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## RACIAL POLITICS IN DALLAS IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

*By Theodore M. Lawe*

At the end of the twentieth century, Dallas was viewed as a progressive city that had made a complete departure from its once rigidly segregated past. The most visible indicator was the election of an African American mayor, Ron Kirk, who claimed victory over an influential white opponent. During Mayor Kirk's two-term administration, he was credited with successful bond elections to build the American Airlines Center, and successfully organized voters and city business leaders in a project to approve the initial planning and construction of the Trinity River Project, a key component for future growth in the city. Several prior attempts to get this project supported had been defeated, which proved Kirk's ability to bridge former divides within the city's structure.

In addition to Kirk's election, at the closing of the twentieth century, four African Americans and three Latinos sat on the fifteen-member Dallas City Council. The nine-member local board of education included three elected African Americans and three Latinos, and the five-person Dallas County Commissioners Court had an elected African American commissioner on that body for over twenty years. The county treasurer, elected at large, was an African American female. Five African Americans served in the state legislature at the end of the century from Dallas County, including one state senator. African Americans were also elected judges in Dallas County District Courts, justices of the peace, and constables, along with appointed judges in Municipal Courts and the first African American from Dallas was in the United States Congress.<sup>1</sup> African Americans were finally well represented in the local city administration, legislative bodies, the judiciary, county commissioners court, and the board of education. Dallas was an African American political success story; political pluralism had seemingly arrived.

Such political accomplishments were the results of population growth in the African American community and the community's development of sophisticated political skills, which resulted from direct community intervention tactics, federal legislation, Supreme Court decisions, over 100 years of community struggles and demands, and other external influences. But more specifically, African American accomplishments came at a high cost from a long and painful history – they were active actors in their own success, not passive observers depending on external forces. According to the Dallas Black Chamber of Commerce (formerly the Dallas Negro Chamber of Commerce), this success came “from long, patient hours of planning and negotiating by dedicated persons associated with the Black Chamber.”<sup>2</sup>

To understand the significance of these accomplishments requires an understanding of the incremental changes in the African American Community that were socially, economically, and politically driven. These changes extended for a hundred years and involved thousands of people and

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the creation of many committees and organizations.

A look back shows that the early part of the twentieth century found African Americans in Dallas County struggling to survive. Most worked in menial jobs such as maids, busboys, waiters, porters, and in agriculture. The best job available to African Americans was a Pullman porter that required constant travel but at least provided a clean uniform.<sup>3</sup> To help alleviate the lack of economic opportunity, the community organized several self-help groups to promote social and economic progress. The largest African American owned business, organized in 1901, was the New Century Cotton Mill Company, which survived until around 1908. Investors in both Dallas and New England raised \$400,000 to finance New Century. Its owner was J.E. Wiley, a transplant from Chicago and the second African American lawyer to organize a practice in Dallas.

African Americans, out of necessity and institutional segregation, also organized their own cultural pursuits. The major annual recreational affair was the Colored Fair and Tri-Centennial Exposition, which began in 1901. Annual Emancipation Day celebrations drew large crowds. The Dallas Black Giants were active in the Texas Colored Baseball League. *The Dallas Express*, a newspaper founded in 1892 by Mississippian W.E. King, was the recorder and voice for the African American community.<sup>4</sup> *The Southwestern Baptist Newspaper* published by Reverend E.W. D. Isaac, the Senior Pastor at New Hope Baptist Church, was the primary religious organ for Dallas' African American community.

From 1900 to 1910, the African American population in Dallas increased from 13,646 to 20,828 – over a fifty percent increase. During this period, several African American professionals moved to Dallas, led by Dr. Benjamin R. Bluitt, who built the city's first "Negro-owned" and operated sanitarium. William M. Sanford and Sandy Jones operated the Black Elephant varieties theater. Dock Rowen founded a successful insurance company, grocery store, and money-lending business. Dr. M. C. Cooper became Dallas' first African American dentist. In 1905, Ollie Bryan became Dallas' first African American woman to practice dentistry. The presence of such prominent professionals was a boon for the community since they provided leadership and served as role models for uplift and economic advancement.

In 1916, the Knights of Pythias built the first commercial building in Dallas for African Americans, designed by architect William Sidney Pittman, the son-in-law of Booker T. Washington. The building, located at 2551 Elm Street, provided office space for doctors, dentists, lawyers, and other professionals. It was designated as a City of Dallas Landmark in the 1980s.

Dallas' African Americans did not passively accept Texas' southern system of institutional segregation. In 1911, J.A. Gilmore refused to give up his seat in the "white-only" section of a streetcar and was ousted from the train by the conductor. The Court of Civil Appeals later ruled that the conductor was lawful in enforcing the "Jim Crow" law, but he used undue force. Gilmore was thus awarded \$100.<sup>5</sup>

In 1918, a group of socially sensitive men organized the Cotillion Idlewild Club for the purpose of providing social recognition and presenting young ladies to society. Because of the uniqueness of the club, *LIFE* magazine sent a photographer to Dallas to attend the annual affair. A favorable article appeared in a subsequent issue of the magazine.

