup> Height, *Step by Step*, 19; Maynard Catchings as quoted in Oakes, “Summary.” Class also shaped white participants; black leaders primarily sought middle-class, white leaders to participate in their discussions and activism.

<sup>174</sup> Height and Lee, *Christian Citizen and Civil Rights*, 35. See also Haynes, “Unfinished Interracial Task of the Churches,” 58; Catchings, “American College Student and Racial Integration,” 3.

<sup>175</sup> For the roots of Protestantism’s emphasis on individualism, see Robert e. McNally, S.J., “The Ninety-Five Theses of Martin Luther: 1517-1967,” *Theological Studies* 28, no. 3 (September 1967), 476. McNally writes, “Faith, as a personal act of commitment, became all-important, and Holy Scripture, as its ultimate foundation, became supreme in religious life for [Martin Luther]... The old Catholic axis, ‘We-Thou,’ changed to a new reformed axis, ‘I-Thou.’”

<sup>176</sup> Height and Lee, *Christian Citizen and Civil Rights*, 5.



---

<sup>177</sup> Responding to critics' insistence on negotiation rather than direct action, King wrote in his letter from Birmingham Jail, "You are quite right in calling for negotiation. Indeed, this is the very purpose of direct action. Nonviolent direct action seeks to create such a crisis and foster such a tension that a community which has constantly refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue." Martin Luther King, "Letter from a Birmingham Jail," April 16, 1963, [www.africa.upenn.edu/Articles\\_Gen/Letter\\_Birmingham.html](http://www.africa.upenn.edu/Articles_Gen/Letter_Birmingham.html).

<sup>178</sup> For works describing race and identity-making in white work environments, see Devon W. Carbado and Mitu Gulati, "Working Identity," *Cornell Law Review* 85, no. 5 (2000): 1259-1308; Elijah Anderson, "The White Space," *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity* 1 (2015): 10-21.

<sup>179</sup> Hollinger, "After Cloven Tongues of Fire," 46.

<sup>180</sup> To close one his most famous speeches from the 2008 presidential campaign, Barack Obama described a white woman named Ashley who had organized a roundtable discussion in a mostly African American community, and how an elderly black man said, "I am here because of Ashley." Obama continued, "By itself, that single moment of recognition between that young white girl and that old black man is not enough... But it is where we start. It is where our union grows stronger... that is where the perfection begins." Barack Obama, "A More Perfect Union," March 18, 2008, Philadelphia, PA, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/03/18/us/politics/18text-obama.html>. Nine years later, many still think of dialogue as the key first step. In February 2017, Ben & Jerry's sponsored a podcast on race and identity by saying, "They believe that dialogue can bridge differences, promoting a more just and equitable future for all." "Oscars So Black...At Least, In Documentaries," Code Switch Podcast, National Public Radio, February 8, 2017. For churches, see The United Methodist Church's General Commission on Religion and Race's "Vital Conversations" series, <http://www.gcorr.org/vital-conversations>.

<sup>181</sup> The call for action as opposed to conversation has grown louder in the wake of tragic murders in Ferguson, Baltimore, Cleveland, and around the country. The movement for Black lives has reawakened the imaginations of religious and non-religious people across America and the world. See Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, *From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2016).

<sup>182</sup> While I could not determine when or whether Height actually said this statement, it is frequently attributed to her. See 156 Cong. Rec. H5985 (daily ed. April 21, 2010) (statement of Rep. Conyers).