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JAMES S. ALLEN AND COMMUNIST ORGANIZATION OF THE
DEPRESSION SOUTH IN THE 1930S

A Thesis
presented in partial fulfillment of requirements
for the degree of Masters of Arts
in the department of History
The University of Mississippi

by
JONATHAN D. HARWOOD
August 2022

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the methods and means by which the Communist Party of the United States organized in the US South during the 1930s. With a focus on the “Negro Question”, I hope to show that local, rather than national or international, concerns animated CPUSA organizing. To that end, the records of James S. Allen, a key CPUSA theoretician, are used to explore the relationships between local Southern sub-organizations and the CPUSA leadership. His organizing in the South is crucial to the avenues that Communists organized and utilized his writings to shape Party policy and engagement with African Americans of the South. This thesis also plays close attention to the Scottsboro Trial as a key moment of mass mobilization and party reception as the American Communist Party organized demonstrations and support to the International Labor Defense with Allen’s influence and expertise within the Party. With the ILD’s support of the Scottsboro Trial, the inroads and organization of the CPUSA in the South were greatly aided and serve as an example of Southern organization of the Communist party and Allen’s impact as a scholar and promoter of a Communist Answer to the “Negro Question.”

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Introduction

James S. Allen was a Communist organizer, party member, activist, and agitator during much of the twentieth century in the United States. He did not hold any national Communist Party positions, nor did he retain great influence outside of the party's membership. However, Allen was an important movement theoretician. As editor of the Communist Party's *Southern Worker* newspaper, Allen played an important role in defining and then articulating the Party's ideas about the South, capitalism, and white supremacy during the Jim Crow era. Allen joined the Party at a time when American members debated how to solve "the Negro question," or how to incorporate Black liberation into the Party's revolutionary goals. Black liberation remained a theme of Allen's work in the South as the Party turned to support Black liberation broadly and then turned specifically to the creation of a "New Negro Republic" in the Black Belt.¹ Allen helped align the party to the needs and aims of the Black belt population through his work in the South, especially his journalistic endeavors. Historians have yet to grapple with his influence. Most mentions of Allen in histories of the Communist Party or Civil Rights groups in the US South mention him as a communist and editor of the *Southern Worker* but his significance as a movement theorist and an agitator of southern labor is missing from existing scholarship. Historian Harvey Klehr classifies the 1930s as the "heyday of American Communism," and

¹ Allen, "Negro Liberation," 25.

Allen serves as a lens through which to view the efforts made by the Communist Party in the South during this crucial period.²

Allen edited the *Southern Worker* during a moment when American Communist organizing was deeply shaped by international affairs and the power of the Communist International, or Comintern, which the Soviets organized to spread communism throughout the world. Even so, the American Communist movement developed unique American characteristics. Among these were racial prejudices that proved hard to overcome, especially as the Stalinist turn created division amongst the more tempered, center-left movements in the United States. who were keenly aware of the National questions and issues of Black liberation.³

Much has already been written on the Communist Party and especially its work in organizing Black Americans. Many histories of the Communist Party deal with the influence of foreign Soviet control. In his history of the US Communist Party and its connection to the communists of the East, for example, Jacob Zummoff argues that the Comintern helped foment the American Communist Party into a more American party throughout the 20s.⁴ As the Depression loomed, Fascism grew in Europe, and Stalin's political power rose in the USSR, the American Communist Party was at its most radical in the early 1930s, however, scholarship on the early American Communist party views it as subordinate to the Soviet Union and the Comintern. Harvey Klehr also views the 1930s as the height of the Party's radicalism and notes its potential to bring in African Americans, but in his telling the move towards the Popular Front strategy of working with liberalism doomed the radical policies that drew these members to it in

² Klehr, *The Heyday of American Communism*.

³ Solomon, 5.

⁴ Zumoff, *The Communist International and US Communism, 1919-1929*, 365.

the first place.⁵ This thesis is aimed at filling in the home-grown activism of the American Communist Party and how Allen utilized the *Southern Worker* and his writings to grow socialism among Black southerners. Other scholarship on the CPUSA shows the influence of mid-century anti-Communism and does not... Another clear example of this view is the work of Theodore Draper, being classified by New Left historians as a “professional anti-communist.”⁶ Draper’s *The Roots of American Communism* was published in 1957 and resides at the height of the Cold War antagonism.⁷ Praised for its “scholarly detachment,” Draper’s work reflects Cold War anti-communism. His moralistic language and attempts to “make clear the intentional muddiness” of the early party result in an over-exaggeration of the Communist Party’s influence and heightened the fear of Moscow and the determination against Communist movements. Draper’s works produced a following and respect in the field and engendered contentious debates from “New Left” historians who were viewing and searching for the individual communists and personal lives as important to the development of the Communist Party.

Challenging the Cold War histories of the Communists, the New Left historians turned to reexamine the “home-grown” communists, laying important groundwork for understanding the role of James Allen within the party. In this literature, historians focused on now well-known communists such as Hosea Hudson, Harry Haywood, Otto Huiswold, and William Z Foster. Hosea Hudson’s biography by historian Nell Irving Painter, *The Narrative of the Life of Hosea Hudson*, for example, examined the members of the communist movement through the life story of a key party member in Birmingham who fought capitalism and white supremacy in the South

⁵ Klehr, *The Heyday of American Communism*, 345.

⁶ Draper, Isserman, and Lyons, “The Old Left.”

⁷ Turner and Draper, *The Roots of American Communism*.

by way of CIO organizing.⁸ Additionally, Robin Kelly's *Hammer and Hoe* embodies the New Left's subtle rejection of the Communist Party's influence as he examines the lives and actions of the South's strongest district in Alabama.⁹ Biographies of Black communists helped draw historians' attention to the role of the Communist Party to the Civil Rights struggle. This thesis draws on the insights of these historians and asks how James Allen, through his involvement in the *Southern Worker*, contributed to this radical milieu in the 1930s South.

In the role of Black communists, many historians grapple with the relationship between Black members and socialist endeavors. Mark Solomon focuses on the period of courting and active recruiting among the Black population in the years following the Russian Revolution in two volumes. *Red and Black* is a detailing work of the ultra-left turn that affirmed and drew Afro-Americans to the Communist party between 1929-1935.¹⁰ *The Cry Was Unity* deals with the creation and formation of the Party and the Black members who were involved in both allied organizations and the few pioneers of Black communism.¹¹ Both of these works deal with the connection between the Communist Party and its dual refutation of the Socialist Party, a much older movement in the United States, and the radicalness of the party as it seeks to answer the "Negro Question" from one of the most peculiar standpoints in the United States.

Solomon's dissertation and the two volumes that result represent the debate and controversy that plagued the shift of historians' writings on Communism and the Communist Party and stand as the works that introduced and led me backward through the historiographical debates. The New Left were principally social historians who saw the politics of Communist

⁸ Painter, *The Narrative of Hosea Hudson*.

⁹ Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe*.

¹⁰ Solomon, *Red and Black*.

¹¹ Solomon, *The Cry Was Unity*.

Party as focused on too heavily to the detriment to the social construction of communist identity and involvement by Party members that the movement had in the United States.

While this scholarship offers crucial insights into debates within the Party, the role of the Comintern, and the organizing of Communists within southern communities, it leaves open the opportunity to explore how the Party, through James Allen, used print to explain the “Negro Question” to southern workers. By examining his writings, publications, and activism in the Deep South, I evaluate the influence Allen had as editor of the *Southern Worker* from the 1930-31, during which time he promoted a communist answer to the “Negro Question.” While these two years represent a short period of time, they nonetheless provide crucial insight into how the *Southern Worker* framed the “Negro Question” as a problem perpetuated by the “boss class” to divide Black and white workers in the South. As Allen saw it, the “Negro Question” could be solved by interracial class solidarity among workers. To that end, he published pieces that portrayed the South not simply as oppressively anti-communist, but rather as a place whose powerful ruling class and exploited workers made it an ideal ground for Communist organizing.¹² Allen’s contributions to Communist organizing in the South struck against the Lynch Law of the South and linked the Communist Party as allies and defenders against lynching—one of the most direct dangers to Black southerners.

A note to clarify the possibilities and limitations of my sources is in order. Allen’s influence in the *Southern Worker* is impossible to directly quantify. While he was editor, the publication did not credit most of its articles to any particular author. Allen did include his byline on some pieces, such as his regular column “The Red’s Say.” Even if Allen did not write the unattributed articles himself, as editor he nonetheless controlled what topics and framing the

¹² Allen, *Organizing in the Depression South*, 65–73.

paper published. It's also important to consider that Allen's wife, Isabelle, "shar[ed] many editorial tasks" with Allen.¹³ She was an activist and writer on her own right whose important article broke the news of the Scottsboro Boys in the *Southern Worker*.¹⁴ Historical records makes it impossible to untangle the work of James Allen from that of Isabelle. And so while this thesis explores work that has been attributed to James Allen, I recognize that Isabelle's ideas and invisible labor have also played a crucial role in shaping these sources.

The paper deals with the formation and discussion of the "Negro Question." The term, while antiquated, comes from an older "Negro Question" in reference to Du Bois, Cyril Briggs, and the Reconstruction era reflections following the Civil War and Emancipation to the Civil Rights term. Allen utilized the "Black consciousness" that began to be used in preference as more and more African Americans joined the movement and the term shifted towards derogatory. Allen's overall aim in writing about the question is to reinforce that the Communist Party is on the side of the Black population and that the party seeks to support Black Liberation.