The third decade of the twentieth century saw several events that demonstrated growth and maturity on the part of African Americans in Dallas. In 1921, St. James A.M.E. Temple opened a new state-of-the-art church designed by architect William Sidney Pitts. In the same year, Thad Else opened the first hotel in Freeman's Town, an establishment designed and built by African Americans that provided a vital place for a community subject to Jim Crow segregation. In 1928, the African American community raised \$50,000 to help fund the proposed \$175,000 community based Y.M.C.A. The first two African American Boy Scout troops were organized at El Bethel Church in Oak Cliff and St. Paul A.M.E. Church in North Dallas. In 1934, Father Max Murphy, a graduate of St. Peter's School in Dallas, became the first African American priest to perform a mass in the Dallas diocese.<sup>6</sup>

From a political perspective African Americans more actively participated in the political processes after the 1950s when African Americans in Dallas were no longer willing to ask for a change and wait patiently to see what happened, but to organize for change for themselves.

Until the 1960s, social inequality was mandated by Jim Crow etiquette. Historically, the African American church provided a venue for self-expression and served as an erected shelter against a hostile white community. The political and social issues in Dallas involved both whites and African Americans on the issues of housing, jobs, law enforcement, enfranchisement, and public accommodations. Indeed, no area of life for African Americans in Dallas was exempt from racial discord.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Dallas was a violent place for African Americans. According to W. Marvin Dulaney, a Dallas historian, in March 1910, Allen Brooks an elderly black man, was accused of abusing a white child. After his arrest (but before he could receive a trial), he was taken from the jail by a mob of approximately 5,000 people and lynched. He was later dragged through the streets of downtown Dallas and pieces of his clothing and parts of his mangled body were handed out as souvenirs. A second case came in 1921 when members of the Dallas Ku Klux Klan kidnapped Alexander Johnson, a bellhop at a local downtown hotel, whose only "crime" was to have supposedly bragged about having sex with white female hotel guests. For such an offense, he was branded with the KKK symbol and killed. In both cases, no one was ever prosecuted. Rumors swirled that Dallas police officers that were KKK members took part in both incidents.<sup>7</sup> The two episodes were emblematic of how violent life was for African Americans in Dallas at the beginning of the twentieth century as well as how racially charged the political environment was. Too often, such lynchings and violence had the intended effect of intimidating African Americans. Approximately 340

African Americans were lynched in Texas from 1885 to 1942. Northeast Texas was one of the most lawless and lynching-prone areas in the state.<sup>8</sup>

Dallas' history is well documented with examples of segregationist and apartheid measures that denied African Americans their constitutional rights. For example early local ordinances barred African Americans access to housing, law enforcement, voting, public facilities, health care, and employment. The Texas Poll Tax passed in 1902 and the Democratic White Primary Law passed in 1903 were major instruments used to disenfranchise African Americans in Dallas and throughout the state of Texas. In 1907, the Dallas City Council revised its Charter to codify rigid segregation of all races in all aspects of city life: public schools, housing, amusements, and churches. The City of Dallas further restricted where African Americans could live by adopting additional Charter amendments in 1916. In the 1930s, the Dallas City Charter was amended to require all candidates for city government offices to run at-large and on a non-partisan basis, which effectively prevented African Americans from holding public offices. Reverend Alexander Stephens Jackson and Attorney Ammon S. Wells voiced African Americans protests to these circumstances through local Republican politics in Dallas County, but given that Texas was a one-party state dominated by Democrats, such actions had very little effect.<sup>9</sup>

During the war years and the out migration of African Americans from the South, African Americans in Dallas, as throughout the South, started to increase their demands for full citizenship by organizing civic and protest groups, community based organizations, and social clubs. In 1918, African Americans formed a Dallas chapter of the NAACP under the leadership of George F. Porter, a schoolteacher, and attorney Ammon S. Wells. Porter was one of the first teachers in Dallas to protest the unequal pay for African American teachers employed in the same job as white teachers. During this time, the KKK-dominated police department intimidated the NAACP by requiring that they have oversight at NAACP meetings.<sup>10</sup> The Dallas Negro Chamber of Commerce (an offspring of the Negro Business League) was formed in 1926 to promote minority owned businesses and to generally improve African Americans' living conditions. The Chamber later hired A. Maceo Smith, a graduate of Fisk and New York Universities, as its Executive Secretary. In addition to re-organizing the Negro Chamber of Commerce in 1933, he became the publisher of the *Dallas Express Newspaper* in 1935. The African American Museum at Fair Park celebrates his contributions to the community with an annual community service awards brunch held in his honor.<sup>11</sup>

In 1935, Ammon S. Wells unsuccessfully ran for state representative for the seat vacated by Sarah T. Hughes, who resigned to become a Dallas County District Judge. In a field of sixty candidates, Wells received 1,001 votes, an impressive showing considering the winner polled 1,844 votes. Well's candidacy signaled to the African American leadership that they could have success in electing their own in Dallas with more attention given to voter registration and voter turnout.<sup>12</sup>

