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"To make their bid for democracy for all people under all circumstances…": The 1944 Philadelphia Transit Strike and New Deal black activism in World War 2

Joe Mariani , '20

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History 91

Introduction

On the Tuesday morning of August 1st, 1944, two and half million Philadelphians found themselves without a ride. When the *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin* published pictures of Thomas Allen(Image a) and James Stewart(Image b) being trained to operate trolley cars for the Philadelphia Transportation Company (P.T.C.), thousands of white workers called out sick and blockaded vehicle depots rather than abide by integration. And so the nearly 1600 trolleys and 400 buses that crisscrossed the City of Brotherly Love and its environs, bringing workers — women and men, black and white — to and from work every day, never appeared at any stops. Industry in the city, making everything from "buttons to battleships" took a nosedive. The stoppage alarmed the War Department, which released a list of critical war materials being held up by the strike, including flamethrowers, radar equipment, jungle hammocks, cotton ducks and artillery shells.[1] Racial tensions in the city reached a fever pitch and many Philadelphians feared a repeat of the racial violence that had convulsed Detroit the summer before. News of the heated situation reached President Roosevelt as he sailed to Alaska. Unable to accept the mounting losses to the war effort and under pressure from black activists across the country, F.D.R.'s administration had 5,000 troops bivouac in Fairmount Park, ready to operate the P.T.C. if necessary and hopefully to compel the strikers to return to work. Facing the loss of their jobs and draft deferments, striking workers relented and begrudgingly accepted the integration of the P.T.C. workforce.

The Philadelphia Transit strike constituted a rare example in American history when black political activists managed to leverage federal political power as well as local organizational capacity to win a fight for the black working-class. Since 1941 black activists had

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[1] "War Production Crippled Badly," *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, August 2, 1944, George D. Mcdowell Philadelphia Evening Bulletin Collection, Temple University Libraries.

barraged the jim crow practices of the P.T.C, combining radical tactics, such as confrontational activism and mass demonstrations, with strategic alliances with industrial union leadership (primarily the C.I.O.), progressive religious groups, and sympathetic advocates within the federal bureaucracy. The basis for the fight against jim crow at the P.T.C. got laid by the grass roots working-class activism of the dynamic local chapter of the National Negro Congress (NNC) and the national "Double V" campaign for victory over fascism at home and abroad. The United People's Action Committee (UPAC), led by educator Arthur Huff Fauset, and the local chapter of NAACP, headed by Carolyn Davenport Moore, led organizing work to desegregate the P.T.C. Fauset and Moore got help from a constellation of individuals and allied groups including the prominent black lawyer Raymond Pace Alexander, Arthur's wife Crystal Bird Fauset, the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) in addition to more opportunistic cooperation with politically unclassifiable figures like Father Divine and eventually even the War Department.

In this paper I want to tell the story of black activists in Philadelphia to make the case for World War Two as a time of radical black activism in the urban North that fits into the historiography of the long civil rights movement. I also want to show how the local conditions of Philadelphia forced black activists to grabble with fighting an alliance of conservative interests and grassroots white working class racism, decades before the dissolution of the New Deal coalition over racial justice issues and the ascendency of conservative reactionary politics in the U.S. I will focus on the local chapter of NNC and its later iteration as UPAC as these groups represented the most significant left-wing political forces in the Philadelphia black community. In doing so I hope to support Wolfinger's claim that 1940s working-class Philadelphia did not inevitably have to split along racial lines, and show how black activists sought to transcend racial divisions even as they anticipated and strategized against white working-class backlash.

Historiography

Historically connecting the Montgomery Bus Boycott of 1955-56 and the Philadelphia Transit Strike of 1944 might seem far-fetched given the differences between peace and wartime, North and South. And while the first holds a seminal place in the dominant narrative of the civil rights struggle, the second remains obscure even among historians. The basic facts of the two situations could even be seen as opposite. In Montgomery black people refused to ride buses; in Philadelphia white people refused to drive them. But both began as strenuous community efforts that ultimately got resolved through federal intervention. Both in Montgomery and in Philadelphia public transit became a focal point of black activism seeking to win a victory over jim crow that delivered material benefits for working-class black people as well as a highly visible removal of restrictions on black bodies. These similarities suggest a connection and continuity between the famous struggles in the post-war deep South and less well-known activism in the urban North during the 1930s and 1940s that challenges the dominant narrative of the civil rights struggle.

This dominant narrative begins in 1954 with Brown v. Board of Education and continues in the middle 1960s with Martin Luther King's "I have a dream speech" and the passage of the Civil Rights Act in 1964 and Voting Rights Act in 1965. The short period of success ends, so the story goes, with the movement faltering in the national moral confusion of the Vietnam War, the counterculture of the late 1960s, women's liberation and the militant tactics of groups like the Black Panther Party. This narrative of the civil rights movement defined it as centered in a uniquely racist South, with its achievements primarily made through the courts and the legislature.[2] Accordingly, scholars drew evidence from sources like presidential archives and

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[2] Steven F. Lawson, "Freedom Then, Freedom Now," In *Civil Rights Crossroads: Nation, Community, And The Black Freedom Struggle*, (Lexington, Kentucky: University Press Of Kentucky, 2003), 3-28; Jacquelyn Dowd Hall

judicial opinions.[3] This narrative left the economic objectives of the civil rights movement unexamined and ignored both racism in the North and activists efforts to fight white supremacy there.[4] Instead, the urban North got depicted as the site of the breakdown of non-violence and racial integration, "where a poisonous identity politics destroyed a supposedly liberal consensus in a colorblind America."[5] An approach to the Civil Rights movement using the lenses of social history eventually allowed for a rewriting the history of the black freedom movement in urban North, one that had a place for the Philadelphia transit strike.

To challenge the dominant narrative, historians attempted to refocus civil rights scholarship towards local campaigns, grassroots activism and the people engaged in this work. These new narratives attempted to connect the "local with the national"[6] and study the ways local activists and grassroots campaigns interacted with federal officials and politicians to accomplish their goals. This broader focus by historians correlated with greater and more varied sources of evidence from "community organizations and institutions, such as labor unions, barbershops, colleges, fraternal organizations, and churches."[7] Consequently, the importance of women and young people as active participants and leaders in civil rights struggles came to the forefront. The timeline and the geographic location of the civil rights movement expanded. What Jacquelyn Dowd Hall called the long civil rights movement views the activism of the 1930s and '40s not as a precursor to the movement but "its first decisive phase."[8] Uncovering the stories of

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"The Long Civil Rights Movement And The Political Uses Of The Past." *The Journal Of American History* 91, No. 4 (2005): 1233–1234.

