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Blacks In Norfolk Virginia During the 1930's

Norma Cromwell Fields
Old Dominion University

BLACKS IN NORFOLK VIRGINIA

DURING THE 1930's

by

Norma Cromwell Fields
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Approved by:

Dr. Dorothy E. Johnson

D. Alan Harris

Peter C. Stewart

ABSTRACT

This thesis analyzes the experience of blacks in Norfolk, Virginia, during the Depression decade of the 1930's. It emphasizes the problems blacks faced in an era of rising unemployment and entrenched segregation. The study uses a variety of tables to show comparatively high rates of disease, joblessness, and crime along with related discrimination in pay and in the distribution of public and private funds for humanitarian purposes.

Using a wide variety of primary sources, including personal interviews, the study examines a variety of subjects. In addition to portraying the plight of the black population, the thesis discusses the role of religion in the black community, the response to Franklin Roosevelt and the New Deal, and the individual achievements of blacks in Norfolk.

PREFACE

The Great Depression was devastating to all Americans but to black Americans the devastation was even greater. Always the last to be hired and the first fired, blacks were hit earliest and hardest by the nation's economic collapse. In many urban centers more than one-third of the black population was on relief. In Norfolk, by 1935 three-fourths of the relief load was black. Black economic problems, during the Great Depression, were intensified by the position of blacks in American Society. Racist beliefs caused many white employers to displace their black employees with whites who needed employment; black wages, throughout the South, were lower than the wages of white workers; and blacks received an unequal share of private and public relief funds.

This paper is a study of the Great Depression and blacks in Norfolk, Virginia from 1930 to 1940. The study addresses some of the economic social and cultural problems in the black community and the community's reaction to these problems. Relief for the unemployed blacks is a special concern. Some historians of black history have criticized the New Deal for failing to provide adequately for relief in the black community. W. E. B. Dubois criticized Roosevelt for failing to raise the wages of black workers in the South

to a level equaling the wages of white workers; Eric Foner and Leslie Fischel contend in America's Black Past, that the New Deal's contributions to the black community were slim; and Robert Allen in Black Awakening in Capitalist America, accused the New Deal of being paternalistic in its treatment of blacks. Were these criticisms true for blacks in Norfolk?

Finally, while these historians are critical of Roosevelt they all agree that he was the most popular President among blacks since Abraham Lincoln. Did Norfolk blacks hold him in such high regard? These are questions which this thesis will address.

My reasons for undertaking the study are threefold. First, there is no written history for Norfolk's black community for the period and there is an urgent need for the recording of the accomplishments and contributions of Norfolk's blacks to the black struggle during the Great Depression. Secondly, I have a very personal interest in this segment of history because the Depression deprived me of knowing my maternal grandparents. My mother was orphaned at six years of age in 1937. Her father was a victim of the tuberculosis crisis which affected Norfolk during the decade of the 1930s and her mother was the unfortunate victim of inadequate medical care which caused her death in childbirth in 1937. Thirdly, this period for me is a source of racial pride because black people were once again able to survive the injustices of man's inhumanity to man.

I would like to acknowledge the kind words of advice given me by Dr. Dorothy E. Johnson, Department of History, Old Dominion University. Her patience and guidance helped to make this work possible.

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CHAPTER I

Norfolk's population in 1930 totaled 129,710 of which 43,942 or 33.9 per cent were black. The black percentage of the population in Norfolk was larger than that of any other city in the state. While there were more blacks living in Richmond, they comprised only 28 per cent of the population there and the city of Roanoke's population was only 18 per cent black. The black percentage of the population in Norfolk was also higher than the percentage of blacks in Virginia's population which was 26 per cent black. Because of residential segregation, made legal by a Virginia law of 1912,[1] blacks in Norfolk were forced to live in certain areas of the city.[2] The majority of black people in Norfolk lived in the region around Church Street including Huntersville, Lindenwood, Young Park and the area around Booker T. Washington High School.[3]

The primary economic activity in Norfolk revolved around the Norfolk Naval Base, and the International

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[1]U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930: Population, 2:1776,1141.

[2]June P. Guild, Black Laws of Virginia (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969), pp. 147-148.

[3]Interview with Mr. James R. Jones, Norfolk, Virginia, 10 December 1978.

Longshoreman's Association. The Portsmouth Naval Shipyard supplied additional employment for many of Norfolk's citizens. In 1930, 80 per cent of black men over ten in Norfolk were gainfully employed. The majority of black men worked in the semi-skilled and unskilled occupations which included barbers, chauffers, truck drivers, delivery men, factory workers, building laborers and general laborers. Fifty-four per cent of black women over fifteen were gainfully employed in 1930. The primary occupations open to these women were in the domestic field including maids, cooks, and housekeepers. Over 80 per cent of the domestic help in Norfolk was provided by black women.[4] Blacks were represented in the professional fields: there were eighteen black lawyers, twenty-five black physicians, eight black dentists, four black pharmacists and six black morticians. Two hundred and sixty blacks were employed as school teachers.[5]

In 1930, before the Depression hit Norfolk, the black unemployment rate almost doubled the white rate of unemployment. Two per cent of whites were unemployed while 3.9 per cent of blacks were unemployed. The unemployment rate for blacks in Norfolk was exactly the same as the unemployment rate for blacks throughout the South; however, it was higher than the unemployment average for Virginia which was 1.6 per cent. The rate of white unemployment in the

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[4] Z. R. Pettet, Negroes in the U.S., 1920-1932 (Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1935), p. 301.

[5] Norfolk City Directory (Portsmouth: Hill Directory and Co., 1930-1940).

state was .8 per cent. Again the black rate of employment doubled the white rate.[6]

One reason for the higher unemployment rate among blacks in Norfolk and throughout the South was that many jobs were closed to blacks. Jobs in the city government, clerks in the downtown stores and most postal positions all went to white workers. None of the merchants on Church Street hired black clerks even though their clientele was almost entirely black. The Miller Drug Store, located on the corner of Church Street and Olney Road was the first white owned retail establishment on the street to hire a black clerk when it engaged Almeda Faulkner in 1936. This was considered a very liberal move on the part of the drug store and the black community complimented the establishment for its interest in putting some of its profits back into the black community.[7]

Employment and residential segregation were not the only kinds of segregation prevalent in Norfolk in 1930. The lines of segregation were very clearly drawn in Norfolk and throughout most of the South. In Norfolk everything was separated along racial lines; schools, churches, hotels, restaurants, hospitals, theatres, public auditoriums, street cars and buses all bore written signs or tacit communications

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[6]U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930: Population, 1:1026.

[7]Norfolk Journal and Guide, 1 February, 1936.

informing one that these services were either for "whites only" or "colored." Even the private charities in the city were divided along racial lines. Blacks had no direct access to white charities. Instead they had to form black extensions to the existing charity. For instance there was the Colored Division of the Community Fund, the Colored Division of the Red Cross, the Colored United Charities and the Colored Union Mission. The separation of the races was paramount to the white community's feelings of superiority. Therefore, white authorities and the city's all white police force saw that the separation of the races was maintained. Even with such strict rules of segregation there were no major racial confrontations in Norfolk. The Norfolk City Directory gave us its explanation that "the two races understand each other and it is to the credit of Norfolk's people--both white and colored--that in all Norfolk's history there has never been a serious misunderstanding."[8]

Since segregation denied blacks access to the white communities they concentrated on building up their own communities. Before the stock market crash in 1929 blacks in Norfolk were working hard to build up their community. They established a bank, the Metropolitan Bank and Trust Company; they had a successful weekly newspaper, the Journal and Guide, one of the few Negro weeklies to enjoy a national reputation; and they were opening up small businesses such as cleaning shops, barber shops, beauty salons, funeral

[8] Norfolk City Directory, 1937.

parlors, restaurants and newstands. In an attempt to uplift the standards of their community blacks were involved in numerous social and civic organizations such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the United Negro Improvement Association, the Elks, the Masons, sororities, faternities, and numerous other privately sponsored organizations.

Segregation was also responsible for the development of a distinct black society in Norfolk. Norfolk's black society consisted of a very definite class system based on family background, economics, and education. There were three classes in Norfolk's black community. At the top of the social pyramid were those blacks who could claim descendence from blacks who were free before the Civil War and those professional and college-educated blacks, such as doctors, lawyers, and teachers. The black middle class consisted of the skilled and semi-skilled laborers such as carpenters, brickmasons, barbers, cleaners, and maids who worked for wealthy white families. The lower class consisted of the masses of blacks, the unskilled workers and general laborers. There were no really wealthy blacks but there were some who were well off. Among them were Journal and Guide editor P.B. Young, Sr., Attorney J. Eugene Diggs, Mortician J.H. Hale, and Physician Edward Murray.[9]

There were numerous problems confronting Norfolk's black population in 1930. Health was a major problem. Poor

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[9]Interview with Mr. Romeo U. Lambert, Shiloh Baptist Church, Norfolk, Virginia, December 1978.

and overcrowded housing fostered the spread of tuberculosis and other communicable diseases. Crime was another problem facing the black community. A large number of crimes committed in Norfolk occurred in the black community. Segregation added to the educational problems for blacks in Norfolk. In 1930, of 36,393 blacks over the age of ten, 4,135 or 11.4 per cent were illiterate[10] while only .7 per cent of whites were illiterate.[11]

Politically most of those blacks were qualified voters were staunch Republicans. However, there was a growing tendency among blacks to align themselves with the Democratic party. In 1928 the Journal and Guide supported Al Smith over Herbert Hoover.[12]

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[10] Pettet, Negroes in the U.S. 1920-1932, p. 239.

[11] Norfolk City Directory 1930, p. 10.

[12] Norfolk Journal and Guide.

CHAPTER II

BLACK CULTURAL AND SOCIAL ATTITUDES AND PROBLEMS

Black history and culture were important to Norfolk's black community during the Great Depression because the history of the Afro-American people gave them faith in their own ability to combat racial and economic problems. Emancipation Day and Negro History Week were important annual events in Norfolk's black community. On these occasions the achievements and accomplishments of blacks collectively and individually were extolled. On Emancipation Day and during Negro History Week blacks studied race history and culture and addressed themselves to many of the problems affecting blacks in Norfolk.

Segregation was the major problem confronting blacks. Blacks were forced by city ordinance to live in one small section of the city. This caused overcrowded and poor housing and made the area a breeding place for crime. The close proximity of blacks contributed to the community's many health problems. The city did not educate black and white children equally. Norfolk spent almost two times more money to educate a white child than it spent on a black child's education; Virginia refused to allow black graduate students admission to the white state owned schools even

though the state made no provisions to educate black graduate students; and white teachers in Norfolk received higher salaries than black teachers regardless of what the qualifications of the black teachers were.

There were institutions in the black community that actively sought to solve these problems. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (N.A.A.C.P.) addressed itself to many of the problems in Norfolk's black community but it was only in the field of education that the N.A.A.C.P. achieved any success. The Universal Negro Improvement Association, unlike the N.A.A.C.P., had no faith in the American system of justice and advocated colonization in Africa as the only solution to black problems in Norfolk. However, religion was the major vehicle through which most blacks sought solutions to their problems. Faith in God and the belief that he would stand by them helped many blacks through the Great Depression.

With all of the problems confronting blacks in Norfolk during the Depression, one thing remained of utmost importance to them, pride in the achievement of the black people in America. The activities and enthusiasm of the Norfolk Emancipation Association is evidence of this fact. Each year on January 1, blacks in Norfolk celebrated Emancipation Day. The Emancipation Proclamation dealt the final blow to Virginia's "Peculiar Institution" only a few generations earlier and blacks seemed intent on honoring the day of freedom. The severe economic conditions made the

older black population accutely aware of their slave past. According to the slave narratives taken by the Works Project Administration in 1937, the Depression so defeated some freedom throughout the South that they felt their condition was no better than enslavement.[1] Nevertheless the celebration of Emancipation Day gave hope and faith to many of Norfolk's black population because it was proof that miracles did happen.

The Norfolk Emancipation Association under the leadership of David Alston supervised the celebration of Emancipation Day. Services were usually held at the First Baptist Church on Bute Street where Reverend Richard Bowling was minister. Reverend Bowling was an active member of the association. Featured in the services for the day were the reading of the Emancipation Proclamation, sermons and lectures by members of the black clergy and Norfolk's leading citizens and musical renditions of the beautiful and sacred Negro spirtuals.[2]

The Norfolk Emancipation Association was not a political organization. Rather it was an association for the study of Negro life. Black history and the accomplishments of black individuals such as Harriet Tubman, Frederick Douglas, and Booker T. Washington, were extolled in Emancipation Day services. The leading membership of the

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[1]U.S. Works Projects Administration, Slave Narratives (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1937).

[2]Norfolk Journal and Guide, 7 January 1933.

Emancipation Association was composed of conservative blacks who felt that many of the city's young educated blacks were forgetting their responsibility to teach race history to the younger black population. They criticized some of Norfolk's black teachers and ministers for their lack of knowledge of race history and their unwillingness to learn. To these blacks some of Norfolk's black educated "elite" were more interested in attending parties, playing bridge and learning the latest dance step than they were in fostering the cultural development of their race.[3]

One of the highlights of Emancipation Day was a big parade through the black community with most of the city's black benevolent and fraternal organizations participating, including Norfolk's famed Excelsior Brass and Reed Band. The band was extremely popular in the black community, it was a source of pride and entertainment, and the people loved to hear it play. Sponsored by the Norfolk Eureka Elks, a fraternal organization composed of black men, the Excelsior Band played for funerals, parties, parades or any such occasion. When the band played for a funeral, on the was to the cemetery it would play slowly and mournfully a dirge such as "Nearer My God to Thee"; but on the way back it would turn to something livelier, such as "When the Saints Go Marching In".[4]

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[3]Ibid., 3 March 1934.

[4]Eileen Southern, Black Music (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1971), pp. 342-343.

The band did its part to alleviate the effects of the Depression on the black community by providing a musical outlet for the frustrations brought on by worsening economic conditions. Since the first slave song was sung in the tobacco fields of the South music had provided a safety valve for black Americans.[5]

Many black people sang because they were sad, not because they were happy. The lyrics of the Negro Spirtuals and the blues, the most popular black music during the decade of the Great Depression, verify this point. The Excelsior Band was famous for its renditions of Negro Spirituals and of the great blues songs of the day. In 1938 Ben Jones, Sr., was director of the band. The band held its rehearsals at the Eureka Elks Home on Church Street and rehearsals were open to the public free of charge.[6]

Coming close behind the celebration of Emancipation Day was the celebration of Negro History Week. In the latter years of the 1930s enthusiasm for the celebration of Emancipation Day appears to have waned while enthusiasm for the celebration of Negro History Week increased. Perhaps this increase was due to the support that the Journal and Guide editor, P.B. Young, Sr., gave to the occasion.

Carter G. Woodson conceived "Negro History Week" in the early twentieth century as a period in which the

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[5]Frederick Douglass, Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass (New York: New American Library, 1968), p. 31.

[6]Norfolk Journal and Guide, 22 January 1938.

contributions of blacks to the development of civilization would be sufficiently emphasized to impress blacks as well as whites. During the observance of this week blacks paid considerable respect to their leaders and heroes. They pointed with pride to the fact that Matt Henson was with Admiral Perry when he reached the North Pole in 1909. They boasted of the victories of black heavyweight champions Jack Johnson and Joe Louis over white fighters, and of Jessie Owen's gold medal victories in the 1936 Olympic Games. Blacks were especially proud of the election of Oscar Depriest of Chicago to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1928. During Negro History Week it was pointed out that in few walks of life did blacks fail to achieve. It was the kind of pride that stemmed from a racial group as peculiarly situated as blacks were. Their world was a small one. The opportunities were few; and what achievements there were, of course, loomed all the greater.[7]

Norfolk and Portsmouth celebrated Negro History Week jointly. The event occurred in February during the week of Lincoln's birthday. Both races were invited to the many programs of the week which included conferences and discussions on the accomplishments and problems of the black community.[8]

Norfolk's Negro History Week celebration of 1933

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[7]John Hope Franklin, From Slavery to Freedom (New York: Vintage Books, 1969), pp. 565-566.

[8]Norfolk Journal and Guide, 11 February 1933.

is particularly noteworthy because of the wide range of events scheduled. The Journal and Guide sponsored the event and the pages of the newspaper were filled with essays on Black History and reports on events which were to take place during the week.[9]

In 1933, sixteen meetings were scheduled with discussion topics that ranged from interracial relations to the kingdoms of early Africa. The programs for each day of the week were sponsored by black civic and social organizations. The Sunday of the week was designated as race relations day. White members of the Y.W.C.A. Interracial Committee, Reverend Sparks W. Melton, pastor of Freemason Baptist Church and Mrs. George R. Martin, chairperson of the committee, were invited to speak before the black community at St. Johns A.M.E. Church. The Interracial Committee was composed of black and white citizens whose responsibility was to keep the lines of communication open between the black and white races in Norfolk[10] in order to foster better race relations.

Another attempt at fostering good race relations during Negro History Week in 1933 was the Norfolk Rotary Club's invitation to Booker T. Washington High School Principal, Winston Douglas, to speak at its regular luncheon held at the Fairfax Hotel. Mr. Douglas's subject was, "The Negro, an asset to Norfolk." According to a report

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[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid.

in the Journal and Guide members of the club were given a

> first hand account of the Negro's attitudes, accomplishment, shortcomings, needs and programs...and heard facts about his religion, business, educational, professional and economic life from one of the races leading representatives in the city...reminding his hearers that they were a group of men who play a vital part in the affairs of the city, the speaker declared he felt it his responsibility to present them with facts, which not only would interest them but would result in benefit both to themselves and to the special part of the community with which he is identified.[11]

The black community was especially proud that Mr. Douglas was asked to address the Rotary Club. They felt that his speech would give the white organization some idea of the true "Negro" whom they felt was unknown to many members of the white community. They wanted the white community to be aware of their worth and of their contributions to the city.[12]

All of the events of Negro History Week in 1933 did not center around the study of black history and black leaders. The aesthetic side of black culture was also stressed. During the week there was a book and picture exhibit on display in the Attucks Building on Church Street. The choral societies of Hampton Institute and Shaw University were presented in concert along with other local talent including Mrs. Pearl Brown who appeared as one of the guest

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[11] Norfolk Journal and Guide, 18 February 1933.

