

The 1969 Oklahoma City Garbage Strike



*By Richard Lowitt**

The turmoil and strife accompanying the efforts of African Americans to secure justice and equality in the 1960's largely evaded Oklahoma. By the latter years of the decade the state was well along on the road to integration in its schools and public accommodations. Oklahoma had no Birmingham thanks to Governors Johnston Murray and most notably Raymond Gary. Their efforts helped achieve the peaceful admission of blacks into the state's public schools. And more notable, two years before the sit-in in February 1960 in Greensboro, North Carolina, African Americans through an impressive series of sit-ins had won the right to be served in Oklahoma City on the same basis as the white customers. By 1964 Oklahoma City adopted a public accommodations ordinance. But even before the 1958 sit-ins, segregation in city

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A sit-in at Katz Drugstore organized by Clara Luper (John Melton Collection, OHS Research Division).

theaters and city buses had ended quietly. Indeed, in 1957 the director of the Department of Commerce and Industry found Oklahoma's record on racial integration an important factor in contacts with prospective new industries.

The successful sit-ins were due largely to the strenuous efforts of Clara S. Luper working with the Youth Council of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). She devoted fifteen months to planning and training its members in civil disobedience. Thanks in good part to her efforts a harmonious atmosphere of negotiation, compromise, and acceptance helped dampen threats of extremists who sought to curb these developments. But with the racial turmoil following the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., in Memphis on April 4, 1968, communities and states, especially in the South, enacted laws and ordinances designed to curtail rioting. Oklahoma and its capital city approved such legislation. Intended to limit race riots, the legislation proved equally effective against angry opponents of the escalating war in Vietnam. At the same time in Oklahoma, Governor Dewey Bartlett issued a proclamation designating the last week in April as Oklahoma Equal Opportunity Week.

But an Equal Opportunity Week did not resolve the concerns of many African American residents of Oklahoma City of which adequate housing was among the most prominent. It focused on realtors' opposition to the civil right legislation that called for open housing allowing individuals to live wherever their means would allow. Add inadequate education, poor city services, and recognition that practically every troubled situation that arose quickly in-

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Clara Luper boarding a bus for a civil rights protest, April 26, 1963 (John Melton Collection, OHS Research Division).



volved the police. Despite much visible progress, African Americans were far from satisfied with their lot. Minor incidents could spark serious disturbances.¹

On July 24, 1969, on a back page of the *Daily Oklahoman* appeared a story that could spark a serious disturbance. Sanitation workers, unhappy with their lot, were calling for improvements. A garbage strike inevitably conjured up memories of the 1968 strike in Memphis that cost Martin Luther King, Jr., his life and led to rioting that scourged numerous urban areas. A strike in New York City saw some one hundred thousand tons of garbage heaped high on city streets and prompted a health emergency. And with Clara Luper serving as spokesperson for the workers, their dissatisfactions would be heard.

Luper was responding to a decision of Robert Oldland, the city manager new to his job from Miami where he held a similar position, to resurrect a minority employment committee. As a member of the committee, Luper responded that since there were no black supervisors in the Sanitation Department that before creating a minority committee this issue should be addressed. Thus, at the outset it was clear that a garbage strike would be a racial issue even more than a labor dispute.

After some discussion 276 sanitation workers told Luper they wanted her as their leader. She agreed, set about organizing a steering committee, and sought a meeting with the city manager to present a list of grievances. Among them was a call for a five-day work week, specific job assignments, and elimination of the practice of making workers help out on other collection routes after completing

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their assignments. The workers also called for improved conditions at the municipal garages and, most important, a pay raise of \$100 a month over the \$360 pay minimum they were then only recently receiving. Oldland told Luper he would look at the demands and respond to them in writing.²

His response failed to satisfy the workers, though the city administration agreed to institute a five-day week on a trial basis in one area of the city. After due consideration the committee rejected the report on Monday, July 28, and agreed to meet later in the week to determine how to proceed. To a charge by Oldland that she was misinformed, Luper replied, "The city council is being asked by the city manager to raise the salaries of some big shot city workers, and I think it's time for the same city to give that long overdue raise for all city workers."³

At a Saturday meeting the sanitation workers voted to again ask the city manager for specific changes in their working conditions and for higher pay. If their requests were not answered by August 19, employees of the department would remain away from their jobs. While Oldland at first refused to recognize Luper as the sanitation employees' spokesperson, he made it clear that workers who left their jobs would be fired. In all there were about 360 workers, mostly African Americans, in the Sanitation Division; only about 40 who attended meetings with Luper agreed to strike if their requests for higher salaries and work changes were not met. They claimed to represent more than 300 sanitation workers.

At the same time the city council as well as city officials were discussing possible pay revisions for sanitation workers, firemen, police, and other city employees, Councilman A. L. Dowell, the lone black member, voiced concerns about revision of lower echelon pay raises while discussing pay range changes for higher paid employees. And Luper announced that the NAACP Youth Council voted to stand or lie down in front of garbage trucks if the workers' demands were not met. Some white workers assured Luper they were with her in endorsing the workers' demands. But Oldland, following an hour-long meeting with Luper, NAACP officials, and a representative of the Black Panthers (at least ten more waited outside the manager's office), insisted "this city will not operate on a demand basis."⁴

"A man [Oldland] who makes \$30,000 a year . . . should be more flexible and understanding of problems," exclaimed State Representative Archibald Hill, a leader in the black community. Following the meeting and several days before the strike deadline, Oldland

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*State Representative
Archibald Hill (OHS Re-
search Division collections)*



indicated some flexibility. He met with sanitation workers and agreed to most of their terms with the exception of the demand for a salary increase that would have to await the completion of a salary review of city workers due at the end of the year. Flexible though he was, the city manager did not back away from his assertion that he would fire workers who refused to work on August 19.⁵

As the strike deadline approached, leaders sought to assure the black community that the dispute could be resolved without a confrontation that might get out of hand. The presence of Black Panthers outside the meeting in the manager's office prompted some of this concern. To help insure a nonviolent outcome, NAACP headquarters in New York agreed to send two specialists, one an attorney, to assist as leaders in the black community and pledged its support of the sanitation workers. In a roll call vote members of the Civic Leadership Coalition (CLC) composed of representatives of all major civil rights, social, and civic organizations, largely located on the east side of Oklahoma City, promised their support of the NAACP Youth Council's pledge to stand or lie down in front of garbage trucks if sanitation workers went on strike. The vote was unanimous. Prior to the vote, CLC leaders listened to five city council members and the city manager present their side in the controversy. A large number of sanitation workers accompanied Clara Luper to this meeting where the central issues were again discussed. Once again it was asserted that all the issues raised by the workers had been or were being resolved except demands for salary increases and for five-man crews instead of three-man work units. If the issues were not resolved, a minister at the meeting in-

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formed the audience that his fellow clergymen would be creating a fund to aid striking workers.⁶

While the CLC supported the sanitation workers, Mayor James Norick and the city council lined up solidly behind the city manager. One by one the mayor and the council members endorsed the manager's edict that those who went on strike would be fired. A. L. Dowell noted that most of the workers' issues had been resolved, except that of salary. He concluded that it was time for the workers to "yield something." While he acknowledged their "real" and "legitimate" demands, he contended the men should consider "past and proposed progress in raising salaries and benefits." Thus, while some middle ground existed, proponents on both sides committed themselves on what each considered central issues: one involving wages, the other the illegality of the contemplated strike and the refusal to bargain. As the August 19 strike date approached, its onset on August 15 appeared inevitable.⁷

Yet on the weekend before August 19, Councilman Dowell urged Oldland to meet with Luper to cobble together a measure to raise workers' wages through a small increase in the monthly garbage rate of \$2.50 for twice-weekly service. Dowell asserted that the dispute had become one of personalities and that the sanitation workers and their families had been largely forgotten. In a statement issued from his office, Oldland said the city was continuing to evaluate the contentious issues and was in the process of establishing a fact-finding citizens committee to assist in resolving them.