[3] Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, "Forward" In *Freedom North: Black Freedom Struggles Outside The South, 1940-1980*, Ed. Komozi Woodard And Jeanne Theoharis, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), Viii-Xiv

[4] Hall, 2005, 1235

[5] Thomas J. Sugrue, *Northern Lights: The Black Freedom Struggle Outside The South,* Oah Magazine Of History, Vol. 26, No. 1, (2012), 9–15

[6] Lawson, 2003, 5, 13

[7] Higginbotham, 2003, Viii-Xiv

[8] Hall, 2005, 1239

activists in the urban North became an important task for historians writing a new history of the civil rights movement.

In recent years historians of the civil rights movement in the urban north have focused on the "civil rights unionism" of activists connected with the National Negro Congress. For Sugrue, the NNC typified the approach of black activists in the North with a program of action based around "addressing the impoverishment and exploitation of black and white workers alike."[9] These activists navigated the "competing, overlapping, and uncertain lines of political power,"[10] that characterized the implementation of federal policies in the 1930s and '40s that resulted in the rise of industrial unionism, led by the C.I.O., in the U.S. Some historians have attempted to combine studies of interracial union organizing with civil rights activism in the 1930s and '40s to suggest a "proletarian" turn in black politics[11]. For Gelman, the first historian to write a book length study of the NNC, the radicalism of the NNC faltered in World War 2, as he claims that the war quelled all forms of permissible dissent by activists.[12] I want to challenge Gelman's claim and instead show how the international black consciousness of these activists found expression in critiques of western, including American, imperialism simultaneous to the patriotic Double V campaign. In addition, I hope to contribute to reversing what Countryman called "Philadelphia's near invisibility within civil rights historiography,"[13] by writing about the Philly

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9 Ibid. 33, 38

10 Beth Bailey And David Farber, "The 'Double-V' Campaign In World War Ii Hawaii: African Americans, Racial Ideology, And Federal Power," *Journal Of Social History* 26, No. 4 (1993): 817.

11 Beth Tompkins Bates, *The Making Of Black Detroit In The Age Of Henry Ford*. Chapel Hill: University Of North Carolina Press, 2012; Sugrue, Thomas J. *Sweet Land Of Liberty;* Risa Lauren Goluboff, *The Lost Promise Of Civil Rights*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2007; Lang, Clarence. *Grassroots At The Gateway: Class Politics And Black Freedom Struggle In St. Louis, 1936-75*. Ann Arbor, United States: University Of Michigan Press, 2009.

12 Erik S. Gellman, *Death Blow To Jim Crow The National Negro Congress And The Rise Of Militant Civil Rights*. The John Hope Franklin Series In African American History And Culture. Chapel Hill: University Of North Carolina Press, 2012 . 182

13 Matthew Countryman, *Up South: Politics And Culture In Modern America.* (University Of Pennsylvania Press. 2006), 4

NNC; Gelman's book about NNC examines local chapter in six major, yet left the extremely active Philadelphia branch out.

Some historians have pushed back against the 'long' civil rights narrative and the viability of civil rights unionism. They have argued it constitutes a careless extension of civil rights history farther and farther into the past and across regions, even comparing this erasure of distinctions as "vampiric" in their undying, transhistorical quality.[14] Beginning with Herbert Hill,[15] some scholars have resisted a narrative of the New Deal producing a union-led era of civil rights struggle that would overlook "thorny question of interracial protest and unionism."[16] Some see these splits as characteristic of the delicate political balancing act that was the New Deal; historian Jefferson Cowie goes as far as calling the whole New Deal an exceptional, unrepeatable period of American History. Additionally, the transformational nature of World War 2 for black civil rights activism has also been debated, with Harvard Sitkoff's arguing against a "wartime civil rights book,"[17] and Andrew Diamond identifying the work of the World War 2-era Fair Employment Practice Committee (FEPC) in enforcing orders banning workforce discrimination in war industries as the beginning of the fracturing of the New Deal order.[18]

Countryman, Wolfinger, and Arnold all identify a Philadelphia community of civil rights activists in the 1930s and '40s composed of allied but ideologically distinct liberal and left

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[14] Sundiata Keita Cha-Jua, And Clarence Lang, "The 'Long Movement' As Vampire: Temporal And Spatial Fallacies In Recent Black Freedom Studies." *The Journal Of African American History* 92, No. 2 (April 1, 2007): 265–88.

[15] Hill, Herbert. "Myth-Making As Labor History: Herbert Gutman And The United Mine Workers Of America." *International Journal Of Politics, Culture, And Society* 2, No. 2 (1988): 132–200.;

[16] Ayers, Oliver. "The 1935 Labour Dispute At The Amsterdam News And The Challenges Posed By The Rise Of Unionism In Depression-Era Harlem" 48, No. 3 (2014): 797–818; Jefferson Cowie. *The Great Exception*. Princeton University Press, 2016.

[17] SITKOFF, HARVARD. "African American Militancy in the World War II South:: Another Perspective." In *Toward Freedom Land*, 93–128. The Long Struggle for Racial Equality in America. University Press of Kentucky, 2010.

[18] Andrew Diamond, "Cutting through the Fog of War: World War II and the Fracturing of the New Deal Order in the Urban North." *Études Anglaises* 67 (January 1, 2014): 96–114.

wings.[19] Those who have studied black activism in Philadelphia consider the successful campaign to desegregate the workforce of the public transit system (in the face of resistance by white workers and the city's business and political establishment) a major victory for these activists.[20] I hope to extend the scholarship of these historians of the long civil rights movement in Philadelphia by analyzing the radical politics of black activists and how they confronted the fact of white workers salient race consciousness. Even as the activists engaged in their project of pursuing black freedom through a politics of industrial unionism, they had to face the divide of the working class over the issue of race. A certain understanding of white supremacy's operation on American labor history sees white workers becoming the primary promulgators of white supremacy in their competition with Blacks in the labor market; I agree with and want to support Melcher's observation that "While this logic is certainly true at some historical junctures, it is a historically contingent response, not a transhistorical inevitability"[21] In Philadelphia at this time, black activists and conservative interests were in open competition for the loyalty of the white working class. Part of the answer of how this fight played out lies in the building an anti-fascist sentiment in American politics and another part comes in the strategic silences alternated with mass mobilizations that black activists engaged in. The 1930s and 1940s constituted "an important moment in United States history when liberals and radicals joined together in support of racial equality."[22] What black activists like Arthur Fauset conceived of doing —advancing the

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[19] Countryman Up South, 33; Arnold, Stanley Keith, *Building The Beloved Community Philadelphia's Interracial Civil Rights Organizations And Race Relations, 1930–1970* (Jackson, Mississippi: University Press Of Mississippi, 2014); Wolfinger, James. *Philadelphia Divided*. 2007. University Of North Carolina Press.

