

COURIER OF CRISIS, MESSENGER OF HOPE: TREZZVANT W. ANDERSON AND
THE BLACK FREEDOM STRUGGLE FOR ECONOMIC JUSTICE

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ABSTRACT

Willie James Griffin: Courier of Crisis, Messenger of Hope: Trezzvant W. Anderson and the
Black Freedom Struggle for Economic Justice
(Under the direction of Dr. Jerma Jackson and Dr. James L. Leloudis)

This dissertation examines the development of the black freedom struggle for economic justice in the American South between the early 1930s and 1960s through the lens of activist-journalist Trezzvant William Anderson. This study argues that his life, writings, and activism provide a more balanced view of the modern Civil Right Movement's development. Anderson's organizing and advocacy sought to elevate the demands for African American equal economic opportunities. Beginning in the late 1920s Anderson used his mobility as a railway mail clerk to undergird an initially clandestine journalism career. By the early 1930s, he was the most influential black press correspondent in the South. Anderson took a leading role in and documented the groundswell of activism concentrated on gaining equal labor rights for blacks in the nation's growing New Deal civil service industry. He continued to fight for labor equality as America entered the fray of World War II and was later drafted into the military, where he led efforts to document black soldiers experiences abroad.

Following the war, Trezzvant Anderson returned home to Charlotte, North Carolina where he briefly published two newspapers to assist in his efforts to mobilize black veterans and keep local African Americans informed about Operation Dixie, a movement to organize black and white labor in the South. In the late 1940s, he joined the staff of the *Pittsburgh*

Courier and became a leading critic of American domestic and foreign Cold War policy. As the classical phase of the Civil Rights Movement emerged, Anderson assumed the role of ‘Roving Courier’ and traveled across the South and documented its unfolding. His activism spanned four decades and his life serves as a critical bridge that connects the pre-1950s untelevised movement to the televised movement that emerged in the late 1950s. Anderson was a maven of the black press and demonstrated a keen understanding of its power and effectively used it as a communications’ network for political protest and organizing in the twentieth-century struggle for first-class black citizenship rights.

To Courtney

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|------------|--|
| AFL | American Federation of Labor |
| AEAOMNS | Ancient Egyptian Arabic Order of the Mystic and Noble Shrine |
| ANP | Associated Negro Press |
| CCL | Colored Civic League (North Carolina) |
| CIO | Congress of Industrial Organizations |
| CWA | Civil Works Administration |
| ETO | European Theatre of Operations |
| FEPC | Fair Employment Practices Commission |
| FBI | Federal Bureau of Investigation |
| FERA | Federal Relief Emergency Administration |
| HUAC | House of Un-American Activities Committee |
| IHCB & CLU | International Hod Carriers Building and Common Laborers |
| JCSU | Johnson C. Smith University |
| MIA | Montgomery Improvement Association |
| NAPE | National Alliance of Postal Employees |
| NAACP | National Association for the Advancement of Colored People |
| NIRA | National Industrial Recovery Act |
| NRA | National Recovery Administration |
| NYA | National Youth Administration |
| NCL | Negro Citizen's League (North Carolina) |
| NNA | New Negro Alliance |
| NCCNA | North Carolina Committee on Negro Affairs |

| | |
|-------|---|
| PWA | Public Works Administration |
| RMS | Railway Mail Service |
| TWUA | Textile Workers Union of America |
| UBC | United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNAVA | United Negro and Allied Veterans of America |
| VWA | Veterans Welfare Association |
| WPA | Works Progress Administration |

INTRODUCTION
**“An Informed Public Is An Intelligent Public”:
African Americans’ Bold Fight for First Class
Citizenship and Trezzvant W. Anderson**

The Negro’s bold fight for first class citizenship didn’t start with the highly publicized Montgomery bus boycott.”

—Trezzvant W. Anderson (1963)

In the last months of 1957, the *Pittsburgh Courier* published a series of seven articles entitled “How Has Dramatic Bus Boycott Affected Montgomery Negroes.”¹ The articles, written by Trezzvant W. Anderson (1906-1963), appeared exactly one year after the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the landmark *Browder vs. Gayle* (1956) decision, striking down segregated seating on the city’s public buses. For the series Anderson returned to Montgomery and spent several days mingling with local blacks on city buses and conversing with locals outside the employment office. Such interactions prompted Anderson to raise probing questions about the impact of the protest. “Was the Montgomery bus boycott a success?” he asked. After interviewing such prominent leaders of the boycott as Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King, Jr., longtime activist E. D. Nixon, and local black attorney Fred Gray, Anderson openly wondered whether the protest “hurt those who did the most to make it effective?” Sorting through the responses of local residents a year after the boycott ended, Anderson surmised that the initiative had failed to carry out its full mission. “Caught in the whirlpool of the national and