Since the wedge between the two parties showed no last minute signs of narrowing, Luper now spelled out some of the actions the black community would take. "The east side community will not allow others to pick up our garbage and members would give up things: new clothes, necessities of all kinds, in sympathy with the men if they were fired." In addition, members of the NAACP Youth Council paraded through downtown Oklahoma City on the Saturday morning preceding the strike. And at a church service the next day, Phil Savage, a NAACP official from Philadelphia and a cofounder of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee, told the workers and their supporters that they "have just begun what you should have started years ago." All the community leaders who spoke throughout the weekend deplored violence yet were firm in their support of the sanitation workers. Also, the Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance sent telegrams to the mayor and city manager expressing concern about the "threat of a strike or violence in our streets."⁸

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On August 19 a majority of the more than three hundred city employees seeking a \$100 per month wage increase were African Americans. The walkout affected approximately four hundred fifty thousand city residents. At no time during its course did Oklahoma City enjoy full, twice-a-week garbage service. Efforts were made to provide once-a-week service and on one occasion for a brief period in one part of the city full service was available. In addition, garbage trucks were parked at fire stations for residents to use to deposit their refuse. The police, most of whom were white and who like the sanitation workers were affected by inflation and anticipated a pay raise, were assigned to accompany garbage trucks and to guard the truck barns all night. But on the first day of the strike there were no incidents. Fifty-six volunteers manned thirty-three trucks aided by forty-three men who remained on their jobs. No incidents occurred because the committee studying city salaries suggested that the city give the striking workers until 5 p.m. Friday to seek reinstatement "without loss of accrued benefits." At a marathon meeting before the scheduled strike, the men decided instead to march on City Hall. They were encouraged by the progress of the fact-finding committee in seeking to improve salaries and working conditions. The one hundred workers who marched wanted to recommend that the council move a pay raise (not yet determined) scheduled for January 1 to September 1. Council members, however, insisted they could not consider giving a pay raise to any segment of city workers without considering all city employees.

After the sanitation workers indicated they could not accept the promise of a raise in 1970 as a reason for calling off the strike, a meeting of council members, sanitation workers, strike committee leaders, and NAACP officials was called at the Oklahoma City Chamber of Commerce offices. Here once again the entire situation was thrashed about. No side was willing to make any concessions on the crucial issue of a pay raise. Since no serious incidents occurred on the first day of the walkout, Oldland had offered an olive branch to the workers, and city residents were alerted how to handle their refuse, officials could only await the response of the disgruntled workers and their supporters.⁹

Early Wednesday morning outside the Westwood garage, severe disturbances occurred. Only twenty-two of the city's sanitation trucks were in service, while thirty-seven persons were arrested for obstructing the street, disorderly conduct, or inciting to riot. Among those arrested were Luper, the spokesperson for the workers, and two NAACP officials: James Brown from New York and Richard Dockery from Dallas. With the strike underway, the citizen

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fact-finding committee recommended a \$40 raise for all municipal employees making less than \$500 a month and a \$20 raise for those earning more than \$500 by September 1 to be financed by a modest increase in monthly sewer and refuse rates. Coupled with an already budgeted \$20 across-the-board annual rate slated for January 1970, the proposed increase would mean a total \$60 per month increase for the Sanitation Division and for other workers making less than \$500 by that date. Though the workers rejected this proposal, it was accepted by the city council, which started to improve the facilities workers used, such as providing showers and lockers. Though the committee proposal became central to the final outcome of the strike, neither the city nor the strikers and their supporters at this time accepted it.¹⁰

Meanwhile, that Wednesday evening (August 20, 1969) at the Greater Cleaves Memorial CME Church about four hundred people, many forced to stand, heard State Senator E. Melvin Porter and State Representative Archibald Hill assert that they would be on hand early the following morning to block movement of garbage trucks. They were joined by Luper, who urged supporters to meet at the nearby Freedom Center from whence they would go in a caravan to the two city garages: one on Classen Boulevard and the nearby one on Westwood. Porter promised to stand in front of a garbage truck. Hill went further and told the cheering crowd that he was willing to lie in front of one of those trucks. Brown, the national youth secretary of the NAACP, criticized the police for overreacting and said they should understand that if sanitation workers got a raise, they would too. Both were in the same situation.¹¹

While these officials and fifteen other men were arrested on Thursday morning, six of the eight city council members agreed to



State Senator E. Melvin Porter, far left, with other African American civil rights lawyers (John Melton Collection, OHS Research Division).

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the citizen council proposed pay raise; two council members were not present, but as Dowell said, "the six votes are enough to pass it." At another packed church meeting, sanitation workers agreed to meet near the Westwood garage to vote on the proposal. One of the strikers said earlier in this meeting the workers would hold out for a \$100 increase. But both Dowell and Luper expressed hope for a prompt settlement. More important, Luper, a high school history teacher, announced she would be returning to the classroom and that the leadership of the strike would change. To offset, in part, the loss of her leadership, the Oklahoma Bar Association offered free legal representation to all city sanitation workers, an indication that there was some sympathy for their cause in the broader community.¹²

By Friday the strike seemingly stalled as sixty-nine workers applied for reinstatement, joining at least thirty who already were rehired or had applied for reinstatement. Meanwhile, new workers (scabs) were being hired, and some of those who remained on the job were being promoted. Employees from other departments were used to drive some of the fifty of the eighty-three available garbage trucks. After four days as the strike appeared to be collapsing, leaders in the black community at various meetings insisted that too much was at stake, that the effort should not be abandoned.¹³

It was not. Sanitation workers demonstrated by marching on City Hall, holding meetings, attending rallies, listening to Luper and Porter, through fiery oratory, whip up enthusiasm. Seeking to curb that enthusiasm and possibly end the strike, Oldland announced that the city would reinstate all but thirty-three of the strikers because that number of new refuse collectors had already been hired. Though those rehired might not be placed in their former jobs, the city manager pledged that every effort to do so would be made. Thus, while the strike situation appeared stalled, it was clear from Oldland's offer that it was having an effect. As one striker observed, "we know what conditions filth brings and that is what Oklahoma City is experiencing now."¹⁴

Without a union and without a strike fund, sanitation workers had to rely on community leaders for guidance and supporters for funds. It was understandable that many workers sought their jobs back and why a week after the strike was launched they yielded their demand for a \$100 per month increase and settled for a \$40 raise effective September 1 and an additional \$20 raise effective January 1. Their only proviso was that they return to their same jobs. At this point if the city council and Mayor Norick assumed the

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initiative, the strike could have ended to the satisfaction of all concerned.¹⁵

Instead, the situation became more intense as a permit was granted for a parade in support of the city manager and the chief of police. On the other side, the CLC now assumed a broader role in the dispute. The coalition, composed of representatives of forty-two black community organizations, was headed by Reverend W. K. Jackson, minister of St. John's Baptist Church, which served as strike headquarters. A strategy committee headed by Urban League Director Frank Cowan sought further meetings with city officials to end the strike now that most of the workers' demands had been met and more workers returned to their jobs. Ten days into the