[12] Ibid.

soloists at the 1931 convention of the National Association of Negro Musicians. The Norfolk Players Guild, composed primarily of black teachers, performed a one act play by John Mathews entitled Ti Yette. The play was based on life among the Creoles of New Orleans.[13]

One of the highlights of Negro History Week for the younger black population was the essay contest. Two prizes in gold were given to the high school students of Norfolk and Portsmouth who wrote the best essay on "Why Study Negro History?" This was a coveted prize among black high school students during the depression.[14]

Negro History Week served as a forum in which many problems facing Norfolk's black community could be aired. One particular problem facing blacks in Norfolk was poor health. Booker T. Washington, one of the principal figures discussed during Negro History Week, was especially interested in the problem of black health. Because of his concern for black health, he instituted National Negro Health Week, which he hoped would inspire blacks to guard their health and to develop habits of cleanliness which would help them become a stronger and more effective group.[15] National Negro Health Week was celebrated during the first week of April.

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[13] Norfolk Journal and Guide, 11 February 1933.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Norfolk Journal and Guide, 30 March 1935.

The activities of the week were sponsored by the city's black physicians.[16]

In 1935 a number of health programs were scheduled in celebration of National Negro Health Week. The local radio stations broadcast two programs centered around the black community's health problems; there was a mass meeting on health at the Booker T. Washington High School; a free well-baby clinic was set up to guard the health of the infant population; there was a clean-up campaign at all of the city's "colored schools"; and on Sunday of the week most of Norfolk's black physicians spoke in the area churches.[17]

Norfolk's black physicians were enthusiastic over the celebration of National Negro Health Week because it offered them a forum in which they attacked the black community's health problems. The early 1930s saw an outbreak of la grippe, typhoid fever and tuberculosis in Norfolk. Tuberculosis was by far the most tragic disease for the city but authorities were also concerned over a possible typhoid fever epidemic. In July of 1933 eighteen cases of typhoid fever were recorded, eleven of which were black. There was one black death. Doctors blamed the outbreak of the disease on the deplorable sanitation conditions that resulted from the shutting off of water when tenants were unable to pay for its use.[18]

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[16] Norfolk Journal and Guide, 30 March 1935.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid.

Many of the city's health problems were caused by overcrowded housing and poor sanitation. This was not a problem peculiar to Norfolk's black population. It was a problem for most people migrating to the city, but it was aggravated for blacks because of the congestion that resulted from enforced segregation. After the passage of the Virginia segregation law in 1912 no blacks could move into white residential areas and no whites could move into black residential areas. The extreme congestion which resulted from the restriction upon the choice of residence and the occupancy of small unsanitary homes by large families led to poor health and a high mortality rate.[19]

Some of Norfolk's physicians spoke openly about the black community's health problems. In 1933 a black physician, Dr. A. B. Green, blamed the Norfolk City Council for the tuberculosis epidemic in the black community. According to Dr. Green, the city did nothing to improve the horrible sanitation conditions in the black community, and these conditions fostered the spread of tuberculosis. In 1936 Dr. Fred D. Morton, state supervisor of dentistry in Negro Schools, speaking in observance of National Negro Health Week, accused the state of Virginia of being criminally negligent in providing for the health of its black community. He charged that, "it has failed to provide proper sanitation in our residential districts, adequate housing laws, minimal comforts and conveniences in schools and other public

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[19]Franklin, From Slavery to Freedom, pp. 436-437.

institutions, unrestricted access to all health clinics, and equal industrial opportunities."[20] In 1939, Dr. C. Lydon Harrell stated in an article appearing in the Journal and Guide that sanitation conditions played an important part in the morbidity and mortality of tuberculosis "most especially in the Negro with its social contacts, poor housing, houses poorly constructed and too small, necessitating in many instances for the entire family to sleep in one or two rooms, with windows closed tight and heads under the cover to keep warm . . . poor and insufficient food and clothing, too much visiting among the sick with poor sanitation. All of any one of these help to lower resistance and spread infection."[21]

Tuberculosis was a major problem throughout Virginia during the Depression but it was the black community which suffered most from the disease. Deaths from tuberculosis were three times higher for blacks than for whites in Virginia. While blacks comprised 26 per cent of the population in Virginia they had 56 per cent of the deaths from tuberculosis.[22] The Piedmont Sanatorium in Burkeville was the only publicly supported sanatorium for black

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[20] Writer's Program of the Works Projects Administration, The Negro in Virginia (New York: Hastings House, 1940), p. 20.

[21] Norfolk Journal and Guide, 21 January 1939.

[22] Ibid.

tuberculosis patients in the state. There were two state supported white institutions, the Blue Ridge Sanatorium in Charlottesville, and the Catawba Sanatorium in Catawba.[23] The annual reports of these three institutions for the years 1936 and 1937 are recorded in Table 1.

Table 1 reflects the discrimination characteristic in Virginia's treatment of black tuberculosis patients. One point of discrimination was in the allocation of state funds. It appears that the state appropriated funds to the Piedmont Sanatorium solely on the basis of the percentage of blacks in Virginia's population because the black senatorium received approximately 28 per cent of Virginia's appropriations to its sanatoriums. This was not an adequate allocation for the treatment of tuberculosis in the black community because blacks comprised more than 43 per cent of the deaths from tuberculosis in the state sanatoriums.[24]

Another point of discrimination in the table is concerned with the donations of private charities and individuals to the sanatoriums. Of the three sanatoriums it appears that the Piedmont Sanatorium needed more state funds because of the low contributions it received from private sources. The private contributions of the Catawba

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[23] Twenty-Seventh and Twenty-Eighth Reports of the Virginia Department of Public Welfare, 30 June 1937 (Richmond: Division of Purchase and Printing, 1937), pp. 53-54.

[24] Twenty-Seventh and Twenty-Eighth Reports of the Virginia Department of Public Welfare, 30 June 1937, pp. 53-54.

TABLE 1

A COMPARISON OF THE STATE SUPPORTED
TUBERCULOSIS SANATORIUMS IN VIRGINIA

Agency	Capacity	Year	Patients Enrolled at the Beginning of year	Patients Rec. During the Year	Death	RECEIPTS		
						State	Other Sources	Total
Blue Ridge Sanatorium	270 270	1936 1937	270 267	378 404	25 21	$94,295.80 98,540.00	$83,036.39 83,967.10	$177,322.19 182,507.10
Catawba Sanatorium	340 340	1936 1937	304 319	458 478	44 55	120,688.63 135,215.00	$92,601.26 92,932.55	$213,289.89 228,147.55
Piedmont Sanatorium	150 150	1936 1937	134 144	229 266	62 52	$84,299.78 88,250.84	$13,285.09 18,650.14	$97,584.87 106.800.98

SOURCE: Twenty-Seventh and Twenty-Eighth Annual Report of Virginia Department of Welfare, 30 June 1937, (Richmond: Division of Purchase and Printing, 1937), pp. 53-54.

and Blue Ridge Sanatoriums were ten times greater than those of the Piedmont Sanatorium. The private donations to the Catawba Sanatorium were more than the state's appropriation to the Piedmont Sanatorium. Considering the black need for more tuberculosis treatment and since the white institutions were not as dependent on the state for funding as the black sanatorium was, it seems that the Piedmont Sanatorium should have received a greater amount of state aid. Instead it received the smallest appropriation of the three sanatoriums.[25]

A third point of discrimation can be seen in the amount of bed space made available to black tuberculosis patients. The Piedmont Sanatorium provided less than 20 per cent of Virginia's beds for tuberculosis patients. This figure does not even represent the percentage of blacks in the population. The need for beds of black tuberculosis patients throughout the state was much greater than the 150 beds provided by the Piedmont Sanatorium.[26]

The Tidewater Memorial Hospital, located in Lynnhaven, provided 33 more beds for blacks in the Tidewater area who required hospitalization for tuberculosis. The hospital was extremely overcrowded. In 1940, the hospital received 128 patients and at the end of the year it housed 50 patients although it had only 33 beds. These statistics reflect the inadequate facilities for black tuberculosis victims in the

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[25] Ibid.

[26] Ibid.

Tidewater area. The Tidewater Memorial Hospital was a private hospital which received some state aid. However, most of its financial resources came from private donations.[27] The hospital cost approximately $15,000 annually to operate. Patients were charged seventy-five cents per day, twenty-seven of which was paid for by the state.[28] The hospital employed three full-time nurses.

The 150 bed Piedmont Sanatorium and the 33 bed Tidewater Memorial Hospital provided most of the tuberculosis bed space available to blacks in Virginia. The Journal and Guide reported that in 1933 there were 1,098 black deaths from tuberculosis in the state, yet there were only 222 beds available to blacks. In the same year there were 936 white deaths and 994 beds for white patients. By 1939 the number of beds available to blacks had increased to 272, but this was still far from a sufficient number. Black physicians protested the lack of bed space available to their tuberculosis patients. Dr. C. Lyden Harrell charged the state to provide bed space to blacks in accordance with the black death rate from tuberculosis. This he felt would be the only way to adequately treat the disease among the black population.[29]

Those afflicted blacks who did not need hospitalization for tuberculosis were treated at the local tuberculosis

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[27] Annual Report of the State Department of Public Welfare, 30 June 1940, p. 125.

[28] Norfolk Journal and Guide, 18 February 1939.

[29] Ibid.

clinic, a free clinic that offered diagnosis and treatment to black and white patients. The clinic was open to blacks on Tuesday and Friday afternoons and the rest of the week to white tuberculosis patients. The Norfolk Anti-Tuberculosis League sponsored the clinic. The league was a private organization which received its funding from city appropriations, the Community Fund, and private donations. The Anti-Tuberculosis League was responsible for the institution of the Open Air Classroom in the city's schools.[30]

In 1936 the Anti-Tuberculosis League introduced four open air or health rooms in Norfolk's schools. Two of the rooms were white and two were black. These open air rooms were part of the league's program to combat tuberculosis among the city's school children.[31] One of the black open air classes was held at the Paul Laurence Dunbar Elementary School. To qualify for admission to the open air classroom the student had to have had very close contact with tuberculosis such as the death of an immediate family member from the disease. In the open air class the child's health was monitored daily, and the children were required to take a nap each afternoon. To insure the proper diet the school

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[30] The Twenty-Seventh and Twenty-Eighth Reports of the Virginia State Department of Public Welfare, 30 June 1937, p. 123; Norfolk Journal and Guide, 5 August 1933; State Department of Public Welfare of Virginia Report for the Two Years Ending, 30 June 1937, p. 123; and Minutes of the Norfolk City School Board, 23 June 1933, p. 47.

[31] Minutes of the Norfolk City School Board, 23 June 1933, p. 47.

provided breakfast, lunch, and a snack for the students and once a month the children went to the tuberculosis clinic where physicians thoroughly examined them to insure that they were not developing the disease. Members of the class were provided with clothes and shoes as needed. Children of the open air rooms were kept separate from the rest of the school population.[32] The open air classroom appears to have been a successful innovation in the league's fight against tuberculosis among school children. However, such programs did not wipe out the causes of the disease such as overcrowded housing and poor sanitation. Tuberculosis remained a serious problem for blacks in Virginia throughout the Depression. It remained a problem because the unfortunate sanitation conditions which created the epidemic in the first place were allowed to continue. The depressed condition of the economy shares a great deal of the burden for Virginia's ineffective battle against tuberculosis in the black community. However, the racist ideology of state budget officials also contributed to the inadequate health care afforded black tuberculosis victims.

Tuberculosis was not the only communicable disease present in Norfolk during the Depression. There were also cases of typhoid fever, small pox, and diptheria, but vaccination could prevent those diseases and the King's Daughters Hospital set up immunization stations in 1936 to

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[32]Interview with Mrs. Theresa F. Cromwell, Norfolk, Virginia, 2 December 1978.

vaccinate the public against them. There were nine stations for whites and four stations for blacks.[33]

The King's Daughters Hospital, an important medical facility in Norfolk, received its funds primarily from private donations but it also obtained some of its money from city and county budgets. The hospital provided a free clinic which offered diagnosis and treatment to white and black children under the age of twelve.[34] In 1935 the hospital opened a maternity center to help combat the problems of childbirth. Six hundred and five patients registered at the center. In 1936 the hospital reported that since the inception of the center there had been no maternal deaths, and only fourteen still-born infants, thirteen black and one white.[35]

The Hospital of St. Vincent DePaul offered another clinic which provided diagnosis and treatment for black and white persons over the age of twelve. The clinic charged twenty-five cents for admission and ten cents for revisits. This clinic was supported primarily by the Norfolk Community Fund.[36]

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[33] Norfolk Journal and Guide, 23 January 1936.

[34] Twenty-Seventh and Twenty-Eighth Annual Reports of the State Department of Public Welfare of Virginia, 30 June 1937, pp. 123-124.

[35] Norfolk Journal and Guide, 23 January 1936.

[36] Twenty-Seventh and Twenty-Eighth Annual Reports of the State Department of Public Welfare of Virginia, 30 June 1937, p. 24.

For hospitalization of illnesses other than tuberculosis, blacks were admitted to the "colored wards" of the city's three major white hospitals. These included the Hospital of St. Vincent Depaul, the Norfolk Truxton Welfare Center, and the Norfolk General Hospital. While black patients could be admitted to these hospitals black physicians were uniformly excluded, even when their own patients were admitted. Denied the privilege of attending their own patients, black physicians in Norfolk united in 1932 to establish their own hospital, the Tidewater Colored Hospital.[37]

Like the King's Daughters Hospital, the Tidewater Colored Hospital was very concerned over the problems of childbirth. In 1933 the hospital opened its first prenatal and postnatal clinic sponsored by a local committee and a group representing the Medical Society of Virginia and the Medical College of Virginia. D. J. S. G. Jones, Chief of the hospital's Obstetric Staff was chairman of the committee.[38]

In 1934 the Tidewater Colored Hospital changed its name to the Norfolk Community Hospital. The purpose of this hospital, as stated in the city charter, was to secure, equip, maintain, and operate a general hospital and maternity ward in which graduate medical students of duly accredited

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[37] Writer's Program, The Negro in Virginia, p. 340.

[38] Norfolk Journal and Guide, 6 January 1934.

medical schools could serve their internship. William M. Rich was president of the hospital board and William T. Mason was secretary. The Norfolk Community Hospital was located on Rugby Street in Lindenwood. Miss Petra Pinn, R.N., a graduate of Tuskegee Institute, was named superintendent of the hospital.[39]

Since the Norfolk Community Hospital was a black hospital and since it was not an accredited medical institution, it received little city funding. The operating expenses for the hospital were donated by black social and civic organizations, white charitable organizations, private individuals and the black physicians themselves. In 1934 the Moles Club, an organization of young black women, presented the hospital with an operating table that cost $405.00. A sterilizing unit that cost $1,238.80 was donated by Norfolk and Portsmouth physicians. Both of these instruments were installed on May 16, 1934, and the first operation was performed two days later. The lamp used in the operating room was donated by the Aeolian Club. The hospital grounds were kept neat and trim by members of the Lindenwood beautification group and the private ward on the second floor was donated and fully equipped and redecorated by the local letter carriers woman's auxiliary.[40] The Mrs. Club,

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[39] Charter Book 41, City of Norfolk, p. 18.

[40] Norfolk Journal and Guide, 2 June 1934.

an organization of young black wives, presented the hospital with an incubator.[41]

Standardization for the hospital was of paramount importance to the black physicians because they wanted the hospital respected as a medical institution. A standardized hospital would give the physicians more credibility in asking for city and state appropriations. In November of 1934 the hospital initiated a campaign to raise $2,000 so that the hospital could pruchase equipment necessary to meet standardization. The black community and white charities such as the community fund responded enthusiastically, and in January 1935 the Norfolk Community Hospital was approved by the American College of Surgeons.[42]

Since the Norfolk Community Hospital had only twenty-eight beds, it could not adequately meet the medical needs of the black community and most of the city's blacks who required hospitalization still had to be housed in the "colored wards" of the white hospitals. The hospital did serve as a symbol of pride and accomplishment in the black community and it did give black doctors and interns the opportunity to practice their profession in an accredited hospital; but the problems of health and inadequate medical care continued for blacks throughout the Depression.

The same slum conditions that contributed to the

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[41]Ibid., 11 April 1934.

[42]Ibid., 2 February 1935.

city's health problems also provided a breeding place for crime. According to the Journal and Guide, a person in 1938 was safer from violence in Chicago than in Norfolk. Since Chicago had a widespread reputation for gangsterism in 1930s, this assertion focused attention on Norfolk's crime rate. The odds against an individual's being shot, stabbed or gassed in Norfolk, the newspaper reported, were 14,000 to one. In Chicago they were 78,000 to one.[43]

Norfolk's jail population was evidence of the high crime rate in the city. In 1938 and in 1939, Norfolk led Virginia's cities in jail committals with 8,354 and 7,778 respectively. The high percentage of blacks in the city jail is evidence of the large degree of crime that was in the black community. Although blacks comprised 34 per cent of the population in Norfolk they comprised 56 per cent of the city jail's population in 1938 and 53 per cent in 1939.[44] Norfolk Crime Statistics for earlier years were not available.

The Journal and Guide attributed the high crime rate in Norfolk's black community to the slum conditions which existed there.[45] Norfolk's slums covered 1 per cent of the city's total area but the slums housed 12 per cent

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[43] Ibid., 14 October 1939.

[44] Ibid.

