




2011

Hastening the Wheels of Change: International Cold War Pressure and Civil Rights Reform During the Truman Presidency

Caley A. Robertson
Colby College

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.colby.edu/honorstheses>

 Part of the [Civil Rights and Discrimination Commons](#), [Other International and Area Studies Commons](#), [Other Public Affairs, Public Policy and Public Administration Commons](#), [Peace and Conflict Studies Commons](#), and the [Public Policy Commons](#)

Colby College theses are protected by copyright. They may be viewed or downloaded from this site for the purposes of research and scholarship. Reproduction or distribution for commercial purposes is prohibited without written permission of the author.

Recommended Citation

Robertson, Caley A., "Hastening the Wheels of Change: International Cold War Pressure and Civil Rights Reform During the Truman Presidency" (2011). *Honors Theses*. Paper 625.
<https://digitalcommons.colby.edu/honorstheses/625>

This Honors Thesis (Open Access) is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Research at Digital Commons @ Colby. It has been accepted for inclusion in Honors Theses by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Colby.

Hastening the Wheels of Change:

International Cold War Pressure and Civil Rights Reform During the
Truman Presidency

Caley A. Robertson

L. Sandy Maisel Fellow 2011

Recipient of the Jack Foner History Prize for the Best Senior Essay 2011

Senior Honours Project

April 2011

Advisor: Professor Robert S. Weisbrot

Second Reader: Professor Paul A. Josephson

Acknowledgments

When I decided to commit my senior year to writing an honours project, I could never have predicted the voyage would take me through as many dusty library stacks, homogenous archive boxes, and user-unfriendly digital search websites as I have actually encountered. Perhaps if my advisor, Professor Robert S. Weisbrot, had warned me I would get stuck in a snowstorm in rural Missouri at the end of January I might have changed my mind. In actuality, however, (increments of weather aside) writing this paper has been one of the most rewarding intellectual experiences of my life. For Professor Weisbrot's continual support and the painstaking hours he spent discussing and reviewing this project with me, I will be forever grateful.

There are many other people "present at the creation" of this study who helped bring my thoughts out onto these pages, and who deserve my sincere thanks. To Professor John Turner and the Goldfarb Center for Public Affairs and Civic engagement, for the grant and fellowship that enabled two research trips, one to the Truman Library in Independence, MO, and the other to the National Archives in Washington, DC. To Professors Elizabeth LaCouture and Jason Petrusis, for the emotional and academic support during a period of painful writer's block, your advice was incredibly calming at every turn. To Peggy Menchen, the research warrior in Miller Library, for her time tracking down primary sources from around the country. To Professor Elizabeth Leonard, for excellent criticisms as I struggled to develop an effective narrative within the text. To Julia Essenburg, for working with me almost weekly on crafting the prose, and for helping me maintain at least the guise of actual sanity. To my second reader, Professor Paul A. Josephson for constant enquiry and encouragement throughout the year. To Ai Yamanaka, for sharing the adventure. And finally, to Kristin Raymond, a friend whose presence in the shadows of this project was always appreciated, no less her emergence in the final hours to bring the paper home.

Contents

<u>Acknowledgments</u>	Page 1
<u>Contents</u>	Page 2
<u>Introduction</u>	Page 3
<u>Chapter One: <i>The White American Dream</i>: Moral Legitimacy in the Cold War Arena</u>	Page 7
Wartime Foreign Critics of American Racism.....	Page 8
Polarising Forces and the Rise of Racial Consciousness After the War.....	Page 14
Naming and Shaming in the United Nations Commission on Human Rights.....	Page 20
<u>Chapter Two: <i>Breaking the Taboo</i>: Federal Engagement with U.S. Civil Rights Reform</u> ...	Page 27
The Department of State: Difficulties with the Empty Vessel.....	Page 28
Truman: A Man of Principle and Pragmatism.....	Page 37
Governments Are Instituted Among Men.....	Page 43
Civil Rights in Presidential Rhetoric After <i>To Secure These Rights</i>	Page 57
<u>Chapter Three: <i>Literal Actions from Literary Abstractions</i>:</u>	
Federal Attempts to Promote <i>de facto</i> Reform in American Society.....	Page 61
Prejudice and Property: A Shifting Government Role in the Supreme Court.....	Page 64
Making Civil Rights a Presidential Plank.....	Page 71
Separate As Constitutionally Unequal.....	Page 75
<u>Epilogue</u>	Page 80
<u>Bibliography</u>	Page 82

Introduction

In the early Cold War arena, international pressure on the United States to live according to its ideological rhetoric enabled the Truman Administration to set a precedent for federal engagement in domestic civil rights reform. As the United States led the march to institutionalise human rights as an international standard of moral legitimacy, the country's grisly record of racial oppression and violence invited foreign and domestic criticism alike. In a period of intense political friction in which both the United States and the Soviet Union attempted to export their political and social ideology to the nonaligned Third World,¹ Washington's human rights record both embarrassed the federal government and interfered with its foreign policy objectives. In response to these pressures, President Harry S. Truman and his advisors led a campaign for civil rights based on their strongly held principles of freedom and equality for all. This period in history fundamentally altered the role of the executive branch in domestic social policy, and initiated a movement of change that would continue throughout the second half of the twentieth century.

This paper intends to prove five discrete points. First: Cold War tensions brought questions of moral legitimacy to the forefront of the national agenda. Second: during the Truman presidency the country's moral legitimacy came to depend on its human rights record. Third: due to their belief in the democratic principles of freedom and equality, President Harry S. Truman and his advisors at least tacitly supported legal and economic desegregation (though perhaps not social.) Fourth: foreign pressure on the United States to live according to its ideological rhetoric gave the Truman Administration the incentive to take action on an issue it was already ostensibly

¹ The term 'Third World' is used in this paper according to its Cold War definition of non-aligned states, in contrast the 'First World' capitalist nations, and the 'Second World' communist countries. Broadly speaking, the term 'Third World' included most of Africa, parts of Central and South America, and much of Asia. Given the strict dichotomy of international politics during this time, the term 'Third World' had derogatory connotations that are in no way intended in this paper. The 'Third World,' it also must be noted, is not synonymous with the 'Developing World,' which describes economic development, not political allegiance.

committed to. Finally, although most of the steps taken towards civil rights during the Truman presidency were more symbolic than substantive, the administration initiated a federal engagement with race discrimination that would continue throughout the twentieth century, ultimately destroying the Jim Crow legal system and similar institutions of racial oppression.

The majority of studies on Cold War civil rights recognise the domestic tensions associated with the spread of communism, but fail to consider how the institutionalisation of the principles of human rights—particularly through the United Nations—and the global wave of racial consciousness played out in the U.S. domestic arena.² Among those studies that do consider the international influence on American race relations are those by Mary L. Dudziak and Thomas Borstelmann. Both of these authors argue that international pressure--often orchestrated by the Soviet Union--encouraged Truman to embrace social reform at least as a long-term goal. Dudziak's article 'Desegregation as a Cold War Imperative' also suggests that although the Truman administration ostensibly supported desegregation, the personal opinions of the president and other officials differed somewhat from the administration's public line. In *The Cold War and the Color Line*, Thomas Borstelmann agrees that influential government officials had a limited personal commitment to civil rights, noting that even Secretary of State Dean Acheson, "[t]he most influential American policy maker 'present at the creation' of the cold war (sic) offered little enthusiasm for racial equality."³ While this paper agrees that President Truman and many of his advisors maintained personal prejudices throughout their career, it disagrees about the influence of these prejudices on their commitment to implementing reform. Truman's administration made significant contributions to the civil rights movement between 1945 and 1953, and these steps

² See William C. Berman, 'Civil Rights and Civil Liberties,' in Richard S. Kirkendall (ed.) *The Truman Period as a Research Field* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press; 1967) for a full consideration of research that had been done on civil rights during the Truman presidency, which though outdated references a number of sources of the nature above mentioned.

³ Thomas Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; 2001), Page 554

relied on a moral commitment in addition to pragmatic incentives. Though international and domestic criticisms of the Jim Crow legal system amid Cold War tensions gave the White House a *realpolitik* motive to push for desegregation, Truman's presidential commitment to the issue suggests his personal belief in the moral correctness of racial equality, at least within the legal and economic spheres.

In *Harry Truman and Civil Rights: Moral Courage and Political Risks*, Michael R. Gardner paints Truman as a man with robust moral integrity. Gardner quotes George M. Elsey, administrative assistant to the president, who described Truman as having an "outspoken...conviction that all Americans should have equal rights and equal opportunities under the law."⁴ Though Gardner's representation of President Truman as an idealist willing to risk his political career to achieve goals he had set for the country may be somewhat embellished, there is some validity to Gardner's claim that the president's personal interest in desegregation was an act of moral courage. Pragmatism and courage intertwined in the late 1940s and early 1950s to allow a young administration the opportunity and context in which to develop a federally driven social reform program seeking civil rights for all.

In 'Brown v. Board of Education and the Interest-Convergence Dilemma,' Derrick A. Bell Jr. argues that the principled argument for racial equality was not enough to drive reform in the United States during the Cold War years. So long as whites believed that racial equality conflicted with their individual and group interests, Bell argues, they were not prepared to accept any level of social reform. Bell restricts his study to the decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*, a legal case in which the Truman Administration was notably active through a Department of Justice *amicus curiae* brief. If extended to consider why different levels of reform were and were not

⁴ George M. Elsey, Administrative Assistant to President Truman, quoted Michael R. Gardner, *Harry Truman and Civil Rights: Moral Courage and Political Risks* (Carbondale, CO: Southern Illinois University Press; 2002), Page x

acceptable during the Truman presidency, Bell's theory offers a useful framework of analysis for both the actions and the rhetoric of the federal government during this period. In order to justify intervention in domestic civil rights, the federal government needed to paint reform as in the interests of white America. During the Truman presidency, international condemnation of domestic race discrimination threatened the nation's moral legitimacy, providing exactly the *realpolitik* incentive necessary for the federal government to highlight civil rights in the national agenda.

The sheer volume of literature on the U.S. civil rights movement attests to the attractiveness this topic, but it does not explain *why* this topic is important. History, the study of patterns and processes that overlap and occasionally conflict to create dynamic change within societies, is an ever growing and changing field that benefits from fresh opinions and conjectures. This paper offers an analysis of a society that resisted change until concepts of moral legitimacy in the global arena forced it, and eventually its people, to consider where their ideological commitments lay. This study contributes to the field of civil rights history by arguing that individual actors during the Truman presidency and global processes *combined* to instigate a crucial change within the federal government, and, subsequently, within the fabric of democracy as it is enacted within the United States.

Chapter One

The White American Dream: Moral Legitimacy in the Cold War Arena

In his pledge, on December 29th 1940, of American industrial aid to Great Britain—which was then under siege by the German Air Force—President Franklin D. Roosevelt told the American public, “We must be the great arsenal of democracy” in the war against powers intending “not only to dominate all life and thought in their own country, but also to enslave the whole of Europe, and then to use the resources of Europe to dominate the rest of the world.”⁵ In this speech, Roosevelt criticized the expansionist policies of European fascists, and committed the U.S. to assisting “Democracy's fight against world conquest.”⁶ Days later, the president reiterated this sentiment in a message to Congress that described the war as a fight for “Four Freedoms”: freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom from want, and freedom from fear. Roosevelt described his decision to end American isolationism as impelled by the country’s need to assert the democratic principles of freedom and equality abroad, a notion that established the tone of American rhetoric for the remainder of the twentieth century. Meanwhile, however, at home the Jim Crow system of legal discrimination oppressed some thirteen million U.S. citizens, something foreign peoples did not fail to ignore as the U.S. advanced a strictly segregated army onto the European continent.⁷ The United State’s role in institutionalising human rights globally through institutions like the United Nations over subsequent years set an international standard of moral

⁵ Radio Address Delivered by President Roosevelt From Washington, December 29, 1940 [Sourced at: <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/WorldWar2/arsenal.htm> on Saturday, April 2nd 2011 at 4:38ECT]

⁶ Radio Address Delivered by President Roosevelt From Washington, December 29, 1940 [Sourced at: <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/WorldWar2/arsenal.htm> on Saturday, April 2nd 2011 at 4:38ECT]

⁷ This is an estimate based on U.S. Census Bureau statistics that state that in 1940 there were 12.8 million Black Americans (or 9.8% of the population), and in 1950 that number had increased to 15 million (10% of the population.)

legitimacy contradictory to the country's own racial practices, giving domestic and foreign critics ammunition to discredit the U.S. government on the new world stage.⁸

Wartime Foreign Critics of American Racism

Throughout the Second World War, the United States stationed a number of GIs in Great Britain, a country Dwight D. Eisenhower, Supreme Commander of the Allied Expeditionary Forces, called “devoid of racial consciousness”⁹ because of the population's apparent colour blindness. White American troops attempted to assert the colour line in Britain during the war, taking particular interest in “protecting” white British women—who they believed did not understand the importance of racial segregation—from black American soldiers. The British population, however, rejected white American attempts to assert segregation, and British women continued regularly engaged in relations with black American soldiers. Judging American troops by their character, not by their physical appearance, many Britons reported finding “black GIs more polite and less arrogant than white GIs, and less likely to complain about the relative lack of American-style comforts.”¹⁰ Subsequently, communities often developed closer ties with the black GIs stationed in their midst. In the small village of Bamber Bridge in Lancashire, for example, after “the U.S. military authorities had demanded that the pubs impose a colour bar...landlords had responded with [signs saying] ‘Black Troops Only.’”¹¹ For African-American soldiers, life in a country where “the colour line was not the custom”¹² proved that a society did not have to be divided by along racial lines as it was at home. “The more I see of England,” wrote

⁸ The “new” world stage being the United Nations and other such international forums aimed at preserving a collective security and global (or indeed regional) peace.

⁹ Thomas Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; 2001), Page 34

¹⁰ Thomas Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; 2001), Page 34

¹¹ Harold Pollins, ‘The Battle of Bamber Bridge,’ BBC History: WW2 People's War: An Archive of World War Two Memories as sourced at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/ww2peopleswar/stories/85/a3677385.shtml> [on Tuesday, 16th November 2010 at 21:09_{ECT}]

¹² Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), Page 83

black Lieutenant Joseph O. Curtis in 1944, “the more disgusted I become with Americans.”¹³ In addition to fuelling British criticisms of white American racism, confrontations over what constituted “appropriate” racial practice in Europe increased tensions across the colour line between American troops. While the apparent colour-blindness of Europeans inspired black Americans to seek equal treatment at home, it inspired whites to resort to violent measures in an attempt to reassert racial dominance.

European interactions with American troops during the war highlighted the apparent hypocrisy of Roosevelt’s freedom rhetoric, exposing Washington to criticism from Allied and Axis powers alike. As Lord Malcolm Hailey noted in a 1944 article in *The London Times*:

There is a growing recognition by the American public that in a conflict which is so largely a war of ideas, their country occupies a somewhat exposed position as a defender of the democratic faith. ‘When we talk of freedom and opportunity for all nations,’ it has been said, ‘some of the mocking paradoxes of our own society become so clear that they can no longer be ignored.’...The position of the Negro...has many features which seem to be in conflict with that sense of the moral value and dignity of the individual which is a fundamental article of the American creed.¹⁴

Lord Hailey’s editorial highlights the paradox of the U.S.’s role in a war where the self-proclaimed leader of the democratic faith failed to implement its rhetoric at home. Moreover, whereas the Allied states discussed U.S. racial practices as a hypocrisy in need of reform, Axis powers sought primarily to weaken the America’s reputation as leader of the free world. Figure One,¹⁵ a Japanese propaganda image from the war period, depicts the American, British, Chinese, and Dutch leaders (Roosevelt, Churchill, Chiang Kai-Shek and a clog to represent the exiled Dutch leader Gerbrandy) trampling over African Americans, Indians, Southeast Asians, and Indonesians respectively.¹⁶ Illustrations that compared American racism with that of British and

¹³ Thomas Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; 2001), Page 35

¹⁴ Lord Malcolm Hailey, ‘America’s Colour Problem: An Objective Survey of the Negro’s Lot, Contrasts in the North and South,’ *The London Times*, Issue 49917, Tuesday, 25th July 1944; Page 5, Column F.

¹⁵ Figure One is an untitled image found in the following article: Anthony V. Navarro, ‘A Critical Comparison Between Japanese and American Propaganda during World War II,’ sourced from <https://www.msu.edu/~navarro6/srop.html> [on Tuesday, 16th November 2010 at 22:25ECT]

¹⁶ Hence the A, B, C, D; the D referring to the Dutch, though that letter is white, unlike the others, and Prime Minister Gerbrandy is not included

Chinese colonialists offended white Americans who believed the democracy promoted equality, not imperial aggression. For many African-Americans, however, such depictions were strikingly accurate, raising questions among black soldiers as to why they were fighting for freedom in Europe when they did not enjoy basic liberties at home.

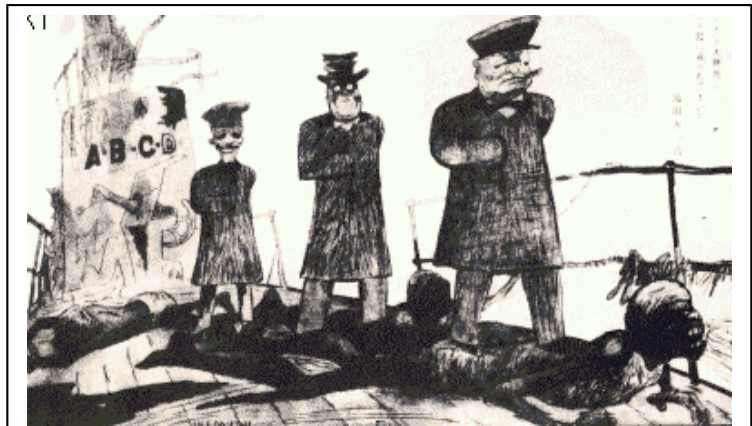


Figure One

A Japanese propaganda image disseminated during the Second World War (exact date unknown.) The image depicts the “A, B, C, D” American, British, Chinese and Dutch (an empty clog as the Dutch government was in exile during the Nazi occupation) leaders Roosevelt, Churchill, Chiang Kai-Shek, and Gerbrandy walking over dark-skinned peoples symbolising African Americans, Indians, Southeast Asians, and Indonesians respectively.

The Nazi propaganda machine took the idea of American ideological hypocrisy to an extreme, as can be seen in Figure Two,¹⁷ a 1944 poster disseminated in the Netherlands. Here, the American “Liberators” are personified as a war machine, adorned in a Ku Klux Klan hood. The machine’s body is a cage of African Americans, explicitly suggesting that racial persecution is at the heart of American society. The depiction of a Jewish-American clinging to a moneybag, and the Star of David between the machine’s legs suggest Jews controlled the wealth and reproduction of the American war machine, a provocative thought for an anti-Semitic audience, and a perennial theme in anti-American propaganda. The noose around the machine’s right arm is juxtaposed with a record in its hand, suggesting the ease with which popular culture and violent assault co-exist within American society. The various pageant banners ridicule America’s obsession with beauty, and the representation of “Miss America” as a Native American furthers the racial irony of the image. Finally, an onlooker, presumably European, holds a sign in Dutch, which reads, "De

¹⁷ ‘Liberators,’ a Nazis propaganda poster, 1944, the Netherlands; as reproduced on http://www.oddee.com/item_66536.aspx [sourced on Thursday, December 2nd 2010 at 12:26ECT]



Figure Two

Nazi propaganda image from 1944, disseminated in the Netherlands.

home.

The U.S. media’s depiction of Nazi anti-Semitism during World War II as inhumane and distinctly undemocratic also challenged the legitimacy of domestic racial practices. In her article, ‘Desegregation as a Cold War Imperative,’ Mary L. Dudziak argues that “In 1944, democracy was, to many Americans, much more than an abstract idea.” Indeed, “part of the meaning of the

USA zullen de Europeesche Kultuur van den ondergang redden," meaning “The USA will save the European culture from ruin.”¹⁸ As anyone vaguely familiar with the Nazi party will note, this image does not represent condemnation of America’s racial practices on ideological grounds. This image is powerful not merely because it presents the United States as an imperial force, but because it also exposes the contradiction between Roosevelt’s “arsenal of democracy”¹⁹ and his failure to implement that rhetoric at

¹⁸ Translated for me by a Dutch friend, Laurens Golverdingen, who admitted the archaic language could be translated such that the banner reads “The USA will save the European culture from ruin,” or “The USA will save the European culture from doom,” although the connotations are much the same.

¹⁹ Radio Address Delivered by President Roosevelt From Washington, December 29, 1940 [Sourced at: <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/WorldWar2/arsenal.htm> on Saturday, April 2nd 2011 at 4:38_{ECT}]

democracy they fought for was its incompatibility with Nazi racism and anti-Semitism.”²⁰ The threat of Nazi encroachment on American freedom was a prevalent theme in U.S. wartime propaganda, as can be seen in Figure Three,²¹ in which American children look fearfully at the shadow of a swastika falling across their yard. Some Americans identified the parallels between Nazi anti-Semitism and domestic racial practices, denouncing both as undemocratic and contrary to Roosevelt’s rhetoric of the American ideal. A *New York Times* article from July 1939, for example, quotes John Brophy, the white national director of the Congress of Industrial Organizations, as saying, "Anti-Semitism, like every other form of racism and minority hatred, has a real place in the plans of un-democratic, un-American forces seeking to dominate our social and political life."²²In identifying racism (in general terms, not merely anti-Semitism) as a tool of un-democratic forces, Brophy also identified the racial practices of the Southern states as a target for domestic reform.

In the same sentiment, Justice Frank Murphy of the United States Supreme Court asserted in 1944 that



Figure Three
U.S. propaganda depicting the threat of Nazi encroachment as an incentive to promote the war effort by buying war bonds. Disseminated in 1942.

²⁰ Mary L. Dudziak, “Desegregation as a Cold War Imperative” *Stanford Law Review*, Vol. 41, No. 1 (November, 1988), Page 70.
²¹ ‘Don’t Let That Shadow Touch Them. Buy War Bonds.’ U.S. wartime propaganda poster, designed by Lawrence Beall Smith, 1942, U.S. Department of Treasury. As reproduced at <http://www.nh.gov/nhsl/ww2/ww21prt.html> [Sourced on Wednesday, November 24th 2010 at 18:50ECT]
²² ‘LIBERTY HELD ENDANGERED: Conspiracy Against Democracy Seen in Anti-Semitism,’ *New York Times*, July 30th 1939, Page 9

“unless immediate and decisive changes were made in attitude and practices respecting racial minorities, the American principles of freedom and equality would be dashed hopelessly upon the rocks of violent persecution and oppression.”²³ Like Brophy, Justice Murphy identified the similarities between racial tensions within the United States and those the war was making manifest upon the European continent. In Europe, racial intolerance had progressed from random lynchings to the systematic annihilation of an entire population, and though this seemed a large difference to some, many Americans undoubtedly identified the line between persecution and genocide as impossibly thin. To Murphy, the similarities between Nazi and American practices would entirely discredit the democratic creed if the government failed to implement change.

The Swedish Nobel Laureate, Gunnar Myrdal, wrote a study in 1944 documenting American race relations, which he called “America’s greatest failure but also America’s incomparably great opportunity for the future.”²⁴ Myrdal argued that in the struggle between democratic ideals and racial practices in the United States there could only be one winner. In light of the country’s rhetorical claim to democratic principles, Myrdal noted that “any and all concessions to Negro rights in this phase of the history of the world will repay the nation many times, while any and all injustices inflicted upon them could be extremely costly.”²⁵ In other words, the United States’ moral integrity as a democratic nation required that the government protect minority groups from racial injustice. As a foreign white critic, Myrdal’s thorough and impartial analysis of U.S. domestic race relations was vastly influential both to the public and government in the United States, proven at least in part by the number of copies sold and

²³ ‘Action to End Anti-Semitism in U.S. Demanded Here by Justice Murphy; Speech at the B’nai B’rith Interfaith Unity Session Warns Nation of Serious Dangers in Growth of Undemocratic Forces,’ *New York Times*, May 9th 1944, Page 36

²⁴ ‘American Dilemma,’ *Time*, Monday, February 7th 1944 [Sourced at <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,791292,00.html#ixzz1IPL0ecZQ> on Saturday, April 2nd 2011 at 6:31_{ECT}]

²⁵ Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* (Piscataway, NJ: Transaction Publishers; 1996 (1944)), Page 1015

adaptations printed in the years after its publication.²⁶ Though racism remained a formidable force in the U.S. at the end of the Second World War, foreign critics began to recognise that federal lip service to egalitarian ideals was frequently void of practical meaning, and the plethora of media coverage on the topic propelled domestic civil rights reform to the top of the U.S.'s national and international agenda.

