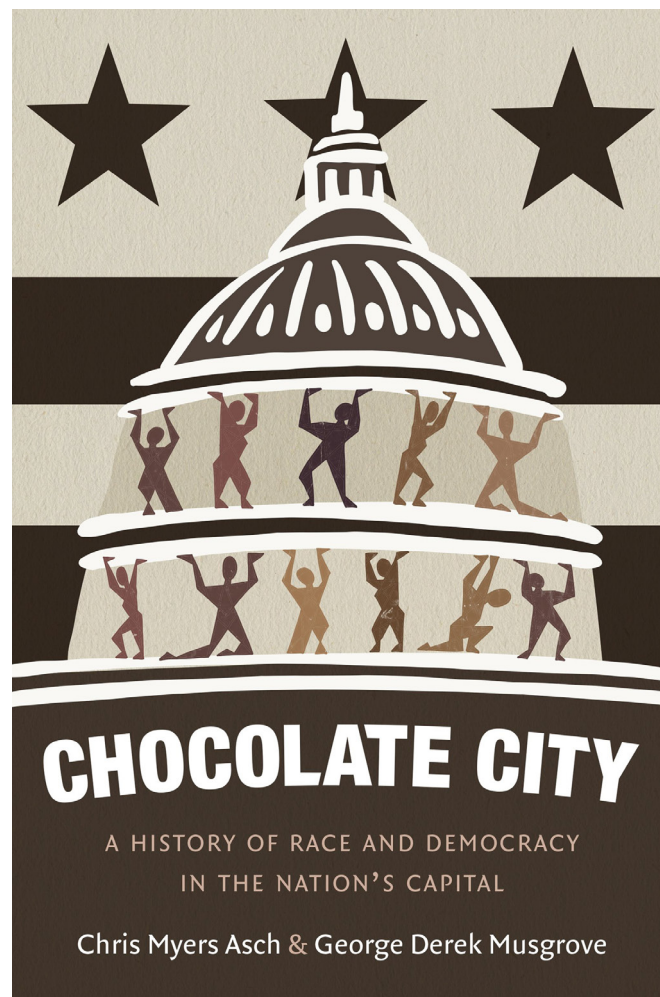


Chocolate City: A History of Race and Democracy in the Nation's Capital

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Reading and Discussion Guide

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CHAPTERS 9-10

Additional Resources: [Chocolate City Interactive Map](#)

Chapter 9: Washington is a Giant Awakened: Community Organizing in a Booming City, 1932-1945

Chapter Overview: With segregation firmly rooted in the District's housing market, the years leading up to and during World War II created a housing shortage crisis for black residents and war-time workers like no other. Along with segregation, restrictive covenants, the federal government's displacement of black communities to build federal buildings, and private developers' complete disinterest in building housing for blacks exacerbated the issue greatly. World War II brought forth the incredible contradiction of black soldiers fighting for "freedom and equality for all" abroad while our nation's capital was segregated in every sector, offering few economic opportunities, affordable housing, or political power to its black residents.

Comprehend

- What tactics did the New Negro Alliance use in their successful push for more non-menial jobs for black workers?
- What was the Fair Employment Practices Committee and how did it prove to be ineffective?
- What was the ultimate problem with white housing reformers and how did it undercut their effectiveness to create affordable housing for black residents?

Respond

- What parallels with the present day did you find in the section on police brutality in DC? Was the situation worse or better in the 1930s than it is today? Do you think efforts to fight police brutality were more or less successful then than they are now?
- Do you think there was more value in interracial union organizing or black and white unions organizing separately for workers rights and protections? Why?

Reflect

- Why do you think high school textbooks and our general collective conscience only celebrate Rosa Parks, the Montgomery bus boycotts, and the lunch counter sit-ins of the 1960s when these tactics were already being used in 1943-1944? Why are names like Ruth Powell and Pauli Murray not as famous?

Key Terms, Names, and Definitions

Chapter 9: Washington is a Giant Awakened: Community Organizing in a Booming City, 1932-1945

Langston Terrace: The first federally funded public housing project in DC (and the second in the nation), this was a 274-unit complex that opened in 1938 and intended for black residents. It included open spaces, playgrounds, and celebratory sculptures of African Americans. Competition to get into Langston Terrace was fierce, and officials screened applicants for who they considered “model citizens” to live there.

“Bonus Army”: A group of WWI veterans, both black and white, who came to Washington to demand an early distribution of a promised federal payment. They grew to nearly 20,000 people and established a tent colony on the Anacostia Flats and throughout the city. The “bonus” never materialized from Congress and protesters who didn’t leave on their own were forcibly removed by soldiers over a month and a half later.