[45] The Biennial Report of the Virginia Department of Public Welfare, June 30, 1938 and June 30, 1939, p. 115.

of the city's population, the majority of which was black. An editorial appearing in the Journal and Guide stated:

> Of all the factors that enter into Norfolk's unenviable crime record it appears that remediable slum conditions are the most responsible. According to a responsible authority, Norfolk stood second three years ago among United States cities with large slum areas. Memphis was reported to have stood first. Since that report Memphis has availed itself of Federal assistance to put through a $3,400,000.00 slum clearance program. Norfolk's slum areas have in the meantime increased. According to available records, Norfolk now stands first among all of the cities of its size in the United States in slum areas.[46]

Norfolk's slum areas contributed 35 per cent of the city's homicide arrests; 39 per cent of its robberies; 35 per cent of arrests for aggravated assaults; 28 per cent of arrests for burglaries; 40 per cent of the arrests for gambling; 38 per cent of prohibition violations and 42 per cent of all other arrests. It cost the city $750,000 annually in policing and otherwise administering the law in this area.[47]

The Journal and Guide felt that eradication of the slums through a federally sponsored housing program would greatly reduce the amount of crime in Norfolk and reduce the cost to the city of enforcing the law in the slums by

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[46] Norfolk Journal and Guide, 11 February 1933.

[47] Ibid., 3 September 1938.

$500,000 annually. During the Depression many of the large cities of the South like Memphis, Tennessee, asked for federal assistance to help eradicate their slum areas and provide low cost housing for blacks. Journal and Guide editor P. B. Young, Sr. tried in vain, throughout the late 1930's to get the Norfolk City Council to ask for a federally sponspored housing program in Norfolk, but the powerful guild of tenement owners resisted his efforts. In an editorial appearing in the Journal and Guide, the newspaper attacked the guild of tenement owners for their resistance to improving the slum areas through federally sponsored programs.

> Norfolk's vested and protected guild of tenement owners, who are the owners of the slums, have resisted every effort put forth to improve these areas through the various federal housing plans. Their battle cry is that they oppose any form of federal housing aid. They oppose government competition in the matter of housing. They don't want to see their investments liquidated and they think it would be foolish of the city to abandon this tax revenue. They are of course silent on the matter of government aid to housing through H.O.L.C. and F.H.A., which aid has accrued to the upper class citizens. They do not resent the fact that the government rehabilitated the washed out building associations with a plan that saved them much embarrassment but did not rescue the savings of thousands of poor people whose deposits were by quiet legislation converted from savings to stock and lost forever except for a small percentage that will be salvaged by receivers. Against the vested interest the slum dwellers have no recourse. All of this has something to do with Norfolk's excessive crime rate.[48]

[48] Norfolk Journal and Guide, 11 February 1939.

The Journal and Guide felt Norfolk's tenement owners were partly responsible for the excessive crime rate because of their failure to improve slum conditions. The owners did not want federal intervention in the city's housing program, yet they did nothing themselves as landlords to improve conditions in the slum areas. Since landlords spent virtually nothing for repairs to tenements in the slum areas the tenements were a profitable investment, and as stated in the above editorial they were a source of tax revenue. Therefore, it was to the advantage of tenement owners to keep conditions as they were. The rampant crime of the slum areas, did not spread into their community. Rather it remained primarily in the black community because the crimes committed in these areas were usually committed by blacks upon other blacks. In a society as segregated as Norfolk was, white figures of authority and power were not very concerned with stamping out the crime in the black community so long as it remained in the black community.[49]

No discrimation against blacks is written into Virginia's criminal code, yet discrimination did exist. Most often when a black was charged with a crime against another black the defendent either went free or received a light sentence. However, a black charged with a crime against a white person was less leniently treated; and when the plaintiff was a white woman conviction was almost certain. In 1931 Dorothy Skaggs, a white woman of Norfolk, positively

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[49] Ibid.

identified William Harper as the black man who raped and robbed her. Convicted and condemned to die within two weeks, Harper won two retrials, but each time the death penalty was confirmed. Before Harper was executed, however, evidence was produced tending to show that Mrs. Skaggs at the time of the alleged assault was actually at a dance hall some forty miles away. Freed in the assault charge, Harper was reindicted for robbery but finally exonerated. Dorothy Skaggs was indicted for perjury but as the evidence was not conclusive enough to satisfy all the jurors in her case, she was set free.[50]

Another discrimination that existed in the treatment of black defendents in Norfolk was that those who were accused of crimes went to trial before all white juries. The Journal and Guide vigorously attacked the exclusion of blacks from juries. The newspaper felt that qualified blacks should be allowed to sit on juries, and that it was the right of taxpaying citizens regardless of race to sit on juries. In 1933, four of Norfolk's prominent black citizens were called for jury duty in the United States District Court. They included G. James Fleming; P. Bernard Young, Jr.; P. J. Chessen; and William T. Mason. Black leaders saw this action as a great advancement for the black community in Norfolk because blacks had not served on juries for many years, possibly not since reconstruction. The judges of Norfolk's Corporation Court, however, continued

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[50]Writers Program, The Negro in Virginia, p. 243.

to exclude blacks from grand and petit jury list because they found the system working efficiently.[51]

Outside pressures caused the Norfolk court to reconsider the efficiency of its system when in 1935, Massachusetts authorities refused to permit extradition of a black man charged with murder in Virginia because, "with an all white jury" the man could not expect justice in a Virginia court. Shortly thereafter several cities of the state announced that blacks would be included in jury lists. In 1935 blacks served on juries in Richmond, Norfolk, Hampton, and Petersburg, usually when the docket was heavy with cases involving blacks.[52] In 1936 the Virginia General Assembly passed legislation providing for the separation of black and white jurors serving on the same panel.[53] This was an outrageous affront to the black citizens who served on Virginia's juries. It was a reminder to them that even though they were now allowed to sit on juries, they were in no way equal to their white counterparts. Therefore, the two races would be kept separate. It would seem that the Depression and the subsequent need for economic frugality would have caused southerners to bend their segregationist attitudes.[54] It was costly to maintain two separate societies. However, not even the Great Depression could

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[51] Norfolk Journal and Guide, 11 November 1933.

[52] Writer's Program, Negroes in Virginia, p. 243.

[53] Ibid.

[54] Norfolk Journal and Guide, 13 March 1957.

convince Norfolk, or any other southern city, to do away with its policy of segregation. Although it meant added expense at a time when the city could ill afford that expense the separation of the races had to be maintained. In 1934, with the inception of the city's new bus system, the Norfolk City Council adopted, over the protests of black citizens, an ordinance providing for the separation of the races on buses. Blacks were to sit in the rear of the bus a policy already used on the city's street cars. Provisions of the ordinance required the bus company to provide separate sections for white and black passengers and gave the bus operator the authority to enforce the regulation. A maximum fine of $250.00 was to be charged against the bus company for failure to enforce the measure and a fine of $25.00 was to be charged against persons who failed to live up to its requirements. Black citizens along with the Norfolk County Unemployed Council, a biracial organization with Marxist leanings, strongly protested against the ordinance saying that such an ordinance would only cause more antagonism between the races. However, the ordinance remained in effect. [55]

Education was another area in which white Virginians insisted on strict racial separation. The attempt of blacks to obtain an education, since the time it became lawful to teach blacks to read and write, has always been a struggle against odds. In 1896 the case of Plessy vs. Ferguson

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[55]Guild, Black Laws of Virginia, pp. 144-150.

established the doctrine of separate but equal facilities for blacks and whites in the South. The state of Virginia and the city of Norfolk while continuing to see that everything was kept separate made no attempt to equalize anything, particularly in the field of education.

The maintenance of two separate systems of education was expensive under normal economic conditions. During the Great Depression economic factors were such that the state simply could not afford two equal systems of education for black and white children. Therefore, blacks received only the bare essentials of educational facilities and the minimum of educational opportunities. The length of the school term was shorter for black children than for white children in Virginia. Black children went to school 151 days out of the year while white students went 174 days out of the school year.[56] The city of Norfolk spent an average of $49.66 to educate a white child and an average of $26.56 to educate a black child.[57] Below is a listing of the amount spent by the city, per child, in the junior high and high schools. Note that the Booker T. Washington School provided both a high school and junior high school for Norfolk's black school age population.

With such a small amount of money being spent to educate a black child in Norfolk as opposed to the amount spent to educate a white child, there was absolutely no way

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[56] Bullock, A History of Negro Education in the South (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1970), p. 177.

[57] Norfolk Journal and Guide, 18 March 1933.

TABLE 2

A COMPARISON OF THE AMOUNT OF MONEY SPENT BY THE CITY OF NORFOLK TO EDUCATE BLACK AND WHITE CHILDREN IN 1933

WHITE	NUMBER OF STUDENTS	COST PER CHILD
Schools		
Maury	1,312	$50.16
Blair	1,668	51.60
Ruffner	1,379	55.90
BLACK		
Schools		
Booker T. Washington	1,331	32.54

SOURCE: Norfolk Journal and Guide, 18 March 1933.

that the educational systems could be equal. Further discrimination in the black school system is seen in the overcrowded conditions in the black schools, which necessitated the need for some students to attend school on a part-time basis. In 1934, 8,000 black children were registered in the city schools, 2,000 of whom went on a part-time basis. None of the white children attended school part-time. The Journal and Guide, the local Interracial Committee, the N.A.A.C.P. and the Tidewater Ministerial Union urged the school board to do something to alleviate the overcrowded conditions in the black schools. Their urging was rewarded when the school board decided that the Henry Clay School in the seven hundred block of Chapel Street would be turned over for the use of black school children in the 1935 academic year. This school became the Laura A. Titus Elementary School. The Titus Elementary School could not completely alleviate overcrowded conditions in the city's black schools. A large number of black children still had to attend school on a part-time basis, a condition which continued into the early 1960's.[58]

Discrimination against the right of blacks to obtain a decent education existed at all educational levels. Except for Hampton Institute's M.A. in education established in 1934, graduate training for blacks in Virginia was nonexistent. White graduate schools were not open to blacks and there were no black graduate schools in the state. Those

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[58] Norfolk Journal and Guide, September 1934.

blacks who wanted to further the education beyond the undergraduate level had to leave the state to attend school. This was costly for most blacks in normal times, in the midst of the Depression the costs must have seemed even higher.[59]

The problem of graduate and professional training for blacks increased as larger numbers of blacks sought such training. The feeling increased, moreover, that the public should provide graduate and professional training for blacks as well as whites.[60] Spearheading this sentiment was the N.A.A.C.P. Since its origin in 1909, the N.A.A.C.P. had laid heavy stress on two means of combating discrimination: legal battles in the courts and education and persuasion of the nation at large. It was through legal battles in the courts that the N.A.A.C.P. fought discrimination against black graduate students who wanted to attend white state owned schools. Thurgood Marshall, a brilliant black graduate of Howard University Law School who later became a justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, lead the N.A.A.C.P. defense team in their court battles.[61] One N.A.A.C.P. tentative test case against public graduate school segregation involved the University of Virginia.

In 1935 Alice Carlotta Jackson, a native of Richmond, and a graduate of Virginia Union University and a graduate student at Smith College, Northhampton, Massachussetts,

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[59]Writer's Program, The Negro in Virginia, p. 246.

[60]Franklin, From Slavery to Freedom, pp. 552-553.

[61]Eric Foner, America's Black Past (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), p. 415.

applied for admission to the University of Virginia Graduate School to study French. The University denied the application on the ground that "the education of white and colored persons in the same school is contrary to the long established and fixed policy of the Commonwealth of Virginia." No one really expected Miss Jackson to be admitted to the University; rather, the N.A.A.C.P. wanted to use her denial of admission as a test case to combat discrimination in graduate training for blacks in Virginia.[62]

In response to Miss Jackson's denial of admission, the Norfolk Ledger Dispatch wrote:

> That the state does not make even in theory equal or approximately equal provisions for white and colored students or would be students in institutions of higher learning is not to be contended; the state does not make such provision. Virginia State College at Petersburg, which is the most advanced state supported educational institution for colored people is not a liberal arts college... Therefore, we are bound to assume that, unless the good and sufficient reasons to which Mr. Scott refers, are weightier than we apprehend them to be, the refusal of the rector and visitors to receive for matriculation, the young woman, completes a case which the university is virtually certain to lose unless the case goes off on some technicality and is not heard and decided on principles of pure law.[63]

The case did not go to court. At the next term of the Virginia legislature, after Miss Jackson's denial of admission, the Stephens Dovell Bill was passed. The bill

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[62]Monroe N.Work, Negro Yearbook 1937-1938 (Tuskegee: Negro Yearbook Publishing Co.), pp. 140-141.

[63]Norfolk ledger Dispatch, 25 September, 1935.

became the Virginia Educational Equality Act. This law was designated to provide equal educational facilities for certain persons denied admission to Virginia state colleges, universities, and other institutions of higher learning. It called for the state to pay the tuition of blacks who were compelled to go to other states to study law, medicine, pharmacy, and other subjects for which there was no provision in black schools within the state.[64]

In July of 1936 the state of Virginia granted $1,800 in state aid to black graduate students to help defray their expenses outside the state. All applicants had tried to enter the graduate school at the University of Virginia. Instead they attended the University of Michigan, Ohio State University, Western Reserve University, Columbia University, and the University of Pennsylvania.[65]

The Virginia Educational Equality Act was considered a step forward for black graduate students in the state but the most significant step toward providing graduate and professional training for blacks grew out of the decision of the United States Supreme Court in the case of Gaines vs. Canada. In 1936 Lloyd Gaines, a qualified black applicant, applied for admission to the law school of the University of Missouri. When refused admission he carried his case to the state courts, and when the state courts denied him relief he

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[64]Guild, Black Laws of Virginia, p. 186.

[65]Work, Negro Yearbook, pp. 140-141.

appealed to the federal courts. Chief Justice Charles Evans Hughes wrote the majority opinion in favor of Gaines.[66] The court ruled that Gaines should be admitted to the University of Missouri Law School and held that the policy of paying a part of the tuition of black students in graduate schools in other states was inadequate as a substitute for the equality that the law guaranteed blacks. The vote for the decision was seven to two with justices McReynold and Butler dissenting.[67]

The Gaines decision laid the foundation for the progression on the part of the court in applying the guarantee of equal protection of the laws to a series of issues: the right to serve on juries, the right to vote in primaries, the right to be considered for admission to a state professional school without discrimination because of race. In making the decision the court was recognizing the developing consciousness of the country that equal protection of the law was to be given a full and not a qualified meaning. Brown v. Board of Education was just fifteen years away.[68]

The decision caused immediate consternation in the states having separate systems of education. The reaction to the decision varied in different states. Some states gave more attention to the matter of appropriating out-of state tuition while others sought to establish opportunities

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[66] Franklin, From Slavery to Freedom, p. 553.

[67] Norfolk Journal and Guide, 17 December 1938.

[68] Franklin, From Slavery to Freedom, pp. 553-554.

for graudate and professional training colleges already in operation. Missouri established a law school; North Carolina, having made some moves in the direction of providing graduate training, accelerated its program. States of the lower South reluctantly appropriated funds to educate Negroes out-of-state. Only Maryland and West Virginia moved in the direction of making it possible for Negroes to attend institutions that had heretofore been used exclusively by white residents. Despite the Supreme Court decision, Virginia still refused to admit blacks to white graduate schools but the state did increase its provisions for out-of-state aid. In an attempt to establish graduate courses at Virginia State College in Petersburg the General Assembly authorized the college to develop such additional curricula as would be made possible by the resources placed at its disposal. The funds granted to the college were hardly enough to establish a viable black graduate school.[69]

Another area in which the N.A.A.C.P. fought racial discrimination was the equalization of teachers' salaries in the South. Black teachers in the South were paid less than white teachers for the same academic workload regardless of their educational qualifications. The belief that blacks should receive less money for the same work performed by whites permeated the South. It was constantly stated that blacks should receive less money because their work was inferior to white labor and because they needed less than

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[69] Commonwealth of Virginia Budget, 1936-1938, pp. 200-215.

whites. Both rationals were completely erroneous, particularly since the qualifications of some black teachers were superior to the qualifications of many white teachers.

In Norfolk the salary paid to black teachers was shamefully low. The white janitor at the Booker T. Washington High School received more salary than any black teacher in the city. In 1939 the janitor at Washington received $140.00 per month while the most a black teacher could make was $115.00 per month for the academic year. Black female teachers were doubly discriminated against, first because they were black and secondly because they were women.[70] Throughout the 1930s the salaries of black teachers remained lower than the salaries of white teachers. The comparative salaries for 1939 are listed in Table 3.

The Norfolk School Board in 1939, employed 528 white teachers for a total salary of $771,948.17 and 235 black teachers for a combined salary of $219,400.50. Maury High School employed 99 teachers at a total cost of $171,787.10 while Washington High School employed 85 teachers for a combined salary of $41,121.50.[71] This type of discrimination in black teacher salaries was present throughout the South. In the late 1930s with the help of the N.A.A.C.P., black teachers began to take action against school authorities who supported this type of discrimination. Court cases

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[70] Minutes of the Norfolk City School Board, May 15, 1939.

[71] Minutes of the Norfolk City School Board, April 30, 1939.

TABLE 3

COMPARATIVE SALARIES OF BLACK AND
WHITE NORFOLK TEACHERS IN 1939

NEGRO	MINIMUM	MAXIMUM
Elementary		
Normal Certificate	597.50	960.00
Degree	611.00	960.00
High School		
Men	784.50	1235.00
Women	699.00	1105.20
WHITE		
Elementary		
Normal Certificate	850.00	1425.00
Degree	937.90	1425.00
High School		
Men	2000.00	2185.00
Women	970.00	1900.00

SOURCE: Aline E. Black vs. School Board City of Norfolk and C. W. Mason Superintendent, Circuit Court Docket No. 1997, File No. 3128.

for equalization of teacher pay were filed in Maryland, South Carolina and Virginia. One celebrated case was heard in Norfolk.[72]

In January of 1938 Aline Elizabeth Black, a chemistry teacher at Booker T. Washington High School, filed a petition with the Norfolk City School Board asking that her salary be on the same schedule as that of a teacher at Maury High School. Miss Black's petition was supported by both the local and national chapters of the N.A.A.C.P. and by the Virginia State Teachers Association, an organization composed of black teachers in Virginia. A basic argument in the petition was that educational credentials entitled her to the same pay as her white counterpart. She held a B.S. degree from Virginia State College in Petersburg, a Master of Science degree from the University of Pennsylvania, and in 1939 she was working toward a Doctor of Philosophy Degree at New York University. She had been employed by the school board for twelve years.[73]

Miss Black's attorneys were members of the N.A.A.C.P. legal team. They included such noted and brilliant black lawyers as Thurgood Marshall of Baltimore, who in 1968 became the first black Justice of the United States Supreme Court; and Charles H. Houston, the attorney who successfully

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[72]Franklin, From Slavery to Freedom, p. 548.