Polarising Forces and the Rise of Racial Consciousness After the War

African-American participation in World War II, combined with a belief in government-initiated social reform as established by Roosevelt's New Deal, meant that black veterans returning home in 1945 hoped "to find a new day for democracy."²⁷ Instead, white southerners greeted black soldiers with violence, as they attempted to reassert dominance and remind black Americans that their role in the war had not changed their position within society. Taking the "lesson" to the extreme, as Thomas Borstelmann notes, "white Southerners unleashed a wave of intimidation, terror, and death upon African Americans that lasted for much of 1946 and 1947."²⁸ Violence came in many forms, including riots such as one in Columbia, Tennessee in February 1946, during which the police arrested 100 African Americans, two of whom were "shot and killed...while under questioning."²⁹ Newspapers overflowed with reports of race-related atrocities, such as the story of ex-GI John S. Jones from Minden, Louisiana, who, on August 8th 1946 was burnt alive with a blowtorch and then dismembered. In many instances, law enforcement officers simply looked the other way as whites committed these barbarous crimes; however, upon occasion, the police themselves perpetrated acts of racial violence. In Batesburg,

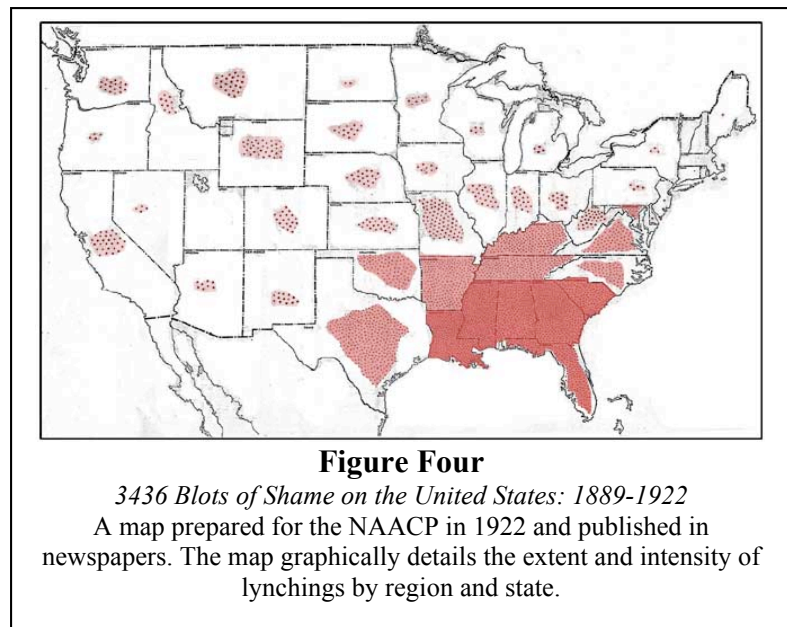
²⁶ David W. Southern, *Gunnar Myrdal and Black-White Relations: The Use and Abuse of 'An American Dilemma 1944-1969'* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press; 1987), Pages 103-104

²⁷ Steven F. Lawson, 'Setting the Agenda of the Civil Rights Movement,' as reproduced in Lawson, *To Secure These Rights* (Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin's; 2004), Page 7

²⁸ Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; 2001), Page 54

²⁹ Steven F. Lawson, 'Setting the Agenda of the Civil Rights Movement,' as reproduced in Lawson, *To Secure These Rights* (Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin's; 2004), Page 8

South Carolina, for example, Police Chief Lynwood Shull “gouged out the eyes of uniformed Army Sergeant Isaac Woodward (and then refus[ed] him medical attention for a day.)”³⁰ This horrific wave of racial violence was just the latest in a long line of grievances that minority groups—blacks in particular—held against white rule in the United States.



The inhumanity of each incident emphasised the longevity of black oppression, breathing life into a passionate domestic reform movement for African-American rights. Amid the brutality, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) worked fervently to

pressure the government into action, citing research such as that presented in Figure Four,³¹ which illustrates the history of lynchings in the United States between 1889 and 1922. Founded in 1909, the NAACP worked towards their “vision of America as one nation in which all of her citizens were ensured political, educational, social, and economic equality.”³² They railed against discrimination and anti-black violence in the South, drawing public attention to the parallels between domestic race problems and colonialism around the world. Members argued that the freedom rhetoric initiated under Roosevelt was not representative of life for the thirteen million black American citizens persecuted under the Jim Crow laws. Moreover, they accused the

³⁰ Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; 2001), Page 54

³¹ Figure Two, *3436 Blots of Shame on the United States: 1889-1922*, was found the National Endowment for the Humanities teaching website EDSITEment, in a section on the NAACP’s Anti-Lynching Campaign in the 1920s. Sourced at http://edsitement.neh.gov/view_lesson_plan.asp?id=805 [on Tuesday, 16th November 2010 at 22:46_{ECT}]

³² NAACP Interactive Historical Timeline, speaker Laurence Fishburne Jr., NAACP Website as sourced at <http://www.naacphistory.org/#/home> [on Wednesday, 17th November 2010 at 10:16_{ECT}]

government of failing to protect its own people from brutal oppression.³³ Unlike other domestic groups pushing for racial equality, the NAACP's moderate tone earned it governmental respect, ensuring the organisation would have a voice in future negotiations. The black press as a whole, despite varying political opinions, shared a commitment to exposing U.S. domestic race problems on the international stage.

Following the Second World War, the U.S. did not resort back to isolationism, but instead took a leading role in the creation of the United Nations, a term coined, not incidentally, by President Franklin D. Roosevelt. The United Nations (U.N.) was founded by 51 states in an attempt to develop relationships among nations that would maintain peace and security, promote social progress, and improve standards of living around the globe.³⁴ Embodying the American principles of democracy, peace, freedom, and understanding, the United Nations “served to institutionalize equal human rights as cultural rules for world society,” and to promote the principle that “failure to demonstrate adherence to them would undermine a nation’s desires to be a world leader.”³⁵ As such, the United States’ growing role in the international arena introduced a new set of considerations onto the domestic policy table. As John D. Skrentny notes, “Before World War II, the world audience, and particularly the non-European audience, was not a significant factor in American domestic politics, at least as regarded domestic race relations.”³⁶ All of this changed after the war, however, because Truman inherited a state engaged in global affairs with a powerful but unenforceable rhetoric that conflicted with existing domestic policy. Though American notions of freedom and equality inspired populations around the world, it also

³³ See the provocative article in the *New York Times*, ‘KILLING OF NEGROES IS PROTESTED HERE: NAACP Tells Truman Shooting of 2 by Tennessee Troopers in Jail was Worthy of Nazis,’ March 2nd 1946, Page 26

³⁴ United Nations website: UN at a Glance at <http://www.un.org/en/aboutun/index.shtml> [Sourced on Thursday, December 16th 2010 at 9:49_{ECT}]

³⁵ John David Skrentny, ‘The Effect of the Cold War on African-American Civil Rights: America and the World Audience, 1945-1968,’ *Theory and Society*, Vol. 27, No. 2 (April 1999), Page 245

³⁶ John David Skrentny, ‘The Effect of the Cold War on African-American Civil Rights: America and the World Audience, 1945-1968,’ *Theory and Society*, Vol. 27, No. 2 (April 1999), Page 243

attracted foreign attention—particularly among non-white populations—to a domestic problem, something African Americans seeking social reform were keen to exploit.

The postwar arena also brought a new strain of policy considerations as tensions developed between the Soviet Union and the United States. Soviet Premier Joseph Stalin's April 1945 prediction that, "each victor of the war would introduce his own political and social system as far forward as his own armies could advance,"³⁷ accurately described the steady postwar erosion of the wartime alliance's political cohesion. Telegrams from statesmen George Kennan³⁸ and Nikolai Novikov³⁹ to their respective governments regarding the situation of U.S.-Soviet relations in 1946, cautioned of the expansionist policies of the opposing administration. Kennan, on the one hand, warned that the Soviet Union, determined that no *modus vivendi* could exist with the United States, would seek to weaken the U.S. on both the domestic and international level until "our traditional way of life be destroyed."⁴⁰ Novikov, on the other hand, warned the Kremlin that there were "Obvious indications of the U.S. effort to establish world dominance,"⁴¹ and that the Soviet Union and its allies were targets for American aggression. These telegrams poignantly depict the mutual distrust between the two emerging superpowers in the aftermath of the war, a distrust that dissolved further as both governments took action to contain the influence of the other in the European continent. From this point onwards, American foreign policymakers put the containment of communism at the top of their political agenda. Cold Warriors on both sides of the Atlantic understood the global political alignment as a dichotomy in which a state could only support one side or the other. In this 'zero-sum' game, successful containment policy required both states to expand their political influence into regions of the world the United States, at least,

³⁷ W.R. Smyser, *From Yalta to Berlin: The Cold War Struggle Over Germany* (St. Martin's Press; 2000), Page 34

³⁸ Deputy Chief of the US Mission in Moscow

³⁹ Ambassador of the Soviet Union to the United States

⁴⁰ Cable by George F. Kennan, February 22, 1946. Part 5

⁴¹ Cable by Nikolai Novikov, September 27, 1946. Point 2

had had little interest in prior to that time. The principle of state sovereignty, another concept established by the United Nations, meant the superpowers could not gain the political allegiances they sought by simply storming into the Third World with military force and imposing their respective ideologies on the populations. As such, propaganda on both sides became the primary means of discrediting the enemy and advancing their own doctrines abroad. Thus, the incompatibility of American race discrimination with the cultural rules of human rights established in the postwar arena became an important theme in the Soviet Union's propaganda efforts to paint American leadership as morally illegitimate.

As a communist state, the Soviet Union interpreted and presented American democracy to Third World nations as an exploitative capitalist system, in which the bourgeois class (overwhelmingly white) lacked the incentive to correct its oppressive ways. In 1945, the U.S. Embassy in Moscow even noted that the city's Foreign Language Institute taught English with a textbook called 'Stories About Negroes,' which depicted the treacherous conditions American blacks lived under. This book, therefore, taught English language learners that racism was a basic facet of American culture. Soviet communists quickly identified blacks as the oppressed "class" in American society, a group promised equality by the law, but frequently denied the right to vote due to poll taxes.⁴² An article in *Trud*, a daily Russian newspaper and the mouthpiece of the Soviet Labour Unions, in 1946, explained, "The purpose of the unbridled terror directed against the negroes was to keep the negro masses from participating in the elections."⁴³ By preventing blacks from participation in the voting process, *Trud* argued—in a manner U.S. Embassy officials considered "representative of the frequent Soviet press comment on the question of Negro

⁴² NARS Doc. 811.4016/8-2646. Memorandum from U.S. Embassy in Moscow to the Department of State, August 26th 1946.

⁴³ NARS Doc. 811.4016/8-2646. Memorandum from U.S. Embassy in Moscow to the Department of State, August 26th 1946.

discrimination in the United States"⁴⁴—white workers maintained economic and political domination. The article went on to call “semi-slave forms of oppression and exploitation are the rule [in the U.S.]”⁴⁵ The Kremlin’s decision to portray racial savagery as an American norm at a time when U.S. domestic news sources overflowed with images of Southern racial violence left the Truman administration vulnerable to criticism from all angles. By November 1946, American Embassy officials in Moscow noted that “recurring dispatches in Soviet press on this subject [of racial discrimination in the capitalist world] may portend stronger emphasis on this theme as a Soviet propaganda weapon.”⁴⁶

The postwar international arena also witnessed a wave of independence movements as colonial populations sought to fulfil their right to self-determination as established by the United Nations Charter of June 1945. The principle of self-determination holds that a nation has the right to determine its own statehood, mode of government and political allegiances, which for colonially-ruled peoples legitimised a revolutionary end to oppression. As non-white peoples around the world threw off the shackles of white rule with varying displays of force and dialogue, the U.S.’s human rights record continued to impair its ability to contain communism around the globe. As anti-American propaganda spread beyond the borders of the Soviet Union, the Truman Administration “realized that their ability to sell democracy to the Third World was seriously hampered by continuing racial injustice at home.”⁴⁷ To the non-white world, evidence of U.S. domestic racism suggested that the American creed had a “Whites Only” sign on it, an interpretation the USSR continually reinforced. Though black Americans sought equality not

⁴⁴ NARS Doc. 811.4016/8-2646. Memorandum from U.S. Embassy in Moscow to the Department of State, August 26th 1946.

⁴⁵ NARS Doc. 811.4016/8-2646. Translation of article in *Trud*, printed on August 23rd 1946 entitled ‘Position of Negroes in the USA,’ transmitted to the Department of State in a memorandum on August 26th.

⁴⁶ NARS Doc. 811.4016/11-2046. Memorandum from the U.S. Embassy in Moscow to the Secretary of State, November 20th 1946.

⁴⁷ Mary L. Dudziak, “Desegregation as a Cold War Imperative” *Stanford Law Review*, Vol. 41, No. 1 (November, 1988), Page 62-3.

independence, self-determination encouraged U.S. civil rights activists to seek a voice in domestic politics, a voice that called passionately for an end to legalised racism.

Naming and Shaming in the United Nations Commission on Human Rights

The international standards of moral legitimacy established by the United Nation made the institution the perfect forum for American civil rights groups to air their grievances in a global arena, drawing attention to federal inaction over domestic human rights abuses. Civil rights groups took their petitions to the U.N. Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR), which had been established in February 1946 to create an international bill of rights, and to investigate accusations of human rights violations brought forth by governments, non-governmental groups, and human rights activists. UNCHR internationalized America's race problems in a way previously inconceivable, publicly humiliating the Truman Administration by once again highlighting the validity of Myrdal's claims in *An American Dilemma*.

While the State Department had not anticipated domestic actors using the U.N. to discredit the federal government, officials had considered that the Soviet Union would abuse the forum as a means to disseminate anti-American propaganda. In November 1947, Dean Rusk of the State Department's office of United Nation's Affairs warned that UNCHR's Subcommittee on the Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities offered the most palpable threat to U.S. legitimacy on the global stage. "This Subcommittee," Rusk wrote to a fellow State official, "was established on the initiative of the U.S.S.R., and there is every indication that that country and others will raise questions concerning our domestic problems in this regard."⁴⁸ Given the

⁴⁸ Memo from Rusk to Hulten (November 4th 1947), NARS Doc. No. 501.B.D. Human Rights/11-447 as quoted in Mary L. Dudziak, "Desegregation as a Cold War Imperative" *Stanford Law Review*, Vol. 41, No. 1 (November, 1988), Page 94

impressive Soviet media coverage of U.S. race discrimination in the late 1940s,⁴⁹ Rusk's concerns were perfectly reasonable, and though it was actually American citizens who engaged the U.N. in discussions of the "Negro Problem,"⁵⁰ this only added credibility to Soviet propaganda. Within a year of the war, black Americans utilised their country's new and purportedly "moralistic" role (the result of governmental rhetoric) in the international community as leverage to promote social reform. In the Cold War context, these actions threatened U.S. prestige, making domestic strife an impediment to national security. Between 1946 and 1951, three separate American civil rights organizations—the National Negro Congress (NNC), the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and the Civil Rights Congress (CRC)—petitioned the United Nations in protest of continued racial discrimination in the United States. These petitions are significant not because UNCHR had any power to compel the U.S. government to implement change, but because they greatly embarrassed the Truman Administration in front of enemy, ally, and nonaligned states alike. If Truman's ability to sell democracy to the Third World had not already been destroyed by the wave of violence reported in the international press, domestic petitions seeking redress for human rights violations during his presidency certainly raised questions about the country's moral legitimacy.

In June 1946, the National Negro Congress presented the first of these petitions to UNCHR on behalf of black Americans seeking "relief from oppression."⁵¹ As Azza Salama Layton notes in *International Politics and Civil Rights Policies in the United States, 1941-1960*, "the National Negro Congress sought five million signatures for its petition and was endorsed by

⁴⁹ In fact, "The US Central Intelligence Group (precursor to the CIA) reported in 1947 that 'the bulk of Moscow's criticism appears to be focused on U.S. discrimination against Negroes.'"— Thomas Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; 2001), Page 75

⁵⁰ This is how the State Department generally referred to domestic civil rights in their communications.

⁵¹ Azza Salama Layton, *International politics and Civil Rights Policies in the United States, 1941-1960* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press; 2000), Page 50

an array of organizations” and influential individuals adding appreciably to its credibility.⁵²

According to a contemporary summary of the petition by George Streater of the *New York Times*, the NNC requested that the U.N. study the political, economic, and social discrimination experienced by black populations in the United States, and make recommendations to the federal government about how to redress the problem.⁵³ The United Nations, however, denied it had the ability to intervene in the domestic affairs of the United States, and little came of the petition.

While the NNC’s appeal did not add appreciable muscle to the civil rights movement, it illustrated to the Truman Administration the tenacity with which black Americans sought social reform. In a meeting with the secretary of UNCHR,⁵⁴ Dr. Max Yergan, president of the NNC, criticized the Truman Administration for failing to implement equality as guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, arguing that it was the NNC’s duty to draw international attention to human rights violations that the government failed to prevent.

Unfortunately, the petition was largely discredited as communist propaganda because Herbert Aptheker, an accomplished scholar but a known member of the Communist Party-USA, had compiled the documentation detailing the specific forms of racial discrimination.⁵⁵ Nevertheless, the NNC’s decision to put forward its petition in the United Nations, the new forum for international affairs, highlighted the “American Dilemma” in international politics, ensuring global news coverage of the “Negro Problem” that embarrassed the Truman administration, even if it had little tangible effect of the position of minority groups within the country.

Anti-Western pressure groups around the world reported the NNC’s petition as evidence of the illegitimacy of American dominance in the new world arena. In Iraq, for example, the

⁵² Including W.E.B. DuBois

⁵³ George Streater, ‘NEGRO CONGRESS APPEALS TO U.N.: Detroit Gathering Asks It to Halt Oppression of the Race in This Country, Pleas of the Petition Letter to the President’ *New York Times*, June 2nd 1946, Page 33

⁵⁴ The Secretary of UNCHR at that time was P.J. Schmidt

⁵⁵ Charles, H. Martin, ‘Internationalizing “The American Dilemma”: The Civil Rights Congress and the 1951 Genocide Petition to the United Nations,’ *Journal of American Ethnic History*, Volume 16, No. 4 (Summer, 1997), Page 37

petition was publicised by Al Istiklal, the Independence Party, which staunchly opposed British colonialism and had already begun to talk of the U.S. in neo-colonial terms because of its role in bolstering colonial governments throughout the region.⁵⁶ At that time, U.S. Middle Eastern policy focused on maintaining colonialism “to protect Western interests and expunge communism,”⁵⁷ and Arab nationalists, unsurprisingly, resented the superpower’s support of these oppressive regimes. As such, many Arab states were extremely receptive to the anti-American propaganda that was frequently disseminated by communist sources. According to James S. Moose Jr., Charge d’Affaires ad interim at the American Embassy in Baghdad, Al Istiklal’s newspaper, *Al Yaqdha*, was, “probably the most vociferous and most spleenful of several ardent anti-British nationalist papers which have sprung up recently.”⁵⁸ U.S. domestic race relations fuelled accusations of rhetorical hypocrisy by those (like black Americans) to whom the hands of freedom and democracy had not yet been extended. In June 1946, *Al Yaqdha* declared:

Thirteen million American negroes have appealed to the United Nations Organization to save them from the persecution which they are suffering at the hand of America which is treating them cruelly and robbing them of all the rights enjoyed by American citizens. Yet the Statue of Liberty still stands in America and the Americans do not feel ashamed!⁵⁹

Such emphatic criticisms of U.S. hypocrisy echoed throughout the Third World, but what made *Al Yaqdha*’s comments particularly poignant was its interpretation of U.S. foreign policy in relation to this hypocrisy. The U.S.’s movement into the global arena,⁶⁰ according to *Al Yaqdha*, proved that the country sought to “usurp the rights of the small nations,”⁶¹ and in doing so it would assert its racial practices abroad. The common themes between this anti-American propaganda, and that

⁵⁶ NARS Doc. 811.4016/6-1046. Memorandum from James S. Moose, Jr., Charge d’Affaires ad interim, American Embassy in Baghdad, Iraq to the Secretary of State. June 10, 1946.

⁵⁷ Caley A. Robertson, ‘A “Neutral” Battlefield: Early Cold War US Diplomacy in the Middle East and the 1956 Suez Crisis,’ December 2010, HI447: Seminar: The Cold War, Term Paper

⁵⁸ NARS Doc. 811.4016/6-1046. Memorandum from James S. Moose, Jr., Charge d’Affaires ad interim, American Embassy in Baghdad, Iraq to the Secretary of State. June 10, 1946.

⁵⁹ NARS Doc. 811.4016/6-1046. Translation of a Reuter (sic) story printed in *Al Yaqda*. Dispatched June 10, 1946.

⁶⁰ Though the Truman Doctrine was not announced until March 1947, the Soviet-sponsored uprising in Azerbaijan and Iranian Crisis had already shown the US’s willingness to engage abroad in response to the threat of Soviet expansion.

⁶¹ NARS Doc. 811.4016/6-1046. Translation of a Reuter (sic) story printed in *Al Yaqda*. Dispatched June 10, 1946.

from communist, or even simply pro-civil rights sources, focused domestic attention on the political alignment of reform activist. As the red scare began and certain U.S. committee and senators adopted aggressive tactics to expunge communist infiltration, only staunchly pro-democratic or anti-communist rhetoric conferred legitimacy on civil rights groups, which cyclically only furthered Soviet criticisms of U.S. hypocrisy.

In October 1947, the NAACP's W.E.B. DuBois, a world-renowned civil rights activist, prepared what Thomas Borstelmann has called the most "scholarly and impressive"⁶² of the three petitions to the United Nations seeking redress for racial inequality in the United States. DuBois called on "the nations of the world to persuade this nation to be just to its own people."⁶³ The NAACP's *An Appeal to the World* received expansive domestic and international media coverage due to its comparative objectivity, sparking outrage around the globe.⁶⁴ This petition had more success than its predecessor because unlike the NNC, charges that the NAACP was a front for communist infiltration were only made by Southern white segregationists and never stuck. DuBois was able to engage international discourse on the issue of U.S. race relations by highlighting his governmental hypocrisy, and his pro-democratic stance at the time⁶⁵ lent legitimacy to his arguments. Charles H. Martin notes that the black press revered the NAACP in the late 1940s for its dedication to racial equality. "The *Atlanta Daily World*," for example, "commended the NAACP for directing 'the world's attention to a miserable failure of democracy here in the United States.'"⁶⁶ Martin also notes that mainstream American media equivocated on the issue, showing concern both for the moral wellbeing of the United States, and the damage that

⁶² Thomas Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; 2001), Page 77

⁶³ *An Appeal to the World: A Statement on the Denial of Human Rights to Minorities in the Case of Citizens of Negro Descent in the United States and an Appeal to the United Nations for Redress* (New York: National Association for the Advancement of Colored People; 1947), Page 20

⁶⁴ "The NAACP petition caught the attention of the foreign press. Newspapers in India, France, Italy, China, and several additional countries informed their readers about the appeal."-- Charles, H. Martin, 'Internationalizing "The American Dilemma": The Civil Rights Congress and the 1951 Genocide Petition to the United Nations,' *Journal of American Ethnic History*, Volume 16, No. 4 (Summer, 1997), Page 39

⁶⁵ DuBois would later convert to communism.