James Allen represents the lens and efforts of the Communist Party to engage with the "Negro Question." With the focus of the *Southern Worker* and Allen's writings on the "Negro Question" being formative to the party, Allen's championship of Black struggles towards liberation such as economic disparities and racial violence pushed the Party to tangible and actionable solutions. First, the *Southern Worker* and Allen's early involvement with the Party shows the first engagement with the "Negro Question" and how the Communist movement pivoted to advocate the advancement of Black liberation and rights. Secondly, the Scottsboro Trial exemplifies the efforts the Party employed to advance the liberation of the Black population

¹³ Allen, 41.

¹⁴ Marcy, "Set Trial on Fair Day to Assure Mobs."

and mobilized support behind the Party. Allen's involvement with the 1930s posits him as an agitator of Party policy, a public name to provide a Communist response, and an example of the Party's stance towards Black liberation.

Chapter 1: Who was James S Allen and what is the “Negro Question?”

In August of 1930, a man entered a printing shop in Rossville, Georgia, carrying a series of typed articles and notes for a subversive newspaper. Sitting on the outskirts of town, this unassuming building became the first printing house of the *Southern Worker*, a Communist Party of the United States funded and organized newspaper aimed at increasing membership among southern workers. The print shop worker might have blanched when James Allen placed the copy for the proofs on the counter, which read “SOUTHERN WORKER—Issued Weekly by the Communist Party of the U.S.A.—White and Colored Workers Unite!”¹⁵ Such a radical message had caused Allen to reach outside of his home base in Chattanooga to find a print shop that would print the paper. The Rossville shop had a cheap enough price and, as Allen would later remark in his autobiography, kept to cash transactions. One of the owners preferred to minimize record keeping because he was the local Kleagle of the Ku Klux Klan, but also needed the business badly.¹⁶ Because he was so strategic, Allen never let a printing problem get in the way of publishing the underground newspaper.

James S. Allen was a Communist organizer, party member, activist, and agitator during much of the twentieth century in the United States. This chapter explores how Allen served as both an agitator and party member in the field and in the newsroom. Allen aggregated information about southern labor organizing and activism through the *Southern Worker* as an

¹⁵ Allen, *Organizing in the Depression South*, 35.

¹⁶ Allen, 36.

editor and contributor. In doing so, he presented a version of the South that was ripe for interracial class solidarity—one where workers in cities, small towns, and on sharecropping plantations challenged their bosses for decent working conditions. Crucial to Allen’s version of the South was the way he portrayed lynching—as a violent tool that bosses used to terrorize Black workers and, in so doing, divide Black and white workers. As part of this understanding, Allen also implied that interracial class solidarity could not only defend Black southerners from violence, but also create a mass movement against Jim Crow and southern capitalism.

James S. Allen’s upbringing gave him a foundation for the communist organizing that he would devote his life to as an adult. Allen was born Sol Auerbach in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in 1906, the same year his parents Jacob and Luba Auerbach emigrated from the Russian Empire. His parents were active members of a “bund”, potentially the *General Jewish Labor Bund in Lithuania, Poland, and Russia*, though they were not particularly religious.¹⁷ Allen references “the Bund” in his letters home to his parents and to the commitment to activism that they instilled in him.¹⁸ Later, Auerbach adopted the name James Allen because he believed his given name would attract undue attention in the South. Under his new name, Allen became a popular journalist among the Left—one with expertise on the South and the position of Black Americans within it. In 1925, soon after he began writing for the *Daily Worker*, Allen graduated from the University of Pennsylvania. He stayed on as a lecturer in Philosophy while he pursued

¹⁷ The Ethnic Bund, a labor organizing group founded in Czarist Russia in 1897. With the Auerbachs emigrating from Russia during this time and numerous references to his parents’ activities in the Bund, the General Jewish Labour Bund in Lithuania, Poland and Russia seems to be a potential candidate for the organization. Whether this was a purely political organization or held benefits socially for a newly emigrated family settling in Philadelphia are hard to determine.

¹⁸ Letter home, “01/22/1931”

radical journalism but was fired three years later for his “sympathetic views towards the Soviets.”¹⁹

Allen began his journalism career as a foreign news writer for the *Daily Worker*, but he maintained an interest in the “Negro Question.” In 1929, he covered an event called “Negro Week.” Cyril Briggs, the founder of the *Crusader* and founder of the African Blood Brotherhood, organized the week to “honor the revolutionary tradition in Black history exemplified by Toussaint L’Ouverture, Nat turner, and Denmark Vesey.”²⁰ Soon after, he wrote a series of articles on the “evils of housing in Harlem.”²¹ Allen’s articles emphasized the landlords’ greed as the driving force behind slums, framed as a class conflict between owners and renters. His work with the party soon expanded beyond the newspaper. The CPUSA enlisted Allen in its efforts to fulfill a resolution that the Comintern adopted at its Fourth Congress in 1922. There, attendees agreed that “Blacks in the United States” would “play an important role in the liberation struggle of the entire African race,” and so it was “essential to support every form of the Black movement that either undermines or weakens capitalism.”²² As part of the effort to increase the party’s Black membership, the CPUSA tapped Allen in 1930 to create a newspaper for an interracial southern working class. He left his home in New York to move South and establish the *Southern Worker* that summer.

Allen embarked on a dangerous mission by moving to the South to work for the CPUSA, but he told his parents that he was deeply committed to that mission. In a letter to his father in September 1930, Allen wrote about his conviction to his Party work in the Deep South. While

¹⁹ A Worker Correspondent, “Auerbach Is Hailed As Aid In Struggle.”

²⁰ Solomon, *The Cry Was Unity*, 98.

²¹ Auerbach, “Daily Worker Exposes Evils of Housing in Harlem; Show How Negro Workers Are Plundered by Landlords.”

²² “Black Struggle Documents - Fourth Congress of the Communist International - Resolutions 1922.”

fraught with personal danger, Allen shared his belief that “one must accept certain premises if one is to do things with any degree of certainty and confidence,” one of those premises being physical harm. Allen’s father previously expressed concern about his son’s productivity and actions in the South, but Allen remained steadfast. As he adjusted to his new life in the South, Allen wrote to his parents about the Party and his role in the collective organization. He framed his work less as employment and more as service. Allen and his father exchanged thoughts about Allen’s commitment to the Party and stressful working conditions as potential detriments to James’ health, but Allen maintained, “I... do not feel that I am sacrificing anything by being in the Party and doing my work there.” His loyalty and devotion to the Party remained consistent throughout his career as a journalist, publisher, author, and agent of the CPUSA.

As Allen began planning what the *Daily Worker* would look like, he paid close attention to what contemporaries called “The Negro Question.” The concept had its origins in W.E.B. Du Bois’ “Socialism and the Negro Problem,” with subsequent leftists taking up the essay’s pointed question: “Can a minority of any group or country be left out of the socialistic problem?”²³ W. E. B. Du Bois’ focused on whether and how the contemporary socialist movement might incorporate Black Americans in their revolutionary aims. In his article published in the *New Review* Du Bois argued that trying to leave out the “American Negro” of the Socialistic problem would only result in the failure of Socialism. Prior to the 1920s, many American socialists remained indifferent to the particular problems of Black Americans.²⁴ But that had changed over the 1920s, with the Comintern’s interest in “the Black Question” on the global scale. By the time Allen moved South, the “Negro Question” had become shorthand for the obstacle of white

²³ W. E. B. DuBois, “Socialism and the Negro Problem.”

²⁴ Foner, *American Socialism and Black Americans*, 3.

supremacy in the United States following the end of legal slavery, and it was a question that the CPUSA was increasingly interested in answering.

During the Second Congress in 1920, the Communist International recognized the anti-colonial and national liberation movement that was growing in Asia, this led to a suggestion by Vladimir Lenin to recognize African Americans in the South as their own liberation movement.²⁵ The Fourth Congress of the Comintern passed a set of “Theses on the Negro Question” after several Black American communists presented and attended the congress in 1922.²⁶ The Theses set out to identify the displaced African Americans with the great colonial question. Anti-imperial struggle lay at the heart of the wave of Marxism that the CPUSA and International held during the early twentieth century. This view of colonialism as being a part of the Imperial structure brought attention to the blighted poor of the South, especially those African Americans who labored in the fields without access to citizenship of any reputable status. Communist ideology heavily supports the anti-colonial struggle and places the Black worker as one of the most exploited workers in the world.²⁷ The linkage of the colonial to the “Negro Question” and problem helped set official Communist policy, from the Communist International at the very least, and sought to apply four Theses’, especially to the southern Black worker.

The CPUSA’s interest in southern Black workers marked a departure from the American Left’s hesitancy and inconsistency on the “Negro Question” during the preceding decades.²⁸ The

²⁵ Berland, “The Emergence of the Communist Perspective on the ‘Negro Question’ in America,” 2000.

²⁶ “Black Struggle Documents - Fourth Congress of the Communist International - Resolutions 1922.” Notable attendees were Otto Huiswold, who presented a report, Claude McKay, who addressed the congress, and Otto Hall, Harry Haywood’s older brother.

²⁷ “Black Struggle Documents - Fourth Congress of the Communist International - Resolutions 1922,” para. 18.

²⁸ Heideman, *Class Struggle and the Color Line*. This collected volume provides invaluable primary source documents written by Socialists in the United States who had different answers on what to do with Black Americans. Some would prefer to see the United States on to segregation while others embraced African Americans into the Left and sought to promote their continued inclusion abroad.