John Ihlder: Reporter turned housing activist, he founded the Washington Housing Association, an organization devoted to developing low-income housing. He became the face of housing reform in DC for two decades, including being appointed the head of the federal Alley Dwelling Authority. Although he advocated for desperately needed housing for black residents, he did so only as long as it was segregated.

Community Chest: A charitable giving organization that raised \$2 million annually to distribute to local organizations serving both blacks and whites experiencing poverty.

Elwood Street: The white head of the Community Chest who sought to help the black population out but only within the lens of segregation and racism.

Alley Dwelling Act of 1934: Aimed at eliminating alley housing and fund public homes for former alley dwellers, the bill also created the Alley Dwelling Authority (ADA), a federal agency that had the local power to condemn structures, remove tenants, and build new units. Although the ADA was successful in eliminating alley communities, they were much less successful in building alternative housing for those who were displaced as a result.

Ross Collins: Mississippi Congressman and chairman of the House Subcommittee on District Appropriations, he happily spent money on the military but choked off funding for reform efforts in the District that would better the lives of black residents.

Edward Harris: Head of the Lincoln Civic Association, he helped make sure the new housing development at St. Mary’s Court would be preserved for black residents as intended despite major protests from whites and lobbied for the ADA and Congress to fulfill its promises.

John Aubrey Davis: Black rights advocate who, in 1933, started picketing businesses that discriminated against blacks, sparking the creation of the New Negro Alliance.

New Negro Alliance: A group that sought to leverage black purchasing power into expanded economic opportunities for black workers. The alliance used private negotiations, public protests, and economic boycotts to pressure owners to hire black employees in nonmenial positions targeting businesses in black neighborhoods that had black clients. The alliance was successful in securing thousands of jobs for black workers between its creation in 1934 and 1938.

New Negro Alliance v. Sanitary Grocery: A Supreme Court case that held up the legality of picketing outside of businesses as a form of protected free speech and was instrumental in the Alliance's successful picketing efforts as well as a watershed victory for protests of all types to come making boycotts – or consumer power – a tool to leverage against corporations.

Sanitary Grocery: A Delaware chain with dozens of stores in DC that refused to hire black clerks. It sued the New Negro Alliance after they picketed its 11th and U St. store, lost the case, and as a result of the bad publicity, changed its name to Safeway.

Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO): Founded in 1935 as a challenge to the racially segregated American Federation of Labor (AFL), this union embraced interracial unionism and created unprecedented opportunities for black workers to bargain collectively and exercise leadership roles. It attracted many of DC's radical activists.

United Federal Workers of America (UFWA): Federal workers union that was affiliated with the CIO, it made interracial organizing an explicit goal and challenged segregation in the federal government. Its communist leanings eventually led to its downfall in the 1940s but for a brief period, the union made modest gains in collective bargaining rights for federal workers.

Eleanor Nelson: White head of the UFWA who was radicalized by the treatment of the Bonus Army and a member of the Communist Party. Under her leadership, the union fought for collective bargaining rights for all workers and wouldn't hold meetings or events in segregated places.

United Cafeteria Workers' Local Industrial Union Number 471: DC's biggest black union run by Oliver Palmer.

Arcade Laundry: Laundry business owned by Harry Viner where part-time organizer Inez Robertson worked and where the laundry workers union successfully organized strikes that resulted in an increase in wages and decrease in working hours.

National Negro Congress (NNC): A national organization established at Howard University in 1935, the NNC was dedicated to building a coalition of radical labor, religious, and civic organizations to fight racial discrimination, particularly in the workplace. One of its top priorities in DC was police brutality. Although it eventually folded during the Cold War for similar reasons as the UFWA, it was one of the most effective civil rights organizations in DC for a decade.

Mordecai Johnson: Howard University's first black president, who served in this position from 1926-1960.

Leroy Keys: A black WWI veteran suffering from mental illness who was killed by police in DC in 1938. His death spurred a 2,000 person protest with 10,000 spectators against police brutality. After Keys' death, the NNC was able to successfully organize around the issue and get the police chief replaced with Edward Kelly, who tripled the number of black officers on the force.

Theodore Noyes: A native Washingtonian and editor of the Evening Star, Noyes was a major advocate of Congressional representation for DC but against home rule, as he and other white elites believed it would lead to black control of the city. In 1917, he helped form the Citizens' Joint Committee on National Representation for the District of Columbia, which drive DC's suffrage movement for the next 20 years.

Marian Anderson: An accomplished black opera singer who was barred from performing in either Constitution Hall or Central High School, two large venues in DC that held 4,000 and 2,000 people respectively. The segregation and racism that barred Anderson from performing in these venues in DC sparked outrage and action to bring national attention to the state of racial affairs in DC.