⁶⁶ Charles, H. Martin, 'Internationalizing "The American Dilemma": The Civil Rights Congress and the 1951 Genocide Petition to the United Nations,' *Journal of American Ethnic History*, Volume 16, No. 4 (Summer, 1997), Page 39

highlighting domestic problems had on the nation's reputation abroad. Saul Padover, columnist for *Picture Magazine* "willingly conceded that racial inequality was the country's most pressing domestic problem, but he cautioned that such accusations 'will embarrass the United States before world opinion and will, in all probability, be used as ammunition by the Russians.'"⁶⁷ Though the American press was divided over the value of the NAACP's actions, most writers conceded that on an international level, domestic race issues were fast becoming a liability.

Months before the NAACP met with members of UNCHR to present their petition, President Truman had stated before a joint session of Congress his belief that "it must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures."⁶⁸ This speech, on March 12th 1947, initiated a policy known as the 'Truman Doctrine,' which guaranteed U.S. support to people fighting "terror and oppression"⁶⁹ around the world. With thirteen million U.S. citizens⁷⁰ living under the oppression of the Jim Crow legal system, however, the NAACP poignantly asserted that Truman's Doctrine represented nothing more than an unenforced rhetoric for many Americans, and called for reform. Not surprisingly, the Soviet Union, which correctly understood the Truman Doctrine as America's attempt to prevent the expansion of Soviet influence in Europe, "championed the NAACP petition in the Subcommittee on the Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities."⁷¹ As such, while the Soviet Union capitalised on domestic unrest within the United States, American civil rights activists capitalised on international tensions in the hope of shaming the government into enacting social reform.

⁶⁷ Charles, H. Martin, 'Internationalizing "The American Dilemma": The Civil Rights Congress and the 1951 Genocide Petition to the United Nations,' *Journal of American Ethnic History*, Volume 16, No. 4 (Summer, 1997), Page 39-40

⁶⁸ President Harry S. Truman, Address before a Joint Session of Congress. March 12, 1947

⁶⁹ President Harry S. Truman, Address before a Joint Session of Congress. March 12, 1947

⁷⁰ This is an estimate based on U.S. Census Bureau statistics that state that in 1940 there were 12.8 million Black Americans (or 9.8% of the population), and in 1950 that number had increased to 15 million (10% of the population.)

⁷¹ Azza Salama Layton, *International politics and Civil Rights Policies in the United States, 1941-1960* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press; 2000), Page 52

The institutionalisation of human rights on the international level, particularly through the formation of the United Nations, set a standard of moral legitimacy in the postwar years that stood in stark contradiction to the United States' domestic racial practices. As the Cold War brewed, the Soviet Union attempted to exploit this contradiction to discredit the United States on the global stage. Domestic civil rights activists also tried to disseminate information about U.S. race discrimination abroad in the hope that embarrassment in the international arena would encourage federal reform at home. This two-sided attack on U.S. moral legitimacy threatened the country's ability to spread the democratic message to non-white peoples who were actively throwing off the shackles of colonial white rule in much of the Third World. As such, Cold War politics brought the Truman Administration face-to-face with the "American Dilemma." Only those branches of government directly engaged with foreign affairs, however, would factor the country's international reputation into domestic policy construction, creating an unbridled divide between the executive and legislative branches of the U.S. government.

Chapter Two

Breaking the Taboo: Federal Engagement with U.S. Civil Rights Reform

Foreign attacks on the United States' moral legitimacy in the late 1940s and early 1950s threatened President Harry S. Truman's role as leader of the free world, and provided new incentives for federal engagement in reforms to which the executive branch was already ideologically committed. Truman, like his predecessor, and in spite of inherited prejudices, believed in the morally correctness of desegregation. Unfortunately, such convictions were not enough to motivate change in a country where leaders relied on public approval to earn and retain office, and throughout this period domestic opinion was too divided over civil rights to make it a priority issue.⁷² Foreign criticism during the initial Cold War years, however, tipped the balance on an issue dividing the country, bringing reform to the top of the nation's agenda as an issue not just of prestige, but also of national security. Proof that international criticism led to this federal change is evident in the fact that only specific parts of the American state, namely, "those [parts] engaged with the world audience"⁷³ showed a commitment to civil rights reform. This limitation reflects the validity of Bell's 'Interest-Convergence Dilemma,' which suggests in a realist tone that dominant groups only take action on social issues when they perceive said action to be in their interests.⁷⁴ In the late 1940s and early 1950s, only those branches of government that came into direct contact with foreign critics—and therefore were forced to realise the damage domestic

⁷² For a fuller discussion of why domestic pressures was an ineffective motivator for federal action during the Truman presidency, see Chapter Three. To clarify, domestic pressure groups were active within the United States, and certainly their actions to highlight U.S. race discrimination abroad helped draw attention to the issue. Civil rights activists are an important part of this story, and certainly this paper does not discredit their hard work and dedication to promoting equal rights; however, in the late 1940s and early 1950s domestic activists were not strong enough politically to motivate a federal engagement in civil rights.

⁷³ John David Skrentney, 'The Effect of the Cold War on African-American Civil Rights: America and the World Audience, 1945-1968,' *Theory and Society*, Vol. 27, No. 2 (April 1998), Page 246

⁷⁴ Derrick A. Bell, Jr., 'Brown v. Board of Education and the Interest-Convergence Dilemma,' *Harvard Law Review*, Vol. 93, No. 3 (January 1980), Pages 518-533

race discrimination had on the nation's ability to implement foreign policy—promoted federal engagement in domestic race relations. Notably, the biggest push for reform during this era came from the Department of State, which was explicitly concerned with foreign affairs, and the Executive Branch, which shaped foreign policy. By contrast, Congress, the national legislative body, which focused primarily on domestic politics and had little contact with foreign critics, actively resisted civil rights reform. As distinguished black historian John Hope Franklin noted in a 1968 address, “The crucial turning point in viewing the problem of race as a national problem occurred when the executive branch of the federal government began actively to assume a major role.”⁷⁵

The Department of State: Difficulties with the Empty Vessel

In its dealings abroad in the aftermath of the Second World War, the Department of State experienced difficulties affecting its policy objectives abroad as a result of foreign preoccupation with domestic race discrimination. The frustrations and failures of State Department officials to convey the U.S. government's ideological commitments to audiences critical of domestic practices filled thousands of reports flooding the department from U.S. Embassies around the world. On May 8th 1946, the acting secretary of state, Dean Acheson, summarised these difficulties in a letter to the Fair Employment Practices Commission:⁷⁶

The existence of discrimination against minority groups in this country has an adverse effect upon our relations with other countries. We are reminded over and over by some foreign newspapers and spokesmen, that our treatment of various minorities leaves much to be desired. While sometimes these pronouncements are exaggerated and unjustified, they all too frequently point with accuracy to some forms of discrimination because of race, creed, color, or national origin. Frequently we find it next to impossible to formulate a satisfactory answer to our critics in other countries; the gap between the things we stand for in principle and the facts of a particular situation may be too wide to be bridged. An atmosphere of suspicion and resentment in a country

⁷⁵ John Hope Franklin, ‘Civil Rights of the Truman Administration,’ in Donald R. McCoy, Richard T. Ruetten, and J. R. Fuchs (eds.), *Conference of Scholars on the Truman Administration and Civil Rights* (Independence, MO.; 1968), Page 134

⁷⁶ Roosevelt's FEPC, which he had created in 1941 to expose and theoretically to prevent discrimination in war industries, but which was dismantled by Congress in 1946.

over the way a minority is being treated in the United States is a formidable obstacle to the development of mutual understanding and trust between the two countries. We will have better international relations when these reasons for suspicion and resentment have been removed.

I think that it is quite obvious...that the existence of discrimination against minority groups in the United States is the handicap in our relations with other countries. The Department of State, therefore, has good reasons to hope for the continued and increased effectiveness of public and private efforts to do away with these discriminations.⁷⁷

Numerous civil rights advocates, the President's Commission on Civil Rights, and the Justice Department all cited Acheson's letter in subsequent years as evidence that desegregation and social reform were integral to the country's interests abroad. Perhaps the most illuminating aspect of the State Department memorandums recording foreign criticism of the "Negro problem" during this time is geographical and political diversity among them. Most State officials noted the political persuasions of the publication they cited, and criticisms from pro-American sources, especially in allied countries, received particular attention because they threatened to further damage the U.S.'s image in with otherwise friendly states. To show the consistent and cumulative pressure on Truman throughout his presidency to redress civil rights inequalities, it is beneficial to briefly suspend the chronological order of this study. Despite the steps the administration took towards social reform during Truman's presidency (discussed at length in chapter three), foreign disapproval of U.S. race practices did not subside, in fact it continued to grow exponentially, particularly in the nonaligned Third World.

In the postwar arena, the U.S.'s burgeoning interest in central Europe came at the expense of damaged relations with its more traditional South American allies, particularly as it re-allocated foreign aid away from the region.⁷⁸ The price of this for U.S. prestige was significant, as it lent anti-American and communist sympathisers credibility. Like in the Soviet Union, these

⁷⁷ Cited in *To Secure These Rights: The Report of the President's Committee on Civil Rights* (1947) as reproduced in Lawson, *To Secure These Rights* (Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin's; 2004), Page 49; also found in 'Brief for the United States as *Amicus Curiae*' (December 1947) submitted by Attorney General Clark, Solicitor General Perlman, and the Department of Justice for consideration *Shelley v. Kraemer*, 334 U.S. 1 (1948), Pages 19-20. As reproduced in Philip B. Kurland and Gerhard Casper (ed.), *Landmark Briefs and Arguments of the Supreme Court of the United States: Constitutional Law*, Volume 46: *Shelley v. Kraemer* (1948), *Terminiello v. Chicago* (1949) and *Wolf v. Colorado* (1949) (Arlington, Virginia: University Publications of American, Inc.; 1975), Pages 251-52

⁷⁸ See Stanley E. Hilton, 'The United States, Brazil, and the Cold War, 1945-1960: End of the Special Relationship,' *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 68, No. 3 (December, 1981), See pages 604-608

forces readily exploited U.S. racial practice to persuade audiences that the U.S. espoused an empty rhetoric of freedom and equality. As Stanley E. Hilton notes in ‘The United States, Brazil, and the Cold War, 1945-1960: End of the Special Relationship,’ this was particularly true in Brazil. The *Correio de Manhã*, a daily Brazilian newspaper, published criticisms of U.S. racism on multiple occasions, stating in February 1947:

The refusal of the vote to negroes which seems to be taking place in the Southern states is one of the paradoxical ways in which the United States, one of the most democratic nations of the earth, strongly reveals itself as racist. The world will not believe such in the clamorous preachings (sic) in favor of ‘respect for the human being’ as long as this indispensable respect is not everywhere inherent to the person and is determined by the color of his skin.⁷⁹

In one left-leaning Brazilian magazine, *Diretrizes*, writer Gondin de Fonseca ridiculed the empty vessel of American rhetoric in light of domestic human rights violations saying, “This happens in the United States, a nation which aims at teaching democracy to the world. Ha ha!”⁸⁰ As democracy grew unsteadily in Brazil in the post-war years, the damage that American ideological hypocrisy had on the ex-colony’s domestic affairs, particularly as U.S. aid bolstered imperial powers in Europe, heightened frustrations and armed anti-American fractions.

Even in countries closely allied with the United States, such as Greece, a recipient of early European reconstruction aid, pro-American writers did not shy away from criticising the U.S.’s domestic racial practices. Mrs. Helen Vlachos wrote a series of articles for *Kathimerini*, a daily Athenian newspaper, in July 1948, about her experiences in the United States, calling racial prejudice and discrimination America’s “Achilles heel.”⁸¹ According to K.L. Rankin, the Charge d’Affaires ad interim of the American Embassy in Athens, “the series, which is written from the human interest angle, has been well disposed with respect to the American people and their institutions and in harmony with the basically friendly attitude the author has always shown

⁷⁹ NARS Doc. 811.4016/2-747. Memorandum from the U.S. Embassy in Rio de Janeiro to the Department of State, February 7th 1947.

⁸⁰ NARS Doc. 811.4016/2-747. Memorandum from the U.S. Embassy in Rio de Janeiro to the Department of State, February 7th 1947.

⁸¹ NARS Doc. 811.4016/7-2248. Memorandum from K.L. Rankin, Charge d’Affaires ad interim, American Embassy in Athens to the Department of State, July 22nd 1948; enclosed clipping of Mrs. Helen Vlachos, ‘Going South,’ *Kathimerini*, July 17th 1948

toward the United States. Her comments in the two pieces under report should therefore be regarded, not as a result of anti-American bias, but as the author's frank reaction to what she regards as a deplorable situation.”⁸² As with the many other dispatches sent to the Department of State from foreign embassy officials, Rankin discussed at length the political motivations of the piece, noting that Mrs. Vlachos’ moderate tone meant that her message would carry to a larger audience. “Mrs. Vlachos' writings,” he noted, “are being widely read and discussed by educated Athenians, the overwhelming majority of whom share her feelings in the matter.”⁸³ While communist propaganda exaggerated racial tensions in the U.S., even more moderate reports in friendly nations gave Soviet and other anti-American propaganda credence, hampering the State Department’s ability to carry out foreign policy objectives.

U.S. race relations also tarnished America’s allies as they sought to defend the democratic creed from Soviet attack. Robert Coe, Counselor of the U.S. Embassy in the Hague, the Netherlands, wrote to Secretary of State Dean Acheson in February 1950 recounting a meeting with a Dutch official:

...the Netherlands is very unreceptive to anti-American propaganda, whether it emanates from Communist sources or from right-wing colonial die-hards. However, he added that the opponents of American policies possess one propaganda theme which is extremely effective throughout Europe and even more effective in Asia—criticisms of American racial attitudes...the American point of view towards negroes and other minority groups was extremely difficult for friends of America to explain, let alone defend...in his opinion, the actual situation is sufficiently bad to provide a very solid foundation for the fabulous structure of lies which the Communists have built up.⁸⁴

In short, during the Cold War, American allies promoting democracy struggled to defend American rhetoric in the face of the country’s grisly human rights record, making it difficult to contain the spread of communism, particularly in non-white Third World nations. Additionally, criticisms of white America’s unfair treatment of minority populations coming from European

⁸² NARS Doc. 811.4016/7-2248. Memorandum from K.L. Rankin, Charge d'Affaires ad interim, American Embassy in Athens to the Department of State, July 22nd 1948

⁸³ NARS Doc. 811.4016/7-2248. Memorandum from K.L. Rankin, Charge daffier ad interim, American Embassy in Athens to the Department of State, July 22nd 1948

⁸⁴ NARS Doc. 811.411/2-1350. Memorandum from Robert Coe, Counselor of Embassy, the Hague to the State Department on the matter of 'Dutch Attitudes Toward American Racism.' February 13th 1950.

imperial powers were simply embarrassing. Indeed, Dutch minister Robert Coe pointed out that in comparison to U.S. practices, “the Dutch attitude towards Indonesia seemed almost enlightened” because “While the Dutch had often demonstrated a stubborn colonial mentality, they have rarely emphasized the racial factor per se.”⁸⁵ The international community was unusually united in its condemnation of U.S. racial practices, such that nations otherwise directly opposed to one another (like colonial and colonised populations) joined forces in a campaign to make the leader of the free world live up to its rhetorical commitments to equality for all.

The similarities drawn between U.S. racial practices and Nazi atrocities during the Second World War heightened foreign sensitivity to the civil rights status of persons of colour in the United States. In response to the wave of violence spreading throughout the South in 1946, the *Manchester Guardian*, for example, reported to a British labour audience, “In a number of southern states the [Ku Klux] Klan is once more active and shows its strength by the openness of many of its activities...They are against Negroes, Jews, Catholics, and Communists, their doctrines obviously paralleling those of Hitler in many respects.”⁸⁶ The perceived similarities between U.S. and Nazi racial practices sparked a determined vilification of American racial practices in the British press, not least because U.S. courts permitted, or at least rarely prosecuted perpetrators of, racial violence. When two fourteen year old black boys, Charles Truesdale and James Adam, were sentenced to death in Jackson, Mississippi, for example, press reports of the court decision “motivated a number of protests to the [U.S. London] Embassy.”⁸⁷ In addition, as three British Members of Parliament wrote a telegram, on January 14th 1946, directly to the White House, stating “Respectfully urge you protect basic human rights by intervening prevent

⁸⁵ NARS Doc. 811.411/2-1350. Memorandum from Robert Coe, Counselor of Embassy, the Hague to the State Department on the matter of 'Dutch Attitudes Toward American Racism.' February 13th 1950.

⁸⁶ NARS Doc. 811.4016/6-2546. 'The Ku Klux Klan,' *The Manchester Guardian*, June 21st 1946, enclosed in a memorandum from the U.S. Embassy in London to the Department of State on June 25th 1946.

⁸⁷ NARS Doc. 811.4016/1-1047. Telegram 195 from Gallman at the U.S. Embassy in London to the Secretary of State, January 10th 1947.

execution Negro boys in state of Mississippi.”⁸⁸ Such determined actions by the public and Parliament alike in the United Kingdom, one of the United States’ closest Cold War allies, forced the State Department to confront the long-term damage domestic inaction on civil rights would have on the country’s position in the international arena.

Colonial powers and ex-colonised nations were unusually united in their criticisms of American racial practices, which indicated the gusto with which the newly entrenched standards of moral legitimacy influenced a nation’s standing in the global arena. While criticisms from European allies were embarrassing, media coverage of the issue in newly independent and predominantly non-white states severely impaired the U.S.’s ability to form alliances essential to its Cold War strategy. Perhaps the most striking way U.S. racial practices leached into the foreign media was when non-white foreign dignitaries on diplomatic missions experienced racial discrimination on American soil. White Americans, accustomed to treating persons of colour as second-class citizens, did not recognise the elevated status of non-white foreign visitors, and often treated them with the same abrasive disregard as they did American blacks. Few foreign officials anticipated the high level of prejudice they experienced in the U.S. (not least, in the nation’s capital), and they returned home deeply offended by their American reception. These incidents exposed American notions of freedom and equality as an “empty vessel” to the free world; a principle that the U.S. readily espoused, but took no responsibility for enacting.

In her article ‘Civil Rights as a Cold War Imperative,’ Mary L. Dudziak discusses the reception of Haitian Secretary of Agriculture Francois Georges at a 1947 conference in Biloxi, Mississippi.⁸⁹ After accepting an invitation from the National Association of Commissioners, Secretaries and Directors of Agriculture, Secretary Georges arrived in Biloxi in November 1947

⁸⁸ NARS Doc. 811/4016/1-1047. Telegram from Donald Bruce, Richard Crossman, and Tom Driberg, all British MPs, to President Harry S. Truman, January 14th 1946

⁸⁹ Mary L. Dudziak, “Desegregation as a Cold War Imperative” *Stanford Law Review*, Vol. 41, No. 1 (November, 1988), Page 90-91

only to be told that “for ‘reasons of color’ he would not be able to stay in the hotel with others attending the conference.”⁹⁰ To add insult to injury, the hotel manager also informed the Haitian diplomat that during the day he would have to eat meals separately from the other guests and officials at the conference. The socialist newspaper, *La Nation*, reported that “the ardent defenders of American democracy now have before their eyes the brutal fact of what this democracy is... Can a civilised people call the treatment of which our Minister has been a victim other than barbaric; can serious people still speak of American democracy?”⁹¹ While one U.S.-friendly Haitian newspaper, *Le Nouvelliste*, stated that the sort of racial prejudice Georges experienced was the result of “stupid insolence” in the South and did not reflect the situation of race relations throughout the country, it also noted that racial prejudice represented a “hideous disgusting fact that constitutes shame for any country as civilized as the United States.”⁹² Unsurprisingly, Secretary Georges left the United States early and the Haitian ambassador lodged a formal complaint with U.S. Secretary of State George C. Marshall, predicting consequences for the international democratic coalition should the U.S. Government continue to permit American nationals to treat foreign officials so unjustly. Secretary Francois Georges wrote in his complaint to Marshall:

The Haitian Government notes with regret that the treatment just received by one of the members of its Cabinet in the territory of the United States does not well accord with the policy of sympathy which it has been unceasingly developing to mark clearly that the world is one. Considering the unfavourable repercussion produced on opinion by incidents of this kind, the Haitian Government would be disposed to decline all invitation to congresses and conferences which are to take place in States where its delegates would be exposed to slights not to be endured by the representatives of a sovereign and friendly country.⁹³

⁹⁰ Mary L. Dudziak, “Desegregation as a Cold War Imperative” *Stanford Law Review*, Vol. 41, No. 1 (November, 1988), Page 90

⁹¹ NARS Doc. 811.4016/11-2047. Quotation from *La Nation* in a memorandum from State Department officer Tittmann at the US Embassy in Port-au-Prince, Haiti to the Secretary of State on November 20th 1947.

⁹² NARS Doc. 811.4016/11-2047. Quotation from *Le Nouvelliste* in a memorandum from State Department officer Tittmann at the US Embassy in Port-au-Prince, Haiti to the Secretary of State on November 20th 1947.

⁹³ NARS Doc. 811/4016/11-1247. Telegram from the Haitian Embassy in Washington D.C. to the Secretary of State, November 12th 1947. Translated into English from its original French by the Department of State Central Translating Division on November 18th 1947.

Such frank admonishments of U.S. domestic racial practices not only embarrassed the Truman administration, but also fuelled criticism of American foreign policy, for why should a country intervene abroad when it could not keep its own house in order? To Secretary of State George C. Marshall, author of the economic strategy to rebuild Europe in the wake of the Second World War, the repercussions of this incident were not lost. Months earlier, in July 1947, Marshall had written that "the foreign policy of a nation that does not want to rely upon possible military aggression depends on the moral influence which that nation exerts throughout the world," adding, "The moral influence of the United States is weakened to the extent that the civil rights proclaimed by our Constitution are not fully confirmed in actual practice."⁹⁴ Marshall encouraged President Truman to take action to defend the democratic alliance by supporting civil rights at home, adding another strong diplomatic voice to the growing number of government officials advocating for social reform.

Even the smallest articles in domestic media illustrating race discrimination had a damaging effect on foreign relations, as anti-American critics scoured the pages of U.S. newspapers and magazines. On August 25th 1952, for example, *Time* magazine published a short piece entitled 'Foreign Relations: How Not to Make Friends' documenting the experiences of Thava Rajah, one of Malaysia' top labour leaders, during a U.S.-sponsored trip to Washington, DC. Among the several businesses that refused to serve Rajah during his visit, one was, according to *Time*, actually in the same building as the State Department's Office of International Information, which sponsored his visit to the American capital.⁹⁵ *Time* noted that Rajah was "not necessarily unfriendly, but he was vastly puzzled"⁹⁶ after being turned away from several stores and restaurants on account of his colour. In one restaurant the manager had explained to Rajah

⁹⁴ George C. Marshall as cited in James Hunter Meriwether, *Proudly we can be Africans: Black Americans and Africa, 1935-1961* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press; 2002), Page 85

⁹⁵ 'Foreign Relations: How Not to Make Friends,' *Time*, Volume LX, Number 8, August 25th 1952, Page 17

⁹⁶ 'Foreign Relations: How Not to Make Friends,' *Time*, Volume LX, Number 8, August 25th 1952, Page 17

and the two men he was sitting with (a Burmese judge and a Malayan university lecturer) that he could not serve them because it was against the law. *Time* quoted Rajah as saying, “After all, isn’t white a color? I am terribly surprised by all this. You people talk democracy, and you must be careful to practice what you preach.”⁹⁷ As Susannah Hufstader noted in ‘Anti-Communism and *Time* Magazine, 1949-1953,’ *Time* was widely read throughout the early Cold War, and it “made a significant impact on public perceptions of Communism, both as a threat on the international stage and in the domestic arena.”⁹⁸ *Time* did not only influence American readers, however, it also reached audiences on the other side of the world. After reading *Time*’s 45-line piece on Thava Rajah’s experiences with racial discrimination in Washington, D.C., Lee Moke Sang, the Secretary of the Federation of Government Administrative and Clerical Unions in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia took action. Three days after *Time* printed its article, the American Consulate staff in Malaysia faced questions to which they had no answer. Sang informed the Consulate:

Incidents reported in TIME MAGAZINE regarding racial discrimination suffered by Thava Rajah and his colleagues who are touring U.S. of America on leader specialists grants given by your Department have greatly shocked members of my Executive Council. As Thava Rajah represents Johore Postal Employees Union on our Executive Council incidents as reported are bound to cause very unfavourable reactions among our unions especially at a time when U.S. of America is looked upon as champion in cause of freedom and justice. I am directed therefore to request explanation of reported incidents so that position can be made known to our delegates at our forthcoming annual conference on August 30, 1952. Yours faithfully Lee Moke Sang.⁹⁹

The U.S. con consulate official handling the situation, a Mr. Vanoss,¹⁰⁰ seemed personally embarrassed over both the accusations, which were damaging for the consulate’s relationship with an important Malaysian organization, and by his lack of information about the incident happened. In his memorandum to the Secretary of State, Vanoss wrote:

⁹⁷ ‘Foreign Relations: How Not to Make Friends,’ *Time*, Volume LX, Number 8, August 25th 1952, Page 17

⁹⁸ Susannah Hufstader, ‘Anti-Communism and *Time* Magazine, 1949-1953,’ December 2010, HI447: Seminar: The Cold War, Term Paper

⁹⁹ NARS Doc. 811.411/8-2952. Letter to American Consulate in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia from Lee Moke Sang, Secretary to Federation of Government Administrative and Clerical Union, on August 28, 1952. Quoted in Memorandum from Vanoss, American Consulate in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia to the Secretary of State. August 29, 1952.