Communist Party of the United States branched off from the Socialist Party following the footsteps of the Russian Revolutionaries in 1919, with the former maintaining a stricter commitment to Marxism than the latter.²⁹ During the 1920s, various labor organizations were centered in New York, the scope of which are beyond this paper, but suffice to say that two of the larger parties, the Communist Labor Party and the American Communist Party combined during a conference in May of 1920.³⁰ While the Communist Labor Party said nothing of the condition of African Americans in its 1920 founding documents, the Workers Party of America (the predecessor of the Communist Party of America) framed race as a product of economic exploitation.³¹ The American Left became further fractured as various factions decided whether to support the rising Soviet government and whether to join the Third International in 1920.³² The American Communist Party emerged from this era of fragmentation in a strong position, and it chose to engage the “Negro Question” at a time when the Socialist Party did not.³³ As the party began to grapple with the “Negro Question” toward the end of the 1920s, many party members attempted to become experts and to help craft the Party’s answer. James Allen joined this effort. He wrote to his father about the possibility that one of his pamphlets might be published by the party in April of 1931 saying, “The Negro Question, you must realize, is a very ticklish one in the Party, and they so very seldom get a realistic treatment of it, that they don’t know what to do with mine.”³⁴ But Allen was optimistic that his ideas about the “Negro Question”—seeing Black

²⁹ Berland, “The Emergence of the Communist Perspective on the ‘Negro Question’ in America,” 1999.

³⁰ Cantor and Foner, *The Divided Left*, 69–70.

³¹ Communist Labor Party of America, “Platform and Program of the Communist Labor Party of America.” Solomon, *The Cry Was Unity*, 17.

³² Jack Ross, *The Socialist Party of America* (University of Nebraska Press, 2015), 224–26. The problems facing the Socialist Party did lead many within to see the Left-wing rise as a threat and even labeled them being paid for by the Federal Government.

³³ Solomon, *The Cry Was Unity*, 19.

³⁴ Allen, “Dear Folks,” September 20, 1930.

Americans as an oppressed nation within the nation whose liberation would be won through “an alliance with the working class”—could become the Party’s position.³⁵

Allen’s theory that Black Americans constituted an oppressed nation echoed the writings of a Black intelligentsia that gleaned lessons from European revolutions. According to communist organizer Oscar Berland, influential Black thinkers such as Claude McKay, Otto Huiswold, and Cyril Briggs agreed with the Soviet position that African Americans within the United States had to fight their own anti-imperialist struggle. This framing by Black thinkers shifted the tone of communist organizers trying to reach the disaffected masses and engage with the “Negro Question.” Combined with the shift to the left by Stalin, 1929-1935 represented a new age of communists focused on the Black struggle with shared intensity to their mission of destroying capitalism.

As these Black political theorists advanced the vision of Black liberation that would shape Allen’s thinking, the Socialist Party continued to lose ground on the “Negro Question”, ensuring that Allen and the CPUSA would have less competition when articulating Leftist ideas about Black liberation. The recognition of failure and lack of communist organizers in reaching these masses is summed up by Eugene Debs, one of the most well-known socialists of the twentieth century, in his claim that “We [the Socialist Party] have nothing special to offer the Negro.”^{36 37} In the early twentieth century, the Socialist movement had not formed a unitary and decisive cohesiveness. Outside of trade unions, the advancement of communism was still in the process of being fleshed out in matters of governance and authority. With the rise of the Soviets, the American socialists would begin to split along lines of ideology and support for the USSR.

³⁵ Allen, *Negro Liberation*, 38.

³⁶ Debs, “The Negro In The Class Struggle.”

³⁷ Jones, ““Nothing Special to Offer the Negro.””

Debs meant that the endeavor of socialism should not be sidetracked by differences created by the capitalist class, such as whiteness or Blackness. Indeed, the race question was secondary to class in the minds of many socialists who engaged in cross-racial revolutionary work. This understanding began to change following the failure of Reconstruction and the growing working-class consciousness of the Gilded Age. Debs, for instance, defended the civil rights of Black people and wrote, “The class struggle is colorless.”³⁸ Debs’s words prove not colorblind rhetoric or a running away from Marxist thought, but Debs defending the fight for improving the living conditions of African Americans because of the direct connection of material conditions to the greater class struggle, “There never was any social inferiority that was not the shriveled fruit of economic inequality,” he once said.³⁹ Debs remained highly influential in the socialist movement, but it would be the CPUSA and not the Socialist Party that drove the Left’s growing interest in Black liberation.

James Allen, as a party theoretician, serves as the link between the neglect the Socialist movement originally showed the oppressed African Americans and the inclusion and courtship of the Communist Party towards the oppressed nation in following the Comintern’s direction. Allen’s perspectives and writings within the party led to the advancement of Marxist thought and the possibility of Communism being the answer to the United States’ global ignominy as an oppressor of a nation—that nation being Black people.⁴⁰ Allen built on the work of Black communists as well as CPUSA leaders like John Reed, who in 1920 delivered a speech to the

³⁸ Debs, “The Negro and His Nemesis.”

³⁹ Debs. 9

⁴⁰ Important to note, the various factions that claimed to be the Communist Party of the United States were varied and split into the Socialist Party of the United States and the Communist Party of the United States along with Stalin’s position as General Secretary of the Central Committee in the USSR in 1922. In example, Harry Haywood and other Black US Communists split and associated themselves in line with theory and praxis with Stalin as opposed to Trotsky in the formation and organization of Black communist movements in the South.

Second World Congress of the Communist International titled “The Negro Question in America.”⁴¹ Allen also joined the Communist Party at a time when it saw increased membership among Black Americans in the late 1920s and early 1930s. While the origins of the Communist parties did not delve deep into fully answering the “Negro Question” at their founding, the five years preceding Allen’s creation of the *Southern Worker* saw the development of interest and engagement with the question. One such organization was the African Blood Brotherhood in which several key members joined the CPUSA after a time and held dual memberships.⁴² The African Blood Brotherhood was a fraternal society and evolved out of the post-war attitudes towards Black men following the return from war. Feeding off the dissatisfaction with the Socialist Party, Cyril Briggs founded the Brotherhood as a “revolutionary secret order.”⁴³ The Brotherhood held deep dissatisfaction with both the Socialist Party and the newly formed Communist Party as neither put the problems of the Black population in the party program and platform. Among the first members were many of the West Indian immigrants who held the Marxist tendency of national determination to the race as an oppressed nation broken up by white supremacy through colonial capitalism. The creation of this racial nation living in the United States was more radical than Marcus Garvey’s Universal Negro Improvement Association’s economic self-sufficiency and embracement of capitalism.⁴⁴ In addition to the growing Black communists who were writing and publishing newspapers, editorials, pamphlets,

⁴¹ Reed, “The Negro Question in America.”

⁴² Bergin, “Unrest among the Negroes.” Dr. Bergin’s *Unrest Among the Negroes* aims at examining the aims and directives of the early ABB and helps focus their work alongside Lenin’s *Imperialism, The Highest Stage of Capitalism*.

⁴³ Foner, *American Socialism and Black Americans*, 309.

⁴⁴ Ahern, “Drafting a Revolutionary Pushkin,” 122.

and organizing within the Communist Party, the party itself sought to increase the membership and support it gave to African Americans.⁴⁵

It was in this context that James Allen published the first edition of the *Southern Worker* in 1930. Allen was tasked with starting a newspaper in the South, the zone where organization amongst African Americans was deemed most needed, and the *Southern Worker* remained a steady call for involvement and organization. The *Southern Worker* debuted in August of 1930 and its first printing called for the organization of workers and farmers together to “Support It, Build It, Spread It!—in every mill and mine, in every city and town, all over the countryside.”⁴⁶

The first edition contained information to introduce the paper—its mission and goals—to workers in the South. Allen introduced the *Southern Worker* as a voice of the rebellion against the conditions of the “Negro worker” who was “kept jim-crowed at every turn, working at lower wages than the white worker, subject to lynching and persecution...” The first paper decried the situation as the Black worker being kept “a virtual slave to the Southern white bosses.”⁴⁷ The papers also advertised the Party, assisted in organization, and kept attention on the actions of the “bosses” of the South as they sought to keep the oppressed nation of African Americans living in the region under the boot of capitalism. In an introduction entitled “What Do We Stand For,” the *Southern Worker* claimed that the only way that the “Southern toilers” could be victorious was through the “firm and solid organization in militant unions, and politically, in the Communist Party.”

⁴⁵ See Ahern, “Drafting a Revolutionary Pushkin”; and Cathy Bergin, “Race/Class Politics: The *Liberator*”, 1929-1934,” *Race & Class* 47, no. 4 (April 2006): 86–104. for more Black Communists focused publications.

⁴⁶ “Write for the Southern Worker!” *Southern Worker*, August 16, 1930, Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Archives.

⁴⁷ James S. Allen, “What Do We Stand For?” *Southern Worker*, August 16, 1930, Vol. 1, No. 1 edition.

The goal of the newspaper remained to function as a mouthpiece for the Communist Party's southern outlet. Allen's job, in particular, remained to provide the communist solution to the "Negro Question" in his capacity as editor. The *Southern Worker* presented Allen a means to highlight the Communist Party's activity in fighting for equal rights, self-determination for Black Americans, and material gains for workers. To that end, Allen's *Southern Worker* included three regular features, "Lynch Law at Work," "The Reds Say," and "From the Mills, Mines, and Farms," that gave readers repeated exposure to Allen's understanding of the "Negro Question" and the Communist Party's answer to it. Taken together, these three columns served several important functions. They aggregated the stories of workers' experiences throughout the South, portraying the region as one ripe for interracial working class organizing. They emphasized the position of Black Americans not only as the targets of what Allen called "white superiority," but also as exploited workers in a violent capitalist system. And the features also spotlighted the pervasiveness of lynching in the South, demanding that all readers, not just Black leaders, take racial terrorism seriously as a tool of the "boss class" to inflict violence on the most vulnerable members of the working class and, in doing so, keep Black and white workers divided.