In 1936, a cross-section of the African American community organized

the Progressive Voters League under the leadership of the Reverend Maynard Jackson and A. Maceo Smith with the charge to represent the community's interests and recommend candidates for political support. In 1937, the League's agenda centered on hiring African American police officers, low-cost public housing, additional public schools, and municipal job opportunities. Under the direction of the League, the African American community cast deciding votes in the city council election of 1937. Such a show of political strength encouraged the city council to vote to integrate the Dallas Police Department and to encourage building a second African American high school to supplement the existing Booker T. Washington High – Lincoln High School. The City of Dallas Park Board also released plans for a new recreation center in the African American community and, in 1941, construction began on the first housing project in Dallas for African Americans – Roseland Homes.<sup>13</sup> According to Dallas Historical Society's "Portrait of an Educator," Principal John Leslie Patton encouraged the teaching of racial pride through innovative approaches to African American history as early as the 1930s. J. Mason Brewer, a noted African American folklorist, was a part of the school's faculty at the time.

Also, in 1936, the African American community, through the Negro Chamber of Commerce, secured \$100,000 in federal funds to build "The Hall of Negro Life" at the Centennial State Fair. Raising the funds proved difficult. A. Maceo Smith, originator of the idea, was initially turned down for funding by a joint state legislative committee and the City of Dallas. Through the help of John Nance Garner, vice president of the United States, funds were eventually obtained. The money arrived just three months before the exposition opened and on June 19, 1936, The Hall of Negro Life opened in Fair Park. Over 400,000 people visited the exhibit, with an estimated sixty percent being white. Harlem Renaissance painter, Aaron Douglas, painted four large murals in the main lobby; one of the murals is currently in the Corcoran Museum in Washington, D.C. and the Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco owns another. The famous Cab Calloway and his Cotton Club Orchestra, along with the Duke Ellington Orchestra, performed at the celebration. The building was immediately demolished after the Fair; perhaps signifying the white establishment's indifference to African American racial pride, it was the only exhibit hall not a part of the Pan American Celebration a year later in 1937. Sixty years later, the site received its proper reverence when it became the home of the African American Museum at Fair Park, the largest of its kind in the Southwest with 25,000 square feet of exhibit space.<sup>14</sup>

During the 1930s, African Americans symbolically elected a "bronze mayor" to represent their interests. Dr. Edgar E. Ward and A.A. Braswell held this position in the late 1930s.<sup>15</sup> Because no public hotels were available to African Americans, many special guests stayed in the homes of the "bronze mayors."

In 1945, Maynard H. Jackson, one of the leaders in the Progressive Voters League, became the first African American to run for the Dallas School Board, and although he was unsuccessful, its symbolic importance cannot be understated. In 1959, Attorney C.B. Bunkley, another African American, ran for the

School Board; he also was overwhelmingly defeated by Nevelle E. McKinney – 34,330 to 13,411 votes.<sup>16</sup> By the 1940's, the African American leadership in Dallas realized that real progress would only come from making progressive plans. They set three priorities: to organize campaigns to overturn the Democratic White Primary; to equalize salaries of African American teachers; and to integrate the University of Texas Law School. In 1942, African Americans in Dallas organized the Dallas Council of Negro Organizations. This group retained Attorney W.J. Durham to represent Thelma Paige and to file a lawsuit, *Page v Board of Education, City of Dallas*. In 1943, African American educators finally received a victory when the court held that the Dallas Independent School District had to equalize teachers' pay. This was the first action of its kind in the state of Texas and it forced other Texas cities to follow suit.

Public school access was important, but movements needed leaders and leaders were trained within the world of higher education. African Americans in Texas were banned on the basis of race from most of the state-supported institutions; Prairie View Normal Institute (now Prairie View A & M) was the only state funded school for African Americans, although African Texans did have access to a number of all-black private colleges, including Wiley College in Marshall. But there were no professional or graduate schools or programs for African Americans, which greatly hindered economic and social advancement for the state's minority citizens.

The issue of lack of educational equality due to the "separate but equal" clause was not limited to African Texans – it affected African Americans throughout the nation. In fact, the NAACP had endeavored to overturn this egregious injustice for years. Led by its brilliant legal counsel, Thurgood Marshall, Texas presented the national organization with an opportunity. Heman M. Sweatt, a graduate of Wiley College, applied for admission to the University of Texas Law School in 1946. Although he was qualified in every area, the university rejected his application solely on the basis of race. Sweatt, supported by the NAACP and with Marshall as lead attorney, filed suit and challenged the rejection. The suit was first argued in state court and the trial judge immediately recognized the potential of the case to overturn "separate but equal." Marshall argued that the state was required to admit Sweatt since Texas had no "black" law school and thus did not satisfy "separate but equal."<sup>17</sup>

The presiding judge delayed the case and Texas' officials scrambled to find a solution. State elected officials decided that the only way out of their dilemma was to fund and open a separate school and in February 1947 a temporary law school, The School of Law of the Texas State University for Negroes, opened in Austin. Satisfied with the Texas' response, the state court subsequently rejected Sweatt's suit.<sup>18</sup>