¹⁰⁰ As in many other Department of State records the official is identified only by his last name, and his title is not mentioned. I refer to Vanoss by the pronoun “he” not because the sex of the individual is evident, but because the vast majority of State Department officials at that time were male.

I have replied stating that any embarrassment suffered by Thava Rajah or any other Malayan while in U.S. under leadership grand would be a matter of utmost concern and deep regret to Consulate and to U.S. Government. However, we have no information other than reference TIME MAGAZINE article we cannot comment further and have transmitted letter to Department requesting full report of facts.

Accordingly, I would appreciate full facts known to Department together with Department's comment.¹⁰¹

State Department officials posted overseas not only faced the impossible task of explaining U.S. domestic race relations to often less-than receptive audiences, but they also had to defend the democratic creed as a principle that embraced freedom and equality in the face of obvious violations of that principle within the United States. When incidents like those involving Thava Rajah in Washington D.C. embarrassed the country, State Department officials were on the front line, waiting to be attacked and then meekly apologise for “any embarrassment suffered.”¹⁰² The U.S. Government's “deep regret”¹⁰³ over such instances did little to temper the anger and frustration of foreign critics, and the hollowness of such language in the face of continued discrimination at home only gave credence to anti-American and communist claims that “semi-slave forms of oppression and exploitation are the rule” in the United States.

Truman: A Man of Principle and Pragmatism

President Harry S. Truman, though ideologically committed to desegregation and equality before the law, held personal prejudices that limited his ability to promote absolute racial equality. Nevertheless, his moral beliefs, when combined with *realpolitik* foreign pressure, led President Truman to promote civil rights reform and take quantifiable steps towards enacting equality. As Alonzo L. Hamby poignantly notes in *Man of the People: A Life of Harry S. Truman*

¹⁰¹ NARS Doc. 811.411/8-2952. Memorandum from Vanoss, American Consulate in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia to the Secretary of State. August 29, 1952.

¹⁰² NARS Doc. 811.411/8-2952. Memorandum from Vanoss, American Consulate in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia to the Secretary of State. August 29, 1952.

¹⁰³ NARS Doc. 811.411/8-2952. Memorandum from Vanoss, American Consulate in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia to the Secretary of State. August 29, 1952.

was “torn between tolerance and tradition in race relations.”¹⁰⁴ Born in Lamar, Missouri, in 1884 to a farm family who had owned a number of slaves prior to the Civil War, in Truman’s experiences childhood racism was established as a norm. Michael Gardner, however, argues, “Despite the racist culture that permeated Missouri in the post-Civil War environment of his youth, Truman evolved into a man who was not put off by a person’s lesser economic status or skin color.”¹⁰⁵ While a pleasant fiction, Gardner’s interpretation of Truman is far too simplistic. A more qualified analysis shows that Truman was ideologically committed to the principle of equality, his political action on racial issues must be understood as provoked by a combination of personal convictions and *realpolitik* pressures.

As president, Truman did not shy away from civil rights reform as his predecessor, President Roosevelt, had done. Early in his career, when he was judge in Jackson County, Missouri, Truman contemplated joining the Ku Klux Klan because of the organisation’s political power in the region; however, when a Klan officer asked the young judge to take a pledge not to hire any Catholics or Jews, he refused, demanding repayment of his \$10 membership fee.¹⁰⁶ Truman’s experiences fighting alongside Irish Catholics during the First World War had taught him the importance of overcoming ethnic differences, and a subsequent distaste for inequality, which continued to inform his political career.¹⁰⁷ Back in 1940, during his re-election campaign for senator, Truman had made a speech in Sedalia, Missouri, saying, “I believe in the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence. In giving the Negroes the rights which are theirs we are only acting in accordance with our own ideals of a true democracy.”¹⁰⁸ Truman’s decision as president to take a stand on racial discrimination is therefore reflective of a deeper understanding

¹⁰⁴ Alonzo L. Hamby, *Man of the People: A Life of Harry S. Truman* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press; 1995), Page 433

¹⁰⁵ Michael R. Gardner, *Harry Truman and Civil Rights: Moral Courage and Political Risks* (Carbondale, CO: Southern Illinois University Press; 2002), Page 6

¹⁰⁶ David McCullough, *Truman* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster; 1992), Page 164

¹⁰⁷ David McCullough, *Truman* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster; 1992), Page 164-5

¹⁰⁸ A quoted in Michael R. Gardner, *Harry Truman and Civil Rights: Moral Courage and Political Risks* (Carbondale and Edwardsville, IL: Southern Illinois University Press; 2002), Page 88

of justice, not merely as a response to real world pressures. Though Truman's belief in civil rights reform suggests that he possessed a degree of racial tolerance atypical of his Southern brethren, his occasional use of derogatory language towards minority groups indicates that his tolerance was limited by personal prejudice. For example, in 2003 the National Archives discovered a lost diary entry from July 1947 in which Truman expressed strong anti-Semitism. "The Jews, I find," he wrote, "are very, very selfish...when they have power, physical, financial or political neither Hitler nor Stalin has anything on them for cruelty or mistreatment to the under dog."¹⁰⁹ Without excusing the obviously anti-Semitic language of this quotation, it is worth noting that Truman goes on to qualify his accusations by broadening his argument, stating, "Put an underdog on top and it makes no difference whether his name is Russian, Jewish, Negro, Management, Labor, Mormon, Baptist he goes haywire. I've found very, very few who remember their past condition when prosperity comes."¹¹⁰ This qualification does not remove the racism from Truman's words, however, and the stark contradiction between this personal note and his public rhetoric regarding Jewish immigrants and the State of Israel is striking. "By the standards of later generations," Thomas Borstelmann argues, and despite Truman's presidential commitment to civil rights, the president "remained a 'racist' in his personal attitudes."¹¹¹ Remembering this fact in a discussion of the man's motives for civil rights reform does not discredit his actions; it simply puts them more appropriately in context. The late William Safire, speechwriter for President Richard Nixon

¹⁰⁹ The diary entry in question is from Monday, July 21st 1947, and reads: (as reproduced in Michael J. Devine, Robert P. Watson, Robert J. Wolz (ed.), *Israel and the Legacy of Harry S. Truman* (Kirksville, MO: Truman State University Press; 2008), Page 13)
Had ten minutes conversation with Henry Morgenthau about Jewish ship in Palestine [sic]. Told him I would talk to Gen[eral] Marshall about it. He'd no business, whatever to call me. The Jews have no sense of proportion nor do they have any judgement on world affairs. Henry brought a thousand Jews to New York on a supposedly temporary basis and they stayed. When the country went backward-and Republican in the election of 1946, this incident loomed large on the D[isplaced] P[ersons] program. The Jews, I find are very, very selfish. They care not how many Estonians, Latvians, Finns, Poles, Yugoslavs or Greeks get murdered or mistreated as D[isplaced] P[ersons] as long as the Jews get special treatment. Yet when they have power, physical, financial or political neither Hitler nor Stalin has anything on them for cruelty or mistreatment to the under dog. Put an underdog on top and it makes no difference whether his name is Russian, Jewish, Negro, Management, Labor, Mormon, Baptist he goes haywire. I've found very, very few who remember their past condition when prosperity comes.

¹¹⁰ Truman's diary entry in question is from Monday, July 21st 1947; as reproduced in Michael J. Devine, Robert P. Watson, Robert J. Wolz (ed.), *Israel and the Legacy of Harry S. Truman* (Kirksville, MO: Truman State University Press; 2008), Page 13

¹¹¹ Thomas Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; 2001), Page 51

and later a *New York Times* columnist, criticised historians for making excuses for the racist language of individuals otherwise remembered for anti-segregation policies.¹¹² Safire argued that actions do not nullify words, and that both are integral to a discussion of character. As such, while it is appropriate to hail Truman's presidential commitment to civil rights, one must not ignore his personal prejudices, nor the limits they placed on his ability to execute reform. Truman, notably, pushed for economic and political equality, ideas established as American values in the Declaration of Independence; however, he did not put social equality on the White House's political agenda,¹¹³ and he continued to refer to racial minorities in derogatory terms throughout his lifetime.

Acknowledging that Truman had personal prejudices does not discredit the moral motivation that the president, as a statesman on the international stage, felt for seeking civil rights reform. American freedom rhetoric as espoused by Truman, and Roosevelt before him, did not qualify the democratic creed as a "white only" ambition, and thus this rhetoric can be interpreted as at least a tacit support of domestic legal equality as well as an international equality. President Roosevelt's belief in this ideal had notably fewer *de facto* results than Truman's, an issue raised in an oral history interview of black civil rights advocate federal Justice William Hastie, Jr., in 1972. Hastie, notably, was the highest ranking African-American judge during the Truman presidency, having been nominated to office by Truman himself in 1946. When asked how Truman's views on civil rights matters compared with those of President Roosevelt, Hastie replied:

I am sure that President Roosevelt was sincerely concerned [about civil rights], both to better the condition of the American Negro and to alleviate discrimination and segregation, but I think there is

¹¹² Quotation from statement by the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum director, as reproduced in William Safire: 'Truman on Underdogs.' Op-Ed in the *New York Times* (July 14, 2003) as sourced at <http://isurvived.org/InTheNews/OnTruman.html> [Thursday, January 13th 2011 at 17:25_{ECT}]

¹¹³ Though Truman supported desegregation, he did not suppose it would lead to extensive socialising between racial groups, and he staunchly opposed the notion of forced racial mixing. For more information on Truman's racial views in this regard see David McCullough, *Truman* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 1992), Pages 584-594

no doubt that President Roosevelt had made a calculated determination that in foreign affairs, in the prosecution of the war, he considered it crucial to hold the support of the southern Democratic leadership, including the most reactionary and prejudiced of that leadership; and that he was, himself, going to take no action that would so alienate that part of the Party and the congressional leadership that he would jeopardize essential support from foreign affairs and other domestic affairs. So the result of that was that Roosevelt would move only very cautiously, almost marginally, in this whole area.

Truman was an entirely different sort of person. I think one of the many remarkable things about him was that though he had been brought up and his public career back in Missouri had developed in machine politics, he was a person who had very firm convictions, and when he reduced an issue in his own mind to a position that, "This is right; and that is wrong," he would not allow political considerations to cause him to disavow the position that he regarded as morally wrong.¹¹⁴

Justice Hastie painted Truman here as having greater convictions and fewer restraints—be they personal or political—than President Roosevelt, making him a more active proponent of civil rights. Firstly, Hastie’s assertion that World War II prevented Roosevelt from promoting the cause of civil rights ignores the six years FDR had been president prior to the war. As racial prejudice has a long history within the United States, civil rights clearly had been an issue for minority groups before to the Second World War, and thus it must be concluded that Roosevelt’s inaction came from the reality that domestic reform was not on white America’s political agenda at that time. As Mary L. Dudziak argues, the war changed this for some American whites (if not FDR himself) because “part of the meaning of the democracy [soldiers] fought for was its incompatibility with Nazi racism and anti-Semitism.”¹¹⁵ In an eloquent display of this sentiment, Aubrey B. Sally, a white World War II veteran and recipient of both the Purple Heart and the Distinguished Service Cross, wrote to President Truman in September 1950, stating, “Segregation is not one of the things I fought for in the last war. In fact, in principle it was one of the things I was most explicitly fighting against.”¹¹⁶ World War II brought racial inequality into the limelight and invigorated the domestic and international push for social change. Hastie’s argument that

¹¹⁴ William H. Hastie, interviews with Jerry N. Hess. Transcript of Oral History, January 5th 1972. 53-54.

<http://www.trumanlibrary.org/oralhist/hastie.htm> [Sourced on Thursday, February 24th 2011 at 15:33_{ECT}]

¹¹⁵ Mary L. Dudziak, “Desegregation as a Cold War Imperative” *Stanford Law Review*, Vol. 41, No. 1 (November, 1988), Page 68

¹¹⁶ Aubrey B. Sally, Letter to President Harry S. Truman on September 22, 1950. Harry S. Truman Papers, Public Opinion Mail, Box 10: Civil Rights [dates are not given for this box file, as these documents have been organised topically not chronologically]

Roosevelt could not afford domestic disunity during war may be legitimate; however, the fact remains that Roosevelt, despite a personal belief in the democratic principle of equality, did have the opportunity to institute civil rights reform before the war, but lacked a significant political motive to do so.

Hastie's second key point is that Harry S. Truman was a determined man with "very firm convictions."¹¹⁷ Though his personal prejudices inhibited him from seeking social equality, he worked to secure the legal and economic rights of racial minorities, and set a precedent for federal engagement in civil rights reform. Justice Hastie recognised the limitations of Truman's civil rights commitment in his oral history in answer to the following question from Jerry N. Hess, the interviewer:

HESS: Just a general question, at this time, just what should President Truman or the Truman administration have done that it did not do to advance the position of the Negro? Did he try hard enough? Did Mr. Truman try hard enough? Should he have appointed more blacks to high office?

HASTIE: Well, certainly in comparison with what Presidents Kennedy and Johnson did, the number of blacks appointed to high office was relatively small. I suppose that breaking a taboo has a significance in itself, and it's hard to compare that with the quantitatively larger things that were done after this taboo was broken. In that sense, I think my appointment to this bench twenty-two years ago, had a value and importance, perhaps greater than the appointment of several Negroes later. Truman was very much concerned, of course, with what, at that time, was of particular concern to the Negro, and a great irritant, and that was the segregation policies in the Armed Forces. And there he moved very positively and effectively. So, I think my answer would be, "He, like I think everyone else, could really do more than he does," in this and so many other things. And yet, his accomplishments in the field of race relations and the treatment of the Negro by the Government were in my view precedent-making; they paved the way for, and made very much easier the things that the President that succeeded him did.¹¹⁸

Truman's contribution to civil rights, according to Hastie, lies in the precedent he set for federal engagement with the issue. In "breaking a taboo,"¹¹⁹ Truman initiated change by symbolically flagging race discrimination as something that stood in staunch contradiction with American democratic principles. The act that caused him to raised this flag, notably, occurred on September

¹¹⁷ William H. Hastie, interviews with Jerry N. Hess. Transcript of Oral History, January 5th 1972. 53-54. Sourced at <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/oralhist/hastie.htm> [Thursday, February 24th 2011 at 15:33_{ECT}]

¹¹⁸ William H. Hastie, interviews with Jerry N. Hess. Transcript of Oral History, January 5th 1972. 76-78. Sourced at <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/oralhist/hastie.htm> [Thursday, February 24th 2011 at 15:33_{ECT}]

¹¹⁹ William H. Hastie, interviews with Jerry N. Hess. Transcript of Oral History, January 5th 1972. 53-54. Sourced at <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/oralhist/hastie.htm> [Thursday, February 24th 2011 at 15:33_{ECT}]

19th 1946 when Walter White, the executive secretary of the NAACP, met personally with Truman and recounted the racial violence white Southerners were inflicting on African Americans. According to White, “Truman became pale, and his voice trembled as he promised action.”¹²⁰ In a telegram the following day to Attorney General Tom C. Clark, Truman mentioned the torture of Sergeant Isaac Woodward by Police Chief Shull, saying:

I am very much alarmed at the increased racial feeling all over the country and I am wondering if it wouldn't be well to appoint a commission to analyze the situation and have a remedy to present to the next Congress...
...I know you have been looking into the Tennessee and Georgia lynchings, and also been investigating the one in Louisiana, but I think it is going to take something more than the handling of each individual case after it happens—it is going to require the inauguration of some sort of policy to prevent such happenings.¹²¹

This quotation indicates Truman's understanding that increased racial violence was, through important, just an extension of racial discrimination occurring throughout the United States. In ordering a holistic assessment of the civil rights status of minority groups, Truman demonstrated his conviction that inequality threatened American national interests. It is important here to note that in private communications, the president explained his incentive to study the status of civil rights as moral, not political. This tone would undergo change as Truman brought his commitment to reform into the public sphere, suggesting his rhetoric reflected not just his personal convictions, but a political decision to make civil rights palatable to the American public.

Governments Are Instituted Among Men

On December 5th 1946, President Harry S. Truman issued Executive Order 9808, creating the first Presidential Civil Rights Committee (PCCR)¹²² in American history, building a vehicle for federal civil rights reform. The president authorized PCCR “to inquire and determine whether

¹²⁰ William E. Pemberton, *Harry S. Truman: Fair Dealer & Cold Warrior* (Boston, MA: Twayne Publishers; 1989), Page 114

¹²¹ Memorandum from President Harry S. Truman to Attorney General Tom C. Clark (CC: David K. Niles, Administrative Assistant to the President) on 20th September 1946, as reproduced in Dennis Merrill (ed.) *Documentary History of the Truman Presidency*, Volume 11, *The Report of the Committee on Civil Rights and President Truman's Message to Congress of February 2*, (Bethesda, MD: University Publications of America; 1996) Document 43, Page 124

¹²² Throughout the remainder of the paper, the President's Committee on Civil Rights will regularly be referred to by the abbreviation PCCR

and in what respect current law enforcement measures...may be strengthened and improved to safe-guard the civil rights of the people.”¹²³ In ordering all federal agencies and departments to cooperate with the committee’s investigation, Truman affirmed the importance of racial equality for the future of American unity, an idea largely ignored since Abraham Lincoln’s reconstruction. The creation of a civil rights committee established a presidential, and thus federal, commitment to redressing race discrimination, signifying to the public the “need to extend equality under the law.”¹²⁴ Capitalising on foreign disapproval of racial violence, Truman exercised his right to executive action, forcing “a very reluctant and largely segregated federal government to assume its rightful leadership role on civil rights.”¹²⁵ By establishing PCCR through an executive order, Truman satisfied civil rights activists, and cleverly avoided confrontation with white southern Democrats in the senate, temporarily isolating the issue from party politics.¹²⁶

In his selection of committee members, Truman continued his attempt to walk the middle ground on civil rights reform, yet he still managed to express his desire for change. With the assistance of White House aides David K. Niles and Philleo Nash, Truman selected a racially, politically, economically, and gender diverse committee of “prominent Americans who would be sympathetic to civil rights.”¹²⁷ Many members of the committee worked for organisations with departments or partnerships abroad, and thus personally appreciated the damage international criticism of America’s domestic practices had on the country’s image overseas. As Walter White noted, “the makeup of the committee was intentionally broad based so that [its] findings would enjoy maximum credibility outside of the more narrow and largely regionally based civil rights

¹²³ Executive Order 9808, 5th December 1946 as reproduced in Lawson, *To Secure These Rights* (Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin’s; 2004), Page 45

¹²⁴ Steven F. Lawson, ‘Setting the Agenda of the Civil Rights Movement,’ as reproduced in Lawson, *To Secure These Rights* (Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin’s; 2004), Page 13

¹²⁵ Michael R. Gardner, *Harry Truman and Civil Rights: Moral Courage and Political Risks* (Carbondale and Edwardsville, IL: Southern Illinois University Press; 2002), Page 27

¹²⁶ Michael R. Gardner, *Harry Truman and Civil Rights: Moral Courage and Political Risks* (Carbondale and Edwardsville, IL: Southern Illinois University Press; 2002), Page 27

¹²⁷ William E. Pemberton, *Harry S. Truman: Fair Dealer & Cold Warrior* (Boston, MA: Twayne Publishers; 1989), Page 114

movement.”¹²⁸ Each member of the board brought an astute awareness of the implications of racial discrimination in their various field, lending their report credibility even among audiences not predisposed to support civil rights reform.¹²⁹

PCCR derived the report’s title, *To Secure These Rights* (TSTR),¹³⁰ from a phrase in the Declaration of Independence, which states: “. . .to secure these rights governments are instituted among men.”¹³¹ This thoughtful title established the committee’s opinion that civil rights reform required governmental action. As Charles W. Shull noted in his 1948 review, TSTR “is an expression of an ideal and it is also a political document phrased on the level of policy to be fixed.”¹³² The authors of TSTR appraised the tenets of U.S. rhetoric in an attempt to the government policy accountable to the principles it so willingly espoused. PCCR briefly noted the country’s achievements towards equality thus far, stating, "But our purpose is not to praise our country's progress. We believe its impressive achievements must be used as a stimulus to further

¹²⁸ Michael R. Gardner, *Harry Truman and Civil Rights: Moral Courage and Political Risks* (Carbondale and Edwardsville, IL: Southern Illinois University Press; 2002), Page 24

¹²⁹ The chairman of PCCR, C. E. Wilson as president of General Electric, a multi-national conglomerate company,¹²⁹ was conscious of the implications, both international and economic, of racial segregation, particularly in the employment industry. Charles Luckman presided over the multinational corporation Lever Brothers, and thus also had the pragmatic international economic incentive to support civil rights reform. John S. Dickey worked in International Cultural Relations with the Department of Public Affairs, and therefore had first-hand experience of how domestic racial practices impaired the U.S.’s ability to implement effective foreign policy in the Third World. James B. Carey worked as Secretary Treasurer for the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), which consisted of eight international labour unions, was conscious of the embarrassingly low labour standards for minority workers in the United States. Morris L. Ernst founded the American Civil Liberties Union, which promoted civil rights for minority groups in the United States, and was conscious of the country’s record compared to other developed nations. Likewise, Boris Shishkin worked as an economist for the American Federation of Labor. Channing H. Tobias, a vocal civil rights activist and one of the two African-Americans on the committee, worked for the YMCA, an international Christian organization that promoted communal unity to overcome the challenges of social, economic, racial and religious diversity. Rabbi Roland B. Gittelsohn, a prominent Jewish spokesman on the committee, famously equated “the highest and purest democracy” with dead soldiers of the Second World War, among whom there was no longer discrimination. Other religious leaders in PCCR, including the Episcopal clergyman Reverend Henry Knox Sherrill, and Methodist leader of the Women’s Society of Christian Services, M.E. Tilly, and Roman Catholic Reverend Francis J. Haas shared Gittelsohn’s moral sentiments regarding discrimination. Sadie T. Alexander, the other African-American and one of two women, sat on numerous committees regarding civil rights, and had previously been the national president of the Delta Sigma Theta sorority, which to this day lists ‘International Awareness and Involvement’ as one of its five programmatic thrusts. Francis P. Matthew, U.S. Secretary of the Navy, brought a shrewd awareness of the international consequences of racial discrimination from a military intelligence perspective. Franklin D. Roosevelt, Jr., as son to Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt, had learnt a strong opposition to racial segregation along moral lines, and his naval experience and work in the American Veterans Committee complemented Matthews’ perspective. Finally, Dr. Frank P. Graham was president of the University of North Carolina, the first public university in the United States, which was dedicated to encouraging racial diversity within its student body. {Evidence cited from: Eulogy by Lt Roland B. Gittelsohn, ChC, USNR at the dedication of the 5th Marine Division Cemetery, Iwo Jima–March 1945 as reproduced on http://www.wv2gyrene.org/spotlight4_gittelsohn.htm [Sourced on Thursday, 16th December 2010 at 8:52_{ECT}]; and Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. Mission Statement, as found on http://www.deltasigmatheta.org/stmt_purpose.htm [Sourced on Thursday, 16th December 2010 at 8:16_{ECT}]}

¹³⁰ Throughout the remainder of the paper, *To Secure These Rights* will often be referred to by the abbreviation TSTR

¹³¹ Epigraph in *To Secure These Rights: The Report of the President’s Committee on Civil Rights* (1947) as reproduced in Lawson, *To Secure These Rights* (Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin’s; 2004), Page 43

¹³² Charles W. Shull, ‘Review: President’s Committee on Civil Rights: *To Secure These Rights*,’ *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 256: Organized Religion in the United States (March, 1948), Page 186

progress, rather than as an excuse for complacency."¹³³ In writing *To Secure These Rights*, PCCR recognised, as Truman had done, that the recent surge of violence in the South reflected deeper problems within the country, and hoped reform would "cure the disease as well as treat its symptoms."¹³⁴ Taking a holistic approach to an investigation of civil rights afforded PCCR the opportunity to establish a blueprint for civil rights reform within the United States, an imperative, by 1947, for reasserting nation's moral legitimacy on the world stage.