A section of each paper contained the reporting of active lynching in "Lynch Law At Work."⁴⁸ The section resembles a classified section in a local newspaper, with short 2-3 line descriptions with a location attached to an incident and with names of victims and perpetrators when available. Not every appearance in the "Lynch Law at Work" section was an active, public lynching—each one falls into the category of the South's lynch law working. Whether it be by white mob or cop, the victims are given a space to give who was responsible and how the attack happened.

⁴⁸ "Lynch Law At Work Feb. 7, 1931."

In addition to the conditions for workers in the South, the *Southern Worker* focused heavily on the Lynch Law aspect of Jim Crow segregation. The Lynch Law, as defined by Ida B. Wells' *Lynch Law in America*, referred to the consistent use of mob violence against Black people, most often men, who whites saw as a threat to the racial order of the South. Following the Civil War and Reconstruction, white people often lynched Black men on behalf of "white women's femininity."⁴⁹ While rape was a charge levied against many Black men who the law defined as vagrant or who challenged the authority of a white person, the *Southern Worker* highlights many cases where the charges against them were more economically based. Robbery, theft, and workplace disputes are highlighted as the cause of death. Many of the articles used in the *Southern Worker* detail the reasonings for these economically focused lynchings by putting them into the class structure of workers and bosses. The term "negro worker" is used consistently in the "Lynch Law At Work" whether it was Alfred Richard from New Orleans, charged with robbery and driven by a white mob to jump into the Mississippi River or the arrest of 32 Black workers following the shooting of a white clerk in Covington, Kentucky.⁵⁰ In the April 18th edition, Tom Carraway was convicted in "only 8 minutes" of "attacking a white woman" and while reporting on the sexually charged response, the *Southern Worker* still points out how the means of death by electrocution is the "legal lynch method of bosses' justice."⁵¹ The *Southern Worker* called for stiff resistance to the Ku Klux Klan and the bosses as they stood against workers. When it came to lynch mobs, the paper consistently argued that "lynch mobs can only be properly dealt with by organized defense committees of Negro and white workers."⁵²

⁴⁹ Wells, "Lynch Law In America."

⁵⁰ "Lynch Law At Work Feb. 7, 1931."

⁵¹ "Lynch Law At Work April 18, 1931," 18.

⁵² "N.C. Landlords Lynch Tennant."

The Lynch Law At Work column remained the most consistent of all the sections published during Allen's tenure as editor and into 1932. The column kept a steady printing of near or actualized lynchings ranging all across the South. Not every recorded incident was a full lynching—where a person was killed by the mob. Instead, many of the reports exemplified the everyday nature of the Jim Crow South and the danger it posed to Black Americans. In Laurel, Mississippi, on Oct. 29 the *Southern Worker* reports on the accusations of an attack of a white man by “negroes” leading to G. M. Welch’s jugular vein being severed. Reporting by the *Southern Worker’s* correspondent reveals that his friends “innocently stated that Welch got the worst of it in a card game argument.”⁵³ It was not just the South that appeared in the Lynch Law At Work column. The December 27th, 1930 printing of a report on racial segregation on behalf of the “boss class” in Rochester, Minnesota serves as the extension Allen makes to racial attitudes being extended along a party line. It specifically “Negro, Indian, Mongolian, Chinese, and Japanese workers” who were barred, and the *Southern Worker* emphasized the connection the workers different races shared—it was the bosses who instigated the segregation.⁵⁴ In that same issue, Eddie Marsh of Albany Georgia is sentenced for “killing his landlord, a pecan grower, in a quarrel.” Marsh is listed as a “Negro farm worker” and his inclusion cemented the class-based dispute between those that owned and those that worked.

In another weekly column, “The Reds Say,” Allen often presented evidence that the South’s particular version of capitalism created fertile ground for interracial working-class organizing. Whereas “Lynch Law at Work” never included a byline, Allen listed himself as the author of every issue’s “The Reds Say” column. In these pieces, Allen stressed that readers should understand the white southern landowner class not merely as local elites, but as “bosses.”

⁵³ “Southern Worker, November 8, 1930.”

⁵⁴ “Lynch Law At Work December 27, 1930.”

When the Loray Mill strike began, for example, Allen alleged that *The Charlotte Observer* helped incite animosity towards the strikers through its derogatory coverage of the workers. Allen urged readers to see the *Observer* as part of the “boss press,” which aimed at turning public sympathy against the worker's cause.⁵⁵ “The Reds Say” also argued that communist organizers were not outside agitators, as many bosses charged. Instead, as Allen’s editorial column in the August 30th, 1930, edition put it, communists had been “born in the South” is quantified by “You become a Red when you have to work from 60 to 70 hours and get about \$10 a week.”⁵⁶ The South had created the conditions conducive to communist organizing. The Party’s growing success there resulted from workers’ making sense of the conditions around them, not importing foreign concepts from Europe.

Allen’s main call and aim in “The Reds Say” is to draw specific attention to the overall works of the Communist Party. Whether he is lobbying for unemployment insurance in the face of the Great Depression or decrying the boss print, Allen wrote the column invoking the Marxist view of class war and promoting class consciousness. The fall of 1930 saw Allen decrying the lack of unemployment insurance in the face of harsh conditions in the winter. The heart of the unemployment insurance call laid in providing a basis for workers to survive the rampant layoffs and changes to material conditions. Allen claimed the situation only benefited the owning class and the unions that served them, such as the American Federation of Labor, “social insurance against revolution is the platform of the A. F. of L. bureaucracy in a nutshell.”⁵⁷

Allen’s editorship column of the *Southern Worker* focused on the introduction of larger Party issues with the United States and railed against the hypocrisy of anti-communists against

⁵⁵ Allen, “The Reds Say...,” August 30, 1930.

⁵⁶ Allen.

⁵⁷ Allen, “The Reds Say...,” November 22, 1930.

the Soviets for issues he “saw here in the South.”⁵⁸ Decrying the ramp-up of war sentiment, the December 13th “The Reds Say” points to the “Bolshevik menace” posed as a distraction by the bosses towards workers to deter organization. Allen links the “Bolshevik menace” to the “Hum menace” of the Great War; urging workers to “chew your chew, fellow-workers, and think over it.” The *Southern Worker’s* position on the hypocrisy of those clamoring against the “reds” on matters of moral superiority against the “forced labor of the Soviets” all while using the highways “built by the convict- gangs,... or campaign posters made by prison labor?”⁵⁹

Part of the resonance Allen sought to inspire in the readers of the *Southern Worker* was the South as a place of revolutionary activity just like the Soviet Union. While organizing and unionizing were critical, and called for by “The Reds Say,” Allen used the editorial column to introduce “red rhetoric” in a Southern context. Instead of importing Soviet terminology or heavy Marxist theory, “The Reds Say” comments on the politicians and bourgeoisie that exploited the workers of the South. Allen’s caustic denunciation of the Federal government’s relief programs is settled amongst the lackluster efforts by Southern cities in actual assistance, decrying the City of Birmingham’s lack of soup kitchens or impactful unemployment relief.⁶⁰

It is difficult to gauge the readership of the *Southern Worker* during its printing and during the Scottsboro Trial or how its coverage impacted the readership. A mark of the message of the *Southern Worker’s* efficacy is the amount of engagement with its readership material conditions. In some edited papers, it’s difficult for a historian to assess readers’ reception and how people talked about the paper. Still, the *Southern Worker* offers some clues that help us gauge how workers engaged the paper. Southern workers interacted with the paper by

⁵⁸ Allen, “The Reds Say...,” December 13, 1930.

⁵⁹ Allen.

⁶⁰ Allen, “The Reds Say...,” December 27, 1930.

contributing to two regular sections of the paper. The first of these was, “From the Mills, Mines and Farms.” Here, workers reported on the events in their homes and localities. Many of these events were on the topics of soon-to-be strikes, racial or class-based violence, and the struggles of everyday communists and workers struggling to survive in the hard-hit Depression Deep South. The Birmingham office was under District 17 of the CPUSA and as a result, had a role in the organization of the Party and in how communists would relay information to one another to organize mutual aid.⁶¹ Allen called for people who needed to read and hear the information most important to workers to be the workers who shared the news. The clarion call went out, “Write for the *Southern Worker!*”⁶²

The authorship of the “From the Mills, Mines, and Farms” aided the paper’s goal of being a worker-written paper as it was written by “A Worker/Farmer Correspondent.” Between the weekly issues, the time to receive reports was short and those that were sent in, anonymized, were published for the depiction of events happening. These short articles ranged from conditions in the shop as in the January 3rd, 1931, an issue where a “Worker Correspondent” tells of a “speed-up” in the Savona Textile Mill in Charlotte, North Carolina to published poems of uplift and revolution such as the November 8th, 1930 “Money Getting’ Small.”⁶³

The Worker Correspondents were faced with the harsh realities of the Great Depression and each winter represented potential starvation. Many write-ins invoked the fact that without their jobs and that sudden loss of income, their families were strangled by the cheapness of the

⁶¹ Allen claims in *Organizing in the Deep South* that “Our most constant and best news contacts were in areas where the Party had established district organizations, as in the Alabama-Tennessee-Georgia District 17 and in the Carolinas-Virginia District 16. But we also developed reliable connections elsewhere, as in the Kentucky coal fields, among the seamen of the Marine Workers Industrial Union in the Gulf ports, and in other places like New Orleans and Tampa among the tobacco workers.”