Marian Anderson Citizens Committee (MACC): Formed by DC black leaders and their vocal white allies, the MACC petitioned the school board and Congress to allow Ms. Anderson to perform in either Constitution Hall or Central High School. After a lot of activism, she ended up performing to an interracial crowd of 75,000 on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial instead – transforming the site into a space for black protest.

March on Washington Movement: Launched by A. Philip Randolph and others, this march was to take place along Constitution Avenue to the Lincoln Memorial in July 1941 as a response to continuous and consistent barring of black workers from city and federal jobs, despite direct meetings with President Roosevelt. Fearing racial violence from the march, FDR issued Executive Order 8802 barring discrimination in defense industries based on “race, creed, color, or national origin”. Randolph then called off the march.

Fair Employment Practices Committee (FEPC): Created by FDR's Executive Order 8802, the FEPC adjudicated claims of workplace discrimination. When the issue of integrating DC's streetcar drivers and operators came up, the FEPC was not able to force the Capital Transit Company to do so, proving that it was in fact powerless.

Jewell Crawford Mazique: A middle-class, well-educated black Washingtonian, Mazique was a political activist who agreed to be featured in an extensive “day in the life” photo collection by the Office of War Information (OWI) which highlighted the wartime contributions of black Americans as war propaganda. Mazique agreed to be photographed hoping it would help improve black employment prospects in the federal government. She was then active in the fight to integrate black workers to become streetcar drivers.

Ella Watson: The subject of another OWI photo project, this time shot by black photographer Gordon Parks, Watson was a janitor for the federal government whose father was murdered by a Southern lynch mob and who struggled to support her family on her tiny salary. She symbolized the opposite reality of black Washingtonians from Jewell Mazique.

Capital Transit Company: A private corporation that owned a public monopoly to operate DC's only bus and streetcar lines, it did not employ a single black person to drive or operate the streetcars. Its' black employees only worked in maintenance and as custodians. When pressured by a major campaign as well as repeated orders from the FEPC to include blacks in its driver and operator positions, the company refused.

Pauli Murray: One of two women in her Howard University Law School class, Murray was a seasoned civil rights protester who gained national attention during her unsuccessful attempt to integrate the University of North Carolina in 1938. She also spent time in jail for refusing to sit at the back of a segregated bus in Virginia.

Ruth Powell: An undergraduate student at Howard, she staged many sit-ins at whites-only counters (although the term had not been coined yet) and organized other Howard classmates to sit at the United Cigar Store demanding to be served. The police eventually arrived and ordered the managers to serve Powell and her friends. When the women were charged over twice the regular price and refused to pay, however, they were taken to jail.

Theodore Bilbo: A Mississippi senator who took charge of the Senate District Committee in 1944 and was so racist he called for deporting black soldiers to Liberia. He also used his position to derail any civil rights initiatives that came through.

Citizens' Committee on Race Relations: Created by an interracial group of middle-class civic leaders, the Committee sought to conduct a systematic "inventory" of racial problems and propose peaceful policy solutions. Like other similar groups, it didn't challenge white supremacy or economic inequality; it instead sought to harmonize race relations and relieve tensions.

Elder Lightfoot Michaux: A black preacher with a large following who built Mayfair Mansions, a 596-unit complex in NE which was the largest single development for black families built during WWII.

Dorothy Height: The (black) leader of the Phyllis Wheatley YWCA, Height came to DC in 1939 and for seven decades, served as a civil rights leader in Washington. During the WWII housing crisis, she helped pressure the federal Defense Homes Corporation to build more housing for black workers.

Chapter 10: Segregation Did Not Die Gradually of Itself: Jim Crow's Collapse, 1945-1956

Chapter Overview: Detailing the decade following World War II, this chapter explores the growing use of direct action and organizing to combat Jim Crow laws in the District's public schools, businesses, and housing practices, setting the stage for rapid change across the city.

Comprehend

- Chapter 10 covers the decade after WWII when activists, lawyers, and everyday people worked to desegregate the nation's capital. The chapter focuses on three sectors: housing, business, and schools. Why were these three sectors important in the movement to end segregation?
- We often hear that ignorance breeds hate but in the case of public schools, there were numerous independent and government-funded reports outlining the alarming state of black schools. What arguments were used to continue segregating schools?
- What were some of the direct action tactics used to end Jim Crow that we read about in this chapter?

Respond:

- During this time period in DC, advocates and lawyers often used the argument that segregation was a threat to our national security and violated international human rights. Do you agree with these lines of argument? Is our country's present-day inequality and injustice a threat to our national security?
- A brief background is always included on each leader mentioned in this book to better understand them and their motivations. Why do personal stories matter for leadership, and/or for a movement? Which leaders with powerful personal stories do we follow now? Does knowing their personal story change how effective they are in either direction?
- We read about school board after school board who acknowledged the "deficiencies but refused to transfer students" out of the crumbling, overcrowded black schools into under-used newer schools with white students. "Research shows that our racial biases are often more about who we choose to help than who we don't. And we tend to help people who are similar to us." How does this truth still show up today in our personal interactions and on larger policy issues?