PCCR identified moral, economic, and international incentives for reform. "The pervasive gap between our aims and what we actually do," the committee noted, "is creating a kind of moral dry rot which eats away at the emotional and rational bases of democratic beliefs."¹³⁵

Economically, PCCR argued that segregation, particularly of the labour force, was inefficient because it inhibited perfect competition in the market, thus lowering gross national product and the standard of living for all citizens. Internationally, PCCR asserted, racial discrimination hindered American foreign policy, particularly as "Those with competing philosophies [meaning communists and fascists] have stressed—and are shamelessly distorting—our shortcomings."¹³⁶

In the context of the rapidly brewing Cold War, domestic race discrimination hindered America's ability to export democracy because many people understood "the treatment which our Negroes receive...as a reflection of our attitudes toward all dark-skinned peoples."¹³⁷ With these ideological and pragmatic incentives for reform, PCCR proposed an agenda more aggressive than the president had hoped given the domestic divide over the issue, particularly within the

Democratic Party.

¹³³ *To Secure These Rights: The Report of the President's Committee on Civil Rights* (1947) as reproduced in Lawson, *To Secure These Rights* (Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin's; 2004), Page 46

¹³⁴ *To Secure These Rights: The Report of the President's Committee on Civil Rights* (1947) as reproduced in Lawson, *To Secure These Rights* (Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin's; 2004), Page 47

¹³⁵ *To Secure These Rights: The Report of the President's Committee on Civil Rights* (1947) as reproduced in Lawson, *To Secure These Rights* (Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin's; 2004), Page 158

¹³⁶ *To Secure These Rights: The Report of the President's Committee on Civil Rights* (1947) as reproduced in Lawson, *To Secure These Rights* (Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin's; 2004), Page 158

¹³⁷ *To Secure These Rights: The Report of the President's Committee on Civil Rights* (1947) as reproduced in Lawson, *To Secure These Rights* (Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin's; 2004), Page 166

In recognising the oppressive potential of a democratic majority (which in the U.S. meant whites), PCCR emphasised the need for governmental intervention to protect its citizens' "essential rights," categorised as: (1) The Right to Safety and Security of the Person; (2) The Right to Citizenship and its Privileges; (3) The Right to Freedom of Conscience and Expression; and, (4) The Right to Equality of Opportunity. In each of these categories PCCR detailed violations of minority rights, and sought to redress institutionalised racism. Moreover, in each of these categories PCCR recognised the implication of domestic race discrimination on the nation's reputation in the global arena.

The first category of rights discussed in TSTR was the 'Right to Safety and Security of the Person,' meaning protection "against bondage, lawless violence, and arbitrary arrest and punishment."¹³⁸ Truman notes in his *Memoirs* that he felt driven to take action on racial discrimination in 1946 "because of the repeated anti-minority incidents immediately after the war in which homes were invaded, property was destroyed, and a number of innocent lives were taken."¹³⁹ Violence made discrimination visible to the outside world, and foreign media portrayed Truman's failure to protect American citizens from racial brutality as a failure of democracy. PCCR noted the psychological consequences of these legal failings, stating, "every time lynchers go unpunished...Negroes have learned to expect other forms of violence at the hands of private citizens or public officials."¹⁴⁰ Discrimination before the law perpetuated violence throughout America, and left the democratic system exposed to accusations of hypocrisy by communists and fascists that were keen to exploit American weaknesses.

¹³⁸ *To Secure These Rights: The Report of the President's Committee on Civil Rights* (1947) as reproduced in Lawson, *To Secure These Rights* (Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin's; 2004), Page 52

¹³⁹ Harry S. Truman, *Memoirs*, Volume 2: *Years of Trial and Hope* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc; 1956), Page 180

¹⁴⁰ *To Secure These Rights: The Report of the President's Committee on Civil Rights* (1947) as reproduced in Lawson, *To Secure These Rights* (Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin's; 2004), Page 65

The second category in TSTR was the ‘Right to Citizenship and its Privileges.’

Citizenship in the U.S. was granted by birth, so as the U.S. Constitution only guaranteed rights to American citizens, PCCR assessed the process of naturalisation for alien residents, noting that, “the standards of eligibility in our naturalization laws have nothing to do with a person’s fitness to become a citizen. These standards are based solely on race and national origin, and penalize some residents who may otherwise have all the attributes necessary for American citizenship.”¹⁴¹ As such, a person’s race restricted their access to constitutional rights, and legal discrimination disproportionately affected some minority populations.¹⁴² PCCR highlighted the immorality of this policy by discussing the death of a Japanese American who had bequeathed his land to his parents in his will. As neither of his parents had been born in the U.S., and they had not been eligible for naturalisation, they were not legally allowed to inherit their son’s property, despite the fact they had actually bought it for him years beforehand.¹⁴³ The government’s failure to protect the legal rights of minority groups suggested, according to PCCR, that the U.S. did not consider the rights set forth in the U.N. Charter universal. Legalised race discrimination also affected the residents of Guam and American Samoa, because the U.S. gave them the status of ‘U.S. national,’ but did not grant them citizenship, so they could not participate in the political process. Violations of the U.N. Charter that American diplomats had been instrumental in creating not only discredited the country’s rhetoric, but also had *de facto* implications for the validity of the United Nations itself.

Even minorities that held U.S. citizenship often found that whites had the means to prevent their participation in the political process. Although universal suffrage existed

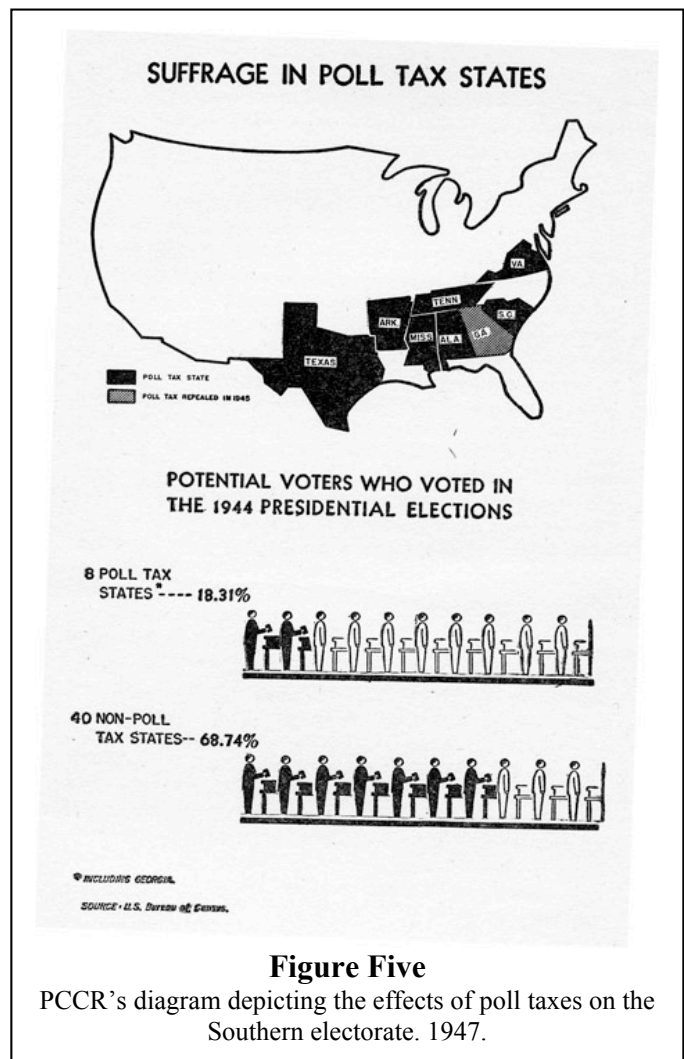
¹⁴¹ *To Secure These Rights: The Report of the President’s Committee on Civil Rights* (1947) as reproduced in Lawson, *To Secure These Rights* (Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin’s; 2004), Page 72

¹⁴² *To Secure These Rights: The Report of the President’s Committee on Civil Rights* (1947) as reproduced in Lawson, *To Secure These Rights* (Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin’s; 2004), Page 73

¹⁴³ *To Secure These Rights: The Report of the President’s Committee on Civil Rights* (1947) as reproduced in Lawson, *To Secure These Rights* (Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin’s; 2004), Page 74

theoretically in the United States, segregationists had constructed various barriers to stop blacks from voting, and “as legal devices for disfranchising the Negro have been held unconstitutional, new methods ha[d] been improvised to take their place.”¹⁴⁴ From simple intimidation tactics to white-only primaries (which stopped blacks electing party candidates), segregationists had found inventive ways to restrict black voters despite the Fifteenth Amendment. Many states enforced a poll tax, which actually prevented poor whites from voting as well, but disproportionately affected racial minorities because of limited employment opportunities. As Figure Five¹⁴⁵ clearly illustrates, poll taxes significantly reduced the voting pool, further inhibiting the democratic process. As U.S. governmental rhetoric suggested the inherent equality of democracy, domestic practices facilitated a majority rule, legally oppressing minority populations. Thus, in the Cold War context, the leader of the “free” world and the spokesmen for the democratic ideal maintained only partial democracy on its own soil.

A final element of the right to citizenship that the report highlighted as inadequately protected by the government



¹⁴⁴ *To Secure These Rights: The Report of the President’s Committee on Civil Rights* (1947) as reproduced in Lawson, *To Secure These Rights* (Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin’s; 2004), Page 75

¹⁴⁵ *Suffrage in Poll Tax States, To Secure These Rights: The Report of the President’s Committee on Civil Rights* (1947) as reproduced in Lawson, *To Secure These Rights* (Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin’s; 2004), Page 78

was the right to bear arms. PCCR stated, “Prejudice in any area is an ugly, undemocratic phenomenon; in the armed services, where all men run the risk of death, it is particularly repugnant.”¹⁴⁶ PCCR examined institutional and private discrimination within the armed services, noting that in spite of rhetoric from the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Coast Guard advocating colour-blindness, the services segregated their troops, rarely commissioned minority soldiers, and did nothing to prevent discrimination among the ranks. Despite their efforts for their country, black military personnel often experienced maltreatment and abuse by both the civil authorities and the general public while in uniform. Fighting a war against racist fascism with a segregated army epitomised the duplicity of U.S. freedom rhetoric for Americans and foreigners alike. That the U.S. government could force its citizens to fight for their country, but could not protect them from the subsequent violence demonstrated an absurd and grotesque hypocrisy in American democratic practice.

The third “essential right” PCCR investigated was the ‘Right to Freedom of Conscience and Expression,’ which as freedom of worship, speech, press and assembly, were rights PCCR considered “relatively secure.”¹⁴⁷ At the time of the investigation, PCCR determined that the most immediate threat to freedom of expression was indirect, stemming “from efforts to deal with those few people in our midst who would destroy democracy.”¹⁴⁸ This section of the report discussed the rights of Communists and Fascists, calling “*special* limitations on the rights of these people to speak and assemble”¹⁴⁹ unconstitutional. Noting that the U.S. attempted to assert freedom of speech as a tenet of the democratic ideal abroad, PCCR condemned “red hunting” as

¹⁴⁶ *To Secure These Rights: The Report of the President’s Committee on Civil Rights* (1947) as reproduced in Lawson, *To Secure These Rights* (Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin’s; 2004), Page 80

¹⁴⁷ *To Secure These Rights: The Report of the President’s Committee on Civil Rights* (1947) as reproduced in Lawson, *To Secure These Rights* (Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin’s; 2004), Page 84

¹⁴⁸ *To Secure These Rights: The Report of the President’s Committee on Civil Rights* (1947) as reproduced in Lawson, *To Secure These Rights* (Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin’s; 2004), Page 84-5

¹⁴⁹ *To Secure These Rights: The Report of the President’s Committee on Civil Rights* (1947) as reproduced in Lawson, *To Secure These Rights* (Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin’s; 2004), Page 85

undemocratic, thereby reiterating Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes' doctrine of 'clear and present danger,' which permits all expression except that which incites violence among listeners.

Discussion of this third right illustrates that PCCR was not solely concerned with racial practices, but sought to project a universal concern regarding individual rights. Allowing freedom of expression for all groups was an important tenet of the democratic ideal, and PCCR argued that failure to implement it would expose the country to accusations of fascist oppression from its democratic peers.

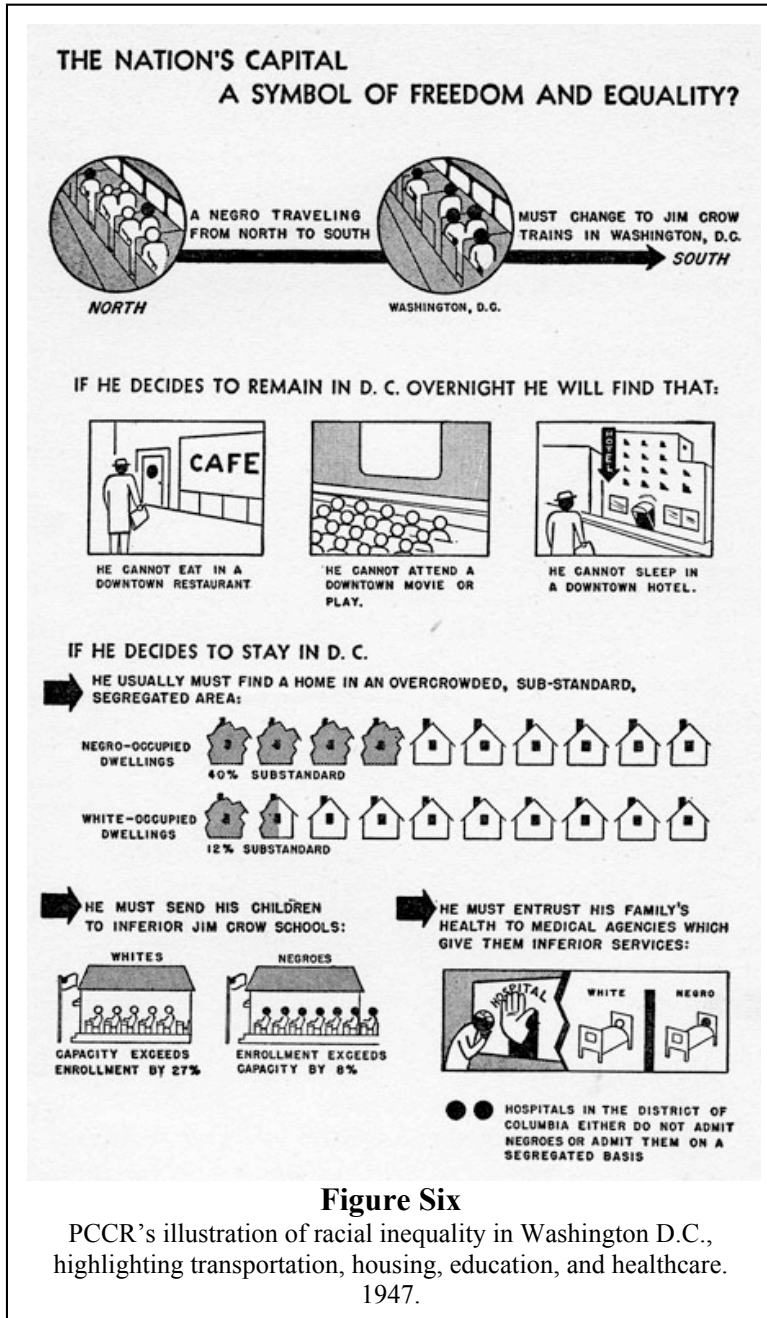
The fourth and final "essential right" considered in the report was the 'Right to Equality of Opportunity', which incorporated the right to political participation, social services, employment, housing, recreation, *et cetera*. In its discussion of job discrimination, PCCR cited a witness before a congressional committee, who explained:

Discrimination in employment damages lives, both the bodies and the minds, of those discriminated against and those who discriminate. It blights and perverts that healthy ambition to improve one's standard of living which we like to say is peculiarly American. It generates insecurity, fear, resentment, division and tension in our society.¹⁵⁰

This quotation illustrates the psychological implications of employment discrimination, which perpetuated racial tensions within society, increasing disunity. Economically, employment discrimination inhibits perfect competition because it prevents a segment of the population from participating as producers and consumers, due to income, restricts specialisation, and stifles ingenuity. Discrimination in the public school system, particularly southern segregation, perpetuated the economic divide between majority and minority groups by limiting a child's potential. Combined, inequality of opportunity in many areas perpetuated the cycle of racially aligned poverty in the United States. PCCR noted that the 'separate but equal' policy of southern states rarely provided equal facilities for minority groups. Moreover, segregation had

¹⁵⁰ *To Secure These Rights: The Report of the President's Committee on Civil Rights (1947)* as reproduced in Lawson, *To Secure These Rights* (Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin's; 2004), Page 86

psychological implications because “it brand[ed] the Negro with the mark of inferiority and assert[ed] that he [was] not fit to associate with white people.”¹⁵¹ Segregation as a principle created divisions and tensions among groups that anti-American actors could easily exploit. As



such, PCCR established desegregation and equality as an issue of both national security and social reform.

PCCR highlighted the failure of the U.S. government to uphold its principles of freedom and equality for minority groups in a discussion of civil rights in the nation's capital, a city that “should symbolize to our citizens and to the people of all countries our great tradition of civil liberties.”¹⁵²

Instead of a beacon for American freedom, Washington D.C., as shown in Figure Six,¹⁵³ exhibited every aspect of the racial

¹⁵¹ *To Secure These Rights: The Report of the President's Committee on Civil Rights* (1947) as reproduced in Lawson, *To Secure These Rights* (Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin's; 2004), Page 111

¹⁵² *To Secure These Rights: The Report of the President's Committee on Civil Rights* (1947) as reproduced in Lawson, *To Secure These Rights* (Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin's; 2004), Page 118

¹⁵³ *To Secure These Rights: The Report of the President's Committee on Civil Rights* (1947) as reproduced in Lawson, *To Secure These Rights* (Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin's; 2004), Page 119

discrimination and inequality denounced by domestic and foreign media. The authors of *To Secure These Rights* called Washington D.C. “a graphic illustration of a failure of democracy,”¹⁵⁴ advocating not just for reform, but also for government-initiated reform.

Importantly, PCCR cited President Truman’s advocacy of a federal role in civil rights reform. In his June 1947 speech at an NAACP rally, Truman had said, “We must make the Federal Government a friendly, vigilant defender of the rights and equalities of all Americans...Our National Government must show the way.”¹⁵⁵ PCCR agreed with Truman’s assessment that the government ought to lead social reform, justifying this in very explicit terms. PCCR asserted that many states had been either unable or unwilling to eliminate civil rights violations on their own, and therefore needed government help. PCCR also argued that, “it is a sound policy to use the idealism and prestige of our whole people to check the wayward tendencies of a part of them.”¹⁵⁶ This assertion highlighted the importance of moral integrity to the American ideal, noting that upholding equality was essential to maintaining both unity within the country and legitimacy abroad. Perhaps most importantly, the U.S.’s civil rights record had “growing international implications,”¹⁵⁷ because failure to uphold democracy and freedom at home exposed the U.S. to vehement criticism abroad, particularly in discussions of human rights at the United Nations. Though PCCR said the government should be concerned about this criticism, they also argued that foreign media attention was only dangerous to America’s reputation if the government failed to respond to it. The federal government had established itself as an instrument of reform during the new deal, and as such the population now looked to Truman

¹⁵⁴ *To Secure These Rights: The Report of the President’s Committee on Civil Rights* (1947) as reproduced in Lawson, *To Secure These Rights* (Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin’s; 2004), Page 118

¹⁵⁵ President Harry S. Truman, *Address before the NAACP*, June 29th, 1947, as found on the website of the Miller Center for Public Affairs, University of Virginia, <http://millercenter.org/scripps/archive/speeches/detail/3345> [sourced on Monday, 15th November 2010 at 13:35_{ECT}] also quoted in *To Secure These Rights: The Report of the President’s Committee on Civil Rights* (1947) as reproduced in Lawson, *To Secure These Rights* (Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin’s; 2004), Page 126

¹⁵⁶ *To Secure These Rights: The Report of the President’s Committee on Civil Rights* (1947) as reproduced in Lawson, *To Secure These Rights* (Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin’s; 2004), Page 127

¹⁵⁷ *To Secure These Rights: The Report of the President’s Committee on Civil Rights* (1947) as reproduced in Lawson, *To Secure These Rights* (Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin’s; 2004), Page 127

to continue in Roosevelt's footsteps. Finally, PCCR argued, "there is much in the field of civil rights that [the Federal Government] is squarely responsible for in its own direct dealings with millions of persons."¹⁵⁸ As the largest national labour employer, racial discrimination within Federal agencies and departments as well as in the military hampered equality in the country as a whole. Thus, in reforming its own internal policies, the Federal Government had a unique opportunity to lead reform nationwide, and cleanse the country's reputation abroad. In all, PCCR made a strong set of arguments for federal government intervention in civil rights, which put pressure on the president to take action.

Responding to the extensive and varied civil rights abuses identified in its investigation, PCCR suggested a comprehensive governmental reform program under six general headings, with thirty-five specific recommendations. First, PCCR proposed strengthening government machinery to better enforce federal policy and create more equality before the law. These measures would expand the government's ability to effect change on American soil, signifying to the outer world that Truman was prepared to enact reform in-keeping with his ideological rhetoric. Second, PCCR proposed government legislation to address racial violence, such an anti-lynching act and a criminal statute on involuntary servitude. With these recommendations, PCCR hoped the government would clearly delineate the law on personal security, both to aid the justice system, and establish American rhetoric (of racial prejudice as un-democratic) within the law. Third, PCCR proposed the government terminate poll taxes, enact a statute of voter protection, institute universal suffrage in New Mexico and Arizona (where Indian citizens could not vote), abolish racial requirements for naturalisation, repeal legal discrimination against ineligible aliens, and grant citizenship to the people of Guam and American Samoa. PCCR believed these measures, if

¹⁵⁸ *To Secure These Rights: The Report of the President's Committee on Civil Rights (1947)* as reproduced in Lawson, *To Secure These Rights* (Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin's; 2004), Page 118

enacted, would secure U.S. citizens and residents their political rights, thereby removing an important tenet of foreign criticism. Fourth, PCCR proposed that the government require all groups that sought to influence the public to register, and establish loyalty obligations for federal employees. PCCR considered these measures sufficient to inhibit communist or fascist infiltration without restricting the rights of those groups to free speech. Fifth, PCCR proposed that the government eliminate all forms of segregation in American life, and enact legislation to ensure fair employment, education, housing, and equal access to national and state facilities. This, the most dramatic set of recommendations in TSTR, was written with the hope the federal government would bring an end to the Jim Crow legal system and the international criticism it attracted. Finally, PCCR proposed the government rally the American people to support civil rights reform, initiating a long-term public education campaign. Combined, these six sets of recommendations¹⁵⁹ represented a complete upheaval of American social life, firmly establishing the principle of equality within the law. Importantly, each set of proposals incorporated changes that would help improve American relations with foreign states and establish the Truman Administration as a strong force of equality on the domestic and international stage.