St. John's Baptist Church, the building that served as strike headquarters (Hillerman Collection, OHS Research Division).

strike 175 men were at work. The Sanitation Department employed 284 garbage collectors compared to 35 at the beginning of the work stoppage two weeks previously.¹⁶

To prompt a resolution of the strike, CLC leaders called early in September for a general boycott of downtown stores and shopping centers. A march on the city Police Department was planned to protest the different handling of demonstrations by blacks who were closely monitored and those by whites who were not. Moreover, Oldland and the city council appeared to backtrack on the citizen committee's proposal by now insisting that active leaders of the strike or men who had been arrested during demonstrations not be

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rehired. On both sides feelings became more intense. Leaders became more determined and locked more firmly in their positions.¹⁷

Excitement mounted in the black community when it was learned that Reverend Ralph Abernathy, the successor of Martin Luther King, Jr., as president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), would be in Oklahoma City to march in support of the workers' demands. Excitement mounted also because the CLC was striving to expand the economic boycott. In addition to the forty-two original groups making up the coalition, eighty additional organizations, including several unions, were expected to join the mass efforts of the coalition and to assist in contributing funds and foodstuff. Excitement faded when it was learned that Abernathy, "due to emergency situations in Atlanta at the Southern Christian Leadership Conference," would not visit as planned. It faded even more when two of the demonstrators at the Westwood Sanitation Department compound weeks previously were found guilty of obstructing a city street and fined. Luper was required to pay two \$30 fines, while Reverend Norbert Kabelitz, pastor of Redeemer Lutheran Church, guilty of the same offense, was ordered to pay two \$20 fines. Kabelitz was one of a handful of white people who were actively engaged with the CLC.¹⁸

Despite setbacks with the strike diminishing in intensity, the CLC could note some positive signs. The Saturday boycott of downtown stores was beginning to have an impact. Merchants reported light business and some harassment of customers, such as being photographed by boycott backers or handed leaflets. A social club volunteered to operate a carpool to take shoppers to nearby communities. By mid-September no blacks were evident at any downtown restaurant. Even more positive was the city council voting a pay raise for sanitation workers, though it was not as high as the one recommended by the citizens fact-finding committee. By mid-September the difference between the contending parties was narrowing. The peaceful marches and the boycott were beginning to have an impact even beyond Oklahoma City. In nearby Norman students at the University of Oklahoma were urged to support the strikers. Further evidence was an announcement in September and quickly endorsed by the CLC that a drive to organize a local union of city employees would soon be launched.¹⁹

On Sunday, September 21, at the Will Rogers World Airport, the president of the SCLC was greeted by a group of about sixty people. He would participate in a march the following day but refused to talk about the strike until he conferred with the CLC leaders. In-

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stead, Abernathy spoke briefly about the SCLC and nonviolence. At a CLC public meeting at the St. John's Baptist Church that evening, Abernathy said, "I came to tell old Pharaoh mayor and the Pharaoh city manager to let the sanitation workers go." But at the end of a march estimated at about eight hundred people, with others watching and cheering them on, "old Pharaoh mayor" John Norick was nowhere to be seen, and the Pharaoh city manager agreed to see Abernathy for the purpose of welcoming him to Oklahoma City but not to discuss the sanitation strike. Frustrated by no reception at City Hall before departing to the city, Abernathy expressed confidence in the local leaders and the "excellent cooperation from the various levels among the community in Oklahoma City." His visit would be followed by another SCLC official whose mission, Abernathy said, would be to determine how the SCLC could best aid the striking sanitation workers.²⁰

Oldland refused to meet with Abernathy and strike leaders which suggested increasing intransigence on the city's part. Mayor Norick, the city manager said, was "busy at the plant (his printing business) and with prior commitments (at the State Fair of Oklahoma)." In a memorandum to department heads for posting in city buildings and offices, Oldland prohibited union organizing "on city property on city time." For their part, Reverend W. K. Jackson, chairman of the CLC, said the coalition looked forward to the aid forthcoming from the SCLC. Meanwhile, the boycott and the marches continued, including a march of about sixty strike supporters intending to call on Oldland's home only to learn that they went to the wrong address.²¹

After Abernathy's visit enthusiasm and support seemed to wane. By early October about half of the more than two hundred workers who walked off the job had returned to work while the city had been hiring new men. But the division staff was still below "the some 275 workers who were on the job before August 19." Nevertheless, an optimistic assistant city manager announced twice weekly sanitation service for the central area of the city on Monday, October 6. The central city was the heaviest work area, but it was less than a third of the total area serviced by the city. As more workers returned or were recruited, service would be expanded depending on the tempo of the strike.²²

That the tempo would change became evident that same week when Roland Betts, a field staff representative of the SCLC, and his wife moved to Oklahoma City. Betts would assess the situation and remain in the city "until this thing is over—until it's won." Another

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SCLC official who accompanied Betts argued that the sanitation strike was essentially “a trade union fight” and should receive their support, a development that never occurred. But to many city officials the strike ended a scant four or five days after it began. To the CLC leadership in mid-October the strike was entering its third month with no end in sight.²³

On October 21 Oldland sent a memo to the mayor and city council in which he addressed “legitimate sanitation employee grievances and to implement changes recommended by the Citizens Fact-Finding Committee.” In particular, the memo called for a five-day work week, increased minority employment in administrative positions, overtime payment for crews volunteering for additional work, improved grievance procedures, and the construction and improvement of shower and crew room facilities in the truck yards maintained by the Sanitation Division. And most important was a pay plan along the lines suggested by the citizens committee.

Oldland further proposed a policy of reinstatement of which 128 workers already had taken advantage. As of October 20, he wrote, “there were a total of 219 sanitation employees working.” With this report, if approved by the city council, the sanitation dispute could have been resolved. Instead, a spokesman for the CLC called for a new walkout on Monday, October 27.²⁴

In calling for the walkout State Representative Archibald Hill, chairman of the CLC’s strategy committee, told a news conference that sanitation workers still demanded “reinstatement of all workers without loss of benefits and at least a \$60 [monthly] raise.” Aware of the city manager’s memo, Hill said the workers disagreed with the pay scales it presented. He called Oldland “an enemy of ours” and that workers who remained at their jobs would “be labeled ‘Uncle Toms’.” In addition, he asserted demonstrations would be increased and not be announced before they took place. Betts, the field organizer for the SCLC, insisted “it is necessary to intensify demonstrations and strike activities.” Others, including a representative of the workers along with a Black Muslim, issued statements suggesting a black community, thanks to the rejection of SCLC support that was strongly coming together. Any grounds for using Oldland’s memo as a base for discussing and resolving the issues on which they were not far apart had disappeared.²⁵

To intensify their efforts, Hill attacked Oldland saying he had handled the situation in an irresponsible manner “with a deep southern approach.” But he insisted that, despite the city manager’s refusal to negotiate, violence would not resolve the workers’ prob-

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lems. Moreover, he argued, it would not be necessary to raise taxes to improve employees' wages since "the sanitation department brings in about \$3.6 million per year and costs only \$1.3 million to operate." Oldland, in turn, called Hill's remarks "irresponsible," adding that all who strike would be fired. But he did not think the announced walkout, if it ever occurred, would be as extensive as the one that began on August 19.²⁶