[73]Aline E. Black vs. School Board City of Norfolk, a corporate body and C. W. Mason, Superintendent, Circuit Court Docket No. 1997, File No. 3128.

argued the Gaines vs. Canada case. Her other attorneys were Thomas Hewin of Richmond and Leon A. Ramson of Washington, D. C.[74]

The school board denied Miss Black's petition. In a letter to Miss Black's attorneys School board chairman A. H. Foreman wrote:

> "Dear Sirs:
>
> "We beg to advise that the school board of the city of Norfolk has carefully considered the petition presented by you for Aline Elizabeth Black, a teacher in the Booker T. Washington High School located in the city of Norfolk, Va. relative to the payment of the salaries of teachers."
>
> "The school board is of the opinion that the matter of salaries to be paid teachers is one of contract between the teacher and the school board and is not controlled by rule, or regulation affecting civil rights."[75]

After the school board's denial of her petition Miss Black filed a writ of mandamus against the school board in Norfolk Circuit Court. In court Miss Black's attorneys argued that her constitutional rights under the fourteenth amendment were violated because she was paid less than white female teachers solely because of her color. Mr. Marshall argued that it was the state constitution which called for separate educational facilities, not the United States Constitution which stated that educational facilities must be supplied equally to the races. The school board represented by city attorney Alfred N. Anderson and Jonathan

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[74] Ibid.

[75] Minutes of the Norfolk City School Board, June 22, 1939, p. 313.

W. Old, argued that Miss Black was making an attempt to change her contract and that the school board had done nothing to infringe upon Miss Black's right to pursue her chosen profession in the city. The lawyers further contended that Miss Black had not been coerced into signing her contract.[76] Judge Alan R. Handel decided in favor of the school board on a technicality. He ruled that mandamus was not the proper action and ordered the suit dismissed. Miss Black promptly filed suit in the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.[77]

Because of her suit, the school board refused Aline Black a contract for the 1939-1940 school year. Twelve hundred people outraged by the board's actions signed a petition to have her reinstated. The Virginian Pilot called the firing, "an act of reprisal in which the school board can take no pride".[78] Hundreds of school children marched in support of Miss Black from the Paul Laurence Dunbar School to the St. John's A.M.E. Church. The children carried signs with slogans which read, "Dictators - Hitler, Mussolini, and the School Board", "Qualify to vote, the School Board Must Go", "Norfolk School Board Unamerican", "We Want Our Teachers Equally Prepared and Equally Paid" and "We Want Miss Black Back".[79]

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[76] Black vs. School Board.

[77] Norfolk Journal and Guide, 10 June 1939.

[78] Norfolk Virginian Pilot, 15 May 1939.

[79] Norfolk Journal and Guide, 1 July 1939.

On July 6, 1939, the Norfolk Interracial Commission met with the school board to request that Aline Black be rehired. The commission was composed of Judge Herbert Cochrane, Mrs. N. M. Osborne, Attorney J. E. Diggs and Reverend R. L. Harris. The school board denied their request. It refused to rehire Miss Black until she ceased to occupy the status of a plaintiff in her equalization suit against the school board.[80] Aline Black, however refused to stop her court action against the board. This was a very heroic stance for a black woman to take during the depression years in Norfolk, and Aline Black was a very heroic woman. In 1940, Judge John J. Parker of the U.S. Court of Appeals ruled in her favor. Judge Parker stated that a double salary standard based on race was unconstitutional and ordered the salaries of black and white teachers in Norfolk equalized.[81]

After her victory over the school board, Aline Black returned to her teaching position at Booker T. Washington High School where she taught Chemistry until she retired in 1969.

Not all of Norfolk's black citizens had the faith in the American system of justice that Aline Black or the N.A.A.C.P. had. Some, such as the Universal Negro Improvement Association, felt that equality for blacks in America

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[80] Minutes of the Norfolk City School Board, July 6, 1939, p. 316.

[81] Bullock, A History of Negro Education in the South, p. 216.

would never be a reality no matter how many test cases combating discrimination were won by N.A.A.C.P. lawyers. Therefore, they felt that colonization of blacks in Africa was the only viable alternative to the problem of racism in America.

The Universal Negro Improvement Association was established in 1914, by Marcus Mosiah Garvey, a Jamaican who immigrated to the United States in 1916. Garvey's objective in establishing the U.N.I.A. was one of drawing the peoples of the race together through a varied program of education, promotion of race pride, worldwide commercial and industrial intercourse, and development of the African motherland. Since Marcus Garvey did not believe that these objectives could be adequately realized in the United States, he called for the colonization of black people in Africa. Garvey's peak of influence among American blacks was in the 1920's. By the time of his death in 1940, his influence was almost nonexistent throughout most of the country.[82] In 1938, however, a group of Norfolk black citizens applied for a city charter for the Berkley Branch of the U.N.I.A.[83] Perhaps the futility and apparent hopelessness of the depression years caused these blacks to re-emphasize Marcus Garvey's ideology in Norfolk. Members of the U.N.I.A. in

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[82] E. David Cronen, Marcus Garvey, Great Lives Observed (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall), p. 1.

[83] Charter Book 44, City of Norfolk, October 10, 1938-May 24, 1940.

Norfolk apparently felt that the condition of blacks in the city was getting steadily worse. They felt that the only way out of the severe economic conditions and racial discrimination was for blacks to return to Africa. Mr. Samuel L. Ashby, President of the Berkley U.N.I.A., deplored the miserable conditions under which blacks had to live and labor in America and declared that "our only hope lies in the final achievement of the U.N.I.A. objective: colonization in Africa." He felt that the same conditions suffered by the Jews in Germany in the 1930's would be forced upon blacks if they were ever to become a competitive factor in the industrial and commercial life of the United States. Garveyites compared the Back to Africa Movement with the Jewish Zionist Movement.[84]

In 1938 Senator Theodore Bilbo, during the filibuster on antilynching, suggested on the Senate floor that blacks be sent back to Africa. This suggestion was endorsed by Tidewater members of the U.N.I.A., and the organizations circulated a petition signed by one hundred local citizens urging that a bill calling for the colonization of blacks in Africa be introduced in the Senate. The petition was sent to Senator Bilbo.[85]

The petition of 1939 was not the first effort of Virginia's U.N.I.A. members to seek colonization of blacks in Africa. As early as 1936, a resolution sponsored by the

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[84] Norfolk Journal and Guide, 7 January 1939.

[85] Ibid.

U.N.I.A. and supported by the peace movement of Ethiopia and the white American Society of Richmond was sent to the Virginia General Assembly. The resolution called for Congress to use relief funds issued to blacks to colonize them in Liberia. The resolution was adopted by the General Assembly and forwarded to the National Congress.[86]

With the many problems confronting blacks in Norfolk it is not surprising that some blacks considered colonization in Africa as a solution to racial and economic problems, especially when they were confronted each day with examples of their second class status. Faced with the same racial problems as U.N.I.A. members, however, most blacks in Norfolk were unwilling to give up their right to live in America. A few were willing legally to fight for their rights as Aline Black did, and many blacks looked to Franklin Delano Roosevelt and the New Deal for solutions to their problems. Nevertheless, most blacks found a release from the frustrations and hopelessness of racial and economic problems in their religion.

In 1930, 48 per cent of the blacks in Virginia cities and 62 per cent of rural blacks were regular church members. There were 1,900 rural churches and 361 city churches. The average membership in city

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[86]Writer's Program, The Negro in Virginia, p. 345.

churches was 292. Black church property was valued at over $14,000,000.00 of which $5,000,000.00 represented the value of city churches.[87]

In Norfolk there were 69 black churches. Black church property in Norfolk was valued at $1,000,000.00. One of Norfolk's black churches as a Roman Catholic Church, the St. Joseph Catholic Church. The church had a white rector and the teachers in its parochial school for black youths were all white.[88]

The black church is the oldest and most viable institution in the black community. Although the church's strong influence on the masses was beginning to weaken in most places during the 1930's,[89] the influence of the black church and clergy in Norfolk continued to thrive. Seeking an escape from the despair and frustrations of everyday existence, many blacks found spiritual comfort and opportunities for social expression in the church. Encompassing virtually every apsect of Negro life, the church provided innumerable services. In addition to being a center of religious devotion and cermony, it was a school, a political meeting hall, and a community recreation and social center. Most of all the black church was all black and proudly so,

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[87] Writer's Program, The Negro in Virginia, p. 253.

[88] Norfolk City Directory, 1937.

[89] Foner, America's Black Past, p. 403.

a self perpetuating segregated institution which made no effort to reach across race barriers, individually or institutionally.[90]

In church blacks could imagine that things were going to be better, if not in this life at least in the next. Leading a song, or testifying at great length, or walking up the aisle to place coins on the collection table, or lifting quavering voices in a well known spiritual, or exhibiting knowledge of parliamentary procedures a board meetings, or watching a loved one "come through," many blacks found on the seventh day an importance which six days of worry and insult did much to diminish. Whether in shouting ectasy or in quiet faith, whether whipped by a preacher into emotional frenzy or led to the good life by words and deeds, whether in a fine church or an elm shaded avenue, or in the alley shop that once housed a blacksmith job, blacks looked upon religion as supplying a great need, as a spring of cool water in a weary land.[91]

Some of Norfolk's black ministers were particularly influential in the black community. While exercising a powerful political, social, and moral influence, many black ministers contributed some of the most militant leadership to the struggle for equal rights. Some ministers urged their members to pay their poll tax and vote, some preached on

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[90]Foner, America's Black Past, p. 403.

[91]Writers Program, The Negro in Virginia, p. 253.

the need for civic reform and kept the interest of their community and race uppermost. Because of growing race consciousness the N.A.A.C.P. became more popular with progressive ministers.

In Norfolk two of the most respected members of the black clergy during the Great Depression were Reverend Walter L. Hamilton, Pastor of the Shiloh Baptist Church and president of the Norfolk Portsmouth and Vicinity Minister's Conference, and Reverend Richard Bowling, Pastor of the First Baptist Church of Bute Street. Reverend Hamilton, young and energetic was one of the city's more militant black ministers. He was outspoken and he encouraged blacks to pay their poll tax and vote and to join the N.A.A.C.P. In 1937 Reverend Hamilton failed to attend the annual meeting of the Norfolk Community Fund, at which he was supposed to represent the black community, because he refused to ride the freight elevator to the scheduled meeting place. Blacks were not permitted to ride in the hotel's regular elevators. Reverend Hamilton's actions prompted the formation of the Committee on Interracial Welfare. The committee consisted of black citizens and its purpose was to act on matters that would promote racial good will and understanding and to assist in guarding black people from local injustices and humiliations. Reverend Bowling was one of the most respected blacks in Norfolk. He was older and more conservative than the liberal Reverend Hamilton, nevertheless he was considered one of

the race's most able leaders. Reverend Bowling was an active member of the Norfolk Emancipation Association. He had a very keen interest in black education and was instrumental in getting the Norfolk unit of Virginia Union University established in the city in 1935. He wrote a weekly article for the Journal and Guide entitled "Guidepost". Reverend Bowling's articles were sermonettes on some of the problems confronting the black community.[92]

Another black minister who was popular in the 1930's was Bishop Charles Emanuel Grace or "Daddy" Grace as his followers called him. "Daddy" Grace was of Portuguese and Negro ancestry. He came to America around 1920, and is reported to have worked as a cook on the railway service before he began to preach in 1925.[93] Bishop Grace considered himself God's agent on earth and his mission was to build a United House of Prayer for all people. Twenty or more Houses of Prayer were established along the eastern seaboard. Bishop Grace's first House of Prayer in Norfolk was on Seventeenth Street, and it consisted only of a tent with sawdust for a floor.[94] He later moved his congregation to Church Street where he erected a modern House of Prayer which still stands.

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[92]Norfolk Journal and Guide, 30 January 1937; Ibid., 7 January 1933; and Ibid., 1933-1939.

[93]E. Franklin Frazier, The Negro Church in America (New York: Schachen Books, 1964), p. 61.

[94]Norfolk Journal and Guide, 9 February 1935.

"Daddy" Grace, the undisputed head of the House of Prayer, ostensibly received no salary for his services. His only source of income was through free will offerings. However, all of the offerings taken in the churches were returned to Grace in his office in Washington. Membership in his organization was supposed to be based on a religious experience, but it seemed to be open to anyone. According to black sociologist E. Franklin Frazier, "Daddy" Grace's religion was a cult which developed out of the fears and frustrations of some blacks during the Depression. The religion was essentially a holiness sect, including conversion, sanctification, and the usual taboos such as no makeup for women. According to Frazier, the belief of this sect boiled down to a worship of "Daddy" Grace. God appeared to have been all but forgotten. Bishop Grace was reported to have told his worshippers, "Never mind about God. Salvation is by Grace only. Grace has given God a vacation and since God is on vacation don't worry him".[95]

"Daddy" Grace was a very flamboyant minister. In his public appearances he was always accompanied by a retinue of brilliantly uniformed guards, armed with swords dangling from their Sam Brown Belts. Bishop Grace was always beautifully adorned. His fingernails, longer than those

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[95]Frazier, The Negro Church in America, p. 62.

of most women, were always elegantly manicured, and his hands sparkled from the many diamonds he wore on his fingers.[96]

The black leadership in Norfolk, particularly the Journal and Guide, considered "Daddy Grace" an exploiter of black people. His appeal was to the lower classes of blacks, and they brought him their pennies, nickels and dimes by the hundreds. He took money out of the community but nobody could see where he was putting any back into it. His skirmishes with the law did not help to endear him to the black leadership. Although no suit was instituted against him in Norfolk, there were frequent paternity charges brought against him in the thirties. Despite the attitude of the leadership, the bishop's many followers in Norfolk as well as throughout the eastern seaboard love him and gave him their full financial support. When Bishop Grace died in 1960 his wealth was estimated to be from five million to twenty-five million dollars.[97]

The black church in Norfolk did its part to help alleviate the economic and social problems in the black community. All of the black churches were receptive to request for food and clothing from members of the community. It was not unusual for churches to take up collections to

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[96]Writer's Program, The Negro in Virginia, p. 256.

[97]Interview with Ms. Romeo U. Lambert, Shiloh Baptist Church, Norfolk, Virginia, 3 December 1978.

keep tenants from being evicted or to feed a destitute family. At Thanksgiving and Christmas churches donated baskets of food to the most needy families in the community.[98] Some churches made individual contributions to lessen the community's problems. The First Baptist Church operated a home for the aged, which it still maintains today. First Baptist also allowed the use of its sanctuary for the opening and closing ceremonies of the Norfolk Unit of Virginia Union University, and the Booker T. Washington High School held its baccalaureate service there. First Calvary Church had its Sisters of Charity, an organization of twenty-five women whose duty was to gather old clothes and shoes and to make them over for needy members of the church. This church also employed a social worker, Mrs. M. B. Lee, whose job was to visit the local courts and slum districts to recruit children for Sunday school, and in some instances, to provide clothes for them.[99] The Shiloh Baptist Church operated a weekly sewing circle at which members made over old clothes for the needy members of the community.[100]

During the depression even the black church had

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[98]Interview with Mrs. Dorothy Jones, Shiloh Baptist Church, Norfolk, Virginia, 3 December 1978.

[99]Norfolk Journal and Guide, 11 June 1936.

[100]Interview with Mrs. Dorothy Jones, Shiloh Baptist Church, Norfolk, Virginia, 3 December 1978.

its problems. In 1934, the Second Calvary Baptist Church was closed when a building and loan concern to which it owed $30,000.00 became dissatisfied with the manner in which the loan was being repaid. The church building was sold at public auction for $5,000.00. A group of disheartened members of the Second Calvary Baptist Church bought the building and renamed it the New Calvary Baptist Church. The Reverend C. W. Madison held services for Second Calvary Church in the auditorium of the Dunbar Elementary School until a new location for the church could be found.[101]

The cultural and social problems of Norfolk's black community in the 1930's were many. They included poor and overcrowded housing, poor health, a high degree of crime, inadequate educational facilities, few educational opportunities and discrimination in employment. Some of these problems existed in the white community, but the element of segregation and the subsequent inequality for blacks intensified these problems in their community. The protests of the N.A.A.C.P. in the courts brought some gains to blacks in Norfolk, particularly in the areas of teachers' salaries and graduate training for blacks. Other problems confronting the masses, however, went unchanged. Blacks could do little more than offer vocal protest over the inequality in the treatment the city gave them. Since most black citizens in Norfolk during the depression were legally disfranchised

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[101] Norfolk Journal and Guide, 19 May 1934.

they were robbed of the basic tools by which they could keep their community strong. Without full political participation they could not be candidates for the offices through which city governments were run or city funds appropriated, nor could they vote for those who would be candidates. If they did not like the way things were going, they could do relatively nothing about it within the framework of the law. Therefore, many problems in the black community went unchecked.