Marshall appealed the decision and in 1950 the United States Supreme Court held that the University of Texas had to admit Sweatt to its law school, ruling that the temporary law school was not an equal facility. The court ruled very narrowly and the decision did not overturn the "separate but equal" clause, but most observers recognized that the end was near for basis of south-

ern institutional segregation. Sweatt enrolled at the law school for the 1950-1951 academic year, along with a few other African Americans. Marshall would use the *Sweatt* decision as a foundation for his monumental argument in the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education, Topeka* decision in 1954.<sup>19</sup>

During the 1940s another milestone in Dallas took place when the first African American, John King, was allowed to serve on a Dallas jury. African Americans had been barred from serving on juries for over fifty years. Political progress also began to pay bigger dividends in the 1940s when an African American became a precinct chair in the Democratic Party and participated in the Democratic County Convention for the first time. During this time, the Dallas City Council also authorized the hiring of fourteen African American police officers with limited authority to patrol the streets in African American communities. The first two officers hired were Lee Gilbert Bilal and Benjamin Thomas, the first hired in Dallas in over fifty years.<sup>20</sup> The city council also authorized the building of several segregated public housing projects in West Dallas for African Americans and a middle-class housing subdivision to maintain racial residential segregation in an area that became known as Hamilton Park, named for Dr. R.T. Hamilton, an influential African American physician. Donald Payton, a Dallas historian, remembers the Hamilton Park community in which he was raised to be one of pride and influence.<sup>21</sup>

In the decade of the 1950s, the African American community was under constant threat of bombings that started as early as 1941 with the bombings of eighteen houses bought by African Americans in then "all white" South Dallas.<sup>22</sup> The Reverend Donald Parish of True Lee Baptist Church vividly remembers his father, who was a member of the special grand jury that investigated the bombings, grabbing shotguns and gathering his entire family on the front porch every time there was a rumor of bombings. Marilyn Mask, a retired school administrator, revealed to a reporter of the *Dallas Morning News* how her employer tried to coerce her into moving from the then all-white Park Row/South Dallas area.<sup>23</sup> The Texas Rangers and the Dallas Police Department investigated the bombing incidents and although they made several arrests, only one man was ever tried and he was found not guilty. Two of the men arrested said that they had been paid by white community organizations to toss bombs at African American homes. The local white religious community was also implicated. Although African Americans had taken the initiative to improve their political, social, and economic conditions prior to the decade of the 1950s, it took the U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education in 1954* to give more muscle and direction to these grassroots efforts. After the *Brown* decision, the political game changed. Racial politics became more confrontational.

Dallas hosted the NAACP National Convention in 1954, and 7,500 conventioners celebrated the *Brown* victory. Nobel Laureate Ralph Bunche gave the closing address and he forcefully called for full rights for African Americans. During the convention, St. Paul Hospital announced that it was for the first time allowing five African American doctors permission to serve patients at its hospital.<sup>24</sup>



In 1955, in an attempt to implement *Brown v Board of Education*, twenty-eight African American students attempted to integrate all-white schools, but Dallas' school authorities denied them entry.<sup>25</sup> The White establishment continually challenged desegregation within the city. The Reverend C.W. Criswell, the most powerful minister in Dallas and the pastor of the largest Baptist church in America, spoke as a demagogue against school desegregation in 1955.<sup>26</sup> His position was balanced by speeches from Rabbi Levi Olan of the Temple Emanuel, who confronted Dallas and his congregation on the moral demands to end poverty and improve education. Olan was a member of the delegation that greeted Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. at Love Field in 1963, when he came to speak at a voter registration drive.<sup>27</sup> White city officials successfully dodged segregation for the remainder of the 1950s and through the 1960s. It was not until Sam Tasby, a taxi driver and father of six children, filed a federal lawsuit in 1970 did the school district earnestly begin to desegregate in 1971, under a federal court order with busing as the chosen mechanism. The school district would remain under court order for more than thirty years.

In retaliation for the NAACP's school desegregation suits, in 1956 the attorney general for the State of Texas, John Ben Shepherd (with the acquiescence of Governor Allan Shivers), organized a campaign to outlaw the NAACP and to intimidate its leaders. As in other parts of the state, the Dallas NAACP's records were confiscated, which crippled the effectiveness of the organization. A. Maceo Smith, a local leader who worked for the Federal Housing Authority, was thus forced to resign as state executive secretary of the NAACP and to terminate ties with the local chapter. The NAACP did not come back to its original strength for several years until Minnie Flanagan became president in 1959 and linked the civil rights organization to the local sit-ins movement.<sup>28</sup>

In 1960, the Dallas School Board held an "integration referendum." Dallas' voters rejected integration by a four-to-one margin. The Dallas School Board adopted a plan in 1961 to desegregate the district one grade a year, starting with the first grade in the 1961-1962 school year. Dallas' defiance of the Brown Decision was consistent with other approaches in Texas and throughout the South.<sup>29</sup>

Also, during this time, the State Fair of Texas was under attack from the African American community for only allowing African American entrance to the fair during "Negro Achievement Day." In an attempt to segregate the Fair, in the 1930s fair officials set aside the day as the lone day African Americans could attend the State Fair. After many years of protests, in 1953, African Americans were allowed to attend the full run of the State Fair of Texas with the exception of certain rides and restaurants. Dating back to 1901, African Americans had organized and promoted their own "colored fair." In a *Dallas Morning News* article, Bessie Slider Moody details her involvement at age sixteen with the NAACP Youth Council and their efforts to desegregate the State Fair of Texas and the Dallas Public Library.<sup>30</sup>