It would occur. Strikers and their supporters were urged to be on hand at the Westwood garage where Reverend Jackson would lead the demonstration that was to begin at 5 a.m. or before the trucks left the garage. For some time after August 20, which was the date of the initial effort to stop the trucks, police patrol cars escorted the trucks on their appointed rounds. The demonstration was designed to put increased pressure on the city for a settlement. All the forces were now in play for the dramatic confrontation that occurred.²⁷

A bold newspaper headline blared "Demonstrators Block Trucks; Eight Jailed." Still reading from the Bible, Reverend Jackson was dragged by two officers from the front of a garbage truck to a paddy wagon. Twice groups of four demonstrators knelt in line in front of trucks leaving the compound and were arrested. Some like Reverend Jackson resisted passively and were carried or dragged to awaiting paddy wagons. Jackson, holding an open Bible, repeated over and over "The Lord is my refuge and strength." All were African Americans; all but Representative A. Visanio Johnson were jailed in lieu of bonds ranging from \$40 to \$100. While six soon were released on cash bonds, Representative Johnson on his own recognizance, Reverend Jackson, the head of CLC, refused bond and remained in jail, saying "I just want to get some rest." Roland Betts, carrying a sign that read "Nigger Get Off That Truck," was one of the arrested men.

Demonstrators who were not arrested left the compound at about 7 a.m. Most of the garbage workers interviewed indicated that they wanted to work. Some crossed the picket line; others were pleased with the prospects of improved working conditions; most were disillusioned. And so was Robert Oldland. While the city manager had expressed doubts that demonstrations would be effective, now he reversed himself. Strikers would not be rehired, as they were after August 19. At the other end of the spectrum, Representative Hill proclaimed that the demonstration that put eight men in jail would be "only kindergarten" in comparison to the forthcoming actions, and he explained that workers who collected garbage would

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not be threatened with actual harm but were certain to be ostracized by the black community.²⁸

That evening, following a peaceful City Hall demonstration, the city council agreed by consensus to keep lines of communication open but to make no overtures to strike supporters. The city would meet with CLC leaders but would not initiate a meeting. Mayor Norick said he did not know when a proclamation of emergency for various locations, including fire stations and other city property, would be lifted. While tensions seemed to ease at City Hall, such was not the case at a Sunday evening meeting called by the CLC. When Reverend Jackson addressed the less than two hundred people in attendance, he asked all sanitation workers to stand. Three men rose. Nevertheless, CLC leaders said a demonstration would occur the following morning. Strikers were to meet at 4 a.m. at the same church, St. John's Baptist. Jackson said workers "don't have a reason to be afraid to walk off the job." "The City Manager," he continued, "can't fire you. He's doing the same thing they were doing a hundred years ago in Georgia and Mississippi—trying to frighten the black man."

Much was at stake. Despite rousing rhetoric, the two-month-old sanitation strike was clearly at a crossroads. Without mass community support, the upcoming walkout could fail, a point emphasized by Representative Johnson in his remarks: "If the strike effort fails Monday, then the black community has lost the struggle, lost the strike, and lost the city. If we lose now, Oklahoma City black people will be ignored by City Hall from now on."²⁹

Early Monday morning forty-four out of forty-six garbage trucks, each with a police car escort, rumbled out of the Westwood compound. About twenty-five workers walked off their jobs. Fourteen demonstrators were arrested, most of them ministers. And the district attorney announced he was considering felony charges against Betts, the SCLC field organizer, and Representative Hill. One of those involved was Mrs. Clare Robertson, who was thrown from a garbage truck when she tried to prevent it from leaving the compound. Once again Reverend Jackson, holding a Bible, was dragged to a paddy wagon. Most of those arrested, after posting \$20 bonds, were released. But three ministers, including Jackson, wanted no bonds posted and intended to fast "until justice is done," according to Senator Melvin Porter, a strike leader. Roland Betts, however, received special treatment. He was arraigned in district court and was released from county jail on \$1,000 bond on a misdemeanor charge.

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In all there were more police (around sixty) than demonstrators (about forty) on hand as anger flared on both sides. But, it should be noted, most of the trucks left the compound after the demonstration had been quelled by the police. For more than an hour more than one hundred sanitation workers, mostly African Americans, milled around the crew room and refused to take out trucks, all but twenty-five doing so after the demonstration abated.³⁰

Meeting that evening, strike leaders told a mass meeting that they would intensify “direct action” until the workers’ demands were met. To assist them in these efforts was Reverend T. Y. Rogers, Jr., of the SCLC. On the platform with Rogers was Theodore GX, leader of the Oklahoma City Black Muslim Mosque. Strike leaders announced that demonstrators on the following day would try again to keep the trucks from rolling and would be on hand when the city council met later in the day. Reverend Rogers told a hand-clapping audience “praying is OK, but you’ve got to march and fight a little, too.” Theodore GX went further and argued that before they could win concessions, they needed to learn that “the white man is your enemy.” But Representative Hill, emphasizing the premise of the CLC leadership, boldly stated if there is violence, “the violence will come from the policemen . . . they’re out there armed and violent.” And they were working twelve-hour shifts instead of their regular eight-hour stints.³¹

In answer to a telegram from Reverend Rogers asking that the governor intervene to head off possible violence, Governor Dewey Bartlett said, “Jurisdiction in the matter between the sanitation workers and officials of the city of Oklahoma City rests with those city officials.” Bartlett parried questions from newsmen, all indicating he had no intention of involving himself. The governor’s press conference in effect diverted attention from the demonstrations called for Tuesday, October 28. A demonstration in which seven protestors were arrested was followed by strike supporters appearing before the city council to protest the failure of the police to investigate the incident in which a garbage truck “ran down” a woman demonstrator. A. L. Dowell, the lone black city council member, acutely observed that the dispute now revolved around one main issue—the rehiring of the workers who acted as leaders in the strike movement.

What did get attention was another mass meeting at St. John’s Baptist Church where strike leaders called for a “Black Friday” in Oklahoma City. They asked that black school children and black workers in all positions stay at home in a show of support. “We have

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to take radical action," asserted Reverend Rogers, "because we have a radical problem." And those in attendance learned that Ralph Abernathy, head of the SCLC, would return to Oklahoma City to support the strike.³²

On Wednesday about 130 workers refused to board garbage trucks, while in a drizzling rain fifteen demonstrators, including four high school students, were arrested at the Westwood compound. About 120 policemen confronted eighty or more demonstrators. Tempers flared on both sides. By mid-morning only twelve of the trucks scheduled to leave the yard were on the road. Seven were manned by volunteer crews from the city's Street Department. Clara Luper and Representative Hill demonstrated but were not arrested while Reverend Jackson remained in jail. At one point, Luper led demonstrators in a "snail dance" in front of the main gate. A white man who was a high school teacher said he joined the demonstration "because I am a Christian." Another demonstrator was Mrs. Robertson, who was bumped by a truck earlier in the week and was again arrested. She was photographed and finger printed by officers in the compound. She then dropped to the ground and was dragged to the paddy wagon. Another demonstrator, clutching a small American flag, lay on his back on the ground and also was dragged to the paddy wagon. With the demonstrators for the first time were Councilman Dowell and Representative Hannah Atkins.