[20] Wolfinger, James. "'We Are In The Front Lines In The Battle For Democracy': Carolyn Moore And Black Activism In World War Ii Philadelphia." *Pennsylvania History: A Journal Of Mid-Atlantic Studies* 72, No. 1 (2005): 1–23. Arnold, *Building The Beloved Community,* 55.

[21] Melcher, Cody R. "First as Tragedy, Then as Farce: WEB Du Bois, Left-Wing Radicalism, and the Problem of Interracial Labor Unionism." *Critical Sociology*, December 16, 2019,

[22] "Fair Play In Bowling": Sport, Civil Rights, And The Uaw Culture Of Inclusion, 1936–1950 Ryan S. Pettengill Journal Of Social History, Volume 51, Number 4, Summer 2018, Pp. 953-979; Sugure, *Sweet Land Of Liberty,* 78.

black freedom struggle —did not preclude cooperation with Republicans, Democrats, communists, even anomalous, self-deifying religious leaders like Father Divine. The realm of acceptable policy positions, strategies, and alliances of left-wing groups, and the mainstream acceptance of left-wing politics itself, was in flux in the 1930s and '40s. A whole new range of possibilities in pursing black freedom presented themselves.

Laying the groundwork: Black activism in Philadelphia in the New Deal Era

Black activists organized around protesting the Italian invasion of Ethiopia in the 1930s to tap into and reenergize the latent Pan-African sentiment of black Americans that had not had a significant outlet since the decline of the Garveyite movement and to build new energy around fighting fascism. In the 1930s, the Philadelphia National Negro Congress, led by Arthur Fauset, identified the liberation of Ethiopia, along with ending colonialism and opposing fascism generally, as primary goals in its founding declaration.[23] In Philadelphia the NNC local "articulated anti-racist activism in Philadelphia through the lens of the global anti-fascist resistance."[24] Ethiopia had become a symbol of pan-Africanism and black liberation for black Americans, to the extent that "wandering Ethiopians" could draw crowds and patronage just by assuming a royal Ethiopian identity.[25] Given this identification with Ethiopia, events of the Second Italo-Ethiopian War 1935-37 got extensively covered in the Philadelphia black press and activist leaders mobilize people for mass demonstrations against Italy's colonialism in east Africa. In 1935 five thousand people protested outside City Hall against Italy's invasion of

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[23] "National Congress Group To Attack Philly Jim Crow: Local …" *The Baltimore Afro-American,* Jan 4, 1936 Pg. 13.

[24] Clayton Vaughn-Roberson, "Grassroots Anti-Fascism: Ethiopia And The Transnational Origins Of The National Negro Congress In Philadelphia, 1935–1936," *American Communist History* 17, No. 1 (2018), 4-15.

[25] Byrd, Brandon. "The Abyssinian Prince: A History Of Imposture And The Interwar United States." *The Journal Of African American History* 104, No. 3 (2019): 355–391..

Ethiopia, mirroring interracial protests led by black activists in other major American cities.[26] When a call went out for American volunteers to fight for Ethiopia, 1500 black Philadelphians signed up, more than twice the number that did in New York.[27] Ethiopian protests also became a surprising occasion of interracial protest. One headlined proclaimed "Italian, Negro masses urged to solidify" describing the words of a white leader of an organization called "The Italian Working Man's Progressive Alliance." This interracial organizing probably contributed to the success of black activists in getting Mayor Wilson to ban victory parades that were planned by Italian-American civic groups in Philadelphia.[28]

The local chapter of the Philadelphia NNC demonstrated the extent that black Philadelphia could be mobilized by a progressive agenda for black freedom and labor activism. The 2nd National Negro Congress, held in 1937 in the Metropolitan Opera House in Philadelphia, represented a major moment for black activism in the 1930s. About ten thousand people attended and over one thousand delegates participated in drafting various resolutions on contemporary issues outlining the NNC's positions; "The convention energized black Philadelphia in ways seldom seen in the city's past, as for a few nights in October it became the center of political activism in the nation."[29] The NNC emphasized role of black self-reliance of black in gaining equality, but did not exclude interracial cooperation; in the NNC's view "freedom for whites and blacks would come only in aid of a movement for industrial unionism."[30] The NNC attempted to position itself as the "broadest coalition possible of

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[26] "Respectable" Organizations Snub N.Y.'S Biggest Turn-Out: 20,000, …" The Baltimore Afro-American, Aug 10, 1935 p. 7;
[27] N. Y. Body Claims 17,500 Recruits For Ethiopia Special To The Afro; Jul 20, 1935; The Baltimore Afro-American Pg. 1
[28] Rossi, John P. "Philadelphia's Forgotten Mayor: S. Davis Wilson." *Pennsylvania History: A Journal Of Mid-Atlantic Studies* 51, No. 2 (1984): 154–166.
[29] Wolfinger 2007 P. 70
[30] Sugure 2008 Pp. 34

advocates for racial equality,"[31] more militant in tactics and politics than the NAACP but not eschewing cooperation with them. Holding the congress in Philadelphia in part reflected the importance of the state for the NNC's mission and the size of the NNC chapter there.[32] One speaker at the convention invoked John Brown as the symbol of the unity of the black and white people, explaining that in the fight for civil rights, black people's "best friends are the white working people and the progressive middle class."[33] Under the leadership of Fauset, this interracial aspect of the Philadelphia NNC's agenda became increasingly emphasized as World War 2 created new opportunities for black activists seeking to fight jim crow in employment. Fauset advised that politicians should ''listen more attentively to the real folks down in the streets, in the lodges and in the barber shops'" and his grassroots approach delivered stupendous results; in a few years he brought around one hundred fifty organizations with a combined membership of 50,000 people into the Philadelphia NNC.[34]

Arthur Fauset, with interracial parents and a cousin who became famous during the Harlem renaissance as literary editor of *the Crisis,* was representative of the progressive black middle class. Fauset engaged in a dizzying variety of work in the black community; his column in the *Philadelphia Tribune* offered telling insights through analysis of important events in the black community at the time, he worked as a principal in the Philadelphia school district and led the Philadelphia NNC, and earned his PhD in anthropology from Penn in 1942 with a study of

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[31] Gellman, Erik S. *Death Blow To Jim Crow The National Negro Congress And The Rise Of Militant Civil Rights*. The John Hope Franklin Series In African American History And Culture. Chapel Hill: University Of North Carolina Press, 2012 Pp 33.
[32] National Negro Congress. "20. Proc. Of Second Congress.'" 1937. Ms African American, Communists, And The National Negro Congress, 1933-1947: Papers Of The National Negro Congress. New York Public Library. Pp. 98
[33] Ibid. , Pp. 36-37
[34] Wolfinger *Philadelphia Divided,* 73-74

New Age black religious groups in Philadelphia,[35] Fauset had a keen eye for ethnographic observation that came out in his columns. As a public intellectual and an activist, Fauset's views provide an important point of reference left-wing black politics at this time.