On the suggestion of Roy Wilkins, the National Executive Secretary of

the NAACP, the Dallas community formed the Committee of 14 (later called the Bi-racial Committee) in 1960 to negotiate and “manage desegregation” in Dallas. The Dallas Citizens Council appointed the seven whites; the African Americans came from the Negro Chamber of Commerce and the NAACP. At the first meeting, A. Maceo Smith (an African American) charged the committee with six objectives:<sup>31</sup>

1. provide integrated food services;
2. provide integrated public accommodations;
3. provide equal employment opportunities for Negroes at City Hall
4. removal of racial designation signs from all public places;
5. provide integrated seating accommodations at sporting events and at other public places; and
6. open accommodations in hotels and motels.

The Committee of 14 was challenged in its approach to “managed desegregation” from various sectors of the African American community that believed in more direct action. Among those who supported sit-ins and more direct action were such leaders as Reverend T.D.R. Thompson, Reverend Aston Jones, Reverend Rhett James, Reverend Earl E. Allen, Dr. Dudley Powell, and such organizations as the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and the Dallas Coordinating Committee on Civil Rights (composed of the NAACP and SNCC). The biggest public demonstration occurred in March of 1965 when an estimated 3,000 people marched and rallied in downtown Dallas. Evidence shows that Black Dallas was divided on strategy for achieving racial integration, but united behind the objective of integration.<sup>32</sup>

Two prominent African American ministers who affiliated with the Committee of 14 harshly criticized those who advocated direct action and called for a “moratorium on picketing” in Dallas. The Reverend E.C. Estelle of the St. John Baptist Church said that “direct action had diminishing returns and public opinion had turned against civil rights demonstrations.” The Reverend B. L. McCormick stated, “There was no need for a city ordinance prohibiting discrimination because none existed.”<sup>33</sup> It should be noted that Reverend E. C. Estelle was a strong supporter of the Reverend J. H. Jackson, the leader of the National Baptist Convention USA, Inc., who was opposed to the strategy of Martin Luther King, Jr. and promoted “gradualism” to desegregation and knocking down the doors of Jim Crow.

In 1964, African Americans began to receive appointments to civic boards and commissions. Dr. William Flowers was appointed to the Advisory Health Board and John H. Glenn and the Reverend Caesar Clark to the City Planning Commission. Conditions changed drastically when the United States Supreme Court declared the Texas Poll Tax unconstitutional in 1966. Soon after, Attorney Joseph Lockridge was elected the first African American to the Texas legislature from Dallas. The Reverend Zan Holmes later succeeded Lockridge and he remembers being told by the rest of the Dallas delegation never to vote in favor of single-member districts. Holmes disobeyed, and was cursed and called a “nigger” on the floor of the house by the chairman of the Dallas del-

egation.<sup>34</sup> In 1966, Attorney L.A. Bedford, who had earlier run for the state legislature, was appointed the first African American judge in the Municipal Courts. Judge Bedford remembers those days as being exciting times. He said that he always strived to be a "hard-working judge and fair in my rulings."<sup>35</sup>

A chapter of the National Urban League was organized in Dallas in 1967, with the goal of helping African Americans identify employment opportunities. Also in 1967, Dr. Emmett Conrad was elected the first African American school board member. Latino Trini Garza, was appointed as well. Dr. Conrad's election to the Dallas School Board was in a citywide election and he gained white as well as African American votes. When he was elected in 1967, the school district had failed to follow through on the federal court order to integrate its junior high schools by 1965 and its senior high schools by 1967. Dr. Conrad won his seat on the school board with the support of the League for Educational Advancement. He succeeded in beating the Citizens for Good Schools' candidate, Albert Roberson, by 4,000 votes, even though the Citizens for Good Schools had won every seat on the school board since its inception in 1950. After serving on the school board from 1967 until 1977, Dr. Conrad eventually served on the Ross Perot Committee studying education in Texas and later served on the Texas State Board of Education.

The following year, C.A. Galloway became the first African American to serve an unexpired term on the Dallas City Council when he was appointed to the position. More concrete political progress came in 1968 when George Allen, a former member of the City Planning Commission, was elected to the Dallas City Council in a citywide election with white community support. Lucy Patterson, a social worker and granddaughter of pioneer school principal, Norman W. Harlee, later joined him in 1973.<sup>36</sup>

The killing of nine African American men and the wounding of eleven others by the Dallas police over the course of several months in 1972 brought the two factions of the African American community together. In that same year, A. Macco Smith led a coalition before the Dallas City Council representing approximately thirty community organizations. He called for establishing a community relations commission and improvements in investigating complaints against the police department relating to the failure to appoint an African American deputy police chief as well as the assignment of more African American officers to African American neighborhoods. Smith's appearance received results. Dallas received an African American deputy police chief in 1973 and an assistant city manager in 1974. As a further indicator of political and social change in 1975, the Dallas Negro Chamber of Commerce changed its name to the Dallas Black Chamber of Commerce and broadened its membership to include African American political leaders.<sup>37</sup>