CHAPTER III

POLITICS IN THE BLACK COMMUNITY

The political leadership of the black community consisted primarily of the Norfolk Civic Association, the black clergy, and the Journal and Guide. The most vocal and probably the most knowledgeable black political leader in the 1930's was Plummer Bernard Young, Sr., the editor of the Journal and Guide. Young was born in Littleton, North Carolina on July 27, 1884, and was educated in the North Carolina public and private schools. After moving to Norfolk, he became president of the Journal and Guide Publishing Company in 1911. Young's civic and social credentials were very impressive. He was vice-president of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, and a member of the executive boards of the Urban League and of the Negro Business League. He was a member of the Trustee Boards of Howard University, St. Paul's Normal and Industrial School which later became St. Paul's College, and the Anna T. Jeanes Rural School Foundation; and he served on the Executive Committee of the Southern Committee on Interracial Cooperation. Young was a Mason and an Elk, and politically he was an independent.[1] His religious affiliation

[1]Thomas Yenner, Who's Who in Colored America (Brooklyn: Yenner Publishers, 1941).

was Episcopalian and he was a member of the Grace Episcopal Church in Norfolk.

Like Aline Black and Reverend W. L. Hamilton, P. B. Young, Sr., epitomized the "New Negro", a racial concept popular in the 1920's. This phrase, coined by Howard University Professor Alain Locke in 1925, described a more militant Negro. He was no longer willing to accept, without protest, the second class citizenship that white America imposed upon him. In many instances a veteran of World War I, he was educated and no longer a rural peasant but an aspiring urbanite who was tearing off the last physical vestiges of slavery.[2]

P. B. Young's political ideology was in line with that of the noted black scholar William Edward Burghart DuBois. From 1928 to 1940 both the Journal and Guide and DuBois supported the same political candidates. From his many editorials on voting it is apparent that Young believed that if blacks were going to recover economically they would have to become politically active. He believed as Dr. DuBois, that full social and political equality was of infinite necessity to blacks if they were ever to gain their rightful place in American society. Therefore, Young was actively engaged in campaigns to get more blacks on the voter registration rolls, to have blacks represented on juries,

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[2]Nathan Irving Huggins, The Harlem Renaissance (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), pp. 7-8.

to stop lynchings, to equalize teacher's salaries and to end Jim Crow practices on elevators and street cars.[3] Young could afford to be more vocal than other blacks such as teachers because he was free from direct reprisal from the white world. The Journal and Guide could take stands on racial issues which black teachers and others who were dependent upon whites could not take.

The Journal and Guide with a circulation of about 78,000 was the most important black newspaper published in the south. The Journal and Guide exemplified the spirit of the "New Negro" and was an effective tool of political and social protest in the black community. Since the white newspapers, for the most part, did not include blacks or the black view in their reporting of the news, the black community needed a viable organ to keep them informed on matters affecting them. The Guide became the main channel through which racial protest was expressed and it was the most militant agitator in the black community. It kept blacks informed on such racial injustices as the Scottsboro case, the Angelo Herndon case, and the Italian invasion of Ethiopia. Norfolk's black community even sent donations to the Scottsboro and Herndon defense funds.[4] On the brighter side the Guide brought news of the latest knockout victories of heavyweight champion Joe Louis. In addition to the

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[3]Norfolk Journal and Guide, 1928-1940.

[4]Norfolk Journal and Guide, 11 May 1933.

victories of the "Brown Bomber," the Guide also reported the successes of Jessie Owens in the 1936 Olympics. Owen's three gold medals ridiculed Hitler's ideas of Aryan superiority.

The Journal and Guide was also responsible for keeping blacks informed on the nation's political activity and of the effects of that activity on the black community. Before each major election, particularly the Presidential election, the Guide explained to its readers who it supported and why. One of the major political ambitions of P. B. Young and the Journal and Guide was to get more blacks to pay their poll tax and qualify to vote. During the Depression the number of black voters in Norfolk decreased. In 1932, 1,004 blacks were registered to vote; by 1934 the number decreased to 675; and in 1936 "not less than 700" blacks voted in the Presidential election. Placing great stress on the need to get more black qualified voters the Guide coined the phrase, "a voteless people is a helpless people."

Working with the Journal and Guide to get more blacks registered to vote was the Norfolk Civic Association. The Norfolk Civic Association was an organization of community minded blacks. Realizing the importance of the vote and of the need to secure more qualified black voters, the Norfolk Civic Association called a mass meeting at the Dunbar School in 1933 to discuss the upcoming primary election. At the meeting, the association voted to launch a drive to obtain one thousand qualified black voters. This was not a large

number since in 1930, 27,920 blacks in Norfolk were of voting age. Nevertheless, one thousand qualified voters in 1933 was to much to ask of Norfolk's black community, and only 675 blacks voted in the 1934 elections.[5]

Some black leaders accused the masses of being apathetic about voting. However, apathy was not the driving force behind the failure of most blacks to vote; rather, it was the payment of the poll tax. The tax on voting in Virginia was $1.50 per year. It was collected with interest, and under the law, it was allowed to accrue three years before collection. Election law required that the tax be paid for the three years preceding any election, and that the payment be made at least six months before the election. If the tax was not paid as prescribed by law one was totally disfranchised.[6] To many blacks in the midst of the nation's worst Depression, the tax seemed more than they could afford to pay, especially since they often believed that their people could never have any real political power in America. Added to this is that the excessive length of time between the payment of the tax and the election caused many potential voters to forget to pay the poll tax. Another reason for the failure of blacks to pay their poll tax was that blacks throughout Virginia knew that payment did not always guarantee

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[5] Norfolk Journal and Guide, 24 October, 1934; ibid., 29 August 1936; Works Project Administration, Negroes in the U.S. 1920-1932; Norfolk Journal and Guide, 24 October 1934.

[6] Norfolk Journal and Guide, 29 September 1934.

blacks the right to vote. Many registrars throughout the state placed obstacles before would be black voters during the 1930's. One type of obstacle was the so-called understanding and educational requirement, which actually consisted of unfair questions. For example, a black voter would be asked to name the counties in a congressional and judicial district, or to quote specific sections of the state constitution, questions that would have stumped even the registrars. When professors at Hampton Institute were turned away, the system had exceeded reasonable limits, declared the Virginia State Court of Appeals in the case of Davis v. Allen. A second type of obstacle placed before would-be black voters was the blank application form upon which a black registrant would-be expected to enter the correct information without guidance, a transparent device that made black changes of being included on the registration rolls nil.[7]

Those few blacks who did qualify to vote and were able to register, for the most part, voted the Republican ticket. Blacks identified the Republican party with Abraham Lincoln, the "Great Emancipator" and had voted almost solidly Republican since Emancipation. Adding to the black allegiance to the Republican party was the distrust blacks felt for southern Democratic politicans, who seemed intent in keeping them in a second class status. Norfolk blacks and blacks throughout the nation continued to vote Republican until the 1936 Presidential election, when the overwhelming

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[7]John Braeman, ed., The New Deal, State and Local Levels (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1975), p. 129.

majority of them cast their ballots for Franklin D. Roosevelt.

Why the sudden shift in black political allegiance? According to black historian, John Hope Franklin, blacks began to leave the Republican party in 1923, when the Republicans attempted to resurrect a strong party in the South with white leadership. Prominent black Republican leaders, such as Benjamin Davis, of Georgia; Perry Howard, of Mississippi; and William McDonald, of Texas, lost influence in their states when the Republican high command began to recognize white leaders in those states and to seat white delegates instead of the black delegates who presented themselves. Black leaders like Robert Church, of Memphis, were so incensed over the lily white Republican movement in the south that they refused to serve on the national advisory committee. Three of the major black newspapers, the Journal and Guide, the Baltimore Afro American and the Boston Guardian all supported Alfred E. Smith over Herbert Hoover in 1928.[8]

Hoover's victory in 1923 demonstrated the Republican possibility of amassing strength among white southerners. He carried Florida, Kentucky, North Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia. Therefore, once in office, Hoover made no attempt to regain the black votes he lost in 1928. He made few black appointments to federal jobs, and he did nothing about the exclusion of

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[8]Franklin, From Slavery to Freedom, p. 524.

black delegates from the Republican primaries in the South. In 1930, Hoover appointed John J. Parker to the Supreme Court. Blacks objected to this appointment because Parker was reported to have said the "participation of the Negro in Politics is a source of evil and danger to both races." Even though the Senate did not confirm Parker's appointment, some blacks considered Hoover an enemy for having appointed him the first place.[9]

Hoover's racial stand partially alienated many black voters, but the Great Depression completed the rupture. That the administration of Harding and Coolidge were as much to blame meant little to needy blacks. To them the Hoover adminstration, which bore the brunt of the responsibility, failed to provide desperately needed relief. Therefore, in 1932 some blacks took what appeared to them to be the only alternative, Franklin D. Roosevelt.

Those blacks in Norfolk who supported Roosevelt in 1932 did not view him as a savior of black people. In an editorial appearing in the Journal and Guide before the election that year, the newspaper explained that blacks who voted for Franklin D. Roosevelt would do so not out of admiration for him, but out of disapproval of Hoover. Little favorable could be discovered in Roosevelt's attitude toward blacks. The newspaper charged that to win the nomination in 1932, the New Yorker made a concession to the South by accepting John Garner, of Texas, as his running mate; that as

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[9]Peter M. Bergman, The Chronological History of the Negro in America (New York: New American Library, 1969), p. 450.

Secretary of the Navy during the Wilson administration, he unjustifiably seized the black Republic of Haiti with the use of United States Marines; and that as Governor of New York, he paid little attention to black problems and did not appoint any blacks to prominent state positions.[10]

Roosevelt's policy of making few black appointments and of giving little attention to black problems on a whole, did not change during the first eight years of his administration. Nothing in the large body of New Deal legislation, for instance, can be singled out as intended to improve the lot specifically of the blacks, and at no time prior to 1941 did Roosevelt make any kind of official statement in opposition to segregation and discrimination such as Harry Truman included in his Fair Deal. In 1941, Roosevelt issued his famous Executive Order 8802, which banned racial discrimination in the defense industries.

What then was the appeal of the New Deal to blacks? In Norfolk in 1930, the relief load was 36 per cent black; by 1936 the black percentage of the relief load had increased to 79.6 per cent. Thus, even after the New Deal had been in effect for three years, the economic plight of Norfolk's black citizenry was worsening. Yet in 1936, Norfolk blacks, for the first time in their political history voted heavily Democratic. Norfolk's heavily-populated black twenty-first precinct, which had never in its political

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[10] Norfolk Journal and Guide, 22 October 1932.

history voted for a Democratic presidential candidate, cast 202 votes for Roosevelt to 131 for Landon.[11]

One explanation for the shift of the black vote to the Democratic party is that the New Deal gave new recognition to black hopes and aspirations. Roosevelt's institution of the "Black Cabinet" was of particular importance to blacks, who felt that they were at last represented in the executive branch of government and that finally some of their problems would be addressed.[12] Members of the "Black Cabinet" were not politicans and none of them held high positions of trust in the government. They were simply racial advisors to members of the executive branch who dealt only with matters affecting the black community.[13] The creation of the "Black Cabinet" was a very effective political move on Roosevelt's part, because while these black leaders had virtually no power in the government, their presence was bringing in the black vote. It was charged that members of the "Black Cabinet" were mere salesmen for the New Deal because more black votes were brought with each new black appointment.[14] Surely this was the case in Norfolk

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[11]Carl Degler, The New Deal (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1970), pp. 12-14; Works Projects Administration, Urban Workers on Relief, pp. 208-209; and Andrew Buni, The Negro in Virginia Politics (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1967), p. 116.

[12]Degler, The New Deal, pp. 12-14.

[13]Franklin, From Slavery to Freedom, p. 530.

[14]Ibid., p. 531.

Because with each new black appointment, the Journal and Guide heaped more and more praise on Roosevelt, making him a hero to many of Norfolk's black citizens. Members of the "Black Cabinet" were highly trained and highly intelligent black leaders. They included such prominent blacks as Mary McCleod Bethune, Robert C. Weaver, Eugene Knickle Jones and William Hastie. Mary McCleod Bethune, the founder of Bethune Cookman College, was made the director of the Division of Negro Affairs in the National Youth Administration. Eugene Knickle Jones was named the advisor on Negro Affairs in the Department of Commerce. Robert Weaver was designated racial advisor in the Department of Interior, and William Hastie was appointed the first black Judge of the Virgin Islands.[15]

Another explanation for the huge shift of the black vote to the Democratic party can be seen in the stand against racial discrimination taken by some individuals close to the President. Harold Ickes, Secretary of the Interior and a former president of the Chicago branch of N.A.A.C.P., desegregated his department when he took office.[16] Eleanor Roosevelt, the President's wife, made it her business to reaffirm by word and deed her faith in the equality of opportunity for all. She included black and mixed organiztions on her itineraries and welcomed mixed groups of adults

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[15]Buni, The Negro in Virginia Politics, p. 113.

[16]Degler, The New Deal, pp. 12-14.

and children to the White House. Blacks heralded her when she secured permission for Marian Anderson to sing on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial after the Daughters of the American Revolution (D.A.R.), refused her permission to hold her concert in its Constitution Hall. When Mrs. Roosevelt resigned her membership in the D.A.R. because of the incident, blacks knew they had found a friend in the White House. In 1939, five thousand people, undoubtedly including many Norfolk blacks, crowded the Mosque Auditorium in Richmond to see Mrs. Roosevelt present to Marian Anderson the N.A.A.C.P. Spingarn Medal for Conspicuous Achievement. Mrs. Roosevelt's invitation to the Hampton Institute Singers to sing at the White House, and her visit to the black patients at the Veterans Hospital in Hampton, followed by a visit to Hampton Institute's Campus, was spread across the front pages of the Journal and Guide. For weeks the Guide advertised the approach of Mrs. Roosevelt's visit and informed the public of the events scheduled in honor of the occasion. Indeed this was a proud time for the local black population, many of whom were alumni of Hampton Institute, or had children in attendance there. These acts of humanitarianism from Mrs. Roosevelt won many black votes for the Democratic party. However, much more than political gain was involved, for the First Lady had a genuinely sympathetic interest in the welfare of blacks which they reflected in their great admiration for her.[17]

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[17]Foner, America's Black Past, p. 398; Writers Program, The Negro in Virginia, p. 347; and Norfolk Journal and Guide, 1 April 1936.

The Roosevelt Administration marked a real turning point in the trends of American race relations, since it was the first time in the twentieth century that federal officials showed genuine concern for the plight of blacks. There was more to this interest than mere humanitarian commitment, for the black vote in the key industrial states of the north had begun to assume a crucial role in politics.[18] Nevertheless, blacks appreciated the concern which members of the Roosevelt administration showed them. They expressed their appreciation through their continued support of Roosevelt at the polls. In 1940, even though the nation was still in the midst of the Great Depression and Roosevelt's New Deal had done nothing specifically to lessen the tragic suffering of millions of black people, blacks overwhelmingly voted for the Democratic ticket. An editorial appearing in the Journal and Guide entitled, "No Hope for the Race in a Willkie Candidacy," explains the mood of the black community:

> We know him and we do not know Wilkie. Roosevelt has started on a work which he has not completed. We want him to complete it...Wilkie has done nothing for the government. Most of his reputation has come from fighting the government's New Deal plans. He has never held public office. He would not know what to do with it if he had. He would be just another Hoover, smart in business, but dumb in politics, and a tool of those who back the social ordinances. But there is another, a more personal reason. The Roosevelts have always been kind to the Negroes. They have hired Negroes all their

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[18] Buni, The Negro in Virginia Politics, p. 114.

> married life. Mrs. Roosevelt's maid and Mr. Roosevelt's valet are colored. It means much to the race to have a man and his wife of this type in the White House, who knows us first hand.[19]

Another reason for Roosevelt's popularity in the black community was his reported stand against lynching. "He called lynching murder," remarked W. E. B. DuBois "and things give us hope."[20] Lynching was not a problem in Norfolk during the Great Depression, but it was a very serious problem throughout most of the South. Therefore, Norfolk's black political leaders were very interested in the passage of a national Anti-Lynching Law.

Blacks in Norfolk could be sympathetic to the plight of their kindred throughout the South because they knew first hand the evil of lynching. In 1870, the Virginia General Assembly passed a law making it a crime for any person to conspire with another to incite the white population to make insurrection against the colored. Yet Virginia mobs lynched eighty-eight blacks between 1882 and 1920. In 1928 during the Byrd administration, Virginia passed an Anti-Lynching Law.[21] The law states that "the lynching of any person within the state by a mob is murder and persons

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[19] Norfolk Journal and Guide, 26 October 1940.

[20] Writer's Program, The Negro in Virginia, p. 243.

[21] Guild, Black Laws of Virginia, p. 171.

composing a mob which commits an assualt and/or battery upon any person without authority of law shall be guilty of a felony."[22]

That Virginia was able to pass an Anti-Lynching Law in 1928 is primarily attributed to the work of white citizens. The leading newspapers of the day and prominent citizens urged the governor to sponsor an anti-lynch law. Among the most vocal of white citizens was Louis I. Jaffee, editor of the Virginia-Pilot who subsequently received a Pulitzer Prize in 1929 for his editorials against mob violence. According to some, Jaffee's writings were instrumental in convincing Byrd of the need for such legislation.[23]

Although Virginia's political leaders urged the passage of a state anti-lynch law, they were not enthusiastic about the passage of a national act. In 1934, Thomas L. Dabney, a reporter for the Journal and Guide, headed a committee responsible for securing signatures in Norfolk, on a petition deploring the increase of lynching and mob violence in the country and asking Congress to pass the measure, "in order that our country might be freed from the savages of mobs and crimes perpetuated by them." He presented the petition to Virginia's Congressmen for their support. Of those Congressmen responding to the petition, Senator Harry F. Byrd and Congressmen Patrick H. Drewery

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[22]Guild, Black Laws of Virginia, p. 171.