Fauset various pursuits overlapped with each other; part of his thesis at Penn was a case study of Father Divine's International Peace Mission, and Fauset went on to praise the black religious leader as an ally in his progressive activities. Father Divine, who led a movement premised on him being God, as well as racial equality, gained a major following in several cities in the American northeast and Midwest in the 1930s, and eventually made Philadelphia the headquarters of his movement. To those from mainstream black churches who criticized Divine's followers for calling him "God," Fauset replied that "I know many a hungry Negro who would call me God if I could discover a way to keep his mind occupied, his stomach contented, and his spirits soaring. If I could accomplish this miracle, I might even come to believe that I was God."[36] For Fauset, the deprivation that characterized black existence in America reflected a failure on the part of black leadership to effectively organize the black masses to meet the challenge of overcoming white supremacy. Fauset's support for Father Divine put him at odds with more conservative black activists in Philadelphia like the attorney Raymond Pace Alexander, who called for a boycott of the leader.[37] Father Divine was a natural ally for Fauset as his movement enhanced the lives of the most vulnerable members of the black community – the poor who were fed at the sumptuous banquets at Peace Missions and in self-sufficient communal living arrangements across the country. The vast majority of Father Divine's followers were

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[35] Savage, Barbara Dianne, "Foreword" In *Black Gods Of The Metropolis*, Arthur Huff Fauset University Of Pennsylvania Press. (2002)
[36] Fauset, "Father Divine—Sour Grapes?" *Philadelphia Tribune,* September 27, 1939,
[37] "Boycott Father Divine, Leader Here Says" *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, August 18, 1939. George D. Mcdowell Philadelphia Evening Bulletin Clippings -. Temple University Libraries, Special Collections Research Center.

black women leading one historian to even analyze the Church as a black woman's movement. While Father Divine's explicit political views were idiosyncratic, he preached a strict doctrine of racial equality; his followers used euphemisms instead of black and white and his famous banquets had conspicuously interracial (though gender segregated) seating. His followers in following his doctrine of perfect racial equality participated in progressive activism, including joint Communist-Divinite parades where cries of "Father Divine is God!" mixed with "Down with Fascism!"[38] This shows the wide variety of organizations mobilizing the black masses for activism at this time.

Fauset used his column in *the Tribune* as a platform to enhance his activist work in the Philadelphia NNC. An internal NNC document strategizing political organizing and influencing of black voters notes that in the black press "No one dramatizes for [the average black voter] the great struggle going on in our country today between progressive and reactionary forces."[39] In Fauset's column, he sought to dramatize exactly this struggle. A distinctly populist style characterized much of Fauset's writing, making politics a fight between "the people" and a small group of elites. Writing in the months after the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union, after which Fauset decidedly favored America's entry into the war, he identified his opponents as the "Lindberg-Nye-Ford-Wheeler clique in America, the old appeaser group in England, the 60 families in our country who control the wealth of the nation and their British cousins"[40] Similarly, when the *Tribune*'s editor Washington Rhodes criticized an effort that Fauset was

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[38] Satter, Beryl. "Marcus Garvey, Father Divine and the Gender Politics of Race Difference and Race Neutrality." *American Quarterly* 48, no. 1 (1996): 43–76.

[39] "7. Congressional Districts (Votes)." *Ms African American, Communists, And The National Negro Congress, 1933-1947: Papers Of The National Negro Congress*. 1939. New York Public Library.

[40] Fauset, Arthur I Write As I See: More Of The War Philadelphia Tribune; Oct 18, 1941 Pg. 4

leading to desegregate public housing in Philadelphia, Fauset addressed Rhodes with the populist calling card of "For us or against us?"[41]

A dramatic display of Fauset's confrontational activism came out in his investigation of a group seeking to exclude blacks from a section of Philadelphia. Called the "Powelton Civic Association," Fauset reported in his column that the group called itself "the last defense of the white man in the Powelton area,"[42] and gave the address of the Episcopal church where they planned to have a meeting. White resistance to black people moving into traditionally white working-class neighborhoods was a longstanding issue in Philadelphia, but in the 1940s it had began to happen in affluent areas of the city as well.[43] Fauset had been writing about organized efforts to keep neighborhoods segregated in Powelton and other parts of the city since before America entered the war and his reporting got published on the first page of the *Tribune*.[44] Fauset interviewed a white Episcopal clergyman who was leading efforts to keep the black people from buying property in his parish, because in his words, desegregating housing would lead to "social equality" and the evil of racial intermarriage. Fauset, the child of an interracial marriage, replied with the probing question "How do you account for the lightened skin of a majority of the Negro people?" Fauset noted that the clergyman appeared "much embarrassed" by his question and to drive the point home he wrote "if the question of raping women must be raised, it is the white man who must be accused a thousand times for raping a negro women for every time the cry can be raised against a Negro."[45] With this kind of forceful language, its not surprising Fauset labeled the Powelton organization "fascist" and called on black activists to

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[41] Fauset, Arthur I Write As I See: Mr. Rhodes And Housing Philadelphia Tribune, Mar 27, 1941 Pg. 9
[42] This Refers To An Upscale Area In University City
[43] Arnold, Stanley Keith. *Building The Beloved Community* Philadelphia's Interracial Civil Rights Organizations And Race Relations, 1930–1970. Jackson, Mississippi: University Press Of Mississippi, 2014 P. 81
[44] Fauset, Arthur, Roberts, Lenerte, Philadelphia Tribune Mar 6, 1941 *Philadelphia* Tribune Pg. 1
[45] Roberts, Lenerte; Fauset, Arthur, "White Priests Admit Anti-Negro Drive: Episcopalian Joins Catholics, Girard College In Purge", *Philadelphia Tribune* Feb 20, 1941 Pg. 1

show up at the Powelton meeting and confront whites with the same type of probing questions he had asked the white priest.[46] Fauset also said that he expected "many white friends" would want to go along as well, not just to protest but also possibly for protection. This confrontation should be done with no less purpose than "in the name of democracy and winning the war."[47]

Fauset did not fear direct confrontation, and throughout his activist career he showed a willingness to engage in direct fights with white supremacy, often using to his advantage his understanding of it. The bringing up of the issue of sexuality with the Powelton priest by Fauset marks an important recognition of the terms of the debate of racial politics at this time. Anticipating things like racist accusations of the danger black men posed to white women, Fauset was ready with a forceful reply. The issue of white people's fear of black men's supposed threat to white women would emerge as a significant issue in the strike for white workers at the P.T.C.. Fauset was already flipping this paradigm on its head in 1941 and developing effective responses for public debates.