About half of those who walked off the job appeared at the NAACP Freedom Center for a rally led by Roland Betts. He urged the men to "stop believing white folks" and urged them to join the morrow's demonstration. "If we stay on till Friday this will be over by Monday and everyone will be back to work," he presciently predicted. Meanwhile, Sanitation Division supervisors reportedly asked the city manager to rehire the strike leaders who walked off their jobs on August 19.³³

As the black community and a handful of white supporters increased the pressure on behalf of the strikers, so too did Mayor Norick and some city council members toughen their stance. They called for felony charges against demonstrators and sought to determine if Dowell could be removed from the council. Both Dowell and Atkins had addressed the rally at St. John's Baptist Church before appearing with the demonstrators the following morning. Dowell, an optometrist whose name often appeared in print as Dr. Dowell, told the rally "the only conclusion I can arrive at is that it is time for the entire black community to take a stand," while asserting "we are tired of asking, we are tired of begging." Representative

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State Representative Hannah Atkins, the first African American woman to be elected to the Oklahoma House of Representatives (OHS Research Division collections).

Atkins went further and said to the black community that the city reached an “all-time low” when at the previous city council meeting “the skunks in City Hall showed their stripes.” Both, as already noted, demonstrated the following morning, and Dowell was arrested at the Westwood site on October 30. While the mayor and several council members considered calling for more severe measures, there was growing recognition that the crux of the matter was no longer wages but the retention of the twelve strikers (the numbered varied at times) who walked off their jobs on August 19, more than two months past.³⁴

Finally, on October 29 Robert Oldland said openly what everyone understood but none had proclaimed, namely that Oklahoma City faced “a major racial crisis.” The sanitation strike was never really a labor dispute as officials previously argued but an effort on the part of black sanitation workers to secure a greater measure of human dignity by achieving parity in the workplace. But Oldland went on to reaffirm the council’s policy of not rehiring the leaders who urged the walkout of two hundred workers on August 19. “This city,” he insisted, “cannot and must not be subjected to the violence and risks that have plagued other cities across the nation,” nor could the city “be administered on the basis of threats or coercion.” While comprehension increased, the city government manifested little sensitivity or knowledge in seeking to cope with it.³⁵

On Thursday morning Reverend Jackson paid a \$20 bond and left the jail, while Dowell and Atkins were arrested along with five others at the Westwood compound where many teenagers were among the demonstrators. That afternoon six hundred Douglass

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High School students marched on City Hall before holding a rally at a nearby park. And there were rumors that the National Guard would be on hand in case anything got out of hand on “Black Friday.” Some Street Department employees who worked out of the Westwood compound refused to go to work that morning, indicating the possibility of a sympathy strike. Hannah Atkins, refusing to post bond, told the judge she wanted to stay in jail “awhile.” The *Black Dispatch* devoted a full page and part of another to listing the names of individuals who supported the sanitation workers and called for “1. Every Man Reinstated,” and “2. Issue the \$60 Dollar Monthly Raise Now!” Later that evening Mayor Norick declared a state of emergency in limited areas of the city.

But the *Daily Oklahoman* also reported that Norick was prepared to tell Reverend Jackson and other black leaders that a majority of the council would vote at a special meeting to change the policy against rehiring the twelve workers by allowing them to return to work on six month’s probation before receiving full reinstatement. Unable to attend this meeting owing to a mass meeting of about seven hundred people at his church, Jackson and other leaders prepared for the march to be led by Ralph Abernathy, while the city prepared to cope with a dire emergency.³⁶

Clara Luper, in charge of organizing students for the march, said there would be one central leader and one from each of the five city high schools participating. Earlier Black Student Union members at Oklahoma City University announced that they too would march. Finally, at this rally Reverend Jackson denied the strike was racial in nature, claiming it was merely “a fight for the sanitation workers.” Earlier at the rally he told the group the CLC would apply for a parade permit the following morning, several hours before the march was scheduled.³⁷

On Friday a crowd estimated by police at fifteen hundred marched three abreast on City Hall. They marched without the presence of the head of the SCLC, who was coping with another emergency situation. No arrests were made; no violent incidents were reported. Most stores in the downtown area along the parade route were closed. Helmeted officers, some with shotguns, others with tear gas and mace, awaited the marchers near City Hall. About four hundred city police and highway patrol troopers were assigned to the march that got underway from Washington Park on the east side in the early afternoon when the state NAACP youth advisor called out “All right. Let’s go, brothers.” As they marched across town for about ninety minutes towards City Hall, they were

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joined by some observers. Several marchers carried signs proclaiming their concerns. A lone police car preceded the procession that wended its way past tumbled-down houses and shabby shops, past a tavern where men were already drunk early in the afternoon, past frowsy prostitutes and ragged kids, while marchers sang "We Shall Overcome" and some of the youth chanted "Black Power." Up front with Reverend Jackson and Luper were Representative Atkins and Senator Porter. Two white ministers marched along side of Jackson. The line of march extended close to five city blocks.

Near City Hall uniformed and plainclothes police armed with heavy wooden riot sticks joined by all the law enforcement officials in the city awaited the marchers. "Anybody who doesn't want to be arrested, stay back" blared forth from a loud speaker as the marchers approached the off-limits area. Asked if the marchers intended to continue to City Hall, Jackson nodded, Luper uttered an inarticulate cry and clasped the hand of Atkins, and the marchers moved forward toward the massed force of police. At the last possible moment, the police stepped aside and let the demonstrators pass. As they crowded the east steps at City Hall, helmeted, armed officers formed a ring around the protestors. Reverend Jackson and Luper turned to face the crowd as the chief of police handed Jackson a portable megaphone. He asked the mayor and city manager, neither of whom were evident, to "keep the faith with these men in order that our city may have the proper image in America," and he added, "We are going to be orderly and non-violent." Whereupon the demonstration took on an aspect of a love-in. The police chief thanked the marchers for their nonviolent attitude. Jackson then asked that "each and everyone of us peacefully now disperse on the sidewalks in groups of not more than three." He asked that people meet again that evening at his church. Policemen then moved aside and let the demonstrators depart. In all, the confrontation lasted about twenty minutes. Governor Bartlett, who carefully monitored the situation, thanked all involved parties for the manner in which they conducted themselves. As tension abated and everyone dispersed, the plight of the sanitation workers was still unresolved.³⁸

District Attorney Curtis Harris sought to resolve the situation by filing felony riot charges against four strike leaders and in doing so angered and solidified strike supporters. The four were Representative Hill, who served as chief strategist and attorney for the strikers; City Councilman Dowell, an intermediary who forcefully argued the strikers' case; Betts of the SCLC; and William Woodward, a respected member of the black community who had not played a prominent

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role in the strike. After arraignment, they were represented by Senator Porter, who hurriedly raised the bonds set at \$5,000 each and arranged a date for a preliminary hearing. The bonds were signed by the operators of a funeral parlor. Representative Atkins and Luper witnessed these proceedings. Both offered brief remarks; Luper's were most telling: "Oklahoma City lacks leadership in the white community at this time. I think the silence of the white churches, labor leaders, political leaders, business leaders and plain white people has created a climate where professional bigots"—and here she rattled off the names of several city officials from the mayor on down—"can practice their bigotry under the flag of law and order."³⁹