At the same time, a new generation of grassroots activists such as Peter Johnson, Al Lipscomb, Elsie Faye Heggins, and J. B. Jackson began to take on leadership roles along with Diane Ragsdale, Marvin Crenshaw, and Roy Williams, and others, some of them in prominent positions. All of these people were introduced to politics through participation in the Fair Park homeowners'

protests involving eminent domain.<sup>38</sup> The new grassroots leadership approach was to file federal lawsuits aimed at creating more district elections for maximizing grassroots political participation. In essence, their efforts were directed at institutional and systemic changes rather than individual concessions. In the 1970's, the federal lawsuit of *Lipscomb et al v. Wise* (Dallas Mayor Wes Wise) began the process that eventually led to single-member district elections for the Dallas City Council and the Dallas School Board, a key component of increasing African American representation. After several years in federal court and multiple rulings, district elections were finally mandated. In 1991, Dallas instituted a 14-1 political configuration, following earlier attempts to implement an 8-3 Council and a 10-4-1 Council. What this meant the end of the at-large system, which was the centerpiece of the Dallas Citizens Council political machine. The new council make-up greatly curtailed the business community's control of city affairs and public education issues, another long-time centerpiece of the white establishment's control. Lipscomb, Heggins, and Ragsdale were later elected to the Dallas City Council; J.B. Jackson became active in mass transportation issues through DART and continued his role as a political strategist.<sup>39</sup>

Marvin Crenshaw made several unsuccessful attempts for mayor. Roy Williams' book on Dallas politics, *Time Change*, explains how, because of single-member districts, more than twelve African Americans became members of the Dallas City Council in the last decades of the twentieth century, a numbers serving multiple terms, which indicated growing African American political strength. Among the unsung heroes that worked tirelessly for institutional change were Kathleen Gilliam, then president of the Board of Education, and Yvonne Ewell, who led the East Oak Cliff Sub-District of the Dallas Independent School District. Ewell was also active in bringing about change in the employment practices of the Dallas based major television network affiliates. Iola Johnson was hired as the first African American female news anchor in the Southwest in 1973.<sup>40</sup> According to Al Lipscomb, the dean of African American politicians, "Dallas has great potential to show other cities how the concept of inclusion works."<sup>41</sup>

According to Alwyn Barr in *The African Texas*, African American officeholders in Texas increased from twenty-nine in 1970 to over three hundred in 1990.<sup>42</sup> Within the private-sector, in 1977, a local group known as the Committee of 100, which was comprised of young African American white-color workers in non-traditional jobs, hosted a dinner for seventeen whites and seventeen African Americans to discuss the need for improvements in local corporate hiring and the image of the African American community in the press. The initiative demonstrated new leadership and, in a change from earlier activism, involved no one from the African American religious community. In another radical change, several white bankers and industrial leaders occupied roles, indicating that Dallas' white citizens had finally realized that working with African Americans was the best direction for the future of Dallas. Although no noticeable results came from this pioneering meeting, at least African American and white leaders initiated and began to form a base from

which future cooperation could develop.<sup>43</sup>

The decades of the 1980s and 1990s saw the Dallas City Council appoint two African Americans as city manager and the selection of the first African American and Latino as Dallas Superintendent of Schools. African Americans Sam Lindsey and Shirley Acy also occupied the positions of city attorney and city secretary, respectively. Al Lipscomb fondly remembers the backroom arguments that led to these appointments.<sup>44</sup> President Bill Clinton later appointed Sam Lindsey the first African American federal judge in North Texas. As the twentieth century came to a close, African Americans served in the appointed positions of chairmen and directors of the board of the DFW International Airport, which aided in more construction and concessions contracts awarded to African Americans and Latinos. John Wiley Price was elected also County Commissioner in 1984 and he became one of the most powerful politicians in the city of any race.

Seven African Americans sued the Dallas Housing Authority in federal court in 1975 on the grounds of racial segregation and unequal conditions. The case eventually resulted in improved public housing conditions; a final settlement known as the "Walker Decree" was reached in 2004.<sup>45</sup>

In 1995, Ron Kirk, an attorney, former lobbyist, and Texas Secretary of State, became Dallas' first African American mayor.<sup>46</sup> His election was monumental in more ways than one since it brought together a working coalition between the white business establishment and the African American community. Kirk made a historic appointment when he selected the first African American as the city's police chief. His administration ended in 2002 not because of electoral defeat (he remained popular with all constituents throughout his tenure), but because of term limitations.

As a powerful reminder of the "Old Dallas" that was run as an white business oligarchy, there is a picture prominently hung in Dallas City Hall that includes all of the Dallas decision makers from that era, including the mayor, federal judge, and the business community. There is not an African American face in the photograph.