Reflect

- The chapter ends with the sobering reality that desegregating schools, ending restrictive covenants, and ending discrimination in businesses wasn't the end of the movement for integration. There were many more pieces to the puzzle, let alone new ways segregation would continue. How do we measure success in this history? What do your faith ideals teach you about change and success?

Key Terms, Names, and Definitions

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Bolling v. Sharpe: A Supreme Court case in which Spottswood Bolling, a DC resident, was denied entry to the all-white John Phillip Susa Middle School along with 10 other black students. The Court ruled in Bolling's favor, thus ordering DC schools to desegregate on May 17, 1954. This was one of four cases that was bundled to challenge school segregation in the US.

Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka: A Supreme Court case which originated when the Board of Education in Topeka, Kansas refused to admit Oliver Brown to the school closest to her home. In this most famous of the four cases that challenged school segregation, the Supreme Court also ruled in Brown's favor, ending legal segregation of schools in the US.

Marguerite Carr v. Hobart M. Corning: A class action lawsuit against Hobart M. Corning, Superintendent of DC Schools, demanding that black students be transferred from overcrowded black schools to underutilized white schools rather than run down white schools. The case was dismissed in 1950.

Federation of Citizens Associations (FCA): An organization established in 1910 by white civic groups to "justify and enforce residential segregation." Composed of neighborhood associations, the Federation worked to protect and enforce redlining and restrictive housing covenants which prevented the sale of property to black residents.

Hurd v. Hodge: A court case decided in May 1948 that struck down restrictive housing covenants in favor of James and Mary Hurd. The Hurds purchased and moved into their new home believing that the presence of other black neighbors meant the neighborhood was open to black residents. The home was one of 20 blocks covered by restrictive covenants that prevented black occupancy and ownership. The white community attempted to force their move and sale of the home.

Annie Stein: The daughter of poor Ukrainian Jewish immigrants in Brooklyn who was part of the communist party and became a strong advocate for desegregation in DC. With "a lifetime of radical activism, a career in statistical research, and a habit of righteous anger. For nearly 50 years-- working through labor unions, civil rights committees, and community groups-- Stein used these energies to combat the routines and institutions of racism." (Learn more: Annie Stein papers, 1954-1993 bulk 1954-1981)

The Lost Laws: Reconstruction-era laws in DC that made discrimination based on race illegal. The laws were largely forgotten about after DC wrote new legal codes in 1901, but the laws had never been struck down, so were still technically legal. Activists used these laws to challenge segregation.

Gardner Bishop: DC resident who became a leading figure in school desegregation when his daughter, Judine, was forced to attend school only half of the time due to overcrowding. Black students often received less than four hours of education per day in schools designed to hold half as many students.

Brown Parent Group for Equality of Educational Opportunity: An organization and civil disobedience campaign launched by black citizens who were frustrated by the long legal battles and lack of progress in school desegregation. They specifically targeted issues of school crowding and part-time education for black students.

Committee for Racial Democracy in the Nation's Capital: Established in 1946, this interracial committee sought to raise national awareness about Washington's racial practices in order to educate the public and advocate for desegregation.

The Strayer Report: An investigation launched by the House of Representatives District Committee to investigate the state of education in the city. The lead researcher was George D. Strayer, professor emeritus of education from the Teachers College of Columbia University. The 980-page report, conducted by 22 researchers, criticized the city schools, especially the black schools.

James Nabrit: A civil rights attorney who argued on behalf of Spottswood Bolling (*Bolling v. Sharpe*) for the desegregation of John Phillip Sousa Junior High School, Nabrit later served as president of Howard University and Deputy Ambassador to the United Nations.

Margaret Just Butcher: A DC native with a PhD in English from Boston University, Butcher joined the DC school board in June 1953. She became a staunch critic of segregation and racial inequities. Butcher was ultimately removed from the board by disgruntled white parents.

Washington Committee for Public Schools: This committee was created by local religious and community leaders to correct the record and continue promoting the desegregation process in DC. They worked to stop segregationists who wanted to spread disinformation about the DC desegregation process including lies about discipline, hygiene, and educational standards.

The Southern Manifesto: Written by Virginia Congressman Howard Smith and introduced on the House floor in 1956, the manifesto rallied congressional representatives to resist racial integration in any public setting, which was mandated by law. It was eventually signed by 82 representatives and 19 senators, all from states that formerly comprised the Confederacy.