Though the four released on bail were not on hand for the march, strike leaders justifiably were pleased with its outcome. At the rally held Friday evening, Betts mentioned the emergency meeting that prevented Abernathy from participating. He was in Dallas and had purchased an airline ticket to Oklahoma City before the emergency that sent him to Memphis. While there was much to celebrate, steps toward resolution would have to come from the white community, and its concerns soon became evident. Hundreds of city residents wanting to know when and where they could dump garbage flooded the Fire Department's alarm headquarters. And the *Daily Oklahoman*, which had faithfully covered the dispute with front page stories, finally committed itself with a front page editorial in the Sunday issue where it would attract widespread attention.⁴⁰

Boldly entitled "Let's Settle It Now," the editorial asserted that Oklahoma City was "setting a time bomb" with a short fuse emanating from a dispute over wages "into a contest as to whether blacks or whites would win." Recognizing that "the cooperation and goodwill of the blacks" was important to the city's future, the editorial claimed that an offer from the city council to rehire former sanitation workers could settle the dispute. While it was not important which side won, it was important "that the public wins." To reach that goal the editorial observed that "Council members are meeting today in Gov. Bartlett's house" with some "dedicated citizens" serving as mediators, adding "Both sides should give enough to reach an agreement."⁴¹

The story accompanying the editorial stated that strike leaders and council members would meet that afternoon at the Executive Mansion. Bartlett still insisted that the dispute was a local problem. That he certainly wanted to assist in seeking a solution can be inferred from the fact that he hastily cancelled a planned vacation

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trip. Both sides were amenable to the meeting prompted by a group of business and civic leaders who were initially contacted by the governor.⁴²

After two and a half months the two sides were now seriously negotiating. For about nine hours until 12:30 the following morning of November 3, the two groups were closeted in separate rooms on the first floor of the mansion with mediators carrying messages back and forth. Mayor Norick did not attend, nor did one councilman who was out of the city. But the city manager and his top assistant were with the council. By 4:30 on Sunday afternoon the CLC delegation of about twenty members representing the strikers presented its proposal for reaching a settlement to the three mediators. Reportedly it contained eight terms, the key issue calling for re-employment of all strikers with full benefits. If the council accepted it, everything also could be quickly resolved since it had already addressed many of them, including a \$60 raise. The mediators, shuffling between rooms, were the president of the Oklahoma City Chamber of Commerce, a former district judge, and a prominent city businessman.⁴³

By the end of the second day the talks broke off. Both sides refused to yield on the rehiring of eleven strike leaders. Calling the talks "fruitless," the chairman of the CLC said "when they get ready they'll call us." Though he did not elaborate, he insisted that demonstrations would continue, while a spokesman for the absent mayor indicated that the limited state of emergency was continuing. And Oldland observed that the primary methods of garbage collection would continue to be the twenty-four trucks placed at fire stations. About eight hundred tons of garbage was collected over the past weekend.⁴⁴

The vice mayor, speaking for a majority of the council, argued that reinstatement of the strike leaders "would establish a precedent that would destroy city government." Reverend Jackson argued the strike leaders were Clara Luper, the adviser of the NAACP Youth Council, and subsequently the CLC and not the eleven workers. The previous offer to take the eleven workers back on probation for six months and then reinstating them with full benefits was not discussed. While it was offered by the council to the CLC with the premise "that there would be no Black Friday," it was not renewed, and there was no mention of it in reports emanating from the Executive Mansion. Most every other point of contention had already been agreed to or was under consideration by the council. To the

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CLC leaders the views expressed by the vice mayor and others stirred deep chords of memory within the black psyche.

One CLC member articulated this view by asserting that city officials in seeking to make eleven men “whipping boys” were utilizing tactics similar to those evident on some antebellum plantations. When a black man had the nerve to speak up, “he was . . . broken by his master in the face of all other black people to create fear in them.” As during slavery days, so too were city officials, some in the CLC believed, attempting “to dehumanize and stifle the conviction of an individual.” The question was simply “whether a Negro is a man.” For hundreds of years whenever an African American stepped forward, seeking to be treated as a man, he had been slapped down. In Oklahoma City, eleven men had stepped forward, and they did not want to be put down for it. This, according to Ira D. Hall, who articulated these views on behalf of the CLC, “is the whole issue.”⁴⁵

The Oklahoma City Chamber of Commerce, which offered jobs to the eleven strikers the city considered a dire threat, found the workers instead capable of advancement and noted that some had college degrees. Strike leaders, however, felt there was a more fundamental issue involved although they appreciated the concern of the chamber. And the workers were dubious about job offers from white businessmen they had no reason to trust. Stanton Young, the president of the Chamber of Commerce and a mediator at the failed meetings at the Governor’s Mansion, now faced a challenge he sought to resolve before a renewed demonstration threatened to destroy whatever racial equilibrium still existed in Oklahoma City. And most ironic was the fact that the one issue that did not exist when the strike got underway was the lone issue now preventing a resolution of the crisis. Progress had been made on every other issue: salaries, hours, working conditions, grievance machinery, showers, and locker rooms.⁴⁶

At a rally after the collapse of the negotiating sessions, strike leaders called for a series of night marches. So sparse was the attendance, about one hundred people, that Betts said he and other SCLC representatives now in the city would return to Atlanta if more support was not forthcoming. Both Betts and Reverend Jackson called on black students to stay out of school, join the march, and urge other students to do the same. “There won’t be anymore going to school in Oklahoma City,” Betts added, “until this [strike] business is over.”⁴⁷

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The following evening a crowd of about two hundred people, chanting and clapping, bunched in front of the Governor's Mansion for a "prayer vigil." The mansion was heavily guarded by troopers spaced about twenty feet apart wielding heavy riot sticks just outside the steel fence surrounding the governor's residence. Troopers and city detectives buzzed in and out, while Reverend Jackson in his clerical robes led the demonstrators in singing "We Shall Overcome." Governor Bartlett was nowhere in sight, though some spectators thought they saw him briefly on the mansion porch, some ninety yards distant. A chilling north wind made for a short vigil. But Reverend Jackson, before the march got underway, called for another Black Friday, intensifying the black boycott of downtown stores and extending it to shopping centers.⁴⁸

The mansion got an encore call the following evening, and strike leaders prepared for a demonstration the next morning at the Westwood compound. At the same time, the city manager announced that workers who recently walked off their jobs would have until the following Monday to return before being terminated, unwittingly allowing these workers to participate in the upcoming Black Friday. Meanwhile, antistrike forces were busy seeking volunteers to man garbage trucks and to demonstrate in support of the city council's stand. On the other hand, the commander of a local white American Legion Post urged city officials to meet with members of the predominantly black post to seek a settlement.⁴⁹

As tensions mounted in anticipation of a second Black Friday, suddenly on Thursday evening strike leaders announced a resolution of the key issue in the dispute. To understand what occurred, one can follow the activities of Stanton Young during the previous week. On Thursday, October 30, he left for a week's vacation in San Diego. That evening from the Dallas airport, having learned there would be a march the next day, he phoned a fellow member of the chamber of commerce and told him he wanted to get the city and the CLC together. From California he phoned back and learned of the limited emergency set by the city. In turn, he received a call from the governor who was concerned because of the announced march. Young told Bartlett he was coming home. He arrived in Oklahoma City that evening and after much phoning back and forth found that he could not set up a meeting for Saturday, thereby losing a day before workers went to their compounds on Monday morning. But a meeting was held on Sunday and again on Monday at the mansion as already noted. Since August, Stanton revealed the chamber of commerce had been trying to find jobs for the strike

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leaders but, he recalled, "We really did not know who we were talking about." At first they believed the city manager indicated thirty men were involved, but "by screening" the number was reduced to twelve and then eleven leaders because one was not a city employee. After the failure of the first agreement, Young learned that the men feared they might be fired from their new jobs.