The alliance of the left and liberals in civil rights and the fluid politics of the 1940s can be better understood by looking at the career of Crystal Bird Fauset. Fauset who served as the executive secretary of the Swarthmore College Institute of Race Relations, whose lecturers in 1935 include labor leader A. Phillip Randolph, anthropologist Margaret Mead, and Marxist historian James S. Allen[48] She joined the Democratic party, and eventually became assistant director for the Works Projects Administration in Pennsylvania; Fauset ended a quota system for sewing jobs, allowing about three thousand black women access to well-paying jobs.[49] She also

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[46] Arthur-Huff Fauset, "I Write As I See: South Carolina Moves Up", *Philadelphia Tribune,* May 30, 1942 Pg. 4
[47] Ibid.
[48] American Friends Service Committee. "Institute Of Race Relations." Swarthmore College, July 1935.
[49] Mcguire, John Thomas. "Working Within The Labyrinth Of Race: Crystal Bird Fauset, Urban African American Women, And The National Democratic Party, 1934–1944." *Journal Of Urban History* 39, No. 2 (March 1, 2013): 172–92.

joined the NNC and spoke at the 1937 convention in Philadelphia. In 1938 she became the first African American woman to be elected as a state legislator; the local NNC branch played an instrumental part in her campaign.[50] During World War 2 she advised both Eleanor Roosevelt and New York City Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia as an race relations advisor. Eventually she left the Democratic party because she got dissatisfied with their unwillingness to take a stronger, more explicit stand on civil rights.[51] In the dynamic and rapidly changing political landscape of the 1940s, a woman who had won an election campaign with the support of the radical, communist-affiliated NNC in 1938 six years later felt herself compelled to become a Republican.

Employment Discrimination and the Double V-Campaign

The particularly acute economic needs of the black community in Philadelphia created a significant demand for solutions that would provide black people with good paying jobs. In the mid-1930s, only 3 cities (Pittsburgh, Cleveland, and New Orleans) had higher percentages of blacks on relief than Philadelphia.[52] The poverty of the black community corresponded to a comparatively smaller black middle class; for example, in 1930 Philadelphia only had 30 black lawyers while New York had 106 and Chicago had 175.[53] Black Philadelphians needed jobs. The U.S.'s unemployment rate was above 10% throughout the Great Depression and for black Americans it was usually at least twice; in 1933 it reached over 50%.[54] As an NNC publication noted "Economic security for the Negro people can only be won through the full support of progressive trade unions in their efforts to protect the living standards and liberties of all

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50 Wolfinger 2007 P. 59
51 Mcguire, "Working Within The Labyrinth Of Race," 172–92.
52 Banner-Haley, Charles Pete. "The Philadelphia Tribune And The Persistence Of Black Republicanism During The Great Depression." Pennsylvania History: A Journal Of Mid-Atlantic Studies Vol. 65, No. 2, No. Spring 1998 (1998): 190–202.
53 Canton, David A. *Raymond Pace Alexander - A New Negro Lawyer Fights For Civil Rights In Philadelphia*. (University Press Of Mississippi, 2010) Ch 1. P. 15
54 Countryman 23

workers"[55] This focus on pursuing jobs through a commitment to organized labor intensified as government contracts poured into the cities industries in the lead up to World War Two. Former NNC President and labor leader A. Phillip Randolph set out to create a national movement to pressure the government to make defense contracts contingent on greater black opportunity in industry.[56] The ultimate result of Randolph's efforts was the March on Washington Committee (MOWC) whose goal was "the dispersal of equality and power among citizen-workers in an economic democracy" without regard to race, creed, or national origins."[57]

Though the March on Washington would not come until 1963, the threat of thousands of black people protesting segregation in the nation's capital on the eve of a war for democracy led Roosevelt to sign executive order 8802, on paper prohibiting discrimination in the defense industry as enforced by the FEPC. As historian Kevin Schultz noted the FEPC was "Born out of guilt, undernourished as a child, and dead at the age of five,"[58] Despite its brief life, the cause it fought for, ending employment discrimination, "served as the formative vehicle in creating a coalition of civil rights liberals" for decades to come.[59] The FEPC was to become the main conduit of black activists campaigning for employment opportunities during the Double V campaign. It was the FEPC that issued the order for the P.T.C. to desegregate its workforce.

Arthur Fauset who would take lessons learned in his fight for unionization of his own profession of teachers to inform his activism later with the P.T.C.. Local 192, the teacher's union Fauset helped found and served as the vice-president of, had commitments not just to fight for

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[55] National Negro Congress, "6. Nat'l Negro Congress News." 1941
[56] Bynum, Cornelius L. *A. Philip Randolph And The Struggle For Civil Rights*. University Of Illinois Press, 2010 P. 164.
[57] Bynum 2010 P. 165
[58] Schultz, Kevin M. "The Fepc And The Legacy Of The Labor-Based Civil Rights Movement Of The 1940s." *Labor History* 49, No. 1 (2008): 71–92.
[59] Ibid.

wages for teachers, but "to making Philadelphia teachers part of the American labor movement, fighting racism in city schools, defending academic freedom and freedom of association, and otherwise acting as a strident voice for teachers in local and state politics."[60] Through the magazine the union led the successful fight to get a teacher tenure law passed at the state level. In local 192 Fauset learned to combine journalism, activism, and union organizing, a combination he would bring to his fight with the P.T.C..

The Double V-campaign took the legacy of black appropriation of American symbols along with the anti-fascist rhetoric of the latest war, to create a powerful propaganda campaign for black freedom. Far from being silenced by government or self-censorship, black activists continued to develop radical critiques of white supremacy throughout World War Two that reflected the black community's deep ambivalence toward U.S. participation in the war; on the one hand, recognizing the opportunities it created for black employment and developing anti-fascist, anti-racist discourse in the public sphere, but on the other, disgusted with the odious hypocrisy of a war to preserve democracy against aggressive facist ethno-states by the jim crow-era United States.