⁶² “Write for the *Southern Worker!*”

⁶³ “*Southern Worker*, January 3, 1931,” col. “From the Mills, Mines and the Farms.”

bosses. The loss of jobs and increased risk of physical maiming were heightened in the “speed-ups” of factories. A man was maimed by the machine he was working on in Chattanooga Sash and Mill Works in June 1930 and the ensuing firing and harsh treatment of the overworked and underpaid worker appeared in the *Southern Worker* on October 25, 1930. The message being presented to readers was one of intensified class war that bosses waged against workers. When referencing the Mill claiming worker negligence to get out of paying compensation, the correspondent points out that “the employee has to take everything because they are not organized like the manufacturers.” Additionally, due to the economic status of the United States during the Depression—moving jobs was taking a gamble of being re-employed elsewhere, “if they could get a job somewhere else they would leave. But since we all got to stay here we should organize and fight for better conditions.”⁶⁴

While focusing on the economic conditions of workers in the “From the Mills, Mines and the Farms” section, Allen paid particular attention to the specific condition of Black workers. With his eye ever on the “Negro Question”, Allen used the *Southern Worker* to provide Black worker representation and issues ranging from racial discrimination in hiring practices to the dedication of a section each week to an article from an unnamed Black working woman. The paper credited “My Life” to “A Negro Working Woman” and told the life story of a Black woman worker as she tried to manage a family, a job, and resist Jim Crow.⁶⁵ The section ran as a series between October 1930 to March 1931. In these articles, the author recounted her life from her birth in Pendergrass, Georgia, then detailed how her family struggled during sharecropping, moved to cities both North and South for work, and eventually became radicalized upon viewing

⁶⁴ A Worker Correspondent, “Maimed By Speed-Up; Then No Job.”

⁶⁵ “My Life” Section begins on October 4, 1930 and continues on to February 28th.

the conditions of workers. More than anything, the *Southern Worker* went out of its way to show the material conditions of the South as responsible for the creation of native-born communists.

The *Southern Worker* played an important role in educating workers around the South about communist organizing happening in cities and towns about which they would not have otherwise known. Allen's role as an aggregator of organizing stories was particularly important given the scattered way that communists had been organizing in the South. Part of communist organization revolved around the creation of shop branches, a group of communist workers within a workplace that unionized. While these emerging organizations were helped by "professional" communist members such as Allen, the conditions and workers who organized were local. Especially in the more industrialized cities of the South such as Birmingham, the joining of larger industry unions organized locally into shop unions.⁶⁶ As the historian Robin D.G. Kelly argues in his work on Alabama communists, these communist organizations were centered among the shops, mills, mines, and farms of the South, many of which were too spread out for workers to know their counterparts personally. Yet the workers were able to write to the *Southern Worker* and numerous testimonials, calls for aid, organization, and declaration of strikes organized through the paper in articles by "Worker Correspondents." In the October 4th, 1930, paper, for example, a worker correspondent in Birmingham, Alabama detailed the suppression of union and communist materials in the U.S. Pipe Company shop. The correspondent explained the efforts to put out a shop paper and the distribution of the *Southern Worker* and CPUSA leaflets. Titling their article "Making Red Shop Out of U.S. Pipe" was certainly a dangerous move, yet the workers in Birmingham wanted to get the "truth about conditions" out to any fellow workers, declaring "We will make the U.S. Pipe shop a red shop

⁶⁶ Devinat, "The CPUSA's Trade Unionism during Third Period Communism, 1929–1934."

whether the bosses like it or not.”⁶⁷ Allen’s paper thus gave the Birmingham workers a platform to expose the bosses’ union-busting tactics and to ask for solidarity from other workers around the South, two tasks that would have been difficult without access to the publication.

Allen also used the *Southern Worker* to amplify the Communist Party’s broader effort to reach out to Black southerners on the basis of class solidarity. For Allen, this meant devoting much of the paper to issues understood by contemporaries as Black issues—lynching, the indignities of Jim Crow, and the exploitation of Black workers. This choice to elevate Black issues to the forefront of a worker’s party cemented the Party’s growing reputation as sympathetic to Black workers. Linking the Southern workers’ issues to the class war ongoing between the workers and the “bosses” is how the *Southern Worker* sought to recruit and gain traction among Black workers who have traditionally been ignored by the Socialist movement. For example, Allen gave a platform to a plasterer from Chattanooga, Tennessee, who used the paper to advocate for the integration of his local plasterer’s Union. With only “3 out of about 400 Negro plasterers,” their numbers were small, and they needed help organizing.⁶⁸ By amplifying the pleas of this Black worker, Allen signaled that the concerns of Black southern workers were the Party’s concerns, too.

Allen also used the paper to encourage readers to interpret global affairs the way that the Party wanted. The *Southern Worker* was an avowedly communist paper on behalf of the Communist Party. At the time Allen ran the paper, the Comintern had declared itself to be in the Third Period of global communism, with the rapidly approaching death of capitalism eminent. The Communist International was undergoing the process historians call “Stalinification” which

⁶⁷ A Worker Correspondent, “Making Red Shop Out of US Pipe.”

⁶⁸ A Worker Correspondent, “Negro Plasterers Kept Out of Union; Jobless.”

meant the taking over of the Comintern and the Moscow leadership of the International with an “ultra-left” leaning.⁶⁹ Shifting politics in Moscow, however distant they were, influenced Party organizing in the United States. Allen, and the *Southern Worker* through him, presented a favorable depiction of the events in the Soviet Union to the workers and sharecroppers in the US South. One byproduct of this shift was an increased animosity toward those not ideologically pure enough by Party’s standards. The paper began using the term “social-fascist” to talk about non-aligned communist and liberal presses.⁷⁰ It also shaped how the paper talked about American politics. For instance, the *Southern Worker* consistently pointed out the lack of Socialist action in terms of answering the “Negro Question” when it came to voting campaigns in the South as it did in 1930’s Texas lieutenant-governor elections.⁷¹ The criticisms of those outside the Party would also be seen in the way the paper talked about the NAACP in the Scottsboro trial as both groups sought to lead the defense of the boys, as the next chapter will show.

Part of the *Southern Worker’s* methods of organizing workers and highlighting the work being done by the Communist Party was through the American Negro Labor Congress and the organization of demonstrations, conferences, and strikes through the paper. Additionally, the *Southern Worker* aided in drumming out support for worker-valued politicians running for office. Whether this was through the Communist ticket on the ballot, or without the flair of radicalism if it was deemed too dangerous to advertise.⁷²

⁶⁹ Kevin McDermott and Jeremy Agnew, *The Comintern: A History of International Communism From Lenin to Stalin* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1997), 90.

⁷⁰ Draper, “The Ghost of Social-Fascism.” Draper’s historiographical importance cannot be understated as professional anti-communist. His receiving of funding from the United States State Department and through the Hoover Institution—the Anti-Communist thinktank.

⁷¹ A Worker Correspondent, “Socialists Avoid Lynch Law Issue In Texas Elections.”

⁷² Johnson, “Communists and Elections.” Allen, *Organizing in the Depression South*, 54.

During Allen's time as the editor of the *Southern Worker*, he used the paper as a vehicle to put the "Negro Question" front and center in an official Communist Party publication. He offered readers a particular understanding of the South as a place where white supremacy and labor exploitation created ripe conditions for interracial communist organizing. And he encouraged readers across racial lines to understand violence against Black southerners not as the problems of Black people alone, but as the problems of labor. He made this case while simultaneously encouraging readers to consider Black Americans as an exploited nation within a nation, whose liberation would come through home-grown revolution. Allen's understanding of the Negro problem and its solution would become particularly important in the 1931 case of the Scottsboro boys—the nine Black teenagers wrongfully accused of raping two white women. As the next chapter will demonstrate, Allen's *Southern Worker* played a crucial role in exposing the injustice of the racist arrests. And important for my purposes, it also provided a high-profile example in which Allen's ideas about lynching, racism, and interracial organizing came together to explain the southern justice system to readers of the communist paper.

Chapter 2: The Scottsboro Trial

In her book *Defying Dixie*, Dr. Glenda Gilmore argues that “We might never have heard of the Scottsboro case if Sol Auerbach, James S. Allen, had not arrived in Chattanooga, Tennessee in mid-July 1930.”⁷³ The incident that put the Scottsboro boys in the hands of the white mob of the South started on a train ride in late March. The various boys boarded the train to ride for better work conditions, any work at all, or to get out of their hometowns. Allen was the editor of the *Southern Worker* for the first five months of the trial and left in August of 1931 to briefly return home to his family and then get back on the road organizing for the International Labor Defense and defense of the boys. His contribution to amplifying the event is well documented in historians’ works on the case. Yet his impact on the trial is hard to gauge. Allen worked on the case as a reporter, organizer, and agitator, and from the Trial, combined with his work for the *Southern Worker*, pushed him into prominence as the Communist Party’s theoretician on the “Negro Question” and Black history.