[23]Buni The Negro in Virginia Politics, p. 102.

and Andrew J. Montague expressed themselves in general terms which did not definitely align them for or against the measure; but Congressman Colgate Darden refused to support the petition; and Congressman Wills Robertson said he was opposed to any federal encroachment upon the rights of states.[24]

Other members of Norfolk's black community joined in the anti-lynch campaign. In 1934, black ministers addressed a petition to the white clergymen of the city asking their support in this effort. Reverend W. L. Hamilton was responsible for circulating the petition. In 1935, black ministers urged Virginia Senators Byrd and Glass to support the Costigan Wagner anti-lynch bill. Three years later the Negro Women's Democratic Club of Norfolk sent letters to Senator Harry F. Byrd and Carter Glass asking them to vote for the passage of the Gavagan anti-lynch bill when it came to a vote on the Senate Floor. The women wrote:

> We the members of the Women's Democratic Club of Norfolk, Virginia, do earnestly urge you to lend your support toward the passage of the anti-lynch bill soon to come up again before the Senate. We believe that the passage of the bill will be a most effective measure in stamping out the curse of lynching so indelibly identified with the south and in addition, we believe its passage will give the Negro population a feeling of security that result in a better racial understanding and good will.
>
> Therefore, as Virginians and as qualified voters of Norfolk, we urgently request that you support and vote for the passage of this bill.[25]

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[24] Norfolk Journal and Guide, 21 April 1934.

[25] Ibid., 17 March 1934.

Even after receiving such a plea for action from the ladies of Norfolk, Senator Glass did not want to vote for the bill when it came up for action. He recommended that the Senate take up the House Independent Office Appropriation Bill instead.[26]

Even though the lynching of blacks continued throughout the South during the 1930's, there was nor federal anti-lynching law passed during the decade. One black criticism of Roosevelt was that he did not publicly support the anti-lynching campaign. When Walter White, the Executive Secretary of the N.A.A.C.P. obtained an audience through Eleanor Roosevelt to plead for the President's support of the anti-lynching bill, Roosevelt demurred because he needed southern votes in Congress on other matters.[27] Nevertheless, the image of Roosevelt eventually became a favorable one and he became the most popular President among blacks since Abraham Lincoln.

While Norfolk blacks had very definite political ideas they were politically powerless since failure to pay the poll tax disfranchised the overwhelming majority of their voting-age population. With a small electorate blacks could not run for office and they had no power in determining which of the white candidates would win. Therefore, blacks in the city had no influence over their own local political destiny.

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[26] Ibid., 12 February 1938.

[27] Foner, American's Black Past, p. 393.

Social and political problems were not the only problems facing blacks in Norfolk. As the Depression grew in intensity one more problem was added to the black community's already heavy load. This was the problem of mass unemployment.

CHAPTER IV

THE ECONOMIC EFFECTS OF THE GREAT DEPRESSION

Marvin Schlegel in revising Thomas Wertenbaker's Norfolk: Historic Southern Port, gives an optimistic report of the condition of Norfolk's white community during the Great Depression. He stated that Norfolk was not hit hard by the Depression, because the Naval Base continued to provide employment for many skilled and semi-skilled workers. Therefore, he says Norfolkians were spared the sight of soup lines and the selling of apples on the street. According to Schlegel there were few business failures in Norfolk and there were no bank failures. Schlegel's report for the early years of the Depression appear to have been true for the remainder of the decade. The Naval Base continued to provide employment for many of Norfolk's citizens and most of the white-owned businesses in Norfolk were left in tact.

The situation in Norfolk's black community was not as optimistic as Schlegel describes for the white community, because a number of small black businesses did fail as well as the city's only black-owned bank. However, the conditions of blacks in Norfolk during the Depression appear to have been better than those of blacks in other cities, particularly

in northern cities such as New York and Chicago where mass unemployment caused racial unrest. Unemployment in Norfolk during the 1930's was never greater than 10 per cent for blacks and 6.9 per cent for whites, while the national average was 25 per cent. Nevertheless, the 1930's were still very difficult years economically for blacks and whites in Norfolk. By 1934, blacks comprised three-fourths of the relief load in Norfolk. This figure would probably be even greater had it not been for the deliberate discrimination of local relief officials in underestimating the plight of blacks. The same economic tragedies which existed in most white communities occurred in the black community: the loss of homes, the depletion of hard earned savings, the closing of a trusted bank and the failure and businesses. However, the racial and social problems in the black community made their economic problems even more acute.

Unemployment was a particular problem for blacks because jobs that had traditionally been considered black occupations were given to white workers. This was particularly true in the domestic and semi-skilled occupations. The Virginian-Pilot ascribed black unemployment to the increased use of labor-saving equipment which reduced job opportunities for the unskilled, a category that included a large per cent of black workers.[1]

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[1] Mattie B. Patterson, "Poverty and Private Charities in Norfolk During the Depression Years 1929-1933," (Master's Thesis, Old Dominion University, 1969), pp. 57-58.

In Norfolk, even the skilled blacks were displaced by whites. In 1933, black woodcalkers at the Portsmouth Navy Yard were laid off because of economic cutbacks. However, instead of calling up the unemployed woodcalkers when work became available, the shipyard put white unqualified shipwrights for whom there was no work into woodcalking jobs.[2]

Since the economic cutbacks of the depression hit the black community most severely the unemployment rate in Norfolk was higher for blacks than it was for whites. In 1930, 3.9 per cent of blacks were unemployed while 2.1 per cent of whites were unemployed. By 1935, the black unemployment rate had reached 8.2 per cent while the white unemployment rate increased to 2.5 per cent.[3] At the end of the decade these figures had risen to 10 per cent for blacks and 6.9 per cent for whites.[4]

The large percentage of black unemployment in Norfolk caused many blacks to apply for public assistance. In 1930, 36 per cent of the relief load in Norfolk was black; by 1934, the number had risen to 3,840 or 79.6 per cent.[5] However, even this large percentage does not accurately represent the

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[2]Norfolk Journal and Guide, 20 May 1933.

[3]Works Projects Administration, Urban Workers on Relief, pp. 208-209.

[4]U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940: Unemployment, 3:796.

[5]Works Projects Administration, Urban Workers on Relief, pp. 208-209.

need of blacks because many who could have qualified for assistance did not apply. Instead they tried to find what little work they could. Many became vendors and piled their trade in the black community selling vegetables and fruit, fish, ice, coal, kerosene or anything else they felt blacks would buy. Some blacks refused to apply for assistance because of pride and others did not apply because they did not know how to go about applying for assistance. In the middle and late 1930's, students for the Norfolk Unit of Virginia Union University initiated a campaign in the black community to inform blacks of the public assistance available to them.[6]

In 1935, the percentage of blacks among the recipients of relief declined slightly to 77.7 per cent, but the proportion was still high.[7] The large number of blacks on the relief rolls in Norfolk and the small number of whites is evidence of the rate by which black workers were being displaced by whites. The major occupations opened to blacks in Norfolk from 1930 to 1940 were in the unskilled and domestic categories, and these were the categories in which the majority of blacks on relief had been employed. A breakdown of black and white workers on relief in Norfolk is shown in Tables 4 and 5.

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[6]Oral Interview, Mr. Robert Brothers, Shiloh Baptist Church, Norfolk, Virginia, 12 December 1978.

[7]Worker's on Relief in the U.S. March 1935 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1938).

TABLE 4

STATISTIC OF BLACK AND WHITE WORKERS
IN NORFOLK ON RELIEF IN 1935

CATAGORIES OF JOBS	WHITE	BLACK
Total No. of People on Relief in Norfolk	1,426	4,969
Professional and Technical Workers	47	41
Skilled Workers (Building Construction)	304	123
Skilled Workers (Others)	69	58
Semi-Skilled in Building Construction	70	255
Semi-Skilled (other)	948	262
Office Workers	99	12
Salesman	145	20
Unskilled Laborers	73	988
Domestic	61	2,015
Proprietors & Managers	57	31

SOURCE: Workers on Relief in the United States in March 1935, (Washington C.C. Government Printing Office, 1938).

TABLE 5

UNEMPLOYED WORKERS ON RELIEF MAY 1934 CLASSIFIED BY OCCUPATION, RACE, AND SEX AND ALL GAINFUL WORKERS IN GENERAL POPULATION 1930 CLASSIFIED BY OCCUPATION NORFOLK, VIRGINIA.

Occupation	Census 1930 Total	Total	RELIEF 1934			
			White		Negro & Other	
			Male	Female	Male	Female
Total Workers Reporting	#60,306 %100.0	4,680 100.0	505 100.0	305 100.0	1,810 100.0	2,030 100.0
Agriculture	1.1	5.6	5.5	1.0	7.6	4.5
Manufacturing and Mechanical Industries	25.3	27.0	53.2	43.6	36.3	9.9
Transportation and Communication	12.2	11.3	13.9	-	25.0	-
Trade	16.0	9.5	14.5	20.3	15.7	1.1
Public Service	9.9	0.5	2.0	-	0.6	-
Domestic and Personal Service	19.0	43.0	3.6	23.6	12.1	83.3
Clerical Occupations	9.6	1.3	3.6	7.6	0.8	0.1
Operatives	-	-	-	-	-	-

SOURCE: U.S. Works Projects Administration, Urban Workers on Relief, by Kathryn D. Ward, Research Monograph IV (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1935), p. 208.

Massive unemployment was devastating to the black community and caused feelings of hopelessness and frustration among blacks. Adding to the frustation in the black community was the failure of the Metropolitan Banking and Trust Company in 1931. While most blacks did not have much money in the Metropolitan Bank, those who could afford any savings had deposited their funds there. The failure of the bank brought distress and despair to the depositors, because they thought that a savings account would bring some economic security and they believed in the soundness of the bank. The failure also brought despair because the depositors lost most of their savings.[8]

The Metropolitan Bank was not the first black bank to be established in Norfolk in the early twentieth century. In 1905 the Knights of Gideon Bank was established. This was replaced in 1910 by the Brown's Savings Bank. During World War I another black bank was established in Norfolk, but it was closed as soon as wartime workers were fired from their jobs.[9] The establishment of black banks in the South was important to blacks since in most cases they were denied complete access to white banks. This was the case in Norfolk. Black banks were organized primarily to supply Negro businessmen with capital. Except for insurance companies, the only

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[8]Norfolk Journal and Guide, 23 June 1934.

[9]Writer's Program, The Negro in Virginia, p. 298.

outlets for the credit resources of black banks were real estate, small and inconsequential retail stores, and the amusement and personal services enterprises conducted by blacks. These enterprises did not offer an opportunity for the type of commercial transactions which are necessary for banking activities. Therefore, most black banks were doomed to failure from the start. Nevertheless, black communities throughout Virginia were intent on establishing banks in the early twentieth century.[10] Of the twenty-seven banks organized in Virginia, double the number organized in any other state, only twelve were open for business in 1921; six in 1929; and in 1939, the Consolidated Bank and Trust Company of Richmond, the Crown Savings Bank of Newport News and the Danville Savings and Trust Company, were the only black banks still open.[11]

Norfolk's Metropolitan Bank was closed in January 1931. It was reopened, however, in July 1931 through the resourcefulness of the bank president, William M. Rich, and seemed then to be on a sound standing. At the annual stockholders' meeting held at the First Baptist Church Bute Street, Mr. Rich reported a net earnings of $3,881.21 for 1932. A report from the secretary treasurer revealed that the bank collected $29,214.00 for the year and that 456 new loans aggregating $20,000.00 were made, the average loan

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[10]E. Franklin Frazier, Black Bourgeosie (New York: Collier Books, 1967), p. 41.

[11]Writer's Program, The Negro in Virginia, p. 299.

being about $42.00. The bank further reported that it had not lost one dollar through investments since the reopening. This report may have been a little too optimistic on the part of banking officials because the Metropolitan Bank closed again for the final time in May 1933. New state banking laws, with which the black bank could not comply, hastened its destruction.[12]

The failure of the Metropolitan Bank was just one more of the many losses which the black community endured during the Depression. The city government offered little or no assistance to the black community's economic problems. On the contrary it was usually the black population who particularly suffered the effects of the city's cuts in its budget. In March 1933, the city council announced a proposal to eliminate the Blyden Branch Library as a means of helping to balance its budget. The Blyden Branch was the only public library open to blacks in the city. The black community responded with cries of outrage and protest. The Journal and Guide, the Norfolk Teachers Association, principals of the blacks schools, and the colored Library Committee all strongly objected to the elimination of the library. They argued that the closing of the library would do great educational and cultural damage to the black community. Particular injury would be done to black school children, for whom the library in some cases was the only source from which they could obtain research and reference material. Since blacks were not allowed admission to the city's white

[12] Norfolk Journal and Guide, 12 May 1934.

libraries, the closing of the only library facilty available to them would have been an injustice to blacks who also bore the burden of paying taxes for the construction of such edifices. After continued stringent objections from the black community the proposal was withdrawn.[13]

In 1933, the salaries of all teachers in Norfolk were cut by 10 per cent. This was particularly unfortunate for black teachers since their salaries were already shamefully low in comparison to the salaries of white teachers. In 1939 the maximum amount that a black female teacher could make was $1,150.00 while the minimum amount which a white female teacher could make was $1,100.00. Black teachers and the black community vigorously protested the cuts in salary, but the cuts remained in effect.[14] To further reduce city expenses on education one-fourth of black school children in Norfolk were enrolled in school on a part-time basis while none of the white students attended school part-time.[15]

Finding no economic relief forthcoming from the city government, blacks looked to the national government for assistance and were left wanting. Even though the unemployment rate in the nation continued to rise, the federal government during the Hoover administration refused to offer any major assistance to relief problems for blacks or whites

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[13] Norfolk Journal and Guide, 1 April 1933.

[14] Ibid., 27 January 1934.

[15] Ibid., 5 September 1934.

Hoover felt that relief was strictly a local problem. He insisted that the cities, with help from private charities could and should take care of the needy. This was a fallacious assumption, for nowhere in the nation was there an adequate system of relief. Local public funds in 1929 paid three-fourths of the cost of relief, but the localities had neither the means to raise revenue nor the capacity to borrow to defray their mounting obligations. Their relief agencies and programs, moreover had concentrated on helping the unemployable. Local administrators had neither the experience nor the facilities to cope with mass unemployment, and private charity was clearly incapable of meeting the nation's needs for immediate relief.[16]

The national government under Hoover ultimately did make an attempt to relieve depressed conditions in the nation through the establishment of the Reconstruction Finance Corporation (R.F.C.). The R.F.C. was established in 1932 with the purpose of providing emergency financing facilities for financial institutions; to aid in financing agriculture, commerce and industry; to purchase preferred stock, capital rates or debentures of its banks and trust companies; and to make loans and the allocation of funds as prescribed by law. It is clear from its purpose that the R.F.C. was not established to provide relief directly to the masses of unemployed, whether black or white. Instead it appears that the agency's primary clientele was big business. As Albert Romasco states

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[16]Albert Romasco, The Poverty of Abundance (New York: Oxford University, 1965), pp. 143-172.

in his book, The Poverty of Abundance, Hoover was more interested in the investing public than in the consuming public. Most of the programs suggested by Congress to alleviate the consumers' distress were opposed by Hoover because to him they all meant increased federal spending. This was the one thing Hoover wanted to avoid because increased spending threatened his efforts to balance the federal budget. Hoover considered the balancing of the federal budget essential to ending the Depression and he believed that in order to achieve this end he needed to build up the investing public.[17]

In Norfolk, blacks benefitted minimally from R.F.C. funds. Some blacks, however, were employed on work projects in the black community, cleaning up the grounds around schools and churches.[18] The Norfolk Relief Commissary was operated from the R.F.C. Under the R.F.C. the commissary was closed from July 8, 1932 until December of 1932. Officials closed the commissary then because they thought that private relief agencies could handle the relief rolls during the summer months. The rationale for this belief is puzzling since the number of Norfolkians on the relief rolls was steadily increasing. Wanser Bagnall Webb, executive secretary of the

[17] Romasco, The Poverty of Abundance, p. 233.

[18] Norfolk Journal and Guide, 18 March 1933.

Colored United Charities, asked for more assistance for the black community because of the increased unemployment among blacks. However, the commissary remained closed.[19]

The economic situation in Norfolk's black community during the Depression was dismal. Since blacks had no economic power in the city they could do nothing about their displacement by white workers. Therefore, black unemployment increased during the decade. With increased unemployment many blacks were forced to apply for public assistance. However, the distribution of relief caused another problem for blacks in Norfolk because the racism of local relief officials caused blacks to get a very small percentage of relief funds.

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[19] Ibid., 1 July 1933.

CHAPTER V

RELIEF IN THE BLACK COMMUNITY

Private relief agencies in Norfolk, like other institutions, were divided along racial lines. Since blacks had no direct access to white relief agencies, it was necesary that they form their own extensions to the white charities. There were, for example, a Colored Division of the Red Cross, a Colored United Charities, a Colored Union Mission, and a Colored Young Men's Christian Association. These black agencies were grossly discriminated against in the proportion of relief funds appropriated to them. City officials unfortunately believed that the needs of blacks were not as great as for whites and that blacks could, therefore, get along on less money. Consequently, black charities received a very small portion of the city's appropriations to private relief agencies.

The primary private relief agency in Norfolk's black community was the Colored United Charities, the black counterpart of the Norfolk United Charities. From 1930 to 1933, Wanser Bagnall was executive secretary of the agency; and from 1934 to 1940, Mamie E. Gordon took over the job. The Colored United Charities was a family welfare agency which provided relief in food and clothing and in employment. The

agency was responsible for accepting or rejecting black applications to the Norfolk commissary depot, it distributed clothing to needy black families in the city, and it handled all black applications for work for the Reconstruction Finance Corporation.[1]

The Colored United Charities, like the Norfolk United Charities, received its funding from city appropriations and the Community Fund. The budget of the Colored United Charities was so low that the agency could offer only minimal assistance to a few black families.[2] A comparison of the budgets for the two family welfare agencies for the years 1930, 1936, and 1939 is show in Table 6.