Clear relationships can be drawn between African American grassroots organizations and political concessions in Dallas. Black Dallas leadership prior to 1950 was vastly different from post 1950 leadership. Before the 1950s, and immediately after the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, the NAACP dominated African American politics. The NAACP strategy of filing federal lawsuits challenging Jim Crow practices within the context of Constitutional rights, played a pivotal role in implementing court-ordered school desegregation mandates. A. Maceo Smith, Juanita J. Craft, and W.J. Durham led the campaigns and were the key players for the NAACP efforts. Juanita J. Craft, after serving on the Dallas City Council, died in 1985 at the age of eighty-three and left her house to the City of Dallas to be used as a landmark designated Civil Rights House. The house was the historic gathering place for civil rights lawyers such as Thurgood Marshall, who led so many NAACP efforts to end institutional segregation. W.J. Durham, a lawyer who moved to Dallas after

the bombings in Sherman, Texas in the 1930s, provided the NAACP with strong analytical legal support. He was reputed to be one of the finest trial lawyers in Texas. Durham, assisted by C. B. Bunkley, Jr., was legal counsel in the historic cases of *Sweatt v. Painter* and *State of Texas v. NAACP*.

Beginning in the 1960s, the federally funded North Texas Legal Services organization assisted African American grassroots organizations in preparing their challenges to unequal political representation on the Dallas City Council, the Dallas School Board, and conditions in public housing. They replaced the NAACP as the legal entity challenging the system for a level playing field.

The progression of African Americans in Dallas does not mean that racism has necessarily ended. The white backlash to the “new politics” was white flight from the city and the school system. A prime example of the phenomenon is statistics from the early 1970s, which show that at least fifty-four percent of the students in the Dallas Independent School District were white. By the end of the twentieth century, white enrollment hovered around ten percent. According to the *Dallas Morning News*’ commissioned report prepared by Booz/Allen/Hamilton, “Dallas residents are migrating from the city to the suburbs at a faster rate than anywhere else in the nation.” The in-migration to the city is coming from South Texas, Mexico, and other countries in Latin America.”<sup>47</sup> In fact, new arrivals in Dallas from 1990–2000 numbered approximately 174,000 people; seventy-five percent of those were Latinos.<sup>48</sup>

Given current trends, the next twenty years will witness more meaningful participation of minorities in the Dallas political process. As the Latino voting base becomes larger and more sophisticated, more Latinos will be elected to public office. Coalition politics in Dallas is the wave of the future.

In summary, the demise of Jim Crow policies and practices in Dallas can be attributed to the efforts of African American plaintiffs and local federal judges in the persons of Judge Jerry Buchmeyer and Judge Barefoot Sanders. These two federal judges made rulings that desegregated housing, schools, and changed the political structure of the local governing bodies; namely, the Dallas City Council, Dallas Independent School District, Dallas County Community College District, and the Dallas County Commissioners Court.<sup>49</sup>

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Dallas Black Chamber of Commerce, *Changing the Profile of Dallas*, 2005, pp. 26-28.

<sup>2</sup>Dallas Black Chamber of Commerce, *Changing the Profile of Dallas*, 2005, p. 8.

<sup>3</sup>Larry Tye, *Rising from the Rails: Pullman Porters and the Making of the Black Middle Class*, (Henry Holt and Company, New York, 2004), pp. 1-3.

<sup>4</sup>Robert Prince, *The History of Dallas from a Different Perspective*, (Nortex Press, 1993), pp. 56-86. Donald Payton, “A Concise History: Black Dallas Since 1842,” *D MAGAZINE*, volume 25, No. 6, June 1998, p. 27.

<sup>5</sup>Donald Payton, p. 27.

<sup>6</sup>Donald Payton, pp. 27-28.

<sup>7</sup>W. Marvin Dulaney, "Whatever Happened to the Civil Rights Movement in Dallas, Texas?" in *Essays on the Civil Rights Movement*, by John Dittmer, George Write, and W. Marvin Dulaney, (Texas A&M University Press, College Station, 1993), pp. 67-68; Robert Prince, *The History of Dallas from a Different Perspective*, p. 64.

<sup>8</sup>*Handbook of Texas Online*, s.v. "Lynching." <http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/LL/jg11.html> (accessed October 17, 2005); James M. Smallwood, Barry A. Crouch, and Larry Peacock, *Murder and Mayhem: The War of Reconstruction in Texas*, (Texas A&M University Press, 2003), pp. 119-121.

<sup>9</sup>Dulaney, "Whatever Happened to the Civil Rights Movement in Dallas, Texas?" pp. 68-69; Prince, p. 42.

<sup>10</sup>Michael Gillette, "The Rise of the NAACP in Texas," *Southwest Historical Quarterly*, 81, April, 1978, pp. 393-398; *The Handbook of Texas Online*, s.v. "Ku Klux Klan," <http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/KK/vek2.html> (accessed September 8, 2005).

<sup>11</sup>Dallas Black Chamber of Commerce, *Changing the Profile of Dallas*, pp. 6-12; *Elite News*, "The Dallas I Know: Pictorial History of the Past and Present," by William Blair, Jr.; "Smith, Antonio Maceo," *Handbook of Texas Online*, s.v. "Smith, Antonio Maceo," <http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/SS/fsm61.html>, (accessed September 10, 2005); The African American Museum, "28th A. Maceo Smith Community Service Awards Brunch, October 15, 2005."