Young felt that if the eleven men knew that the jobs were not just assigned to them but were suited to them, that there was opportunity for advancement, and that they were wanted and not being placed in a make-work program their outlook would change. The businessmen who offered jobs agreed with Young. All recognized that educationally the men were well qualified: four had gone to college; the others had all attained or gone beyond the eleventh grade. Young further claimed that the businessmen understood that those workers who spoke for others when "improper" conditions existed were the best employees when the conditions were corrected. The best employees were the smart employees, an asset to any thriving enterprise. He candidly admitted that the business community was aware of the poor conditions sanitation workers experienced and did not react fast enough to the last alternative the workers took to bring the city to meliorate their lot through an illegal strike which the chamber did not condone.

Young said it was through the chamber's response at the Wednesday meeting that Reverend Jackson, the CLC leaders, and the eleven strikers realized that they were wanted. On Thursday, Young met twice with Jackson and at 6 p.m. brought him a list of sixteen jobs from which the men could select their employment. Moreover, the corporate board of the chamber assured the eleven men that if they were terminated their case would be reviewed and that they would be offered other employment. Young concluded that resolution came about "only after certain people in this community stood up and let it be known that things were not right." In his public remarks on Thursday evening, Young credited the role of the black community with bringing the city's attention to shortcomings in the Sanitation Division.⁵⁰

Thereafter, the state of emergency was lifted. At a rally Young told those in attendance that the vice mayor asked him to call all city workers who left their jobs "to please come back." He also called attention to an eight member committee, four appointed by the CLC and four by the chamber, that would review any termination, if it arose, among the eleven and if necessary find the man another job. A headline in the *Daily Oklahoman* proclaimed "Everybody

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Loves Everybody Now.” The governor, city officials, and CLC leaders all expressed relief, gratitude, joy, and jubilation that the long ordeal was over, each contending group finding something positive in its resolution.⁵¹

With everybody on speaking terms with everybody, with sanitation workers returning to their jobs, with the strike leaders settling into new positions, with school children returning to the classroom, the eleven-week ordeal came to an end to the satisfaction of all parties, including the residents of Oklahoma City who no longer would have to take their garbage to one of twenty-five fire stations because of the lag in regular pickups. Most city employees were enabled to enjoy a four-day holiday from Saturday through Tuesday, being granted Monday off, which preceded Veterans Day, an official holiday. Those sanitation workers required to be on the job would receive double pay. The only points of contention that remained were the felony charges against four strike leaders.⁵²

Until these charges were dropped, Reverend Jackson told 250 persons at a rally “the fight really isn’t over yet,” a point reiterated by Reverend T. Y. Rogers of the SCLC. He called for a more belligerent black community; “Don’t sit down and let the white folks in this city misuse you . . . You’ve got to fight the racist system, even if it means resorting to violence.” And District Attorney Curtis Harris made clear his intentions to proceed against the four leaders facing felony charges growing out of demonstrations at the Westwood garage. “Neither the city of Oklahoma City nor the chamber of commerce are running my office,” Harris asserted. In turn, Senator Porter, who represented the four men, called for a court ruling on the charges leveled against them. He preferred to see the charges dismissed after being proven “without merit in the court.” And that is what occurred several weeks later when Special Judge Robert Berry dismissed the “riot” charge at the end of a preliminary hearing, ruling there was not enough evidence to support it.⁵³

The eleven-week strike that disrupted garbage collection in Oklahoma City was quite remarkable in several ways. To start, there were winners and no losers, except for the hard-pressed residents of Oklahoma City who never enjoyed full service throughout its duration. Further, there was no violence, though the police, helmeted and armed, arrested demonstrators, some of whom practiced passive resistance, at a time when violence frequently accompanied demonstrations against the Vietnam War, numerous racial incidents, and strikes. Big city riots were a common occurrence. Credit for the nonviolent approach must be accorded to Clara Luper and

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the NAACP Youth well trained in the ways of passive resistance and to Reverend W. K. Jackson and the CLC who proclaimed their faith and never relented in their support of the strikers and the fight for human dignity, which they considered a cultural issue. The strike also commanded the attention of the national NAACP and the SCLC. Both sent individuals from their headquarters to aid in the effort. Moreover, every black official in the Legislature and on the city council endorsed the strike and all were arrested. The black community emerged from the strike a more unified, self confident, and proud sector of Oklahoma City.

City officials, too, could claim victory. They did not yield in their insistence that "leading strikers" not regain their jobs. It took awhile until they settled on eleven men. While the city was in the process of raising wages and meliorating working conditions, they would do so at their own pace and not appear to be yielding to striker demands. At times they were truculent, but when push came to shove on Black Friday, the city yielded. At other times officials seemed more receptive to workers' concerns. And when it was all over and the city celebrated, the mayor, the city's official leader, was no where to be seen.

What made the strike unique was the role of the chamber of commerce, which negotiated a resolution that brought the strike to an end. Its role was especially significant because chambers traditionally shunned such involvement. That its leaders exhibited concern for the plight of distressed garbage workers and in turn involved some of their associates in the chamber was most unusual in that the chamber crossed a racial divide to assist the beleaguered black community and in doing so recognized that hitherto unrecognized municipal workers provided vital services necessary in a thriving urban community.

That the strike was a racial matter and not primarily a labor dispute there can be little doubt. Reverend Jackson insisted that it was not, but no union local or any other labor group came to the support of the garbage workers. To be sure there were some white supporters at the rallies. A Lutheran minister was active in the CLC. And a handful of white garbage workers openly agreed with the aspirations of their black brethren, but they were few and far between. The garbage strike originated with and was conducted almost exclusively by blacks who quickly saw or came to conclude that beneath the debatable issues it was a fundamental struggle to achieve a greater measure of human dignity.

ENDNOTES

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¹ Discussion of background material in these early paragraphs is based on Paul English's draft of a United Press International (UPI) story, April 3, 1968, box 11, folder 13, Harry Culver Papers, Carl Albert Center, University of Oklahoma, Norman (hereafter cited as Culver Papers). On housing see Gilbert Hill, "Negroes Keep Up Fight for Better Housing," *Oklahoma City Times*, July 3, 1964; and draft of February 15, 1968, story on housing in box 7, folder 15, Culver Papers. For school integration see *Oklahoma Integration Report as of October 1961*, box 7, folder 7, Culver Papers. For the remarks of the director of the Department of Commerce and Industry, see UPI story, October 4, 1957, box 7, folder 25, Culver Papers; "Executive Department Proclamation, April 24, 1968, in which Dewey Bartlett called for an equal opportunity week, box 7, folder 25, Culver Papers. For Clara Luper, see story by Jack Taylor in *Oklahoma City Times*, July 1, 1964, box 7, folder 25, Culver Papers; and UPI story, September 11, 1958, box 7, folder 25, Culver Papers.

² *Daily Oklahoman* (Oklahoma City), July 24, 1969, 41; Clara Luper, *Behold the Walls* (Oklahoma City: Jim Wire, 1979), 211-15.

³ *Daily Oklahoman*, July 29, 1969, 15; *ibid.*, August 2, 1969, 17; Luper, *Behold the Walls*, 215.

⁴ *Daily Oklahoman*, August 3, 1969, 1; *ibid.*, August 5, 1969, 13; *ibid.*, August 7, 1969, 1; *ibid.*, August 8, 1969, 33; *Black Dispatch* (Oklahoma City), August 7, 1969.