Table 6 reflects the racism and discrimination with which most black relief agencies in Norfolk had to contend. Even though more blacks were in need of assistance than whites, the city repeatedly awarded more funds to the white charity than it did to the black charity. The highest annual budget received by the Colored United Charities was in 1936, when it was given $6,854.88, of which $3,661.13 was from the city and $3,193.75 from the Community Fund. This was a very small amount especially when one considers that 79.6 per cent of the relief load in Norfolk was black. In the same year the white agency received an annual budget of $21,546.84, of which $12,277.31 came from the city and $8,288.80 from the Community Fund. Yet the percentage of

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[1] Norfolk Journal and Guide, 21 January 1933.

[2] Twenty-Fifth and Twenty-Sixth Annual Reports of the State Department of Public Welfare of Virginia, p. 70.

whites on the relief rolls was 21.4 per cent. The salaries of the white agency's employees was more than the total receipts of the black agency, which brings out another point of discrimination. Black charity workers' salaries were miserably low in comparison with those of white charity workers. This type of blatant discrimination permeated Norfolk's treatment of black relief agencies.[3]

The Colored Union Mission, black counterpart of the Norfolk Union Mission was another black agency against which the city discriminated. The Union Missions were described in the Virginia Reports on Public Welfare as character building and recreational organizations for men.[4] During the Depression the colored Union Mission supervised by Reverend J. A. Handy, offered black men who were out of work free food and a place to stay. The Colored Union Mission was not a member of the Community Fund. However, in 1933 the Colored Division of the Community Fund voted to lend indirect aid to the mission because they believed that the agency was doing a good job in alleviating the plight of the black unemployed. Since it was not a member of the Community Fund the Colored Union Mission relied heavily on city funding to carry on its work. In 1935, the city appropriated $525.00 to the Colored Union Mission. In 1936

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[3] Twenty-Fifth and Twenty-Sixth Annual Reports of the State Department of Public Welfare of Virginia, p. 70.

[4] Ibid., p. 90.

TABLE 6

A COMPARISON OF THE RECEIPTS OF THE COLORED UNITED CHARITIES AND THE NORFOLK UNITED CHARITIES FOR THE YEARS 1930, 1936, 1939

		STAFF				RECEIPTS			EXPENDITURES		
Agency	Year	Families Served	Paid Employ.	Volun-teer	City Approp.	Comm. Fund	Other Source	Tot. Rec.	Sal&Off Expend.	Gen. Relief	Tot. Exp.
Colored United Charities	1930	263	5	4	2,840	3,240		6,080	1,537		6,080
Norfolk United Charities	1930	800 (about)	7		23,670	11,359	1,898	36,927	13,566		36,927
Colored United Charities	1936	224	5		3,661	3,194		6,855	1,785	4,684	6,855
Norfolk United Charities	1936	541	5½		12,277	8,289	982	21,547	9,956		20,519
Colored United Charities	1939	1,726						4,485			5,179
Norfolk United Charities	1939	359						19,598			18,445

SOURCE: Virginia Department of Public Welfare Reports 1930-1940 (Richmond: Division of Printing 1931, 1937, 1949).

TABLE 7

A COMPARISON OF THE RECEIPTS OF THE PUBLIC ORPHANAGES
IN NORFOLK FOR THE YEARS 1930 and 1935

Agency	Year	Number of Children End of Yr.	State Approp.	City Approp.	Commun. Fund	Other	Total	Oper. & Maint.	Salary and Matron	Total
Children's Aid Society	1930	24	651	400		1,450	2,501	73		
Norfolk Female Orphan Society	1930	42		5,618	2,029	3,724	11,434	11,145		11,483
Turney Home For Boys	1930	24		2,840	2,122	1,953	6,914	6,893		
Children's Aid Society	1935	4	1,266	211			1,476	1,327	364	1,691
Norfolk Female Orphan Society	1935	37		32,960	1,086	2,273	6,655	4,571	2,655	7,216
Turney Home For Boys	1935	34		6,828	2,205	919	9,952	6,494	5,263	

SOURCE: Virginia Department of Public Welfare Reports 1930-1936, (Richmond: Division of Printing, 1931, 1936).

Table 7 reflects the same racial discrimination seen in the previous tables. City or private relief officials appropriated more relief funds to the white homes than to the black home, with no regard to the need in the black community.

Another incidence which reflects the lack of concern city and private relief officials had for black children is seen in the fact that the city provided a day nursery, the Norfolk Day Nursery,[9] for white children, while the Children's Aid Society provided the only city-supported day nursery for black children. The Christian Conference Day Nursery[10] provided another day care facility for black children. Both of these nurseries, however, were mostly inferior to the Norfolk Day Nursery. A comparison of the budgets of the Norfolk Day Nursery and the Christian Conference Day Nursery is made in Table 8.

Other black relief agencies which offered relief assistance to the black community, but for which no budgets could be found, included the Colored Division of the Red Cross, the Hunton Y.M.C.A. and the Phyllis Wheatley Y.W.C.A. The Colored Division of the Red Cross offered minimal assistance to the black community through its sewing circles. The cloth was furnished by the local chapter of the American Red Cross and the finished garmets were distributed to blacks through the Colored United Charities. The Hunton

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[9] Twenty-Seventh and Twenty-Eighth Annual Reports of the State Department of Public Welfare of Virginia, June 30, 1937, p. 76.

[10] Ibid., p. 75.

TABLE 8

A COMPARISON OF THE RECEIPTS OF THE DAY NURSERIES PROVIDED FOR BLACK AND WHITE CHILDREN IN NORFOLK FOR THE YEARS 1936, 1937

Agency	Year	Number of Children	City Approp.	Commun. Fund	Other	Total	Sala-ries	Op. & Maint.	Int. Debt	Total
Christian Conference Day Nursery	1936	12				375	240	276	141	657
Norfolk Day Nursery	1936	30	1,941	1,431	478	3,850	1,912	1,514	276	3,702
Christian Conference Day Nursery	1937	10				375	240	192		432
Norfolk Day Nursery	1937	33	2,036	1,304	283	3,623	1,929	1,573	137	3,639

SOURCE: Virginia Department of Public Welfare Reports, 1936-1937, (Richmond: Division of Printing, 1937), pp. 75-56.

Y.M.C.A. allowed the use of its building for the housing of the Norfolk Unit of Virginia Union University, and the Phyllis Wheatley Y.W.C.A. operated an employment bureau and conducted a free sewing class for the unemployed.[11]

It cannot be said that all white people neglected the needs of blacks during the Depression since there were members of white community who made a direct effort to alleviate some of the suffering in the black community. Among these people were a white postman and his Boy Scout Troop. The postman, C. L. Christian, daily saw a number of small black children from Titustown digging into garbage cans for bits of discarded food that they carried home to share with their families. Christian told his Boy Scout Troop about these children. The troop went to work immediately and furnished a substantial meal daily to these families. The number of families fed sometimes reached as high as 125. The Scouts, their families, and the troop committee bore practically all the expense of the project except for the daily or weekly gifts of bread from the Norfolk bakery and grocery store chains. The troop continued its commissary for four weeks at which time a regularly constituted welfare agency took over the project.[12]

Limited private help for the city's poor came also through special money-raising drives such as the Christmas Joy Fund, which the Virginian-Pilot sponsored. The Joy Fund

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[11] Norfolk Journal and Guide, 4 February 1933. Ibid., 14 January 1933; Ibid., 3 June 1935.

[12] Norfolk Journal and Guide, 28 January 1933.

gave away baskets of food to needy families at Christmas. Some black families were recipients of these baskets. In 1934 the Joy Fund gave away 1,500 baskets of which 400 went to black families. Five hundred baskets would have been a more adequate representation of the percentage of blacks in the population; however, blacks were very grateful for the baskets they did receive. Each basket contained enough food for several meals. One typical Joy Fund basket contained twelve pounds of flour, two pounds of meal, two pounds of sugar, two loaves of bread, one box of salt, one pound of shortening, eight items of canned goods, one ham, one box oatmeal, one-half pound of coffee, and ten pounds of potatoes. The Journal and Guide was responsible for distributing the baskets in the black community.[13]

Since blacks could expect little or no assistance from charities or from the city, they were forced to look to each other for assistance. The old biblical adage "thou art thy brother's keeper" became true for blacks in Norfolk. The black church offered food, clothing and money to needy families in the community. Also blacks could rely on their neighbors for what little assistance they could afford to give them. Many black families provided food, clothing and shelter to other more needy families. There were also the contributions of black businesses such as the Journal and Guide which in 1933 sponsored a free exhibition for homemakers. All of the women in the city were invited. The newspaper

[13]Ibid., 29 December 1934.

gave away free baskets of food stuff and numerous other gifts, in addition to sponsoring classes on cooking, sewing, and beauty aids.[14] Perhaps the most memorable example of a black individual's efforts to combat the depression can be seen through the humanitarian acts of Dr. Edward W. Murray. Dr. Murray, a local physician, used his own material resources and his medical skills to help ease the troubled conditions brought on by the Depression. He was widely known for his annual charitable projects which included a ten dollar prize in gold for the winner of an essay contest in citizenship for students at the Booker T. Washington High School, Christmas dinners and bags of fruit and candy for families on relief, and an Easter egg hunt for the children in the black community. In 1935, Dr. Murray's Easter egg hunt was held on Virginia Beach Boulevard, with 750 children participating. One thousand eggs and 1,000 pennies were hidden in addition to special prize eggs worth from one to five dollars. There was a parade, to the grounds, in which the Excelsior Band played. Transportation for the occasion was furnished by Norfolk undertaker, J. H. Hale.[15]

Dr. Murray was very generous with his professional services as well. In 1935, with the cooperation of several local black physicians, Dr. Murray enlarged the services of his clinic to care for those persons in need of eye, ear

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[14] Norfolk Journal and Guide, 1 April 1933.

[15] Ibid., 27 April 1935.

was equally natural that in these agencies there would be differences between black and white relief grants, numbers of workers, salary and the like.[17] This was true in Norfolk and throughout the South.

In Virginia from 1933 to 1938, all of the New Deal programs with the exception of the Civil Works Administration and the Public Works Administration were under the direction of the State Department of Public Welfare. However, in 1938, the Public Assistance Act of that year placed the local administrative responsibility for all forms of assistance on the local welfare boards. All counties and cities throughout the state had a three member board of public welfare and it was the responsibility of this board to handle local relief cases. The local welfare boards hired social workers to investigate relief applications. In the cities there was one social worker for every one hundred twenty-one relief cases.[18]

The State Department of Public Welfare report did not provide a statistics on general relief among individual cities and counties until 1938. In this year Norfolk received 6,057 applications for relief, of which 1,384 were denied, 3,973 were approved, and 238 were pending at the end of the year. In 1939, Norfolk received 6,914 applications for relief, of

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[17] Basil Rouch, The History of the New Deal (New York: Creative Age Press, Inc., 1944), pp. 71-72.

[18] Biennial Report of the State Department of Public Welfare, June 30, 1938, June 30, 1939, pp. 8-20.

which 2,008 were denied, 5,289 were approved and 83 were pending. Almost three-fourths of the relief applications approved in Norfolk were black. Unless they could receive work relief, the assistance given to Norfolk's needy was minimal. The average general relief grants in Virginia's cities was $72.48 a year.[19]

For blacks in Norfolk, the most significant New Deal agencies were the Federal Employment Relief Administration (F.E.R.A.), the National Recovery Administration (N.R.A.), the Works Progress Administration (W.P.A.), the Public Works Administration (P.W.A.), the Civil Works Administration (C.W.A.), the Civilian Conservation Corps (C.C.C.), and the National Youth Administration (N.Y.A.).

The First New Deal agency to come to Norfolk was the F.E.R.A. The F.E.R.A. worked directly to alleviate the plight of the destitute. It tried by locally administered dole and work projects to pump more money into circulation. Until the end of 1935, when it was abolished, it administered most of the direct relief and work relief programs distributing about 4,880,000.[20] During the summer of 1933 appropriations under the F.E.R.A. were made available to Virginia.[21]

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[19]Ibid., p. 36; Annual Report of the State Department of Public Welfare, June 30, 1946, p. 18; and Theodore E. Whiting, Final Statistical Report of the F.E.R.A. (Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1936), p. 1.

[20]Twenty-Fifty and Twenty-Sixth Annual Reports of the State Department of Public Welfare, June 30, 1935 (Richmond Division of Purchase and Printing, 1935), p. 8.

[21]Biennial Report for the State Department of Public Welfare, June 30, 1938 and June 30, 1939, p. 19.

In the South the progress of the F.E.R.A. was dogged by racial discrimination since the design of projects and allocation of funds remained in local hands. In Jacksonville, Florida, black families on relief outnumbered white families three to one, but the money was divided according to proportions of the total city population. Therefore, 15,000 black families received 45 per cent of the aid while 5,000 white families got 55 per cent. In the state of Georgia, the hourly wage for blacks was fixed under the F.E.R.A. at below thirty cents an hour.[22]

In Virginia the need of a black for relief was more rigorously questioned than the need of a white person. Blacks received a lower weekly stipend than whites and they were dropped from the rolls upon employment for even a few days at a pittance of wages, and for work relief purposes they were usually classified as unskilled regardless of their training.[23] Such discriminations were particularly true of local F.E.R.A. officials in Norfolk.

In 1934, the city of Norfolk received $389,309.00 from the F.E.R.A.; and in 1935, the city received $1,128,539.00 from the agency.[24] Little of this money was spent in the black community. The only tangible evidence of the F.E.R.A.'s contribution to the black community was the

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[22]A. J. Moncrief, Jr., "Negro Problems Becoming Acute," Christian Century, 28 March 1934, p. 432.

[23]Braeman, The New Deal, p. 127.

[24]Works Projects Administration, Final Statistical Report of the F.E.R.A., p. 379.

establishment of two nursery schools for black children. One nursery school was provided at the Armstrong School on Church Street,the other was conducted at the J. J. Smallwood School. At the Smallwood Day Nursery thirty-two children between the ages of two and five were enrolled. The educational program was outlined according to the best authority on child psychology. Salame Waites and Estelle Mitchell were employed as teachers for the nursery school. 25

The black community became outraged with local F.E.R.A. officials in 1935, when 700 black women were dropped from the local relief rolls so that they could harvest the strawberries and other crops grown by Norfolk and Princess Anne county farmers. The farmers complained that because of the one-third cut in wages by the F.E.R.A., they could no longer get black women to harvest their crops since they preferred to remain on relief. The farmers promised that these women would make an average of two dollars a day. The price for picking strawberries was two cents a quart, and in some instances, only one cent a quart. This meant that these women would have to pick between 100 to 200 quarts a day to be sure of a two dollar salary. This was not an easy task. Local officials consented to the farmers' request and agreed to discontinue general and work relief to black women until the season was over. No white women were dropped from the relief rolls to harvest farm crops.[26]

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[25] Norfolk Journal and Guide, 13 October 1934.

[26] Norfolk Journal and Guide, 25 May 1935.

The Journal and Guide and Norfolk's black ministers strongly objected to the dropping of black women from the relief rolls. P. B. Young, Sr., proposed that the women be placed back on relief and then suspended only as they were able to find employment. His proposal was turned down by H. G. Parker, local F.E.R.A. administrator and the black women remained off the relief rolls.[27]

The Public Works Administration (P.W.A.) was created under the National Industrial Recovery Act for the dual purpose of giving employment and making possible the resumption of necessary state and local public construction which had been severely cut during the depression years. Between June 1933 and June 1940 the P.W.A. made grants totalling $2,318,000,000 to state and local governments for more than 16,600 public works projects. Funds were made directly to the local government.[28]

Despite the provisions of the P.W.A. contracts, which called for a proportionate number of black workers in P.W.A. construction, few blacks were employed. This was particularly true in Norfolk where few blacks were employed in the construction industry. The local chapter of the N.A.A.C.P. protested the lack of black employment in public construction. As a result of their protest six blacks were added to the

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[27] Ibid., 18 May 1935.

[28] Federal Work Projects Administration, Federal Work Security and Relief Projects by Arthur E. Burns, Research Monograph XXIV (Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1940), p. 13.

public works board. However, it appears that few blacks were added to the employment rolls of the construction industry.[29]

In the South less than 10 per cent of the funds appropriated to the area by the P.W.A. went for construction in the black community. The only major P.W.A. related construction in Norfolk's black community was the building of the Norfolk Community Hospital. The hospital was built at a cost of $95,650. Of this, the P.W.A. paid 45 per cent and the city paid the remainder.[30]

The Civil Works Administration (C.W.A.) was also created under the authority of the National Industrial Recovery Act. The C.W.A. was expected to stimulate recovery through the injection of a purchasing power into the economic system in a short period of time and to alleviate the critical unemployment situation in the winter of 1933-1934. In Norfolk the C.W.A. authorized the building of athletic and recreational projects. The original C.W.A. budget in Norfolk was $1,242,654.23. Only a small amount of this sum was spent on construction in the black community. The Booker T. Washington High School's athletic field, baseball diamond and basketball court were built with C.W.A. Funds. After the C.W.A. went out of existence and the Works Progress Administration took over, the black community received an additional $11,000 for the construction of City Beach and $19,000

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[29] Norfolk Journal and Guide, 5 August 1933.

[30] Norfolk Journal and Guide, 14 October 1939.

for the purchase of the Barraud Park real estate. This was the total recreational appropriation to the black community in Norfolk. The rest of the original budget was spent on recreation in the white community. The construction of Foreman Field alone coast $300,000.00.[31]

Although blacks were the victims of racial discrimination by the F.E.R.A., the P.W.A. and C.W.A., these agencies did provide some relief for Norfolk's black community. The F.E.R.A. established nursery schools for black children, the P.W.A. helped build the New Norfolk Community Hospital and the C.W.A. built the athletic grounds around Booker T. Washington High School. However, the National Recovery Administration, (N.R.A.) brought no relief to Norfolk's black community. Instead it brought blacks more unemployment. The N.R.A. was established to stimulate industry. It established codes of fair competition that provided for a minimum wage of twelve to fifteen dollars a week, a forty hour week, and the abolition of child labor under the age of sixteen. Blacks suffered not so much from the enactment of the N.R.A. codes as from their immediate administration. Under the application of the N.R.A. codes, employers were supposed to pay basic minimum wages of specific types of

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[31]Works Projects Administration, Federal Work Security and Relief Programs, p. 13; Norfolk Journal and Guide, 5 February 1938; ibid., 13 January 1934; and W. H. T. Squires, Through the Years in Norfolk (Portsmouth: Princraft Press, 1937).

workers. Employers, however, systematically evaded the codes in their treatment of blacks. They either reclassified workers or fired blacks so that they could hire whites.