The moment Truman's Committee on Civil Rights placed its 178-page report in the president's hands on October 29th 1947, "civil rights moved to the forefront of the liberal reform agenda."¹⁶⁰ *To Secure These Rights* staunchly asserted that civil rights reform was essential to the moral, economic, and international well being of the country, and dared the president to take action. Black civilians, veterans, labour leaders, and white liberals all hailed the report's progressive tone, advocating for immediate policy in the manner suggested by PCCR. In the South, however, "the leaders of 'white supremacy' began at once their campaign of demagoguery

¹⁵⁹ *To Secure These Rights: The Report of the President's Committee on Civil Rights* (1947) as reproduced in Lawson, *To Secure These Rights* (Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin's; 2004), Page 151-175

¹⁶⁰ William E. Pemberton, *Harry S. Truman: Fair Dealer & Cold Warrior* (Boston, MA: Twayne Publishers; 1989), Page 115

to attempt to nullify [Truman's] efforts to develop federal safeguards against racial discrimination."¹⁶¹ The tenacity of the report overwhelmed the president. As Alonzo L. Hamby notes in his book *Man of the People: A Life of Harry S. Truman*, "Truman faced a dilemma. The report was stronger than he had expected, yet he had portrayed the committee as sound and had promised action. He now had to respond to this aggressive agenda while trying to hold Southern Democrats behind him."¹⁶²

When asked about the efficacy of *To Secure These Rights* in an interview in 1977, Philleo Nash, Special Assistant in the White House Office during the Truman Presidency, stated, "I would like to point out that the whole country's attitude on civil rights and on majority-minority group relations was turned around by the President's Committee on Civil Rights."¹⁶³ The report illustrated the idea that by the mid-1940s the establishment of racial equality in the United States was integral to both domestic unity, and to the success of U.S. foreign policy. A wide spectrum of the population—including liberals seeking social reform and State Department experts concerned with national security—called on the Truman administration to take a stand against race discrimination. No longer able to take the middle ground, Truman chose not to protect the Democratic coalition, but to take action to defend the country's reputation in the global arena. In February 1948, Truman took PCCR's recommendations to Congress, illustrating, even though his bill was not passed, that the federal government was willing to be the force of change on civil rights. Though the Congress did not establish PCCR's recommendations in law until the mid-1960s, President Truman initiated a process of reform that created a "tremendous awakening of

¹⁶¹ Harry S. Truman, *Memoirs*, Volume 2: *Years of Trial and Hope* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc; 1956), Page 180

¹⁶² William E. Pemberton, *Harry S. Truman: Fair Dealer & Cold Warrior* (Boston, MA: Twayne Publishers; 1989), Page 115

¹⁶³ Comment by Philleo Nash, in Francis H. Heller (ed.), *The Truman White House: The Administration of the Presidency 1945-1953* (Lawrence, KS: The Regents Press of Kansas; 1980), Page 222

the American conscience on the great issues of civil rights,”¹⁶⁴ and the wheels of change gained momentum.

Civil Rights in Presidential Rhetoric After *To Secure These Rights*

In *American Civil Rights Policy from Truman to Clinton*,¹⁶⁵ Steven Shull argues that although presidential communications regarding “emotionally charged” policy areas such as civil rights “may be more symbolic than substantive,”¹⁶⁶ they still have an important function. Presidential communications focus public attention on issues the president considers important, which encourages debate and ultimately enables the White House to gather support for policy preferences prior to setting detailed policy agendas. After receiving the report compiled by the President’s Committee on Civil Rights (PCCR), public communications released by the White House emphasised the importance of social reform on foreign relations. On January 7th 1948, in his State of the Union address, for example, Harry S. Truman asserted, “Whether discrimination is based on race, or creed, or color, or land of origin, it is utterly contrary to the American ideals of democracy.”¹⁶⁷ Symbolically, this was a message to the international community as much as the domestic population; a message in which the President of the United States branded racism as both undemocratic and ‘un-American.’ This is the speech in which Truman called on Congress to authorise the European recovery program, a program to fund development, contain communism, and provide a “moral stimulus to the entire world.”¹⁶⁸ In committing the federal government to driving reform in such an internationally orientated speech, the president emphasised the

¹⁶⁴ Harry S. Truman, The President's Farewell Address to the American People, 15th January 1953, reproduced on <http://trumanlibrary.org/calendar/viewpapers.php?pid=2059> [sourced on Monday, 15th November 2010 at 14:48_{ECT}]

¹⁶⁵ Despite the title of this book Shull fails to adequately analyse Truman’s role in civil rights reform, which, given his arguments regarding presidential communications is an unfortunate oversight.

¹⁶⁶ Charles W. Shull, ‘Review: President’s Committee on Civil Rights: *To Secure These Rights*,’ *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 256: Organized Religion in the United States (March, 1948), Page 58

¹⁶⁷ Harry S. Truman, State of the Union Address, January 7th 1948. Sourced at <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/tap/1748.htm> [Tuesday, February 22nd at 14:45_{ECT}]

¹⁶⁸ Harry S. Truman, State of the Union Address, January 7th 1948. Sourced at <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/tap/1748.htm> [Tuesday, February 22nd at 14:45_{ECT}]

significance of civil rights reform to this “moral stimulus” package. “Above all else,” he said, “we are striving to achieve a concord among the peoples of the world based upon the dignity of the individual and the brotherhood of man.”¹⁶⁹ While this speech did nothing substantive for civil rights, symbolically it drew a parallel between the country’s international aims and a domestic issue. In relating race discrimination to an inability to effect world peace, the president emphasised the damage domestic civil rights had on the democratic creed, and initiated debate on a topic set to appear on the White House’s policy agenda.

Less than a month later, President Truman presented a special message to Congress on civil rights, which in its opening sentiments emphasized the international incentive for social reform. “The founders of the United States,” he said, “proclaimed to the world the American belief that all men are created equal...these ideals inspired the peoples of other lands, and their practical fulfilment made the United States the hope of the oppressed everywhere.”¹⁷⁰ The President went on to note that the ideals of liberty and equality had not been completely realised, and never would be “so long as any American suffers discrimination as a result of his race, or religion, or color, or the land of origin of his forefathers.”¹⁷¹ For the United States to maintain its position as the “hope of the oppressed everywhere,” Truman argued, the democratic ideal had to be realised. For the democratic ideal to be realised, racial discrimination had to be abolished. For racial discrimination to be abolished, the federal government had to take action. Truman reasserted the claims of PCCR in stating that, “The protection of civil rights is the duty of every government which derives its powers from the consent of the people.”¹⁷² This sentiment is

¹⁶⁹ Harry S. Truman, State of the Union Address, January 7th 1948. Sourced at <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/tap/1748.htm> [Tuesday, February 22nd at 14:45_{ECT}]

¹⁷⁰ Harry S. Truman, Special Message to Congress on Civil Rights. February 2nd 1948. Sourced at <http://www.yale.edu/glc/archive/972.htm> [Friday, February 18th 2011 at 18:16_{ECT}]

¹⁷¹ Harry S. Truman, Special Message to Congress on Civil Rights. February 2nd 1948. Sourced at <http://www.yale.edu/glc/archive/972.htm> [Friday, February 18th 2011 at 18:16_{ECT}]

¹⁷² Harry S. Truman, Special Message to Congress on Civil Rights. February 2nd 1948. Sourced at <http://www.yale.edu/glc/archive/972.htm> [Friday, February 18th 2011 at 18:16_{ECT}]

particularly compelling given the President's audience, Congress, who individually derived their power from votes, and upon whom he placed the burden civil rights legislation. Truman's concluding sentiment was also international:

If we wish to inspire the peoples of the world whose freedom is in jeopardy, if we wish to restore hope to those who have already lost their civil liberties, if we wish to fulfil the promise that is ours, we must correct the remaining imperfections in our practice of democracy.

We know the way. We need only the will.¹⁷³

The President did not choose to end this instructive message to Congress calling for reform on moral grounds, instead he chose to highlight the international consequences of failing to "correct" the situation. Put simply, Truman did not make a moral claim about civil rights; he just assumed one. Thus, the White House's action to redress domestic race discrimination were inspired by concepts of moral correctness, but motivated by the international implications of failing to live up to the promises of the American creed.

Truman's decision not to make a public moral argument for civil rights also has a pragmatic message: namely, the President and his speechwriters did not believe that principled reform arguments would be compelling to large segments of the American population. Those members that saw reform as a morally correct action probably already backed Truman's rhetorical crusade, and thus these were not the targets of his speeches. The impact of domestic race relations on international affairs was Truman's realist argument for reform, one that did not require him to insult large segments of the Democratic Party by calling their beliefs "immoral."

International pressure in the Cold War arena for the U.S. to live according to its ideological rhetoric came from both communist and non-communist sources, bridged the divide between the colonial and colonised world. The unprecedented unity with which the international

¹⁷³ Harry S. Truman, Special Message to Congress on Civil Rights. February 2nd 1948. Sourced at <http://www.yale.edu/glc/archive/972.htm> [Friday, February 18th 2011 at 18:16_{ECT}]

community collectively condemned U.S. domestic race discrimination underscored the significance of civil rights reform to American moral legitimacy, and subsequently the country's efficacy on the global stage. The federal government, committed to the democratic principle of equality since the ratification of the U.S. Constitution, had lacked either the moral leadership or the *realpolitik* motivation to expand that principle to include minority populations before the inauguration of Harry S. Truman at the end of an international war against racial prejudice. The polarised Cold War international climate exacerbated domestic racial tensions and brought U.S. human rights violations to the attention of peoples around the world. Foreign media coverage of U.S. race practices impaired the country's ability to sell democracy to the nonaligned Third World, making civil rights reform an issue of national security. President Truman's decision to create a committee to investigate the civil rights status of minority populations in late 1946, though a response to the wave of violence spreading through Southern states, suggested a presidential commitment to redressing domestic discriminatory practices. The President's Committee on Civil Rights produced a provocative report that advocated for a strong federal commitment to reform given the ineffective and differing state commitments to the issue. PCCR said this action was essential because discriminatory practices were fundamentally un-American, and damaging to both the national economy and the country's reputation in the global arena. As the president grappled with incorporating the contents of PCCR's report into his political rhetoric without ostracising Southern white voters, he also began ordering and approving measures that would make *de facto* changes in American society.

Chapter Three

Literal Actions from Literary Abstractions: Federal Attempts to Promote de facto Reform in American Society

The Truman administration's active role in civil rights reform during the late 1940s and early 1950s was a response to the growing significance of international condemnation of the country's racial practices in the polarised Cold War arena. Though it is important to recognise the increased domestic pressure for federal action on civil rights immediately preceding the 1948 presidential election, the American public was too divided over the issue to be the primary force driving social reform. The reality that steps taken to improve the welfare of minority populations in the United States were made only by branches of government directly influenced by foreign pressure, while actively resisted by Congress, the national legislative body, exhibits the international nature of these reforms. The most significant steps taken towards eradicating racial inequality during Truman's presidency came from the Department of State, the president himself, and the Department of Justice. Though Truman's civil rights initiatives were more symbolic than substantive, he gave momentum to a reform movement that would continue throughout the second half of the twentieth century, eventually realising every single policy objective set down by the President's Committee on Civil Rights in 1947.

President Truman's rhetorical commitment to civil rights reform alienated large segments of the Democratic Party, particularly members in the South, where segregation remained an

important tenet of both the social and legal system.¹⁷⁴ Conservative Democrats opposed to Truman's civil rights rhetoric tried to convince him to change his 1948 electoral message, but the president held strong to his ideological convictions. "I'm not asking for social equality," he wrote on August 18th 1948 to friend Ernest W. Roberts, a proponent of segregation, "because no such thing exists, but I am asking for equality of opportunity for all human beings and, as long as I stay here, I am going to continue that fight."¹⁷⁵ Any scholar of Truman's civil rights policy will note that most of the steps the president took towards reform occurred in the months leading up to the national election. Considerations of domestic policy are not without merit, particularly as black northern voters became an important pressure; however, traditional histories of Truman's motivations have been too quick to call the president's actions election tactics.¹⁷⁶ Under immense foreign pressure to take action on U.S. race discrimination, the federal government's decisive steps in 1948 reflect the global nature of a domestic issue, not least because the American population was too divided over civil rights to be the primary force pushing for change.

The oft-cited Gallup poll from March 1948, which asked fifteen hundred U.S. citizens whether they supported a congressional enactment of Truman's entire civil rights programme, was not as indicative of Truman's imprudent moral courage as some authors have claimed.¹⁷⁷ Michael Gardner, for example, states in *Harry S. Truman and Civil Rights: Moral Courage and Political Risks* that 82 percent of those surveyed in March 1948 opposed congressional enactment

¹⁷⁴ For an excellent account of the damage civil rights had on Democratic party politics see Sean Savage, *Truman and the Democratic Party* (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press; 1997), Pages 120-126, and David McCullough, *Truman* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster; 1992), Pages 584-594

¹⁷⁵ Personal Letter from Harry S. Truman to Ernest W. Roberts on August 18th 1948, as reproduced in Robert H. Ferrell, *Off the Record: The Private Papers of Harry S. Truman* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, Publishers; 1980), Pages 146-7

¹⁷⁶ See William C. Berman, 'Civil Rights and Civil Liberties,' in Richard S. Kirkendall (ed.) *The Truman Period as a Research Field* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press; 1967), Page 196 for a list of sources with this argument.

¹⁷⁷ See Michael R. Gardner, *Harry Truman and Civil Rights: Moral Courage and Political Risks* (Carbondale and Edwardsville, IL: Southern Illinois University Press; 2002), Page 83; and Sean Savage, *Truman and the Democratic Party* (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press; 1997), Pages 129

of Truman’s civil rights programme.¹⁷⁸ The two Gallup polls that posed this question in March 1948, however—#414K and #414T, having 1511 and 1529 respondents respectively—show vastly different results from those Gardner cites. In Poll #414K, only 19.46 percent of respondents said congress *should not* pass Truman’s civil rights programme as a whole; and in Poll #414T,

Figure Seven
Results of a Gallup poll conducted in March 1948.

Question: qn10c [the same for both polls]
(Have you heard or read about the “Civil-Rights” program recently suggested by President Truman?) [IF YES, ASK:] How do you feel about Truman’s civil-rights program? Do you think Congress should or should not pass the program, as a whole?

Field Date: 03/05/1948-03/10-1948 [same for both]

Sample Size: 1511 for #414K; and 1529 for #414T

	Poll #414K		Poll #414T	
	%	No.	%	No.
Should	22.77	344	21.91	335
Should no	19.46	294	20.80	318
No opinion	19.52	295	22.69	347
Not necessary, it's in the U.S. Constitution	0.66	10	0.72	11
Might work in North, dangerous in South	0.00	0	0.13	2
Should, if it's constitutional	0.00	0	0.13	2
Anti-lynch law should be passed	0.20	3	0.07	1
Negro segregation in travelling	0.07	1	0.00	0
Depends what it includes, some okay	0.26	4	0.13	2
Miscellaneous	0.20	3	0.26	4
No code or no data	36.86	557	33.16	507

that number was 20.8 percent.¹⁷⁹ As can be seen in Figure Seven, the vast majority of respondents (over 30% in both instances) did not answer the question because, presumably, they had not yet heard of Truman’s civil rights programme.¹⁸⁰ Withal, in both instances more people supported a complete congressional enactment of

Truman’s civil rights programme than the number who opposed it, and still more supported partial implementation of the programme. According to the Gallup Brain record of its polls,

¹⁷⁸ Michael R. Gardner, *Harry Truman and Civil Rights: Moral Courage and Political Risks* (Carbondale and Edwardsville, IL: Southern Illinois University Press; 2002), Page 83

¹⁷⁹ Tables constructed from statistics as found on Gallup Brain. Respondent answers in poll #414K can be found at <http://0-institution.gallup.com.library.colby.edu/documents/question.aspx?QUESTION=110164&SearchConType=1&SearchTypeAll=feel%20truman%20%20%20program%20%20think%20congress%20not%20pass%20program%20whole> [Sourced Thursday, April 14th 2011 at 14:20_{ECT}]. Respondent answers in poll #414T can be found at <http://0-institution.gallup.com.library.colby.edu/documents/question.aspx?QUESTION=111530&SearchConType=1&SearchTypeAll=feel%20truman%20%20%20program%20%20think%20congress%20not%20pass%20program%20whole> [Sourced Thursday, April 14th 2011 at 14:26_{ECT}]. The field date for both polls was 03/05/1948-03/10/1948.

¹⁸⁰ The assumption is derived from the question leading in to qn10c, which asked, “Have you heard or read about the “Civil-Rights” program recently suggested by President Truman?” and IF YES, respondents were asked how they felt about a congressional enactment of that programme. Of course, some respondents may have declined to answer the question despite their knowledge of the president’s civil rights programme as well.

interviewers have only asked this question on three occasions in the organisation's history, the two instances cited above in March 1948, and once in November of that same year.¹⁸¹ Where Gardner got his statistic that 82 percent of respondents opposed congressional enactment therefore, remains uncertain;¹⁸² and a 20 percent opposition does not indicate that civil rights reform carried the level of political risk Gardner argues it did. What these results do suggest is that civil rights was a contentious issue during an important election year, one that required Truman to exercise caution in order to prevent offending large segments of his constituency. Governmental action on civil rights in 1948—which included an *amicus curiae* brief in a key civil rights case, and a pair of executive orders to desegregate the military and prohibit race discrimination in the civil service—did not reflect the sort of caution one might expect from a president facing a difficult election. After all, Gardner is correct that white Southern Democrats were at least as important an interest group as Northern blacks in the mid-twentieth century (and probably more so.) The decision to take action on civil rights in an unpredictable domestic arena, therefore, suggests that the Truman Administration was responding to a different incentive, which, upon examination, proves international in nature.

Prejudice and Property: A Shifting Government Role in the Supreme Court

One of the most impressive displays of federal engagement in civil rights reform during the Truman presidency was the Justice Department's involvement in legal cases where issues of race discrimination, particularly segregation, were at stake. Facing a conservative Congress, and keen to enact change unabated by party politics, the Truman's Justice Department filed several

¹⁸¹ This was checked through a search of Gallup's poll database, the results of which can be found at: <http://0-institution.gallup.com.library.colby.edu/search/results.aspx?SearchTypeAll=feel+civil+rights+truman&SearchConType=1&s=&p=1&b=Search> [Sourced Thursday, April 14th 2011 at 14:11ECT]. The results from November 1948 differ from those in March only in that more respondents had heard of Truman's civil rights program at that time, but equal numbers continued to support and denied congressional enactment of it.

¹⁸² Oddly Gardner cites the poll statistics as from March 1948, "a month after Truman's special message on civil rights was submitted to the Congress;" however, in the notes lists it as the results of a poll taken on April 5th 1948. No such poll exists from April 5th 1948.

amicus curiae briefs to promote civil rights reform through the Supreme Court. Prior to 1948, the Justice Department had only participated in civil rights cases “when the litigation involved a federal agency, and when the question in the case concerned was the supremacy of federal law.”¹⁸³ Following the President’s Committee on Civil Rights’ 1947 report, however, the Justice Department started participating in cases in which it was not a party. Philip Elman, a lawyer in the Solicitor General’s office from 1946 to 1960, explained in an oral history interview, that this change was inspired by the “strong position urging an end to racial discrimination”¹⁸⁴ PCCR espoused in *To Secure These Rights*. At the time of the committee’s report, several cases involving purported civil rights violations were pending in the Supreme Court, leading Elman and Phineas Indritz, a lawyer at the Department of the Interior, to initiate a governmental intervention in keeping with PCCR’s recommendations. The two lawyers successfully convinced the Department of the Interior, the Department of State, the NAACP, the ACLU, the American Jewish Congress, and the American Jewish Committee to write letters to the president and the Attorney General outlining their concern over the status of civil rights in the U.S. and suggested the staff “write letters to the President and the Attorney General urging the government to intervene in the Supreme Court.”¹⁸⁵ Elman, who sat at the unofficial civil rights desk in the Solicitor General’s office,¹⁸⁶ then collated these messages into a formal memorandum to the Attorney General recommending that the United States file an *amicus curiae* brief in the first among these cases, *Shelley v. Kraemer*. Following executive approval, this brief would set a precedent for government intervention in legal proceedings involving civil rights.

¹⁸³ Citing the cases of *Mitchell v. United States*, 313 U.S. 80 (1941) and *Taylor v. Georgia*, 315 U.S. 25 (1942) respectively; quotation from Mary L. Dudziak, ‘Desegregation as a Cold War Imperative’ *Stanford Law Review*, Vol. 41, No. 1 (November, 1988), Page 105

¹⁸⁴ Philip Elman interviewed by Norman Silber for the Columbia Oral History Project, ‘The Solicitor General’s Office, Justice Frankfurter, and Civil Rights Litigation, 1946-1960: An Oral History’ (1987) *Harvard Law Review*, Volume 100, No. 4 (February, 1987), Pages 817-18

¹⁸⁵ Philip Elman interviewed by Norman Silber for the Columbia Oral History Project, ‘The Solicitor General’s Office, Justice Frankfurter, and Civil Rights Litigation, 1946-1960: An Oral History’ (1987) *Harvard Law Review*, Volume 100, No. 4 (February, 1987), Page 818

¹⁸⁶ There was no civil rights division in the Department of Justice at that time. In his oral history Elman called himself the “civil rights man in the Solicitor General’s office” (818), which is why he was so heavily involved in the case.

Shelley v. Kraemer was a private arbitration about a ‘restrictive covenant’ that had been written into a property contract in 1911 in St. Louis, Missouri, stating that for the next fifty years the property owners could not sell or rent to “people of the Negro or Mongolian race.”¹⁸⁷ Racial restrictive covenants became popular in the United States after the Supreme Court decision in *Buchanan v. Warley* in 1917, which ruled that city zoning laws, an official endorsement of segregation, were unconstitutional.¹⁸⁸ *Buchanan v. Warley* did not prevent individuals writing their racial prejudices into property agreements because restrictive covenants were private arrangements otherwise unhindered by the law. As such, though state-sanctioned housing segregation had been abolished, white populations had a legal loophole to maintain racial separation, a covenant that held up in local courts. In 1948, *Shelley v. Kraemer*, however, disputed the legitimacy of these covenants at the Supreme Court level, forcing a branch of the federal government to either officially endorse segregation measures it had thus far tacitly accepted, or to reject racial restrictive covenants as unconstitutional, paving the way for broader challenges against segregation. According to Solicitor General Philip Perlman, the brief filed in *Shelley v. Kraemer* in 1948 was “the first instance in which the Government had intervened in a case to which it was not a party and in which its sole purpose was the vindication of rights guaranteed by the Fifth and the Fourteenth Amendments.”¹⁸⁹ The decision to involve the Department of Justice in this legal proceeding on the side of the plaintiff, not only established the government’s position on civil rights, but it also had positive symbolic value for Truman on the global stage.

In his 1987 interview, Elman suggested that President Truman and Attorney General Tom C. Clark’s decision to approve the first *amicus curiae* brief in *Shelley v. Kraemer* was the result of an electoral strategy aimed at gaining Northern black votes. His interpretation, however, ignores

¹⁸⁷ Tony Mauro, *Illustrated Great Decisions of the Supreme Court* (Washington, D.C.: CQ Press; 2000), Page 189—‘Mongolian’ here seems not to refer to individuals from the Mongolian state, but more probably in a derogatory manner to all Asians or Asian Americans.