Allen was only in the South for eight months when the revolutionaries in Chattanooga, TN heard of the Scottsboro boys being taken off the train in Paint Rock, Alabama. Allen, his wife Isa, and Tom Johnson, the Birmingham, AL organizer, were sitting by the radio when the broadcast went on and by the evening preparations had been made to travel down to Jefferson County. The time spent on informing and organizing against lynching and boss-run trials was about to be put to the test on a national stage as the Communists prepared to help. Allen’s

⁷³ Gilmore, *Defying Dixie*, 118.

contributions go beyond the reporting and organizing on behalf of the Scottsboro boys and the *Southern Worker*, his work in those two pivotal movements focused his examination of the “Negro Question”, eventually resulting in several books that shaped the Party’s stance.

The case of the Scottsboro Boys shows how James Allen’s ideas about racism and interracial organizing came together to explain the southern justice system to readers of the communist paper. In this case, the Communists used lynching as key evidence that proved to African Americans that so long as the United States was a capitalist empire, it would remain irredeemable. Framing lynching as a consequence of capitalism and imperialism connected the struggle of Black Americans with the struggle of all workers and colonized people. Allen, a key CPUSA theoretician on the “Negro Question,” sought to show that communism was the answer to that question. In his time with the *Southern Worker*, Allen provided a platform for the grievances and attacks on the workers of the South, especially the Black workers who were underrepresented in Southern unions and labor movements. The Scottsboro Case was a crucial moment wherein Allen made a case to his readers that even though the Black teenagers were not part of the labor movement nor the communist party, the CPUSA was deeply invested in achieving justice for them. As Allen saw it, placing anti-lynching work within the Party’s purview expanded the issues around which the Party could organize, while at the same time building the base of workers who were increasingly radicalized by the grim realities of the Great Depression.

On March 25, 1931, as “Scottsboro Boy” Haywood Patterson later recalled, the fight that drew national attention to the African Americans who became the Scottsboro Boys began when a white boy harassed Patterson, Roy and Andy Wright (brothers), and Eugene Williams. “That is

how the Scottsboro case began... with a white foot on my Black hand,” Patterson said.⁷⁴

Patterson remembered the freight train ride as uneventful for him and his three Black companions riding in the oil tanker. After “three or four” white boys also hobbing that day crossed over, the white teens began to physically and verbally harass Patterson. Then, at Lookout Mountain, the white boys hopped off and grabbed rocks to throw at the four in the oil tankers. When the freight train stopped at Stevenson, Patterson, Williams and both the Wrights found other Black boys on the train and invited them to sit in the oil tanker, hoping to stave off further harassment. Soon after, the train took off and the boys came to blows. Several of the white boys hopped the train and returned to Stevenson. They called ahead to Paint Rock, Alabama, where the Scottsboro boys were pulled off the train for “assault and attempted murder.”⁷⁵ One of the Black teens, Clarence Norris, later wrote in his memoir about the sense of excitement that the white farmers of Paint Rock must have felt to vindicate the “attempted murder” of the white teens.⁷⁶

Shortly after the Nine were pulled from the train, two white women named Victoria Price and Ruby Bates claimed the Black teens had raped them—a common charge lobbed against Black men in the South who challenged the social or economic power relations of Jim Crow. This charge incited the already angry mob, and some white Alabamans began to talk of lynching over next few days as the Nine were imprisoned at Scottsboro. Patterson remembered that the Sherriff was “on our side” as he prevented some deputies from delivering the boys to the mob.⁷⁷ The long sleepless night saw the boys awake when the National Guard arrived in the early hours

⁷⁴ Patterson and Conrad, *Scottsboro Boy*, 1.

⁷⁵ Patterson and Conrad, 5.

⁷⁶ Kinshasa and Norris, *The Man from Scottsboro*, 34.

⁷⁷ Patterson and Conrad, *Scottsboro Boy*, 8.

of the morning. The National Guard assisted in taking the boys to Gadsden, AL to ward off any further attempts at lynching, and this is where the boys stayed till their trial on April 6th.⁷⁸

The Nine were from different backgrounds and were not all connected to each other prior to being drug off the train. Of the Nine, only four knew of each other before getting on the Southern Railway train: Haywood Patterson (age 18), Eugene Williams (13), and the brothers Andy (19) and Roy (12) Wright. Clarence Norris (19) had left his family at age 17 and was looking for work around the South. After being involved in a few public work ventures and leaving them, Norris had hopped the train heading towards Alabama looking for better prospects as the train traveled west.⁷⁹ Charles Weems was the oldest of the boys at 19. Andy Wright was one of the longest held of the boys after violating his parole in 1946, finally leaving Kilby prison for good on June 6, 1950. Ozie Powell suffered the worst through the various trials. In what was described by the officers as an escape attempt, Powell slashed at the deputy transporting him, Norris, and R. Wright. He was shot in the head and suffered brain damage for the rest of his life.⁸⁰ After proving herself as his mother, Josephine Powell questioned her son on his actions. His only response was “he done give up.” Olen Montgomery was born in Monroe, GA where he completed school up to the fifth grade; however, suffered from poor sight his entire life—being nearly blind in one eye. He was one of four Scottsboro Boys released in July 1937. Eugene Williams, one of Patterson’s companions, had all charges dropped against him due to his age in July 1937. In perhaps the worse physical condition prior to his arrest, Willie Roberson suffered from a serious case of syphilis. Due to his medical condition and physical capabilities, Roberson

⁷⁸ This includes their indictment on March 31st.

⁷⁹ Kinshasa and Norris, *The Man from Scottsboro*, 33.

⁸⁰ Goodman, *Stories of Scottsboro*, 260–61.

was also released in July 1937 with the prosecutors finally believing him. But that would come later.

April 6th began with the boys being transported from Gadsden to Scottsboro for the trials to begin. On the 6th, Clarence Norris and Charlie Weems are both tried, convicted, and sentenced to death. On that day, the ILD observer Lowell Wakefield estimated “some eight thousand” members of the crowd gathered for the trial.⁸¹ The trials start fell on the same day as the traditional Fair Day for Jackson County where farmers from the rural county gathered. In short order, the next Six Scottsboro boys are indicted, and only two weeks from being pulled from the train car in Paint Rock eight of the Scottsboro boys were convicted and sentenced to death with the youngest being declared a mistrial due to his youth and the hung jury on whether the death penalty should be used, with 7 in its favor. Within hours of the verdict being delivered, the Communist Party telegraphed Governor Benjamin Miller and Judge Hawkins denouncing the trial as a “legal lynching” and the ILD called for a new trial based on unfair representation on the all-white jury.⁸²

The Scottsboro trial became known as a moment when the Communist Party increased its efforts toward Black liberation in the South. By the time of the arrests and trial, James Allen had been publishing the *Southern Worker* for about eight months. He was an important position to educate readers about the trial, and also to frame it through his understanding that the threat of lynching should be a communist concern. Allen understood the Party to be perfectly situated to defend the Scottsboro Boys and make concrete the Party’s commitment to achieving Black liberation in the South. Allen claimed that “The Communists were the only force in the country

⁸¹ Allen, *Organizing in the Depression South*, 80.

⁸² Allen, 82.

willing and able to initiate a mass defense movement that would be powerful enough, when coupled with effective court action, to breach the fortress of racism.”⁸³ Alongside “Jim” and Lowell Wakefield, the Southern representative of ILD, the Communists were in Scottsboro for the hearing. They also monitored the National Guardsmen guarding the boys during the time they were imprisoned, awaiting trial. Allen recognized that Scottsboro had implications for the South that went beyond the fate of the nine teens. He thought that the NAACP and other liberal groups might be too moderate in their legal approach and their rhetoric about the case. But the Party could explain to readers that the Scottsboro case was a high-profile example of the all-too-common boss strategy to use the threat of lynching against the working class.⁸⁴

In the paper’s coverage of the trial, Allen and other journalists emphasized that the unfair treatment of the Black defendants illustrated another form of lynching—what the paper called a “legal lynching.” The paper called for the Black teens to have access to a jury that actually represented their peers rather than an all-white jury. This line of thought reappeared the *Southern Worker’s* issues from April through July. Particularly notable was the April 4th edition, wherein Helen Marcy, the pen name of Isabelle Auerbach, wrote a front-page story entitled, “SET TRIAL ON FAIR DAY TO ASSURE MOBS.”⁸⁵ Marcy, who was on the scene on March 31st for the hearing, reported that the courtroom was full of tension, where the “lynch-hungry mob” had already set the tone for the defendants. The indictment occurred without sufficient legal counsel. But Marcy framed this evidence through a class lens, writing that “Boss justice works quickly against the workers.” Marcy and the *Southern Worker* portrayed the crowd as whipped up in a racial frenzy resulting from an assault on white femininity. When explaining why the boys had

⁸³ Allen, 83.

⁸⁴ Allen, 88.

⁸⁵ Marcy, “Set Trial on Fair Day to Assure Mobs.”

not been lynched already, Marcy pointed to a lack of “merchant” leadership, implying that the money-making class instigated lynchings, and with few of them present that day, the boys had escaped being murdered. Noting that some white farmers had arrived at the courthouse, Marcy portrayed them as poor and starving, therefore vulnerable to “boss” pressure to lynch. “These farmers, most of them dressed in rags, with no coats, in overalls patched a thousand times,” she wrote, “with thin, emaciated faces” had been pressured by “the bosses and the bosses’ press to lynch equally starving and wretched Negro workers.” Marcy concluded by calling for “white workers and farmers of Scottsboro” to reject the logic of the bosses and to instead “get together with the Negroes and defend the nine youths.”⁸⁶

The *Southern Worker* also condemned the printing presses—the “boss press”—for its role in calling for the lynchings of the Scottsboro Boys. The communist newspaper lambasted the discourse around the Scottsboro boys as “boss-print” and argued that even the most “liberal” or “moderate” of newspapers in the South had promoted the bosses’ viewpoint. The term “boss-print” referred to the mainstream newspapers of the region and their ties to the boss class in terms of Marxist class dynamics. The *Southern Worker* broadly conceived of bosses as the owners of the factories, mills, farms, and mines that sought to oppress the working class through exploitation. The *Southern Worker* portrayed these bosses as direct enemies of workers everywhere and a tool of the bourgeoisie. Allen paid close attention to the mainstream coverage of the Scottsboro case. He told his readers to be deeply suspicious of reporting by the *Chattanooga Times*, *Atlanta Constitution*, and the *Birmingham News*, all of which implicitly or explicitly came out against the Scottsboro boys.⁸⁷ The “boss-print” label for newspapers in the

⁸⁶ Marcy.