<sup>12</sup>Dulaney, "What Happened to the Civil Rights Movement in Dallas, Texas?" pp. 71-72.

<sup>13</sup>Dulaney, "What Happened to the Civil Rights Movement in Dallas, Texas?" pp. 71-72.

<sup>14</sup>Dallas Black Chamber of Commerce, *Changing the Profile of Dallas*, pp. 6-12; *The Handbook of Texas Online*, s.v. "Hall of Negro Life," <http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/HH/pkh1.html>, (accessed September 12, 2005); *Dallas Morning News*, February 16, 2006.

<sup>15</sup>Prince, pp. 103-104, 131.

<sup>16</sup>Dulaney, "Whatever Happened to the Civil Rights Movement in Dallas?" p. 72; Donald Payton, p. 29.

<sup>17</sup>Alwyn Barr and Robert A. Calvert, eds., *Black Leaders: Texans for Their Times*, (Texas State Historical Association, 1981), pp. 184-187; Michael L. Gillette, "Blacks Challenge the White University," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 86, (Oct. 1982), pp. 321-344.

<sup>18</sup>Michael L. Gillette, "Blacks Challenge the White University," pp. 321-344.

<sup>19</sup>Michael L. Gillette, "Blacks Challenge the White University," pp. 321-344.

<sup>20</sup>*Dallas Morning News*, May 23, 2006.

<sup>21</sup>Jim Schutze, *The Accommodation: The Politics of Race in an American City*, Citadel Press, 1986, pp. 77-78; Donald Payton, pp. 26-31.

<sup>22</sup>Prince, p. 132.

<sup>23</sup>Reverend Donald Parish oral interview by author, October 4, 2005; *Dallas Morning News*, April 8, 2006.

<sup>24</sup>Donald Payton, p. 29; Julia Jordan, Church Historian, New Hope Baptist Church oral interview by author, September 20, 2005.

<sup>25</sup>Glen M. Linden, *Desegregating Schools in Dallas*, (Three Forks Press), pp. 95-116; On October 15, 2005, The African American Museum at Fair Park gave an award to Sam Tasby for his contributions to the African American Community. A school has been named in his honor: *Dallas Morning News*, February 15, 2008.

<sup>26</sup>Schutze, pp. 91-93. Prince, p. 143.

<sup>27</sup>Gerry Cristol, "Levi A. Olan: Conscience of the City" in *LEGACY*, Dallas Historical Society, Fall 2005, pp. 46-53.

<sup>28</sup>*The Handbook of Texas Online*, s.v. "National Association for the Advancement of Colored People," <http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/NN/vn1.html>, (accessed September 8, 2005).

<sup>29</sup>Linden, p. 94; C. Van Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*, (Oxford University Press, 1966), pp. 149-173.

<sup>30</sup>Schutze, pp. 94-97. Prince, p. 60; *Dallas Morning News*, February 10, 2008.

<sup>31</sup>Dulaney, "Whatever Happened to the Civil Rights Movement in Dallas, Texas?" p. 79.

<sup>32</sup>Schutze, pp. 116-117.

<sup>33</sup>Dulaney, pp. 84-85; Leroy Fitts, *A History of Black Baptists*, (Broadman Press, 1985), pp. 100-101.

<sup>34</sup>Schutze, pp. 181; David Richards, *Once Upon a Time in Texas*, (University of Texas Press, 2003), pp. 53-64.

<sup>35</sup>Judge L.A. Bedford, oral interview by author in his law office, November 3, 2005.

<sup>36</sup>Marvin Dulaney and Robert Edison, "A Time Line of Dallas Race Relations," (an unpublished paper) pp. 406; Dallas Black Chamber of Commerce, "Changing the Profile of Dallas," p. 8; Prince, p. 76.

<sup>37</sup>Dulaney, "Whatever Happened to the Civil Rights Movement in Dallas, Texas?" pp. 88-89; Dallas Black Chamber of Commerce, *Changing the Profile of Dallas*, p. 9.

<sup>38</sup>Schutze, pp. 163-166.

<sup>39</sup>*Dallas Morning News*, February 6, 2005, December 12, 2004, and October 22, 2005; *The Handbook of Texas Online*, s.v. "Dallas, TX," <http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/DD/hdd1.html>, (accessed October 8, 2005).

<sup>40</sup>*Dallas Morning News*, February 20, 2008.

<sup>41</sup>Al Lipscomb, former city council member, oral interview, December 2, 2005.

<sup>42</sup>Alwyn Barr, *The African Texans*, (Texas A&M University Press, 2004), p. 89.

<sup>43</sup>Oral Interviews with Marvin Robinson, Billy Allen, and State Representative Helen Giddings, who attended the affair, October 22, 2005.

<sup>44</sup>Al Lipscomb interview, December 2, 2005.

<sup>45</sup>*Dallas Morning News*, December 21-22, 2004.

<sup>46</sup>*Dallas Morning News*, December 25, 2004.

<sup>47</sup>*Dallas Morning News*, "Dallas at the Tipping Point," April 18, 2004.

<sup>48</sup>*Dallas Morning News*, October 23, 2005.

<sup>49</sup>*Dallas Morning News*, February 15, 2008.