¹⁸⁸ Tony Mauro, *Illustrated Great Decisions of the Supreme Court* (Washington, D.C.: CQ Press; 2000), Page 188

¹⁸⁹ See footnotes, Mary L. Dudziak, “Desegregation as a Cold War Imperative” *Stanford Law Review*, Vol. 41, No. 1 (November, 1988), Page 105

both domestic tensions over civil rights and the overwhelming foreign criticism the U.S. had endured over its racial practices. It ought to be noted further that Elman follows this conjecture in his oral history interview with legal history scholar Norman Silber by stating, “Well, I don’t know exactly what happened.”¹⁹⁰ By the time of his interview, Elman knew retrospectively how vital Northern black voters had been to Truman’s success; however, this reality does not imply an equivalent presidential motive.¹⁹¹ Democrats were so divided over civil rights in the year leading up to the election that the president actively resisted taking a stand on the issue for fear of losing his Southern white base. Indeed, when members of Americans for Democratic Action (ADA) pushed a more powerful civil rights plank during the Democratic national convention in July 1948, Truman called the plank a “crackpot amendment”¹⁹² because it antagonised large sections of the party without substantial benefits. However, when ADA’s version of the plank passed and Southern Democrats walked out of the convention to run their own presidential candidate, Truman had no choice but to take the black vote more seriously. This point of transition, however, came some seven months after the president approved the Justice Department’s brief in *Shelley v. Kraemer*. Until forced to court the black electorate in July 1948, the immense international pressure he faced to bring American policy in to line with its rhetoric more plausibly motivated Truman’s actions. Moreover, as Mary L. Dudziak notes in her study of the period, “The image of a well-meaning President struggling against a recalcitrant Congress might help Truman at the polls in the United States, but not in the United Nations. Some actual change in American racial policies was needed to silence foreign critics.”¹⁹³ Truman’s rhetoric on civil rights, Dudziak

¹⁹⁰ Philip Elman interviewed by Norman Silber for the Columbia Oral History Project, ‘The Solicitor General’s Office, Justice Frankfurter, and Civil Rights Litigation, 1946-1960: An Oral History’ (1987) *Harvard Law Review*, Volume 100, No. 4 (February, 1987), Page 818

¹⁹¹ See Table 1, ‘A Summary of the 1948 Black Vote for Selected Key States: Abstract From the NAACP Report to President Truman,’ as reproduced in Ronald D. Sylvia, ‘Presidential Decision Making and Leadership in the Civil Rights Era,’ *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 25, No. 3, Civil Rights and Presidential Leadership (Summer, 1995), Page 397

¹⁹² Diary entry of Harry S. Truman, July 14th 1948, as reproduced in Robert H. Ferrell, *Off the Record: The Private Papers of Harry S. Truman* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, Publishers; 1980), Pages 143

¹⁹³ Mary L. Dudziak, “Desegregation as a Cold War Imperative” *Stanford Law Review*, Vol. 41, No. 1 (November, 1988), Page 103

suggests, would have been enough to placate domestic reform activists because they did not expect (or did not seek) dramatic change.¹⁹⁴ The president's decision to pursue substantive reform, therefore, reflected the international scope of the American dilemma.

The Justice Department's brief in *Shelley v. Kraemer* highlighted the consequences of enforcing racial restrictive covenants on the U.S.'s position in an international arena already critical of the country's civil rights history. The Department of Justice quoted at length from Secretary of State Dean Acheson's May 1946 letter to the Fair Employment Practices Commission,¹⁹⁵ which argued that domestic desegregation and civil rights reform were integral to the nation's interests abroad. The brief also cited a letter from the Under Secretary of the Interior, Oscar L. Chapman, who, in his discussion of domestic minorities (which generally focused on Indian affairs), echoed Acheson's concerns. "The broad implications of restrictive covenants," Chapman had said, "are entirely inconsistent with the future national and international welfare of the United States in its relations with the 'non-white' peoples."¹⁹⁶ The concern these two important officials had over the moral well-being of the United States within an increasingly non-white global arena echoes the thousands of State Department memos from U.S. embassy officials noting the damage domestic race relations had on the country's image abroad. The international repercussions of *Shelley v. Kraemer*, therefore, made the Supreme Court's decision a federal concern, and as such some of the best legal minds in the country collaborated to find a solution that would protect the moral legitimacy of the country without domestic creating a backlash among Southern whites supremacists.

¹⁹⁴ Mary L. Dudziak, "Desegregation as a Cold War Imperative" *Stanford Law Review*, Vol. 41, No. 1 (November, 1988), Page 103

¹⁹⁵ Quoted at length in Chapter Two in 'The Department of State: Difficulties with the Empty Vessel'

¹⁹⁶ Citing a letter from Under Secretary of the Interior, Oscar L. Chapman, to the Department of Justice on November 10th 1947, 'Brief for the United States as *Amicus Curiae*' (December 1947) submitted by Attorney General Clark, Solicitor General Perlman, and the Department of Justice for consideration *Shelley v. Kraemer*, 334 U.S. 1 (1948), Page 19. As reproduced in Philip B. Kurland and Gerhard Casper (ed.), *Landmark Briefs and Arguments of the Supreme Court of the United States: Constitutional Law*, Volume 46: *Shelley v. Kraemer (1948)*, *Terminiello v. Chicago (1949)* and *Wolf v. Colorado (1949)* (Arlington, Virginia: University Publications of American, Inc.; 1975), Page 251

To the Justice Department, a Supreme Court decision that ruled racial restrictive covenants as legally enforceable violated the principle of democracy, since it lent a federal hand to segregation practices. The Department of Justice argued that “judicial enforcement of racial restrictive covenants constituted governmental action in violation of rights protected by the Constitution and laws of the United States;”¹⁹⁷ thus, segregated housing was contrary to the basic principles of American democracy. The brief commented at length on the implications these covenants had on individual freedoms, stating:

[Racial restrictive covenants] are responsible for the creation of isolated areas in which overcrowded racial minorities are confined, and in which living conditions are steadily worsened. The avenues of escape are being narrowed and reduced. As the people so trapped, there is no life in the accepted sense of the word; liberty is a mockery, and the right to pursue happiness a phrase without meaning, empty of hope and reality. This situation cannot be reconciled with the spirit of mutual tolerance and respect for the dignity and rights of the individual which give vitality to our democratic way of life. The time has come to destroy these evils which threaten the safety of our free institutions.¹⁹⁸

The language of this quotation exhibits the strength with which the Justice Department demanded substantive change from the Supreme Court. The allusion to the vitality of democracy indicates the level of federal awareness over the country’s moral legitimacy amid Cold War animosities, suggesting the symbolic repercussions of the decision were as significant to the government as *de facto* change.

The government displayed its awareness of the potential damage dramatic reform could have on domestic politics, suggested that the Supreme Court could refuse to enforce racial restrictive covenants without actually finding them ‘unconstitutional.’ The brief noted that the federal government had committed itself to public policy objectives—in statutes, executive

¹⁹⁷ ‘Brief for the United States as *Amicus Curiae*’ (December 1947) submitted by Attorney General Clark, Solicitor General Perlman, and the Department of Justice for consideration *Shelley v. Kraemer*, 334 U.S. 1 (1948), Page 48. As reproduced in Philip B. Kurland and Gerhard Casper (ed.), *Landmark Briefs and Arguments of the Supreme Court of the United States: Constitutional Law*, Volume 46: *Shelley v. Kraemer (1948), Terminiello v. Chicago (1949) and Wolf v. Colorado (1949)* (Arlington, Virginia: University Publications of American, Inc.; 1975), Page 280

¹⁹⁸ ‘Brief for the United States as *Amicus Curiae*’ (December 1947) submitted by Attorney General Clark, Solicitor General Perlman, and the Department of Justice for consideration *Shelley v. Kraemer*, 334 U.S. 1 (1948), Page 4. As reproduced in Philip B. Kurland and Gerhard Casper (ed.), *Landmark Briefs and Arguments of the Supreme Court of the United States: Constitutional Law*, Volume 46: *Shelley v. Kraemer (1948), Terminiello v. Chicago (1949) and Wolf v. Colorado (1949)* (Arlington, Virginia: University Publications of American, Inc.; 1975), Page 236

pronouncements, and international agreements—that promised “to deny the sanction of law to racial discrimination, and to ensure equality under the law to all persons, irrespective of race, creed, or color.”¹⁹⁹ The Justice Department argued that as a branch of the federal government, the Supreme Court was bound by public policy, and therefore could not enforce racial restrictive covenants because such action would sanction discrimination within the law. As such, the Justice Department offered the Supreme Court the opportunity to condemn segregation without addressing it as a constitutional question, which undoubtedly would have alienated white supremacists.

In its decision on May 3rd 1948, the Supreme Court did not rule racial restrictive covenants unconstitutional, and therefore it did not prevent buyers and sellers from making such agreements privately. However, the Court did note that state or federal enforcement of such covenants violated the Fourteenth Amendment’s equal protection clause, making enforcement of these covenants unconstitutional, though the covenants themselves were not. This decision did not challenge the constitutionality of segregation policies, nor did it substantially alter the civil rights status of minority populations; however, the federal government condemned race discrimination as un-American and removed the veil of legality such practices had earlier enjoyed. In 1987, Philip Elman reflected that the government’s argument in *Shelley v. Kraemer* was “not an ordinary brief. It was a statement of national policy,” he claimed. “We were showing the flag; we were expressing an authoritative, forthright position that all government officials would be bound by.”²⁰⁰ Whether or not the Department of Justice’s *amicus curiae* brief substantially aided the Supreme Court’s decision, “the department’s actions were an important precedent in the legal

¹⁹⁹ ‘Brief for the United States as *Amicus Curiae*’ (December 1947) submitted by Attorney General Clark, Solicitor General Perlman, and the Department of Justice for consideration *Shelley v. Kraemer*, 334 U.S. 1 (1948), Pages 93-4. As reproduced in Philip B. Kurland and Gerhard Casper (ed.), *Landmark Briefs and Arguments of the Supreme Court of the United States: Constitutional Law*, Volume 46: *Shelley v. Kraemer (1948), Terminiello v. Chicago (1949) and Wolf v. Colorado (1949)* (Arlington, Virginia: University Publications of American, Inc.; 1975), Pages 325-6.

²⁰⁰ Philip Elman interviewed by Norman Silber for the Columbia Oral History Project, ‘The Solicitor General’s Office, Justice Frankfurter, and Civil Rights Litigation, 1946-1960: An Oral History’ (1987) *Harvard Law Review*, Volume 100, No. 4 (February, 1987), Page 819

battle against discrimination in American life.”²⁰¹ In *Shelley v. Kraemer* the federal government committed itself to defending minority rights in legal proceedings, and the Supreme Court suggested that over time it would to start examining discrimination as a constitutional question.

Making Civil Rights a Presidential Plank

At the Democratic national convention in Philadelphia in July 1948, Party liberals challenged Truman’s hope of maintaining a moderate line on civil rights in his presidential campaign. Prior this point, Truman had taken action to promote civil rights in response to foreign pressures, but domestic disunity had led him to adopt a weak civil rights platform in an attempt to placate Southern Democrats. Party liberals, however, “were angry over the Administration’s refusal to endorse a strong plank on civil rights and they were determined to write one into the party platform even if it necessitated a fight on the floor.”²⁰² Hubert Humphrey, the mayor of Minneapolis, gave a speech at the convention rallying support for this stronger party line on civil rights by noting the implications domestic inequality had for the country’s moral legitimacy in the global arena. Speaking powerfully from a podium, Humphrey declared:

This is far more than a Party matter. Every citizen in this country has a stake in the emergence of the United States as a leader in the free world. That world is being challenged by the world of slavery. For us to play our part effectively, we must be in a morally sound position.²⁰³

Humphrey, like Truman, described the international implications of the “Negro problem” in an attempt to persuade those members of his audience that might otherwise oppose civil rights.

Humphrey’s attempt to appeal to a broader audience, however, was unsuccessful. Following

Humphrey’s speech, large segments of Democratic Southerners walked out of the convention,

²⁰¹ William C. Berman, ‘Civil Rights and Civil Liberties,’ in Richard S. Kirkendall (ed.) *The Truman Period as a Research Field* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press; 1967), Pages 196-7

²⁰² William C. Berman, ‘Civil Rights and Civil Liberties,’ in Richard S. Kirkendall (ed.) *The Truman Period as a Research Field* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press; 1967), Page 193

²⁰³ Hubert H. Humphrey, *1948 Democratic National Convention Address*, delivered 14 July 1948, Philadelphia, PA. Speech transcript: <http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/hubertthumphey1948dnc.html> [Sourced on Friday, April 15th 2011 at 12:41_{ECT}]

uniting under South Carolina Senator Strom Thurmond, a staunch segregationist and third-party candidate in the 1948 election

Though Truman resented the damage Humphrey's speech had done to party unity, it would be a stretch to say this drastically altered his course of action, given that he had already prepared the two executive orders to desegregate the armed forces and prohibit race discrimination in the civil service. William C. Berman notes in 'Civil Rights and Civil Liberties,' that "Once the campaign was on, it was essential for President Truman to give further evidence of his sincerity and good will on the civil rights question."²⁰⁴ Party tensions prior to Humphrey's speech had, to some extent, impeded Truman. Though he made several speeches on civil rights, and approved the Justice Department's *amicus curiae* brief in *Shelley v. Kraemer*, he had not yet taken decisive presidential action to assert his position on the issue. White House memos from as early as January 1948 suggest the president was prepared to desegregate the military by executive order; however, "it was not until the delegates at the 1948 Democratic National Convention called for a liberal civil rights plank that included desegregation of the armed forces that Truman felt comfortable enough"²⁰⁵ to issue that order. The plank adopted by the DNC gave Truman the opportunity to prove to the international community, and those members of the national community in support of civil rights, that as president of the United States he was capable of implementing change reflective of his rhetorical line. Though party divisions in July 1948 damaged Truman's chances to win in Southern states, it gave him the opportunity to take sides in a domestic struggle, signifying to the world that he was a man of his word. "Analysts have suggested," presidential scholar Ronald Sylvia notes, "that Truman's decision was rewarded by the delivery by civil rights groups of overwhelming numbers of black voters in key states that off-

²⁰⁴ William C. Berman, 'Civil Rights and Civil Liberties,' in Richard S. Kirkendall (ed.) *The Truman Period as a Research Field* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press; 1967), Page 192

²⁰⁵ Comment by Truman Archivists at the Truman Library on Executive Order 9981, <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/anniversaries/desegblurb.htm> [Sourced on Friday, April 15th at 13:02_{ECT}]

set Southern losses.”²⁰⁶ Truman’s actions may have been inspired by personal convictions, but they were also inhibited by personal prejudices, and reflected the calculated and decisive nature of an introspective and intelligent mind. The president’s decision to desegregate the military, though not fully implemented until 1950 (and then due to *realpolitik* pressures,) showed that Truman was prepared to continue nurturing the growth of democracy at home. Needless to say, though some foreign news agencies commended the president’s actions (just as they would when he submitted his Civil Rights Bill to Congress in 1949, though it never passed), critics of American democracy recognised change in the United States primarily as something achieved by “progressive” fractions, and not by the president and his administration.²⁰⁷

In 1949, a U.S. Embassy official in Moscow, Foy Kohler, noted, “this attention to the Negro problem serves political ends desired by the Soviet Union and has nothing whatsoever to do with any desire to better the Negro position.”²⁰⁸ Kohler went on to note that though the Soviet press had mentioned the renowned black statesman Ralph Bunche several times over the previous year, it had never identified his race. Indeed, the first time the Soviet press recognised Bunche as a ‘Negro’ politician, according to Kohler, was in an article entitled ‘Washington--An Unsuitable Place for a Negro,’ which explained that Bunche had refused the position of assistant secretary of state, because it would have required him to move to Washington, DC, a city with staunch segregation laws. In short, the Soviet press ignored Bunche’s racial identity except when it could be used to embarrass the White House. Bunche’s role in American political life represented progress to an administration taking steps to improve domestic civil rights, an improvement that went practically unreported in the Soviet media. In its attempt to paint U.S. democracy as

²⁰⁶ Ronald D. Sylvia, ‘Presidential Decision Making and Leadership in the Civil Rights Era,’ *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 25, No. 3, Civil Rights and Presidential Leadership (Summer, 1995), Page 397

²⁰⁷ For extensive evidence of this, it is worth reading at length the Department of State reports on representations of U.S. race discrimination in foreign media. (NARS files beginning 811.4016/ and 811.411/)

²⁰⁸ NARS Doc. 811.4016/6-2749. Memorandum from the U.S. Embassy in Moscow to the Secretary of State, June 27th 1949.

fundamentally exploitative, the Kremlin “seize[d] upon anything showing the position of the U.S. Negro in a derogatory light while ignoring entirely the genuine progress being made in America in improving the situation.”²⁰⁹ By 1949, the U.S. State Department called the “Negro question” “One of the principal Soviet propaganda themes regarding the United States,”²¹⁰ and called for a direct U.S. response to the “misinformation” Moscow disseminated both within and outside its borders.

In January 1952, Eleanor Roosevelt also expressed concern over the extensive news coverage of U.S. domestic race relations in the French press. During her visit to Paris as part of the United States Delegation to the General Assembly of the United Nations, she wrote home to then Secretary of State, Dean Acheson, Mrs. Roosevelt said:

I think this is perhaps one of the things that militates against us more than anything else. I do believe something really energetic should be done to bring the countries of Europe and Asia up-to-date on the situation of the Negro in the United States. It is almost the best U.S.S.R. Soviet (sic) propaganda as far as its affect upon the nations that should be our friends.²¹¹

A lifelong political activist, Eleanor Roosevelt was a respected spokesperson for civil rights. Secretary of State Dean Acheson’s reply exhibits the energy with which the Department of State was trying to counter the damage that domestic racial practices were having on foreign relations.

It is our belief that simple truth about the place of the Negro in America is our most effective weapon in meeting this problem... In the field of press and publications, a sizable package of background materials has been sent to eighty-five of our overseas missions. The chief merit of this ‘kit,’ designed for adaptation to the special needs of the various areas of the world, lies in the fact that it is the answer of American Negroes themselves to allegations made by those either ignorant or uninterested in the true situations.²¹²

The United States disseminated information about the “Negro Problem” in countries particularly sensitive to racial discrimination in an attempt to counter the misinformation spread by communist and anti-American groups. Though the Department of State could not independently

²⁰⁹ NARS Doc. 811.4016/6-2749. Memorandum from the U.S. Embassy in Moscow to the Secretary of State, June 27th 1949.

²¹⁰ NARS Doc. 811.4016/6-2749. Memorandum from the U.S. Embassy in Moscow to the Secretary of State, June 27th 1949.

²¹¹ NARS Doc. 811.411/1-2852. Letter from Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt (as stated) to Secretary of State Dean Acheson, January 28th 1952.

²¹² NARS Doc. 811.411/1-2852. Letter from Secretary of State Dean Acheson to Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt, February 12th 1952.

enforce domestic change in the United States, by incorporating the views of African Americans into their propaganda campaign they gave a largely silenced group a political voice in the international community, albeit a strongly vetted voice.

As international criticism of the U.S. “Negro problem” continued to hamper the Department of State’s ability to affect U.S. foreign policy, the federal government began actively countering anti-American propaganda with its own psychological warfare campaign.²¹³ Meanwhile, Truman’s administration continued to engage with civil rights in the judiciary system by filing a number of *amicus curiae* briefs similar to that in *Shelley v. Kraemer*. The president himself presented a Civil Rights Bill to Congress in 1949, which was immediately shot down by the domestically-focused legislative body; however, Truman continued to seek ways to redress race discrimination, and the issue remained a perennial theme in his political rhetoric at home and abroad. No single act in the second half of Truman’s presidency was more significant for the civil rights movement, however, than the Justice Department’s decision to file its final and most compelling *amicus curiae* brief in the landmark segregation case of *Brown v. Board of Education*.

Separate As Constitutionally Unequal

In its 1952 the *amicus curiae* brief in *Brown v. Board of Education*, the Department of Justice defended federal intervention in state policy on the grounds that international cold war pressure had morphed a social issue into a threat to national security. The foreign press’s preoccupation with American segregation, the government argued, damaged the country’s ability to form alliances essential for defence in a polarised political arena. As such, the Justice Department supported the NAACP’s challenge of the precedent set by the 1896 Supreme Court

²¹³ For details of this campaign, see State Department’s confidential memorandum “Suggestions Re Handling Communist Campaign on Treatment of Negroes in the U.S. (‘We Charge Genocide’)” sent from Chester S. Williams to Mr. Edward Barrett, Assistant Secretary, and Mr. Francis Russell, Director of the Office of Public Affairs on December 27th 1951. This document is filed in the box of NARS Doc. 811/411; however, it does not have its own decimal code.

decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson*, which had sanctioned state-sponsored ‘separate but equal’ segregation. The ‘separate but equal’ doctrine had served as scaffolding for racial segregation policies in affect throughout the South; despite a number of attempts to overrule it, the Supreme Court had never questioned the constitutionality of the decision. In the 1950 case of *Sweatt v. Painter*, the Court had skirted the issue, ruling that as a law school set up for black students in Texas was fundamentally unequal to its white-only equivalent, it did not meet the requirements of ‘separate but equal.’ In *Sweatt*, the Court required an all-white institution to admit several black students until Texas had improved its black law school. Though the Supreme Court was not prepared to decide the constitutionality of segregation in this case, the ruling suggested to leading NAACP attorney Thurgood Marshall that the Supreme Court could be convinced to explore the issue if he could prove that separate schools were never equal. Subsequently, African American families in several states and the District of Columbia began to file lawsuits that in 1954 would be ruled on collectively under the leading title of *Brown v. Board of Education*.

The Department of State outlined how the interests of the United States were implicated in the Court’s decision. Abridge here, this argument is one of the most compelling pieces of evidence that reveal the federal government’s awareness of how domestic discrimination was destroying the country’s reputation abroad:

It is in the context of the present world struggle between freedom and tyranny that the problem of racial discrimination must be viewed. The United States is trying to prove to the people of the world, of every nationality, race, and color, that a free democracy is the most civilized and most secure form of government devised by man. We must set an example for others by showing determination to remove existing flaws in our democracy.

During the past six years, the damage to our foreign relations attributable to this source has become progressively greater...the undeniable existence of racial discrimination gives unfriendly governments the most effective kind of ammunition for their propaganda warfare. The hostile reaction among normally friendly peoples, many of whom are particularly sensitive in regard the status of non-European races, is growing in alarming proportions...The sincerity of the United States in this respect will be judged by its deeds as well as its words...Although progress is being

made, the continuance of racial discrimination in the United States...jeopardizes the effective maintenance of our moral leadership of the free and democratic nations of the world.²¹⁴

The clarity with which the Department of Justice identified and explained the international scope of the “Negro problem” is striking, not least because it indicates the tenacity with which the government had begun to fight for its moral legitimacy in the global arena.²¹⁵

As in the *Shelley v. Kraemer*, in the *amicus curiae* brief for *Brown v. Board of Education* the Justice Department offered the Supreme Court an opportunity to clearly state the government’s position without creating a major backlash among white segregationists. The brief noted that the Court only had to make a decision on the constitutionality of the ‘separate but equal’ doctrine if, and only if “it were found as a fact, upon the basis of supporting evidence, that the separate schools are equal in the education (sic) benefits and opportunities afforded children of both races.”²¹⁶ As such, the Department of Justice argued that the Supreme Court could make a ruling in *Brown* similar to the one it had submitted in *Sweatt* in 1950, but only if “separate schools are found physically unequal.”²¹⁷

If, however, segregated schools had already levelled the playing fields across the colour line, the Department of Justice demanded that the Supreme Court address question of “whether ‘equalization’ is the same as equality.”²¹⁸ In this instance, the brief argued, in-keeping with the

²¹⁴ Letter to from Secretary of State Dean Acheson to Attorney General James P. McGranery, dated December 2, 1952, quoted in ‘Brief for the United States as *Amicus Curiae*’ (December, 1952) written by Attorney General James P. McGranery and Special Assistant to the Attorney General Philip Elman in *Brown vs. Board of Education*, Pages 7-8. As reproduced in Kurland and Casper (ed.), *Landmark Briefs and Arguments of the Supreme Court of the United States: Constitutional Law*, Volume 49: *Brown v. Board of Education (1954 & 1955)* (Arlington, Virginia: University Publications of American, Inc.; 1975), Pages 121-3

²¹⁵ See Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), Page 61. Even accounts that highlight foreign pressure as a minor contributing factor to Truman’s civil rights campaign often cite this section of the *amicus curiae* brief. See for example, Comer Vann Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press; 1955).