Given these realities the Double V campaign occurred in a context of extreme ambivalence on the part of the black community during the war. Horace R. Cayton, a black sociologist, wrote an article entitled "Fighting for White Folks?" that appeared in *The Nation* magazine in September 1942. The article noted that "the more frequently the slogans of democracy are raised the lower falls Negro morale." He also noted bitterness of an unnamed young black men who, upon being drafted into the army, said "Just carve on my tombstone,

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[60] Toloudis, Nicholas. "How Local 192 Fought For Academic Freedom And Civil Rights In Philadelphia, 1934-1941." *Journal Of Urban History* 45, No. 5 (2019): 941–960; Densmore, Chris. "Black History Month And Swarthmore College Exhibits" Peace And Conflict Studies At Swarthmore College, February 16, 2016

'Here lies a black man killed fighting a yellow man for the protection of a white man.'"[61] Another black man from Nashville suggested that the U.S. government might "declare war on that nation in Dixieland to help us all have one common cause to fight for: liberty, equality, and justice for all."[62]

In this context, the Double V campaign had to be propagated through the media black people most trusted; the black press. As Thomas Sugrue pointed out: "The burgeoning black protest movement[against segregation in defense industry] had no stauncher ally than the black press"[63] The Double V campaign got started by the *Pittsburgh Courier* based upon a letter to the editor.[64] Using the common language and themes of government propaganda, the black media and black activist organizations appropriated and redeployed terms to advance the cause of black freedom. As the U.S. entered the war, Hitler became a personified symbol of the connection between fascism abroad and racism at home The Philadelphia Tribune quoted a young black woman as saying "The most severe punishment that could be given to Hitler would be to paint him black and bring him to America,"[65] and printed this on the front page. The NNC identified practices such as job discrimination against blacks and poll taxes discriminating against poor people of all races as other examples of "Hitlerism." Federal government propaganda consistently censored images of black soldiers in combat, even as black readers consistently demanded such images from their media [66] As Kimberley Phillips said, "In defiance of their

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61 Cayton, Horace R. "Fighting For White Folks?" *The Nation*, September 26, 1942.
62 Phillips, Kimberley L. *War! What Is It Good For?: Black Freedom Struggles And The U. S. Military From World War Ii To Iraq*. Chapel Hill, University Of North Carolina Press, 2012. Pp. 32;
63 Sugrue, 2008 Pg 47.
64 Phillips, Kimberley L. *War! What Is It Good For?*, Pp. 32; Wynn, Neil A., Jacqueline M. Moore, And Nina Mjagkij. *The African American Experience During World War Ii*. Lanham, United States: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2010 Chapter 2, Pg. 12.
65 "Treatment For Hitler Make Him Black!" Philadelphia Tribune Jun 3, 1944, Pg. 1
66 Phillips *War! What Is it Good For?* P. 52

public excision from the unfolding visual narrative about the war, African Americans used the Double V campaign to create their own."[67] The Double V campaign itself, by focusing on displaying the hidden participation of black people in the war effort, fought against the erasure of the black experience by white supremacy.

The NNC publication Congress View, primarily run by black women, supported the Double V campaign and stated its mission was to ' to win the war and to win full citizenship,' and be a "link among progressive Negroes throughout the country."[68] Anti-Hitlerism had numerous manifestations in the black consciousness at this time. The image of Hitler arm and arm and a hulking white man wearing a t-shirt with the words "reactionary south" and a swastika, smiling to each other holding a sheet labeled "Jim Crow in the Armed Forces" (Image) This sheet is being stabbed by the bayonets of black and white American G.I.s who are labeled "Negro and white united." [69] This image importantly shows black people in combat roles, something that was consistently censored from American propaganda and is an additional depiction of what black activists wanted to portray as the alliance of racists at home and fascism abroad. It depicts American soldiers fighting to destroy discrimination at home, as they would do in the case of the Philadelphia transit strike.

The anti-Hitler message of the NNC did not make it uncritical of American foreign policy. A series of articles published in *Congress View*, written by an activist in the Caribbean, about anti-colonialist activism in the West Indies, showed that even during wartime the NNC

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[67] Phillips *War! What Is it Good For?* P. 32
[68] Gelman, *Death Blow to Jim Crow,* 169
[69] Congress Vue November 1943 Congress Vue - April 1943 To May 1944. April 1943 - May 1944. Ms African America, Communists, And The National Negro Congress, 1933-1947: Papers Of The National Negro Congress. New York Public Library.

would venture to criticize the empires of the U.S. allies.[70] *Congress View* was not unique: Horace Cayton noted that "The growing identification of the American Negro with non-white people all over the world is no figment of Nazi propaganda. A recent issue of a Negro weekly contained five articles and an editorial on colored people outside of America."[71] For the NNC, the "black freedom struggle in America was part and parcel of the struggle against fascism abroad,"[72] but the war against fascism abroad did not mean unqualified support for the imperialism of the allied powers.

P.T.C. Fight

The campaign to end discrimination at the P.T.C. began after black workers submitted a complaint about discrimination to the FEPC at the beginning of America's entry into World War 2. This coincided with a renewed campaign in Philadelphia of activism for civil rights unionism. In 1942, Fauset changed the NNC local name to UPAC-United People's Action Committee, marking a change in direction for the group. Instead of just focusing on fighting for political, social, and economic freedom for black people, UPAC would be "A militant far-reaching program to make democracy a reality for all the people of America as part of the great fight against Fascism and in preparation for a lasting peace and security." [73] Fauset's choice to expand the scope of the organization might have been a strategic one given the geographic distribution of Philadelphia's black population. Unlike in Chicago and New York, in Philadelphia the black population was spread out in several disconnected sections of the city, and so did not constitute an overwhelming majority in any single ward.[74] In any case, despite the changed name, UPAC

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[70]H.P. Osborne "Organized Groups In The West Indies" *Congress View* December 1943 P. 3
[71] Cayton 1942 P. 3
[72] Gelman 2012 Pp. 38
[73] National Negro Congress, "91. United Peoples Action Comm." April 1944
[74] Canton, David A. *Raymond Pace Alexander - A New Negro Lawyer Fights For Civil Rights In Philadelphia*. University Press Of Mississippi, 2010 Chapter 3 Pp. 2 .

continued to be an organization of black activists primarily focused on issues facing the black community.

The P.T.C.'s decision to open up skilled jobs to black employees came after years of campaigning, mass demonstrations, and bureaucratic lobbying led by black activists in Philadelphia.[75] Fauset led mass rallies to protest jim crow by the PTC, and even promised a crowd that the P.T.C. would be desegregated in two months, exactly two months before the company announced its decision to comply with the FEPC directive and take applications from black people.[76] Fauset's rhetoric in discussing the hiring practices of the P.T.C. was forceful and dramatic than it was previously; he declared that "We will if necessary spill our blood on these shores."[77] As Fauset put it, the P.T.C. fight was something like a moment of truth for black Philadelphia: "300,000 Negros in the City of Philadelphia should determine now to make their bid for democracy for all people under all circumstances"[78] That the P.T.C. became a focal point for the attention of leaders in the black community reflected a growing conviction among black activists that black liberation required the elimination of economic oppression. Additionally, it reflected the fact during World War 2, as American cities became crowded and underwent rapid racial demographic change the public transportation system became a sight of regular interracial contact, a contested space.[79]

Black activists' relationships with organized labor often took place behind the scenes, reflecting the contentious nature of interracial labor organizing but also the successes that could occur under civil rights unionism. When the union election came in 1944 for the P.T.C.