In order to reclassify black workers employers thrust them into low wage groups. There were numerous devices to achieve this end. Some codes provided a wage rate based on the rate paid in 1929. This "economic grandfather clause" enabled employers to pay white workers ten cents an hour more for doing the same work as blacks simply because blacks were certain to have received less than the standard wage in 1929. Other codes provided a percentage increase over the wage of June 15, 1933. In the hotel code, black bell boys in the South received a 20 per cent increase in a salary of $15 dollars a month while white clerks received a 20 per cent increase in salaries of $80 to $100 a month.[32]

Many white employers refused to pay minimum wages to blacks because they thought that black labor was less efficient than white labor. Added to this was the erroneous belief that blacks could get along on less wages because their needs required less. Blacks seldom complained about the codes for fear of losing their jobs. Indeed some blacks in Norfolk did lose their jobs, not because of complaints by blacks over low wages, but simply because white employers preferred white labor to black labor. One local restaurant

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[32]Work, The Negro Yearbook, 1937-1938, p. 23: Kelly Miller, "The Black Streaks in the Blue Eagle". Christian Century, 8 December 1933, p. 1413; Work, Negro Yearbook, February 1934.

dismissed its black employees and hired white workers as soon as wages were raised under the codes. The Virginian Pilot expressed a fear that thousands of black porters, janitors, elevator men, messengers, drivers and the like would be ousted by employers who had hired black workers because they could get them cheap but who preferred white labor. The newspaper called the Blue Eagle "a predatory bird to the Negro". The Virginian-Pilot published a resolution adopted by the Norfolk laundrymen, who were among the largest employers of black labor in the city. The resolution stated, "We will continue to employ the same proportion of colored workers with white workers and will not replace any colored workers with white workers because of the increased rate of pay." Not all white employers around the city agreed with the laundrymen's resolution. The result was an increase in the number of blacks on the relief rolls to 79.6 per cent of the total recipients by the end of 1934.[33]

In order to fight labor discrimination under the N.R.A. codes, blacks in Norfolk began to organize. In 1933 numerous black labor organizations emerged. Black hotel and restaurant workers organized. Winston Douglas, principal of Booker T. Washington High School urged black teachers to organize so that they could more effectively combat

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[33]Kelly Miller, "Black Streaks on the Blue Eagle", Christian Century, 8 December 1933; Virginian-Pilot, 15 August 1933; and Norfolk Journal and Guide, 2 September 1933.

discrimination in salaries and working conditions; newsstand and shoeshine parlor workers organized; black barbers and cleaners also tried to set up labor unions. None of these labor unions which developed in Norfolk amassed any economic power in the black community and they were not effective in combating N.R.A. discriminations against blacks.[34]

When the N.R.A., first came to Norfolk in 1933, blacks were enthusiastic about the agency. P. B. Young, Sr. expressed his hopes that the N.R.A. would bring a New Deal for the Negro. He actively encouraged blacks to participate in the N.R.A. consumer campaign and only purchase goods from those establishments that signed the Blue Eagle Pledge. He also encouraged blacks to join in the N.R.A. Prosperity Procession. Between 1,500 and 2,000 blacks representing 35 organizations marched behind the motorcade division of the white section in the N.R.A. Prosperity Procession of 1935.[35]

In 1934, realizing the added depression and frustration the N.R.A. brought to blacks in Norfolk, P. B. Young, Sr. wrote "In the same measure that we have borne the maximum of labor and sacrifice in return for the minimum of the rewards of labor and sacrifice in all the crises in American history we are playing that roll now in the great drama now

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[34] Norfolk Journal and Guide, 2 September 1933; Ibid., 28 April 1934; and Ibid., 23 September 1933.

[35] Ibid., 19 August 1933; Ibid., 23 September 1933; and Ibid., 9 September 1933.

depicted on the American Stage." Young, however, was not willing to give up on the N.R.A. He still insisted that it was the best way out of the nation's difficulties. He listed its objectives as security, happiness, self-respect, and a decent standard of living for the ordinary man. Blacks realized few of those objectives under the program. The N.R.A. was so unpopular in the black community that blacks began to refer to the agency as "Niggers Run to Africa". When the Supreme Court declared the N.R.A. unconstitutional in 1935, few blacks lamented its demise.[36]

While the N.R.A. was very popular in Norfolk's black community the Works Progress Administration was very popular there. The Works Progress Administration (renamed the Works Projects Administration) was established on May 6, 1935. The W.P.A. gave relief in food, clothing, commodity surpluses and employment. The agency utilized some forty existing agencies of the federal government to organize projects in their fields. One reason for the W.P.A.'s popularity among blacks was that unlike most other New Deal agencies, the W.P.A. did not have a quota on the number of black workers. In 1935, therefore, 30 per cent of all W.P.A. workers were black.[37] Another reason for the popularity of the W.P.A. in the black community was that in 1936 Harry

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[36] Norfolk Journal and Guide, 17 February 1934; Interview with Mrs. Dolly Jones, Shiloh Baptist Church, Norfolk, Virginia, 3 December 1978; and Franklin, From Slavery to Freedom, p. 537.

Hopkins, Administrator of the W.P.A., issued an order banning racial discrimination on W.P.A. projects.[38]

In Norfolk 36 per cent of the work relief jobs provided by the W.P.A. were given to black relief victims.[39] At first glance this figure seems generous enough but when one considers that blacks comprised three-fourths of the relief rolls the figure does not appear generous at all.

The W.P.A. contributions, aside from employment, to Norfolk's black community included the building of Barraud Park and City Beach, the construction of the Booker T. Washington's High School's cafeteria, library and gymnasium,[40] and the sponsoring of a clinic at the Norfolk Community Hospital. The clinic was especially arranged to care for indigent patients who were financially unable to pay a regular doctor's fee. Dr. C. R. S. Collins was made Director of the Clinic.[41]

As in the administration of the F.E.R.A., discrimination existed in the local administration of the W.P.A. Harry Hopkins' ban against racial discrimination had no effect on Norfolk's W.P.A. officials. The most flagrant example of

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[38] Norfolk Journal and Guide, 15 August 1936.

[39] Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Sixteenth Census of the United States 1940: The Labor Force, 3:749.

[40] Norfolk Journal and Guide, 3 December 1933.

[41] Ibid., 5 February 1938.

local W.P.A. discrimination occurred in 1938 when black women who had been employed for several months in the local W.P.A. sewing room at Norfolk Community Hospital were transferred to outdoor projects. The sewing room was then removed to a new location where white women were hired to fill the places of blacks. The outdoor jobs given to the black women required them to wield shovels and axes, push loaded wheel barrows, and perform other manual tasks that men usually performed. The black community was outraged. A citizens' committee under the leadership of Reverend W. L. Hamilton was formed. Strong protests were made to city officials. After a series of negotiations, the women were restored to their positions in the sewing room.[42]

The Civilian Conservation Corp (C.C.C.) and the National Youth Administration (N.Y.A.), the two final New Deal agencies that were important in Norfolk's black community, were programs for young people. The purpose of the C.C.C. was to provide employment as well as vocational training for young men whose families were on relief. In 1937, eligibility requirements were extended to include boys of families who were not on relief but preference was given to boys from relief families.[43] The age of Virginia C.C.C. enrollies ranged from seventeen to twenty-four years.[44]

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[42] Ibid., 22 January 1938.

[43] Twenty-Seventh and Twenty-Eighth Annual Reports of the State Department of Public Welfare of Virginia, June 30, 1937, p. 44.

[44] Biennial Report for the State Department of Public Welfare, June 30, 1939, p. 66.

In Virginia blacks comprised 32 per cent of C.C.C. enrollment. The quota for blacks and whites was determined as follows: 50 per cent of the total quota was allocated on the basis of black and white population of the county or city, and the remaining 50 per cent of the total quota was allocated on the basis of the number of white and black appliciants reported as available for enrollment by the locality. At least with this quota blacks received more relief than they would have if the quota system had been based entirely on the black percentage of the population. On the other hand with this quota blacks could receive much less assistance depending on the racial attitude of local officials. Black C.C.C. enrollment in Virginia was higher than the nation's black C.C.C. enrollment. Blacks made up 10 per cent of the United States population; however, the nation's C.C.C. enrollment was only 6.1 per cent black.[45]

In the Civilian Conservation Corp young men worked on conservation projects. They were responsible for combating soil erosion, fighting forest fires, building truck rails and other such tasks. Civilian Conservation Corp enrollies received thirty dollars a month and free food and lodging. The young men were allowed to keep five dollars; the remaining twenty-five dollars was sent to their families.[46]

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[45] Ibid., p. 62; Department of Commerce, Bureau of Census Sixteenth Census of the U.S. 1940: The Labor Force; and Bergman, The Chronological History of the Negro in America, p. 469.

[46] Biennial Report for the State Department of Public Welfare, pp. 61-67.

There were no figures available on the number of blacks from Norfolk who were enrolled in the state's segregated C.C.C. camps. However, the Journal and Guide reported that in 1933 forty-five black young men from Norfolk reported to the C.C.C. at Fort Monroe.[47]

The most important contribution of the National Youth Administration to Norfolk's black community is seen in the establishment of the Norfolk Unit of Virginia Union University (later Norfolk State College) in the city in 1935. The committee responsible for the establishment of the college consisted of Committee Chairman Winston Douglas; advisory Committee Chairman P. B. Young, Sr.; and scholarship chairman Reverend B. B. Evans. The members of this committee drew up a financial plan for the college which was endorsed by William J. Clark, President of Virginia Union University. The plan called for a budget of $10,000 per year. This was to be acquired through a minimum enrollment of 100 students, each of whom was to pay $100 per year. The $100 could be paid on the installment plan. The Norfolk Unit initially taught the basic subjects such as history, math, English, and science.[48]

Samuel F. Scott, a native of Portsmouth was employed as Dean of the college. Scott had been on the faculty at Prairie View State College in Texas and he had been on the staff of the Emergency Relief Administration in New York.

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[47] Norfolk Journal and Guide, 8 June 1935.

[48] Norfolk Journal and Guide, 8 June 1935.

Under Dr. Scott the Norfolk Unit of Virginia Union University thrived. It ended its first year with a $1,000 profit.[49]

In 1935 eight-five students were enrolled at the Norfolk Unit of Virginia Union University. The faculty consisted of five persons, three of whom were employed part-time. By 1940 student enrollment had increased to 256 students. The faculty had increased to twenty-five, only five of whom were employed part-time.[50] In 1939, Professor Scott left the Norfolk Unit to become Professor of History and Sociology at Virginia Union University. Professor Lyman B. Brooks replaced Professor Scott as Director of the Unit.[51]

Private individuals enthusiastic and hopeful over the establishment of the junior college, gave gifts to the school. Mrs. Thelma Eaton gave the school a set of encyclopedias and Mrs. Jessie Yeargins furnished the restrooms. The Norfolk Portsmouth and Vicinity Baptist Ministers under the leadership of W. L. Hamilton pledged their support to the Norfolk Unit:

> Whereas we the members of the Norfolk Portsmouth and Vicinity Baptist Ministers Conference feel that the Norfolk Unit of Virginia Union University is an advance in true educational opportunities for the youth of our city; whereas many high schools of our sections are now receiving college

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[49] Ibid.

[50] Norfolk State College Library, Correspondence File and College History.

[51] Norfolk Journal and Guide, 8 June 1935.

> training who could not for lack of necessary finance get such training were it not for the Norfolk Unit; whereas the members of the faculty of the Norfolk Unit are of such calibre that they make cultural contribution to our community thereby arousing worthy ambition in our young people and whereas students may begin their career in higher education under Christian influences. . .Therefore be it resolved that we the Baptist Ministers of Norfolk, Portsmouth, and Vicinity express to Dean Scott and the members of his faculty our great appreciation and pledge them our hearty support.[52]

Quarters for the school were located on the second floor of the Hunton Y.M.C.A. Housing remained a serious problem. The income for the junior college was derived from five sources, scholarships from individuals and organizations, gifts, extracurricular activities of the students, government aid through the N.Y.A., and tuition and fees.[53]

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[52] Norfolk Journal and Guide, 2 January 1937.

[53] Ibid.

Conclusion

The nation in 1939 was still suffering from the Depression and blacks throughout the country were suffering more acutely than whites. However, blacks in Norfolk seem to have fared better economically than blacks in many other sections of the country. In 1939 the unemployment rate for blacks in Norfolk was 10 per cent while unemployment rates for whites in Norfolk was 6.9 per cent. The existence of the Naval Base, the Longshoreman Association and the Norfolk and Western Railway helped keep Norfolk's rate of unemployment well below the national average. Even though 90 per cent of Norfolk's black working population was employed they were still being discriminated against since most of them received less wages than whites for the same work performance.

Socially the situation did not improve for blacks during the 1930's. In 1940 segregation was as rigid as it had been in 1930. Blacks were still forced to live in certain areas of the city. Many blacks continued to live in the overpopulated slum areas of the city where poor housing, sanitation, and crime remained problems and the tuberculosis rate was still higher for blacks than it was for whites. Only in the field of education had there been any significant gains for Norfolk's black community. The Gains vs. Canada

decision gave additional state aid to black graduate students and it forced the state to begin to seriously consider the establishment of graduate programs in the state for blacks. Aline Black's legal victory over the school board gave black teachers equal pay with white teachers. Furthermore the Norfolk Unit of Virginia Union University provided blacks with their first two year college.

In general private charities could do little to solve the economic problems created by the Great Depression. These agencies were simply not equipped to deal with mass unemployment. Private charities were established to provide aid for the unemployable, those persons physically or mentally incapable of working. Therefore they did not have the means to assist adequately the large numbers of unemployed people who wanted work but could not find jobs. Norfolk's private agencies were particularly ineffective for blacks since they had no direct access to the city's white relief agencies. Instead blacks had to look for aid through the "colored" divisions of the major relief agencies. These "colored" divisions received little funding from the city and from the Community Fund. The budgets of the "colored" charity agencies were so small that they could barely pay the salaries of their employees. Therefore they could offer little relief assistance to the black community.

Even though the situation had not improved for most of Norfolk's black population under the New Deal, Franklin D. Roosevelt was the most popular President since Abraham

Lincoln. The reason for this is not difficult to surmise. The New Deal provided the black community with tangible evidence of the federal government's concern for them. The F.E.R.A. provided blacks with their first real publicly-supported Day Nursery; the P.W.A. helped to construct the Norfolk Community Hospital; the C.W.A. built the athletic grounds around Booker T. Washington High School; the W.P.A. built City Beach, Barraud Park, and the library, cafeteria and gymnasium of the Booker T. Washington High School; the N.Y.A. made possible the establishment of the Norfolk Unit of Virginia Union University. Furthermore, a number of blacks received cash and work relief. It did not matter to Norfolk's blacks, who were used to receiving little or nothing from federal officials, that this New Deal assistance was significantly less in proportion of their needs than the aid that the city's whites received. What did matter to these blacks, was that federal officials were at last showing concern for the plight of black people. In addition to the New Deal's building program in the black community, the humanitarian gestures of Eleanor Roosevelt, Harry Hopkin's stand against racial discrimination and the creation of the black cabinet helped to endear Roosevelt to blacks.

Outside of what the Roosevelt administration had tried to do directly or indirectly, the decade of the 1930's was marked with identifiable milestones for blacks. In athletics Jessie Owens was an Olympic champion, Joe Louis was

heavyweight champion of the world, black football players starred on many of the major college teams. In interracial activities, conferences on a variety of subjects began to meet with overbearing regularity and thcugh self-consciously interracial the pattern developed almost irrevocably. These were achievements in which Norfolk's black community took immense pride. The social tide for blacks in American seemed to be turning and blacks credited the turning to the New Deal.

It appears that the criticisms of the Depression period given by the historians of black history mentioned in the preface holds true for blacks in Norfolk. W. E. B. Dubois criticized Roosevelt for failing to increase black wages in the South. A wage increase was particularly important to blacks in Norfolk since their pay was shamefully low in comparison to white wages. However, Roosevelt did nothing to increase wages in Norfolk. In fact under the N.R.A. black wages were cut and in some instances black workers were displaced by whites. Leslie Fischel and Eric Foner stated that the New Deal's contributions to blacks were slim. This again was true for blacks in Norfolk since blacks received a very small proportion of relief funds and work relief in comparison to the white community. Robert Allen accused the New Deal of being paternalistic. This proved true because there were no blacks in positions of power in the New Deal either nationally or locally. Finally all of the historians agreed that Roosevelt was a very

popular President among blacks. Indeed, Roosevelt was the most popular President among black Norfolkians since Abraham Lincoln. Even though Roosevelt's New Deal was not successful in combatting the Depression, blacks in Norfolk and throughout the nation continued to vote overwhelmingly for Franklin D. Roosevelt.

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Brothers, Robert. Member Norfolk Unit Virginia Union University Class of 1937, Norfolk, Virginia. Interview, 10 December 1978.

Cromwell, Theresa F. Member Open Air Classroom, Paul Laurence Dunbar Elementary School, Norfolk, Virginia. Interview, 3 December 1978.

Lambert, Romeo U. Retired Assistant Principal J. Cox Jr. High School, Norfolk, Virginia. Interview, 2 December 1978.

Jones, Dorothy. Member Norfolk Unit Virginia Union University Class of 1938, Norfolk, Virginia. Interview, 2 December 1978.

Jones, Dolly. Norfolk, Virginia. Interview, 2 December 1978.

Jones, James R. Retired Secretary Norfolk Chapter N.A.A.C.P. Norfolk, Virginia. Interview, 10 December 1978.