²¹⁶ ‘Brief for the United States as *Amicus Curiae*’ (December, 1952) written by Attorney General James P. McGranery and Special Assistant to the Attorney General Philip Elman in *Brown vs. Board of Education*, Page 10. As reproduced in Kurland and Casper (ed.), *Landmark Briefs and Arguments of the Supreme Court of the United States: Constitutional Law*, Volume 49: *Brown v. Board of Education (1954 & 1955)* (Arlington, Virginia: University Publications of American, Inc.; 1975), Page 125

²¹⁷ ‘Brief for the United States as *Amicus Curiae*’ (December, 1952) written by Attorney General James P. McGranery and Special Assistant to the Attorney General Philip Elman in *Brown vs. Board of Education*, Page 11. As reproduced in Kurland and Casper (ed.), *Landmark Briefs and Arguments of the Supreme Court of the United States: Constitutional Law*, Volume 49: *Brown v. Board of Education (1954 & 1955)* (Arlington, Virginia: University Publications of American, Inc.; 1975), Page 126

²¹⁸ ‘Brief for the United States as *Amicus Curiae*’ (December, 1952) written by Attorney General James P. McGranery and Special Assistant to the Attorney General Philip Elman in *Brown vs. Board of Education*, Page 11. As reproduced in Kurland and Casper (ed.), *Landmark Briefs and*

evidence already submitted by the NAACP,²¹⁹ which noted that “Segregation of white and colored children in public schools has a detrimental effect upon the colored children,” and that “The impact is greater when it has the sanction of the law, for the policy of separating the races is usually interpreted as denoting the inferiority of the Negro group.”²²⁰ Moreover, the Department of Justice cited numerous Supreme Court decisions,²²¹ stating, “The Government submits that compulsory racial segregation is itself, without more, an unconstitutional discrimination.”²²² As such, the government argued that if the Supreme Court felt impelled to question the constitutionality of the ‘separate but equal’ doctrine, it would have to overrule *Plessy v. Ferguson*, and call the doctrine ‘unconstitutional.’ “Separate but equal,” the Justice Department declared, “is a contradiction in terms.”²²³

Quoting from a decision in the 1917 case *Gompers v. United States*, the Justice Department noted that though *Plessy* had long-since been accepted in the American legal system, “The provisions of the Constitution are not mathematical formulas having their essence in their form; they are organic living institutions transplanted from English soil. Their significance is vital, not formal; it is to be gathered not simply by taking the words and a dictionary, but by considering their origin and the line of their growth.”²²⁴ This eloquent defence of revisionist legal

Arguments of the Supreme Court of the United States: Constitutional Law, Volume 49: Brown v. Board of Education (1954 & 1955) (Arlington, Virginia: University Publications of American, Inc.; 1975), Page 126

²¹⁹ Kenneth Clark’s *Black Doll, White Doll Experiment*. For on this study, see John P. Jackson, *Social Scientists for Social Justice: Making the Case Against Segregation* (New York, NY: New York University Press; 2001), Pages 109-153

²²⁰ Opinion Delivered by Chief Justice Warren on December 9th 1952, cited in ‘Brief for the United States as *Amicus Curiae*’ (December, 1952) written by Attorney General James P. McGranery and Special Assistant to the Attorney General Philip Elman in *Brown vs. Board of Education*, Page 12. As reproduced in Kurland and Casper (ed.), *Landmark Briefs and Arguments of the Supreme Court of the United States: Constitutional Law, Volume 49: Brown v. Board of Education (1954 & 1955)* (Arlington, Virginia: University Publications of American, Inc.; 1975), Page 127

²²¹ Including *Henderson v. United States*, 339 U.S. 816, *Sweatt v. Painter*, 339 U.S. 629, and *McLaurin v. Oklahoma State Regents*, 339 U.S. 637.

²²² ‘Brief for the United States as *Amicus Curiae*’ (December, 1952) written by Attorney General James P. McGranery and Special Assistant to the Attorney General Philip Elman in *Brown vs. Board of Education*, Page 17. As reproduced in Kurland and Casper (ed.), *Landmark Briefs and Arguments of the Supreme Court of the United States: Constitutional Law, Volume 49: Brown v. Board of Education (1954 & 1955)* (Arlington, Virginia: University Publications of American, Inc.; 1975), Page 132

²²³ ‘Brief for the United States as *Amicus Curiae*’ (December, 1952) written by Attorney General James P. McGranery and Special Assistant to the Attorney General Philip Elman in *Brown vs. Board of Education*, Page 17. As reproduced in Kurland and Casper (ed.), *Landmark Briefs and Arguments of the Supreme Court of the United States: Constitutional Law, Volume 49: Brown v. Board of Education (1954 & 1955)* (Arlington, Virginia: University Publications of American, Inc.; 1975), Page 132

²²⁴ *Gompers v. United States*, 233 U.S. 604, 610 (1914), as cited in ‘Brief for the United States as *Amicus Curiae*’ (December, 1952) written by Attorney General James P. McGranery and Special Assistant to the Attorney General Philip Elman in *Brown vs. Board of Education*, Page 25.

practices suggested that a Supreme Court ruling against the ‘separate but equal’ doctrine could propel the state further towards its democratic ideals. Recognising the tenacity with which many Southern states clung to segregation, however, the brief suggested gradual reform, or desegregation with “deliberate speed.” When asked about the brief filed in *Brown v. Board of Education*, Elman answered, “The reason I’m proud of that proposal is that it offered the Court a way out of its dilemma, a way to end racial segregation without inviting massive disobedience, a way to decide the constitutional issue unanimously without tearing the Court apart... We proposed a middle ground, separating the constitutional principle from the remedy...”²²⁵ The middle ground was an avenue the government hoped would relieve the international implications of the American dilemma Myrdal had identified eight years previously, a way for the court to find segregation unconstitutional once and for all. The brief filed by Truman’s Justice Department in *Brown v. Board of Education* was the last significant step made by an administration under immense foreign pressure to align its domestic policy with its idealistic rhetoric and convictions, but among the first in the broader movement to make civil rights “living realities, not literary abstractions.”²²⁶

As reproduced in Kurland and Casper (ed.), *Landmark Briefs and Arguments of the Supreme Court of the United States: Constitutional Law*, Volume 49: *Brown v. Board of Education (1954 & 1955)* (Arlington, Virginia: University Publications of American, Inc.; 1975), Page 140.

²²⁵ Philip Elman interviewed by Norman Silber for the Columbia Oral History Project, ‘The Solicitor General’s Office, Justice Frankfurter, and Civil Rights Litigation, 1946-1960: An Oral History’ (1987) *Harvard Law Review*, Volume 100, No. 4 (February, 1987), Page 827

²²⁶ ‘Brief for the United States as *Amicus Curiae*’ (December, 1952) written by Attorney General James P. McGranery and Special Assistant to the Attorney General Philip Elman in *Brown vs. Board of Education*, Page 32. As reproduced in Kurland and Casper (ed.), *Landmark Briefs and Arguments of the Supreme Court of the United States: Constitutional Law*, Volume 49: *Brown v. Board of Education (1954 & 1955)* (Arlington, Virginia: University Publications of American, Inc.; 1975), Page 147.

Epilogue

During Truman's presidency, Cold War tensions brought questions of moral legitimacy to the forefront of the national agenda. As such, foreign criticism of U.S. domestic racial practices, particularly in light of the country's rhetorical commitment to freedom and equality, threatened the country's reputation on the world stage. Influential members of the Truman administration (the president himself, Acheson, Clark, and even Marshall), tacitly supported legal and economic desegregation (though perhaps not social), and responded to foreign criticisms by incorporating civil rights reform into the national agenda. At a time of intense domestic disagreement over segregation, the federal government emerged as the leading actor on social reform, suggesting the extent to which the movement was impelled by external factors. Although most of the steps taken towards civil rights during the Truman presidency were more symbolic than substantive, the administration initiated a federal engagement with race discrimination that would continue throughout the second half of the twentieth century. In summary, individual actors and global processes combined during the Truman presidency to instigate a crucial change within the federal government, and, subsequently, within the fabric of American democracy.

This study focuses the majority of its attention on federal action and foreign criticism related to civil rights, and sometimes it does so at the expense of recognising the efforts of domestic activists. Given the limited voice of U.S. minorities in political discussions, federal policy reform was invariably a product of national interest viewed through the white American lens. In the Cold War context, this lens was narrowed further in accordance with the state's determination to contain communism. At times, domestic civil rights advocates successfully incorporated into these geo-political tensions (such as when the NNC, NAACP and CRC petitioned the United Nations over human rights violations occurring in the United States), but for

the most part their activity was on the local and state level. This is not to overlook the power civil rights groups had when they threatened to march on Washington, DC, but rather to note that such activity would not become common or truly effective for several more years. This study in no way seeks to disregard the achievements of domestic civil rights activists, quite the opposite. The ability of the black press to keep U.S. race discrimination within sight of foreign critics marks the tenacity with which individual actors sought social reform. Moreover, this tenacity over subsequent years would highlight the hypocrisy of race discrimination in the eyes of white Americans as well as foreigners, and by 1964 created a domestic climate in which congressional enactment of the PCCR's recommendations would be realised.

This study sought to internationalise an issue typically viewed through a domestic lens, exposing federal engagement with civil rights reform as a product of the rapidly globalising post-World War II arena. Without resorting to counterfactuals, it seems clear the progress made during Truman's presidency towards civil rights could not have been achieved without the dynamic shifts in national legitimacy that resulted from collective security efforts such as the United Nations, if only because domestic reform was orchestrated almost entirely at the federal level. Though many members of the U.N. still have a grisly record with regards to human rights, the accountability international condemnation brings to bear on those states continues to produce internal reform in nations hoping to increase their moral legitimacy in the international arena. The Cold War may have ended, therefore, but it left a legacy of competition for moral legitimacy that suggests a gradual global shift towards the practical fulfilment of the democratic ideal.

Bibliography

PRIMARY SOURCES:

Speeches

- HUMPHREY, Hubert H.: *1948 Democratic National Convention Address*. July 14th 1948, Philadelphia, PA.
[Sourced at <http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/hubertthumphey1948dnc.html> on Friday, April 15th 2011 at 12:41_{ECT}]
- ROOSEVELT, Franklin D.: Radio Address 'Arsenal of Democracy.' Delivered from Washington, DC. December 29th 1940.
[Sourced at: <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/WorldWar2/arsenal.htm> on Saturday, April 2nd 2011 at 4:38_{ECT}]
- TRUMAN, Harry S.: Address before a Joint Session of Congress. March 12th 1947.
[Sourced at http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/trudoc.asp on Saturday, April 2nd 2011 at 5:16_{ECT}]
- TRUMAN, Harry S.: *Address before the NAACP*. June 29th, 1947.
[Sourced at <http://millercenter.org/scripps/archive/speeches/detail/3345> on Monday, November 15th 2010 at 13:35_{ECT}]
- TRUMAN, Harry S.: State of the Union Address. January 7th 1948.
[Sourced at <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/tap/1748.htm> on Tuesday, February 22nd at 14:45_{ECT}]
- TRUMAN, Harry S.: Special Message to Congress on Civil Rights. February 2nd 1948.
[Sourced at <http://www.yale.edu/glc/archive/972.htm> on Friday, February 18th 2011 at 18:16_{ECT}]

News-clippings

- HAILEY, Lord Malcolm: 'America's Colour Problem: An Objective Survey of the Negro's Lot, Contrasts in the North and South,' *The London Times*, Issue 49917, Tuesday, 25th July 1944; Page 5, Column F
- POLLINS, Harold: 'The Battle of Bamber Bridge,' BBC History: WW2 People's War: An Archive of World War Two Memories as sourced at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/ww2peopleswar/stories/85/a3677385.shtml> [on Tuesday, 16th November 2010 at 21:09_{ECT}]
- SAFIRE, William: 'Truman on Underdogs.' Op-Ed in the *New York Times* (July 14, 2003) as sourced at <http://isurvived.org/InTheNews/OnTruman.html> [Thursday, January 13th 2011 at 17:25_{ECT}]
- STREATOR, George: 'NEGRO CONGRESS APPEALS TO U.N.: Detroit Gathering Asks It to Halt Oppression of the Race in This Country, Pleas of the Petition Letter to the President' *New York Times*, June 2nd 1946, Page 33
- 'Action to End Anti-Semitism in U.S. Demanded Here by Justice Murphy; Speech at the B'nai B'rith Interfaith Unity Session Warns Nation of Serious Dangers in Growth of Undemocratic Forces,' *New York Times*, May 9th 1944, Page 36
- 'American Dilemma,' *Time*, Monday, February 7th 1944 [Sourced at <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,791292,00.html#ixzz1IPL0ecZQ> on Saturday, April 2nd 2011 at 6:31_{ECT}]
- 'KILLING OF NEGROES IS PROTESTED HERE: NAACP Tells Truman Shooting of 2 by Tennessee Troopers in Jail was Worthy of Nazis,' *New York Times*, March 2nd 1946, Page 26
- 'LIBERTY HELD ENDANGERED: Conspiracy Against Democracy Seen in Anti-Semitism,' *New York Times*, July 30th 1939, Page 9
- 'Foreign Relations: How Not to Make Friends,' *Time*, Volume LX, Number 8, August 25th 1952, Page 17

Federal Documents

The below listed documents are from the National Archives and Records Service, held in the National Archives II, they belong in the Department of State Central Decimal File, part of RG 59: General Records of the Department of State. Both files "811.4016" and "811.411" cover "Race Problems" in the United States, the former from 1945-1948, the latter from 1948-1954. Many hundreds more citations belong in this section for colouring my understanding of the subject matter; however, the below are those cited in the text of this paper.

- NARS Doc. 811.411/1-2852. Letter from Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt (as stated) to Secretary of State Dean Acheson, January 28, 1952; and reply from Mr. Dean Acheson to Mrs. Roosevelt, dated February 12th 1952.
- NARS Doc. 811.411/2-1350. Memorandum from Robert Coe, Counselor of Embassy, the Hague to the State Department on the matter of 'Dutch Attitudes Toward American Racism.' February 13th 1950.

- NARS Doc. 811.411/8-2952. Letter to American Consulate in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia from Lee Moke Sang, Secretary to Federation of Government Administrative and Clerical Union, on August 28, 1952. Quoted in Memorandum from Vanoss, American Consulate in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia to the Secretary of State. August 29, 1952.
- NARS Doc. 811.4016/1-1047. Telegram 195 from Gallman at the U.S. Embassy in London to the Secretary of State, with enclosed Telegram from Donald Bruce, Richard Crossman, and Tom Driberg, all British MPs, to President Harry S. Truman, January 14th 1946.
- NARS Doc. 811.4016/2-747. Memorandum from the U.S. Embassy in Rio de Janeiro to the Department of State, February 7th 1947.
- NARS Doc. 811.4016/6-1046. Memorandum from James S. Moose, Jr., Charge d'Affaires ad interim, American Embassy in Baghdad, Iraq to the Secretary of State, with enclosed translation of a Reuter (sic) story printed in Al Yaqda.. June 10, 1946.
- NARS Doc. 811.4016/6-2546. 'The Ku Klux Klan,' *The Manchester Guardian*, June 21st 1946, enclosed in a memorandum from the U.S. Embassy in London to the Department of State on June 25th 1946.
- NARS Doc. 811.4016/6-2749. Memorandum from the U.S. Embassy in Moscow to the Secretary of State, June 27th 1949.
- NARS Doc. 811.4016/7-2248. Memorandum from K.L. Rankin, Charge d'Affaires ad interim, American Embassy in Athens to the Department of State, July 22nd 1948; enclosed clipping of Mrs. Helen Vlachos, 'Going South,' *Kathimerini*, July 17th 1948
- NARS Doc. 811.4016/8-2646. Memorandum from U.S. Embassy in Moscow to the Department of State, with enclosed translation of article in *Trud*, printed on August 23rd 1946 entitled 'Position of Negroes in the USA.' August 26th 1946.
- NARS Doc. 811/4016/11-1247. Telegram from the Haitian Embassy in Washington D.C. to the Secretary of State, November 12th 1947. Translated into English from its original French by the Department of State Central Translating Division on November 18th 1947.
- NARS Doc. 811.4016/11-2047. Quotation from *La Nation* in a memorandum from State Department officer Tittmann at the US Embassy in Port-au-Prince, Haiti to the Secretary of State on November 20th 1947.

Miscellaneous Documents

- MYRDAL, Gunnar: *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* (Piscataway, NJ: Transaction Publishers; 1996 (1944))
- *To Secure These Rights: The Report of the President's Committee on Civil Rights* (1947) as reproduced in Lawson, *To Secure These Rights* (Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin's; 2004)
- *An Appeal to the World: A Statement on the Denial of Human Rights to Minorities in the Case of Citizens of Negro Descent in the United States and an Appeal to the United Nations for Redress* (New York: National Association for the Advancement of Colored People; 1947)

Other

- FERRELL, Robert H.: *Off the Record: The Private Papers of Harry S. Truman* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, Publishers; 1980)
- HELLER, Francis H.: *The Truman White House: The Administration of the Presidency 1945-1953* (Lawrence, KS: The Regents Press of Kansas; 1980)
- MERRIL, Dennis (ed.): *Documentary History of the Truman Presidency, Volume 11, The Report of the Committee on Civil Rights and President Truman's Message to Congress of February 2,* (Bethesda, MD: University Publications of America; 1996)
- TRUMAN, Harry S.: *Memoirs, Volume 2: Years of Trial and Hope* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc; 1956)
- 'Brief for the United States as *Amicus Curiae*' (December 1947) submitted by Attorney General Clark, Solicitor General Perlman, and the Department of Justice for consideration *Shelley v. Kraemer*, 334 U.S. 1 (1948). As reproduced in Philip B. Kurland and Gerhard Casper (ed.), *Landmark Briefs and Arguments of the Supreme Court of the United States: Constitutional Law, Volume 46: Shelley v. Kraemer (1948), Terminiello v. Chicago (1948) and Wolf v. Colorado (1949)* (Arlington, Virginia: University Publications of American, Inc.; 1975)
- 'Brief for the United States as *Amicus Curiae*' (December, 1952) written by Attorney General James P. McGranery and Special Assistant to the Attorney General Philip Elman in *Brown vs. Board of Education* (1954). As reproduced in Kurland and Casper (ed.), *Landmark Briefs and Arguments of the Supreme Court of the United States: Constitutional Law, Volume 49: Brown v. Board of Education (1954 & 1955)* (Arlington, Virginia: University Publications of American, Inc.; 1975)
- William H. Hastie, interviews with Jerry N. Hess. Transcript of Oral History, January 5th 1972. 53-54. <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/oralhist/hastie.htm> [Sourced on Thursday, February 24th 2011 at 15:33ECT]
- Aubrey B. Sally, Letter to President Harry S. Truman on September 22, 1950. Harry S. Truman Papers, Public Opinion Mail, Box 10: Civil Rights [dates are not given for this box file at the Truman library, as these documents have been organised topically not chronologically]

- Philip Elman interviewed by Norman Silber for the Columbia Oral History Project, 'The Solicitor General's Office, Justice Frankfurter, and Civil Rights Litigation, 1946-1960: An Oral History' (1987) *Harvard Law Review*, Volume 100, No. 4 (February, 1987)

SECONDARY SOURCES:

- BELL, Derrick A., Jr.: 'Brown v. Board of Education and the Interest-Convergence Dilemma,' *Harvard Law Review*, Vol. 93, No. 3 (January 1980)
- BERMAN, William C.: 'Civil Rights and Civil Liberties,' in Richard S. Kirkendall (ed.) *The Truman Period as a Research Field* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press; 1967)
- BORSTELMANN, Thomas: *The Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; 2001)
- DEVINE, Michael J. Robert P. Watson, and Robert J. Wolz (ed.): *Israel and the Legacy of Harry S. Truman* (Kirksville, MO: Truman State University Press; 2008)
- DUDZIAK, Mary L.: *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000)
- FRANKLIN, John Hope: 'Civil Rights of the Truman Administration,' in Donald R. McCoy, Richard T. Ruetten, and J. R. Fuchs (eds.), *Conference of Scholars on the Truman Administration and Civil Rights* (Independence, MO.; 1968)
- GARDNER, Michael R.: *Harry Truman and Civil Rights: Moral Courage and Political Risks* (Carbondale, CO: Southern Illinois University Press; 2002)
- HAMBY, Alonzo L.: *Man of the People: A Life of Harry S. Truman* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press; 1995)
- HILTON, Stanley E.: 'The United States, Brazil, and the Cold War, 1945-1960: End of the Special Relationship,' *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 68, No. 3 (December, 1981)
- JACKSON, John P.: *Social Scientists for Social Justice: Making the Case Against Segregation* (New York, NY: New York University Press; 2001)
- KRENN, Michael (ed.): *Race and U.S. Foreign Policy during the Cold War: Race and U.S. Foreign Policy from the Colonial Period to the Present*. Vol. 4., *Race and Foreign Policy During the Cold War* (New York, N.Y.: Garland Publishers; 1998)
- LAWSON, Steven F.: 'Setting the Agenda of the Civil Rights Movement,' as reproduced in Lawson, *To Secure These Rights* (Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin's; 2004)
- LAYTON, Azza Salama: *International politics and Civil Rights Policies in the United States, 1941-1960* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press; 2000)
- MARTIN, Charles, H.: 'Internationalizing "The American Dilemma": The Civil Rights Congress and the 1951 Genocide Petition to the United Nations,' *Journal of American Ethnic History*, Volume 16, No. 4 (Summer, 1997)
- MAURO, Tony: *Illustrated Great Decisions of the Supreme Court* (Washington, D.C.: CQ Press; 2000)
- MCCULLOUGH, David: *Truman* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster; 1992)
- MERIWETHER, James Hunter: *Proudly we can be Africans: Black Americans and Africa, 1935-1961* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press; 2002)
- NAVARRO, Anthony V.: 'A Critical Comparison Between Japanese and American Propaganda during World War II,' sourced from <https://www.msu.edu/~navarro6/srop.html> [on Tuesday, 16th November 2010 at 22:25_{ECT}]
- PEMBERTON, William E.: *Harry S. Truman: Fair Dealer & Cold Warrior* (Boston, MA: Twayne Publishers; 1989)
- SAVAGE, Sean: *Truman and the Democratic Party* (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press; 1997)
- SKRENTNY, John David: 'The Effect of the Cold War on African-American Civil Rights: America and the World Audience, 1945-1968,' *Theory and Society*, Vol. 27, No. 2 (April 1999)
- SMYSER, W.R.: *From Yalta to Berlin: The Cold War Struggle Over Germany* (St. Martin's Press; 2000)

- SOUTHERN, David W.: *Gunnar Myrdal and Black-White Relations: The Use and Abuse of 'An American Dilemma 1944-1969'* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press; 1987)
- SHULL, Charles W.: 'Review: President's Committee on Civil Rights: *To Secure These Rights*,' *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 256: Organized Religion in the United States (March, 1948)
- SYLVIA, Ronald D.: 'Presidential Decision Making and Leadership in the Civil Rights Era,' *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 25, No. 3, Civil Rights and Presidential Leadership (Summer, 1995)
- VANN WOODWARD, Comer: *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press; 1955)