⁵ *Daily Oklahoman*, August 12, 1969, 13; *ibid.*, August 13, 1969, 1. For the remarks of Archibald Hill, see story "Oldland Stand on Sanitation Issue Rapped," unmarked clipping, box 5, folder 27, Culver Papers.

⁶ *Daily Oklahoman*, August 12, 1969, 13; *ibid.*, August 13, 1969, 1; *ibid.*, August 14, 1.

⁷ *Daily Oklahoman*, August 15, 1969, 1; *Black Dispatch*, August 16, 1969.

⁸ *Daily Oklahoman*, August 17, 1969, 1; *ibid.*, August 18, 1969, 2; *ibid.*, August 16, 1969, 1; *ibid.*, August 19, 1969, 27. In an editorial on August 19, 1968, 8, the *Daily Oklahoman* without mentioning the strike situation noted how inflation "was putting the squeeze on everyone and everything today." The editorial focused on the impact of inflation on education.

⁹ *Daily Oklahoman*, August 19, 1969, 1; *ibid.*, August 20, 1969, two stories on p. 1.

¹⁰ *Daily Oklahoman*, August 21, 1969, 53; *Black Dispatch*, August 21, 1969.

¹¹ *Daily Oklahoman*, August 21, 1969, 1.

¹² *Ibid.*, August 21, 1969, 5; *ibid.*, August 22, 1969, two stories on p. 1. For greater detail on Clara Luper in jail, see Luper, *Behold the Walls*, 220-22. Luper was the first African American admitted to the history graduate program at the University of Oklahoma.

¹³ *Daily Oklahoman*, August 23, 1969, two stories on p. 1.

¹⁴ *Daily Oklahoman*, August 24, 1969, 1; *ibid.*, August 25, 1969, 1; *ibid.*, August 26, 1969, 1.

¹⁵ *Daily Oklahoman*, August 26, 1969, 1, story by John Greiner notes the workers shifting wage demands.

¹⁶ *Daily Oklahoman*, August 28, 1969, 1; *ibid.*, August 29, 1969, 5; *ibid.*, September 1, 1969, 2; *Black Dispatch*, August 28, 1969.

¹⁷ *Daily Oklahoman*, September 6, 1969, 1; *ibid.*, September 8, 1969, 1; *ibid.*, September 9, 1969, 1.

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¹⁸ *Daily Oklahoman*, September 10, 1969, 1; *ibid.*, September 13, 1969, two stories on p. 1; *Black Dispatch*, September 11, 1969.

¹⁹ *Daily Oklahoman*, September 14, 1969, 1; *ibid.*, September 16, 1969, p. 1; *ibid.*, September 18, 1969, 13; *ibid.*, September 20, 1969, 1.

²⁰ *Black Dispatch*, September 23, 1969; *Daily Oklahoman*, September 22, 1969, 1; *ibid.*, September 23, 1969, 1.

²¹ *Daily Oklahoman*, September 23, 1969, 1; *ibid.*, September 24, 1969, 17; *ibid.*, September 26, 1969, 1; *ibid.*, September 20, 1969, 1.

²² *Daily Oklahoman*, October 2, 1969, 1.

²³ *Ibid.*, October 11, 1969, 22; see also *Oklahoma Observer* (Oklahoma City), October 17, 1969, 16-17, for a story by Rhoda Clary reviewing the situation.

²⁴ Memorandum, "Council Memo No. 1708-69," October 21, 1969, box 5, folder 17, Culver Papers; *Daily Oklahoman*, October 22, 1969, 1.

²⁵ *Daily Oklahoman*, October 22, 1969, 1.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, October 23, 1969, 1; *Oklahoma City Times*, October 23, 1969, story by Tom Boone.

²⁷ *Daily Oklahoman*, October 24, 1969, 1.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, October 25, 1969, 1. W. K. Jackson left the city jail around 6 p.m. on October 24 after an unidentified man posted \$40 bond for the minister.

²⁹ *Oklahoma City Times*, October 25, 1969, 1; *Daily Oklahoman*, October 27, 1969, 1. Undated clipping, *Oklahoma Journal* (Oklahoma City), October 1969, story by Paul Cartledge, box 5, folder 27, Culver Papers.

³⁰ *Oklahoma City Times*, October 27, 1969, two stories on p. 1; *Daily Oklahoman*, October 18, 1969, 1.

³¹ *Daily Oklahoman*, October 28, 1969, 1.

³² *Daily Oklahoman*, October 29, 1969, 1. For Governor Dewey Bartlett's response, see draft of UPI story, October 29, 1969, box 5, folder 27, Culver Papers. See also *Oklahoma Journal*, October 29, 1969, story by Paul Cartledge, box 5, folder 27, Culver Papers.

³³ *Oklahoma City Times*, October 29, 1969, 1.

³⁴ *Oklahoma City Times*, October 30, 1969, 1.

³⁵ *Daily Oklahoman*, October 30, 1969, 1.

³⁶ *Black Dispatch*, October 30, 1969; *Daily Oklahoman*, October 31, 1969, two stories on p. 1 and p. 19; *Oklahoma Journal*, October 31, 1969.

³⁷ *Daily Oklahoman*, October 31, 1969, 1, story by Dave Dryden.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, November 1, 1969, two stories on p. 1. Clara Luper's detailed and dramatic account is related in *Behold the Walls*, 229-37. See also the account in the *Tulsa (Okla.) World*, November 1, 1969, story by Roy Bode.

³⁹ *McAlester (Okla.) Democrat*, November 1, 1969; *Oklahoma Journal*, November 1, 1969, story by J. Nelson Taylor.

⁴⁰ *Daily Oklahoman*, November 2, 1969, for editorial and story.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*, 8. See also *Sapulpa (Okla.) Daily Herald*, November 3, 1969, where the story by Harry Culver details the role of Governor Bartlett.

⁴³ *Daily Oklahoman*, November 3, 1969, 1.

⁴⁴ *Oklahoma Journal*, November 4, 1969, story by Rhoda Clary.

⁴⁵ Draft of UPI story by Harry Culver, November 4, 1969, box 5, folder 27, Culver Papers. See also *Oklahoma City Times*, November 4, 1969.

⁴⁶ Draft of UPI story, November 4, 1969, box 5, folder 27, Culver Papers.

⁴⁷ *Daily Oklahoman*, November 4, 1969, 1.

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⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, November 5, 1969, 1.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, November 6, 1969, 1; *ibid.*, 49, for a review of the week's development. See also *Black Dispatch*, November 6, 1969.

⁵⁰ Stanton Young, draft of interview by Harry Culver, November 7, 1969, box 5, folder 27, Culver Papers; *Daily Oklahoman*, November 7, 1969, 1, story by Nancy Kell.

⁵¹ *Daily Oklahoman*, November 7, 1969, 1. See also *Oklahoma Journal*, November 7, 1969, 1.

⁵² Draft of UPI story by Gary Goodine, November 7, 1969, box 5, folder 27, Culver Papers; *Daily Oklahoman*, November 8, 1969, 1.

⁵³ *Daily Oklahoman*, November 11, 1969, 7; *Ibid.*, November 12, 1969, 1; *ibid.*, November 22, 1969, 1; *Oklahoma Journal*, November 11, 1969, 1; *Black Dispatch*, November 13, 1969.