⁸⁷ Allen, “Southern Worker, April 18, 1931,” 1; Allen, *Organizing in the Depression South*, 82. The *Chattanooga Times* reported: “Alabama is to be commended upon the dispatch with which this matter was disposed of.” The *Atlanta Constitution*: “The government and the people of Alabama deserve the praise of the whole country for the

South during this time reflected Allen's understanding of the influence that capitalists had over the way ordinary people learned about public affairs. But Allen believed that his paper, both prior to and during the Scottsboro trial, had more credibility than these major dailies because it gathered its news from Worker Correspondents, not bosses. With news from workers coming in weekly to the various PO boxes that the Allens and their comrades maintained, the *Southern Worker* offered an alternative that workers should trust more than boss print.

The paper also covered the important moment when the Scottsboro Boys had officially enlisted Communist lawyers as their legal defense. In the May 23rd, 1931, issue of the *Southern Worker*, an article ran titled "Parents See Boys in Kilby; Solid for ILD" in which the paper explained that the Scottsboro Boys and their parents would fully entrust the Communists and the ILD as the defense lawyers of their choosing.⁸⁸ This moment was particularly important because the NAACP had also expressed interest in representing the boys, and a rivalry had developed between the communists and the civil rights organization. The *Southern Worker* reported that many of the boys' parents and close relatives visited them in Kilby prison, their first reunion since the arrest. After the visit with family, Josephine Powell, the mother of Ozie Powel, received a letter from her son that Walter White, the secretary and future president of the NAACP, approached Ozie to ask that the NAACP handle the case over the ILD. The claim, contents of the letter, and Mrs. Powell's response were headlined in the *SW* and called "More Underhanded Tricks" as the CP and the NAACP fought over who would represent the Scottsboro Nine.

manner in which they handled the perpetrators of this repulsive outrage." The *Birmingham News*: "The ILD should know the trials were conducted in an orderly manner, that there was no mob violence, that all legal forms were strictly observed ... The activity of the International Labor Defense can be regarded only as meddling."

⁸⁸ "Southern Worker, May 23, 1931."

With claims that “Walter White is just a lie,” Josephine Powell’s defense of her son appeared to rest with the ILD in the summer of ’31, but the interference by the NAACP made it an enemy of some Communists. In addition to the letter sent to Ozie Powel, the paper claimed that the NAACP did not use the funds that workers donated towards the defense. Instead of the NAACP, the *SW* set up a PO Box for the Southern ILD Defense funds in Chattanooga. It is quite possible that Allen and his compatriots, who were living and publishing the *SW* from the city during 1931, tended to the box and its funds, but archival records are thin here.⁸⁹ Once again, the Third Period's anger against social fascism impacted how the Communists interacted with others on the case. Because the NAACP held many middle-class philanthropists and those who embraced capitalism, the Party saw the group’s actions as discrediting the Party and endangering the boys who needed a full-throated defense. Allen implied that the NAACP reflected “boss class” interests in that the group sought to undermine the ILD.

In addition to collecting funds to send to the boys, the *Southern Worker* advertised and helped organize the All-Southern Scottsboro Defense Conference held on May 31st, 1931.⁹⁰ The Party held the conference in the Masonic Hall and delegates from the Birmingham, Atlanta, and Chattanooga Communist Party groups attended, as did representatives from the Croppers Union of Alabama. Organizers also boasted that all the parents of the Scottsboro boys attended as an “expression of solidarity with the mass movement for the release of the boys led by the ILD and the LSNR[League of Struggle for Negro Rights].”⁹¹ The event was not without drama as while leaving the Masonic Hall, “Comrades Amis, editor of the *Liberator*, Harry Haywood, Negro

⁸⁹ Adding to talk about the controversy between the two groups and the defense of the Scottsboro boys. Hugh T. Murray, “The NAACP versus the Communist Party: The Scottsboro Rape Cases, 1931-1932,” *Phylon* (1960-) 28, no. 3 (1967): 276–87.

⁹⁰ “Boy’s Parents To Be At Scottsboro Conference.”

⁹¹ “Boy’s Parents To Be At Scottsboro Conference.”

TUUL organizer from New York City, Tom Johnson, District organizer of the Communist Party, Jack Carson, Charlotte District Organizer of the Communist Party, were searched and arrested” while outside the building. Police charged them with loitering, which the *Southern Worker* argued was an attempt to “intimidate and terrorize workers” who showed interest in the Scottsboro defense campaign.⁹²

Arrests aside, the conference that Allen’s *Southern Worker* held helped promote succeeded in bringing in 104 delegates from churches and organizations, white and Black attendees alike.⁹³ The conference was just one of several that the Party had helped to organize around the country, where ordinary workers arrived to meet one another, pool resources, and volunteer in campaigns on behalf of the Boys.⁹⁴ While gathering the very much needed money and volunteers, the Conference passed resolutions that established tasks each of the delegates should do once they returned home. These resolutions and the heightened organization of the conferences promoted smaller and more community-connected committees of defense when the delegates returned home.⁹⁵ In essence, the Communist Party created a nationwide network of small but dedicated worker organizations that became invested in the fate of the Scottsboro boys. As conference attendees learned about the situation in Alabama, they made sense of the Scottsboro case with the Party’s framing. The *Southern Worker* presented lynching as a boss tool and Black southerners as an exploited nation within a nation. James Allen had played a critical role refining the Party’s understanding of the “Negro Question”, which in 1931 became central to its explanation of the Scottsboro case.

⁹² “Charge Leaders with ‘Loitering;’ Fined.”

⁹³ “7 Southern States 14 Cities Represented.”

⁹⁴ The New York Scottsboro Defense Conference recorded 247 delegates.

⁹⁵ “Pledge Fight for Scottsboro Boys.”

Allen left the South in 1931, moving to a position in New York City, but he traveled back for the Decatur retrial for the Scottsboro boys in April of 1933. During this time, he observed the various attitudes being offered against the defendants and how public opinion was held against them. In his autobiography, Allen remarks on the common passers who walked and were in Decatur and Morgan County. Moving freely and engaging townsfolk, Allen encountered outright racists and anti-Black sentiments while also being engaged with the racialized Old South system that aimed to keep Black and whites separate and in their respective social stations. Against this idea of Black inferiority was the respectability that racial segregation instilled in the South. As some of the pro-Scottsboro Boys agitators called for Black Jurors on the bench, a shopkeeper in Decatur espoused the popular idea that “No nice, respectable, decent n_____ would want to get on a jury.”⁹⁶ Jim Crow segregation kept Black and white folks separate physically and socially, with Black people unable to be inequitable and impactful political and legal stations as it just is not the “South’s way.” In the wake of all the work he’d done on the “Negro Question” through the CPUSA, the white racism he heard during this visit might have left Allen deflated for how little white southern workers’ class consciousness seemed to have changed. Though perhaps he felt energized to continue the work that remained to be done. In any case, the experience stuck with him such that he wrote about it in his memoir.

Allen attempted to understand the racial ideology that permeated the South in terms of class and understood that some of the southerners whom he spoke with saw it as an ingrained law of the South, a system in which there could be no deviation. In talking to an “educated middle-class Southerner” Allen got the response of the Southerner being “born and raised in the

⁹⁶ Allen, *Organizing in the Depression South*, 98.

South? Is it necessary for me to say anything else?”⁹⁷ In the US South, the idea of racial segregation permeated every facet of social and public life. White southerners often used violence against Black people who violated the social or economic norms of the Jim Crow South.⁹⁸ Allen wrote to his parents about his distaste for the South and its regimented social system. If Allen was repulsed by the South on the atmosphere he experienced first coming South, the events of the Scottsboro trial gave him the opportunity to reach a larger audience with the tangible, communist solution to the “Negro Question.”

“In the larger perspective, it must now be recognized, the Scottsboro mass defense marked the beginning of important changes in the South. It was the first major civil rights crusade since Reconstruction. The movement thus inaugurated, and continuing into the forties and fifties, burst out in the tumultuous civil rights struggles of the sixties that won notable victories.”⁹⁹

The Communist Party, including Allen and other operatives in the South, saw the Scottsboro case as an opportunity to fulfill the global commitment to oppressed nations as expressed in the 1920s Comintern directives. Allen’s publications and journalistic writings on the trial helped bring to light the commitment the Communists needed to have to be a capable ally in this time. While working to make inroads into the Black community, the communist directives were for the advancement of measurable and actionable goals to overcome the racial problems of the capitalist system of the South. With every supportive action, the communists were hoping to foment distrust of the economic system that many workers were already dissatisfied with. This activism around the Scottsboro case in turn helped reinforce the fact that

⁹⁷ Allen, 98.