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[75] Wolfinger, *Philadelphia Divided,* 114
[76] "Colored Motormen to Drive P.T.C. Cars Within 2 Months", Philadelphia Tribune, pg. 1
[77] Fauset, Arthur, "I Write As I See: Fight, Fight, Fight!", *Philadelphia Tribune*, Pg. 4
[78] Fauset, Arthur "I Write As I See: P. T. C. Must Change" *Philadelphia Tribune*, Jul 10, 1943;
[79] Nelson, Bruce. "Organized Labor And The Struggle For Black Equality In Mobile During World War Ii." *The Journal Of American History* 80, No. 3 (1993): 952–88.

workforce, the company union faced steep competition from the growing CIO, which promised to bring higher wages to the P.T.C.'s underpaid employees. Hill details that during the 1944 union election that PRT sound trucks blasted the message "A vote for CIO is a vote for N*** on the job". Nearly 2000 of about 6000 votes went to PRT, though the CIO-affiliated TWU won.[80] Historians have noted that the TWU downplayed its dedication to racial equality in the union election, while its opponents emphasized it to the maximum extent. The TWU's silence was a strategic choice that did not reflect them backing down from equality within the union. In fact, the Tribune and Arthur Fauset participated in this silence. After TWU won the election, Fauset explained the strategic silence by saying that "your true leaders are out to WIN – and the pick their battles according to their own choosing, not the choosing of the super masters"[81] Fauset understood this structural dynamic and the overall benefit of interracial unionism; thus he felt confident that even when white racism could was mobilized to divide the working class on racial lines, a union with a policy of interracial unity could win out. What relegating blacks to lower paid positions got whites was easier access to higher paying jobs, but overall wages got kept lower than they would otherwise-what interracial unionism would get whites and blacks was higher wages overall, going against the company interest. P.T.C. workers had the lowest wages of transit workers in every major city, and it was the promise of financial gains that led the TWU to win out in the union election.[82]

The radical nature of black activism can be seen in the focus on advancing black agency by those in engaged in activism against the P.T.C.. Black protesters of P.T.C. carried signs "we drive tanks, why not trolleys" (image). This spoke to the demand by black people to be in the

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80 Herbert Hill, *Black Labor And The American Legal System* (Washington: Bureau Of National Affairs, 1977) 204
81 Fauset, Arthur, "I Write As I See: P.T.C.: Now It May Be Told" *Philadelphia Tribune,* Pg. 4
82 Wolfinger, *Philly Divided*, 159

driver's seat, to be engaged in combat and working in higher paying jobs at home. The image of black people going into the driver's seat had important symbolic value for a black population fighting for freedom, self-determination, and independence. The image depicts the prominence of young people and women in black activism; both these groups had agency especially limited agency by white supremacy. So, while the P.T.C. fight was one for black male jobs, the symbolism behind it had created a wider meaning for the black community. The symbolism of being in the driver's seat was important enough that one of the 8 black workers who chose to get trained to be a trolley car driver gave up 19 years of seniority in the company which he had in the maintenance department but lost by switching positions--he chose to get trained to drive trolley cars even though he knew it meant a pay cut.[83]

With the worker's union and the FEPC pushing the P.T.C. to desegregate and the growing labor shortages of the war increasing the pressure, the company finally relented and announced it would enforce the order. This was the moment when the transit system got shutdown by striking white workers and when the P.T.C. allowed them to occupy bus depots and keep the trolley's from running. Strikers made the reason for their protest clear: race. The day after the shutdown began, Frank McMenamin, spokesman for the strikers, told the *Philadelphia Inquirer* that the strike was "Strictly a black and white issue."[84] Frank Carney, the head of the old company-controlled union that had recently been supplanted by the CIO in representing P.T.C. workers, stated bluntly in the same article: "We won't go back to work until they take the Negroes off."[85] On the first day of the strike, crowds swelled at stations in the torrid August heat but the tracks remained empty. Commuters got stood up by their hereunto reliable morning and

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[83] Hill, *Black Labor And The American Legal System*, In Fn. 92 P. 421.
[84] "Union Balked Parley, Strike Leaders Claim" *The Philadelphia Inquirer Public Ledger (1934-1969)*, August 2, 1944 (Page 3 Of 28).
[85] Ibid.

evening date: a P.T.C. vehicle. Most factories had to do without a large portion of their employees and the ones who did show up came several hours late. Companies sent out trucks with signs that named the factory they provided a ride to; nurses got rides on horse-drawn milk wagons;[86] Mayor Samuel made room for stranded commuters in his limousine;[87] and at least one woman roller-skated to work.[88] Father Divine called for all of his cars and those of his followers to be made available to war workers.[89]

The city sat on edge waiting for violence to break out. While the press focused on incidents of window smashing that occurred in black neighborhoods, the strike's most serious act of violence by far occurred when two white men in a car, wearing the same white helmets that had just been issued to policemen, shot a 13-year-old black boy in the chest as he played in the street in front of his home.[90] Whites who perpetuated violence generally did not face consequences, while black violence got significant press attention. When a black truck driver got thrown out of his truck and beaten by a group of young white men and women, the police released them after giving them a "lecture".[91] In contrast to white impunity, the *Philadelphia Tribune* actually published a front page editorial with the headline "We Are Sorry," condemning the property damaged they attributed to a negligible minority of irresponsible colored people."[92]

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[86] "Hitch-Hiking Nurses Find Old Dobbin Is Best Bet" *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, August 1, 1944. George D. Mcdowell Philadelphia Evening Bulletin Clippings. Temple University Libraries, Special Collections Research Center.
[87] "Mayor Gives A Lift -." *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, August 2, 1944. George D. Mcdowell Philadelphia Evening Bulletin Clippings. Temple University Libraries, Special Collections Research Center.
[88] War Worker Roller Skates To Work, *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, 08-02-1944
[89] "Father Divine Calls All Cars To Ease Tieup" *Philadelphia Tribune*, Aug 5, 1944 Pg. 3
[90] "2 In Car Shoot Boy In Strike Disorder *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin* August 4th 1944
[91] "Violence In Strike Scored At Hearing" *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin* 1944-08-02
[92] "We Are Sorry" *Philadelphia Tribune* August 12 1944 Pg 1
Pg. 1

The NCAACP even handed out hundreds of thousands of fliers urging calm, which appeared to be effective in easing tensions.[93] (image)

One left wing commentator described the ugly racism deployed by those leading the strike, ‘‘the common man in his undershirt,’”[94] who saw black threats everywhere: to jobs, houses, and women. A white man in his undershirt can be seen clearly in the foreground of one of the pictures below, looking at the camera. The crowd of workers leaving the Navy Yard is interracial, calm for the first days of a paralyzing hate strike, but also entirely male. The mixing of white women and black men might have caused more tensions to be unleashed. Other images of the strike reveal the role sex and gender played in the strike. A black man, with work gloves in his back pocket, gets aboard a P.T.C. trolley after the army has restored services. The driver is a white woman. The potential of black male drivers interacting with white women was cited by white strikers as a reason to keep the P.T.C. workforce segregated. The presence of soldiers was required not just to prevent racial violence but also at least in part to protect white women perhaps symbolically.

Black Activists assessments of the strike

Early analysts of the strike depicted the strike as something of a plot of the rich to divide workers. Robert C. Weaver, an economist and member of FDR’s “black cabinet,” examined the strike in *Negro Labor*, published in 1946. Weaver argues that “anti-Negro prejudice on the part of white operators was only a minor causal factor in the strike,” and instead the strike resulted from a “bitter struggle over financial power and the control of the Philadelphia Transportation

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[93] “Philadelphia, Pa. Rapid Transit Strike, 1943-45.” Naacp 1940-55. General Office File. Pennsylvania. Papers Of The Naacp., Part 13, Series A, University Publications Of America, Frederick, Md.
[94] Wolfinger *Philly Divided,* 154

Company's employees."[95] The seismic changes brought on by the New Deal and World War 2, including a burgeoning labor movement and a welfare state, spoke to significant shifts that had occurred in American society due in part to the newly substantial role of the federal government in people's everyday lives. For policymakers like Weaver interested in advancing the interests of black Americans, a revolutionary reordering of American race relations through an integrated labor movement and federal intervention might have seemed much closer and much more possible than it was. The *Baltimore Afro-American*'s opinion on the strike was mixed; the army had not acted immediately to arrest strike leaders, but it also "refused the strikers' proposal to go back to work provided they are given a written guarantee that colored motermen and conductors will not be trained and hired."[96] At the same time, the strike was something of a demoralizing blow to some in black working class hoping their contribution to the war effort would lead to a change in racial attitudes among whites; one black soldier wrote home asking "Is the City of Philadelphia in the state of Pennsylvania, USA or is it in Germany?"[97] explaining that he no longer felt like bragging about his hometown to his fellow soldiers.

Fauset's response to the strike was characteristically constructive. He urged the building up of progressive coalitions in the face of "the diabolically conceived plans of the strike instigators." The headline "Liberals Caught Napping"[98] of his article in Congress View, referred to the sleepy carelessness of social liberals in neglecting to anticipate racial reactionary forces coalescing to oppose even moderate civil rights reform in the U.S. during the 1940s. In this article Fauset argues for greater alliances and cooperation among left-wing and progressive

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[95] Robert Clifton Weaver, *Negro Labor: A National Problem*, (New York: Harcourt Brace And Company, 1946), 163

[96] "The Philadelphia Strike", *Afro-American,* Aug 12, 1944, pg. 4

[97] "Soldier Loses His Pride In Native Phila*." Philadelphia Tribune*, Sep 2, 1944, pg. 2

[98] Fauset, Arthur. 1944. "Liberals Caught Napping." Congress View, September 1944.

groups in local and national politics. Fauset does not play down the racial issue and calls for black activists to take the lead in organizing actions against the strike. Fauset even criticizes the NCAAP for leaving the NNC alone early on in the strike in organizing activism. This call for broader and deeper alliances amongst progressive groups leads Fauset appeal to patriotism, saying the defeat of the strike showed the determination of "the negro and white masses… to stand by law and order, help America win the war, and salvage from this debacle at least some shreds of honors and decency for the city of Philadelphia." In addition to his appeal to patriotism, Fauset cites a surprising variety of voices in the city who condemned the strike and supported efforts to maintain peace in the city: the interfaith Federation of Churches, both the *Inquirer* and the *Evening Bulletin*, Communist Political Association and the Veterans' Associated Fellowship. That a progressive cause like Fauset's gained support from church leaders, communists, veterans, and the editorial boards of what were at the time strongly republican newspapers suggest the broad but potentially uneasy coalition of groups Fauset wanted to work towards bringing together to advance civil rights. Fauset's optimism about the future potential of achieving true equality for black people in America might seem naïve to an uniformed observer, but really it speaks to the unique political vision of an accomplished leader in black activism.

Conclusion

Instead of simply being a harbinger of the white reactionary conservatism of the late 60s and 70s, the Philadelphia transit strike represented a moment of triumph for radical black activists attempting to advance black equality while fostering interracial solidarity during World War 2. It provides an example of the range of possible responses by black and left-wing activists to the barriers created by white supremacy in the pursuit of their goals. Attempting to democratize the American economy and enervating white supremacy's grip on American

democracy was no easy task**.** Black activists overcame the direct opposition of an entrenched conservative establishment and a large portion of the white working class in the P.T.C. fight. The social forces of the New Deal, World War Two, and the Great Migration opened up the black community to progressive politics and galvanized people to pursue a more aggressive political agenda, especially against discrimination by public services. These black activists did not just fight job discrimination for the material gains it brought to their communities; they also sought to enhance the self-concept of black people and raise expectations of their rights as American citizens. Empowering black people, not just achieving marginal concessions, necessarily required developing radical attacks on white supremacy as it manifested in American public discourse and in the American economy; it required harsh criticism of the existing American society. Yet, left-wing black activists envisioned achieving black working-class progress in the economic realm through the tools of the New Deal — unionization and state intervention. And they leveraged the circumstances of a war to defend America to advance black freedom. Their rejection of the white supremacy that underlie much of American society did not preclude them from envisioning and attempting to achieve a better America for black people and for all the people.

Images:

Image a

Image b

Image c

Image d

Image e

Image f

Attention Citizens!

PTC is standing pat on upgrading Negro workers (6 p. m. Tuesday)

WMC also stands firm.

The CIO top leadership is opposed to the stoppage and against compromise on upgrading.

FEPC stands pat.

Negro and white people and organizations have flooded officials with telegrams urging a square deal for Negro workers at PTC. Only a well-organized handful among the bus and trolley operators are behind this race-hating, undemocratic action. THEY CAN AND WILL BE DEFEATED IN THEIR EFFORTS.

CITIZENS — SIT TIGHT
Keep Your Heads and Your Tempers!

THIS STOPPAGE IS A DISGRACE TO PHILADELPHIA, TO AMERICA AND TO DEMOCRACY, but it will be settled and settled right if you —

1. Wire PTC, Mitten Bldg., to continue to stand pat on upgrading Negroes.
2. Wire Mayor Samuel to insist as Mayor that Negroes be upgraded at PTC.
3. **KEEP COOL. Treat other people as you would be treated. Share your car.**

PHILA. METROPOLITAN COUNCIL FOR EQUAL JOB OPPORTUNITY
(Representing 24 business, church, labor and civic organizations in Phila.)
Room 922 — 121 North Broad Street

NATIONAL ASS'N FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF COLORED PEOPLE
16th and Lombard Streets. For information call, PENnypacker 3470

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