⁹⁸ Stephen A. Berrey, *The Jim Crow Routine: Everyday Performances of Race, Civil Rights, and Segregation in Mississippi*, electronic resource (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2015).

⁹⁹ Allen, *Organizing in the Depression South*, 125.

the communist organizers who came South did not bus in radicals with them but helped radicalize people who were already living in material conditions ripe for further action.

Allen's use as the editor of the *Southern Worker* and the party's leading theoretician on the "Negro Question" and Black history came into higher focus with the Decatur trial in 1933. In this pamphlet published by the Party, Allen called the Scottsboro re-trial as a farce and perversion of justice. In a pamphlet called *Smash the Scottsboro Lynch*, Allen wrote that the Communist Party and the mobilization efforts behind it had been successful in keeping the boys away from a lynch mob and connected to their supporters among the working class, and would continue to be so long as the support for the boys' freedom does not dry out.¹⁰⁰ Allen explained the verdict by pointing to the racism of government leaders, Judge Horton, and the Alabama court system, framing the outcome as further efforts by the boss class to divide the Black and white working class. The political pamphlet cited the *Southern Worker* as the reason the legal lynching was delayed. Allen linked the actions of the Communist Party to the continued struggle for Black liberation, national self-determination, and equal rights for the Black population of the United States and the bourbon South. The actions of the Communist Party helped organize the mass demonstrators who pressured the judges and Alabama Supreme Court, who gained a sense of power from being organized, even as they did not win the boys' freedom.

Part description of the events and part propaganda piece, the *Smash the Scottsboro Lynch* pamphlet highlighted the perspective the Communist Party wished to foster among workers in the South. Not only did the pamphlet question the trial's outcome and the meaning of "southern justice," but it also elevated the struggle of the Scottsboro Boys as a primary example of why the Party needed to make inroads into the South. To Allen, the mass movement represented by the

¹⁰⁰ Allen, "Smash the Scottsboro Lynch Verdict!"

Scottsboro defense campaign and its affiliated conferences laid the groundwork needed to destroy the social hierarchy that kept the Black population under the white. Allen pointed to the ILD's lawyer's actions in the trial to espouse how the Communist Party viewed the equality of the Black population. During the trial, the ILD attorney S. Liebowitz's demanded that the Attorney General call the Black teens "Mister," an honorific that whites seldom used when talking to Black men.¹⁰¹ Allen saw this gesture as representative of broader changes the Party sought in the South, which would lead to the "rising power of the Negro masses" who would help forge a worker revolution.

Some historians and contemporaries have labeled the Communist Party's influence in the Scottsboro trial, in which James Allen was so invested, as a political stunt and just as currying favor amongst the Black population. Walter White, the eventual president of the NAACP, claimed the "communist strategy in the Scottsboro case was to create martyrs of innocent Negro boys."¹⁰² Despite both the ILD and the NAACP claiming representation of the Scottsboro Boys, the families and the boys themselves sided with the ILD. One of the teens, Clarence Norris, said that while he didn't know the political differences between the two organizations, he accepted the ILD because "they were there for us when we needed them." Norris agreed, later writing that "without that communist organization trying to save our lives, we would have went to the chair on the 10th of July 1931."¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ Allen, 11.

¹⁰² White, *How Far the Promised Land?*, 215.

¹⁰³ Kinshasa and Norris, *The Man from Scottsboro*, 50.

Conclusion

As opportunistic the Scottsboro might have been for the Communist Party, the work done on behalf of the boys through James Allen, the *Southern Worker*, and the International Labor Defense kept them all from the electric chair and the death sentence. However, it does not mean that the mass mobilization was able to get justice for the boys rapidly. None of the boys were directly exonerated and the charges of rape were only dropped against Olen Montgomery, Willie Roberson, Eugene Williams, and Roy Wright on July 24th, 1937. The four had spent over six years on death row. Each of them was released first and found some measure of work prior to settling throughout the country. Haywood Patterson was sentenced to 75 years in prison for rape. Patterson would eventually escape in 1949. His freedom was short-lived and after a manslaughter conviction in 1951, he was sentenced to prison and died of cancer by 1952. Clarence Norris was convicted of rape and sexual assault and then sentenced to death. His sentence was commuted by Governor Bibb Graves in 1938 to life in prison and then given parole in 1946. Andrew Wright was convicted of rape and sentenced to 99 years. He was paroled in the State of New York in 1950 and was rumored to have returned home to his mother Ada Wright in Chattanooga. Roy Wright went on a lecture tour with the Scottsboro Defense Committee and pursued a career in the US Army and Merchant Marines before a murder-suicide taking his and his wife's life in 1959. Charlie Weems was convicted of rape and sentenced to 105 years but was paroled in 1943 and would die of tuberculosis, exacerbated by his imprisonment, shortly after his release. Ozzie Powell, due to his attack on the deputy, plead guilty to assaulting a deputy and his

plea bargain set him to 20 years in prison with the rape charges dropped. Paroled in 1946, Powell went on to die in Atlanta in 1974.

In the wake of the Scottsboro case, the *Southern Worker* also played an important role explaining the ILD to readers and helping to raise funds for it. The paper portrayed the legal advocacy organization as a vehicle for defending Black Americans in the South. While circumstantial and uninvolved with the Scottsboro trial, the International Labor Defense had been heavily involved with the trials and charges against communist agitators in the South. In one edition of the *Southern Worker*, for example, the paper offered updates on the trial of three Chattanooga worker leaders' is broadcasted on the front page.¹⁰⁴ The ILD was already in the South and Allen served as a connection to wire the ILD as he might have done for any other organizers in the South. The importance of Allen was that as the editor of the *Southern Worker*, he was in close contact with the revolutionary workers of the South and the CP leadership in New York.¹⁰⁵ As the mouthpiece of the works and the Party in the South, Allen's editorial position put him as the first to know and a channel in relaying information to others.

While Allen only edited the *Southern Worker* for two years, his time there deeply shaped his thinking on the "Negro Question." This experience would inform his future writing on the subject and, by extension, the discourse in the Party around how to achieve Black liberation in the United States. Key works that Allen published outside of his editing for the *Southern Worker* were several pamphlets and books that came out later in the 1930s. *The Negro Question in the United States*, published in 1937, consisted of a communist perspective of the prior seventy years of social and economic development of the southern United States, focused on the Black Belt

¹⁰⁴ "Chattanooga Trial Set March 31."

¹⁰⁵ Allen, *Organizing in the Depression South*, 72–78.

region. Allen utilized information collected while working in the South in 1930-33 as well as census records and commerce records of plantations and factories. Importantly, his book gave credit to Helen Marcy (an alias of his wife, Isabelle Allen) for helping to compile the data.¹⁰⁶

In the years after his time at the *Southern Worker*, Allen's work on the "Negro Question" received attention from American pundits and journalists. Some celebrated it, while others criticized the framing of Black Americans as a subjugated nation within a nation. Malcolm Crowley from the *New Republic*, for example, reviewed Allen's *The Negro Question alongside* Dr. B. Schrieke's *Alien Americans: A Study of Race Relations*, both of which concerned the "Negro Question."¹⁰⁷ Crowley's reviewed Allen's work rather favorably for its use of quantitative data on the Black Belt. However, Crowley rejected Allen's idea to create a Black Belt Republic within a future Communist States of America. His main objections were rooted in both demographics and ideology. Allen's inclusion of Middle-Mississippi uplands which separate the two main regions of the Black Belt seemed off to Crowley. "The simple fact is that Mr. Allen's Black Belt does not correspond to any area revealed by the Census Bureau reports," he wrote.¹⁰⁸ Additionally, Crowley lambasted Allen's use of the revolutionary language and claimed that the slogan, "require[d] too much explanation to rouse the enthusiasm of Negroes..." Crowley concluded his review by claiming that the Race question had morphed into a class one, writing, "The race problem in the South is slowly being transformed into a class problem; the white and the Black tenants are beginning to stand together." Despite Crowley's criticisms of Allen's book, the fact that he took the argument seriously and introduced it to the readers of the

¹⁰⁶ Allen, *The Negro Question in the United States*, 12.

¹⁰⁷ Crowley, "Two Books About the Negro."

¹⁰⁸ Crowley. Crowley is not the only review that pointed out the lack of consistency in the Black Belt geographic area. See also Lasker, "Black Belt Economy."

New Republic suggests that after his time at the *Southern Worker*, Allen's ideas about the "Negro Question" reached a much broader audience than the communist readers of his paper in the early 1930s. And at least some member of the political elite took his work seriously.

Allen's devotion and effort in the South gave him recognition and credibility in the Communist Party as a historian and theoretician. He eventually became the head of International Publishers, the official publishing firm of the Communist Party. As the head of International Publishers, Allen continued with his desire to make readily available Marxist canon attainable for any potential reads with a series of "New World Paperbacks." His continued writings and activism within the Party remained tinged by his time in the South, where he helped the Communists show it was possible to "challenge from within the peculiar Southern system with its heritage from slavery." Most importantly, Allen reinforces the fact that the South needed both Black and white workers combined to make changes and combat the mantle of white supremacy and capitalism in the South. Allen's message of cooperation and consistent calls for unity were headed for a time, yet the pressures of the pre-War period separated the radicalness that dared to embrace Black Liberation fully. Allen continued to write throughout the twentieth century and still argued for the full liberation of African Americans, however, the radical Black Belt Republic begins to be brought up less, the Nation within a nation is not as important as unity and economic concessions and cohesiveness. In the end, Allen called for "White and Colored Workers, Unite!"

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