¹ Trezzvant W. Anderson, “How Has Dramatic Bus Boycott Affected Montgomery Negroes,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 9 November 1957, pg. B1.

international publicity,” he wrote, the boycott “became a show for the outsiders” that “overshadowed its primary purposes.”²

Anderson explained that when black leaders first decided to initiate the bus boycott, they formed the Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA) and had identified three primary goals: an ending to abuses white bus drivers directed towards black passengers, ensuring an opportunity for local blacks to sit in a “seat on a first-come, first-served basis,” and securing employment opportunities for “Negro drivers on predominantly Negro lines.”³ Anderson regarded the employment of black drivers as the most important of these goals. He believed that movement leaders should not have conceded to end the boycott just because the Supreme Court outlawed segregated seating, but should have continued to protest until African Americans were hired as bus drivers. Anderson conceded that while blacks in Montgomery could now sit and ride on the city buses anywhere they pleased, “some of the money now going into the pockets of the bus owners ought to be channeled into Negro pockets.”⁴

Anderson believed that full, meaningful citizenship for African Americans required substantial structural change so that some of the burdens African Americans carried were lifted. In his series on Montgomery Anderson carefully pointed out the active, deliberate protest mounted by organizers had actually cost some organizers their jobs and livelihood. Most notable among those individuals was Rosa Parks whose refusal

² Trezzvant W. Anderson, “How Has Dramatic Bus Boycott Affected Montgomery Negroes,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 16 November 1957, pg. B1.

³ Trezzvant W. Anderson, “How Has Dramatic Bus Boycott Affected Montgomery Negroes,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 9 November 1957, pg. B1.

⁴ Trezzvant W. Anderson, “How Has Dramatic Bus Boycott Affected Montgomery Negroes,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 21 November 1957, pg. B1.

to give up her seat had helped launch the boycott. For years Parks had worked as an expert seamstress at the Montgomery Fair Store in the heart of the city and she enjoyed the business of some of the most influential residents. But, after her role in igniting the bus boycott, she was fired. During his stay in the city, Anderson spent an afternoon with Parks as she somberly packed her belongings, headed to Detroit almost penniless.⁵ Such harsh reprisals, wrote Anderson, came “in the only way the white man could react: to kill Negroes economically.”⁶ Thus, it was for these reasons that he believed the boycott had ultimately failed because it was designed to place economic pressure on local business and political leaders, but actually ended up jeopardizing the economic security of black residents.

For most historians and in popular historical imagination, the 1955 Montgomery Bus Boycott marks a crucial milestone in the beginning of the Civil Rights Movement. Yet Anderson believed that the protest assumed more significance as a vehicle that the mainstream media used to highlight the plight of black people in America. As he explained, the boycott merely “set into motion the wheels which gave the news hungry, sensational seeking press, radio and television the first ‘natural’ it had ever had involving

⁵ Jeanne Theoharris, *The Rebellious Life of Mrs. Rosa Parks*, (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2014); Theoharris’ chapter four covers the “high price” that Parks paid for being a heroine, near destitution forced her to move to Detroit after not only her employers cut her off but the Montgomery Improvement Association declined to provide her employment that would incorporate public appearances to promote the local movement.

⁶ Trezzvant W. Anderson, “How Has Dramatic Bus Boycott Affected Montgomery Negroes,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 28 November 1957, pg. B1. Both John Henrik Clark, then also a *Courier* journalist, and the Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA) criticized Anderson’s articles as unfair. The MIA pointed to its efforts to raise money for Parks when she lost her job. See Clark Letter, 20 December 1957: *The Papers of Martin Luther King, Jr.: Symbol of the Movement*, pg. 344-345; Troy Jackson, *Becoming King: Martin Luther King Jr. and the Making of a National Leader*, (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky, 2008), pg.; and Jeanne Theoharris, in *The Rebellious Life of Mrs. Rosa Parks*, questions why the MIA did not create a position to accommodate her speaking appointments; It is important to note that Anderson never criticized King and actually asserted that he thought very highly of him.

Negroes since the turn of the century.”⁷ After the boycott’s first two weeks, according to him, the television cameras altered the protest’s basic purposes by focusing national and international attention on its most dramatic aspects—the inability of blacks to simply sit on the buses where they pleased and their willingness to walk, rather than be treated as second-class citizens. It was this development and the subsequent Supreme Court ruling forcing the integration of seating on the local buses that helped sear the boycott into the national civil rights narrative as a pivotal victory. The media not only overlooked the underlying demand for economic justice, it also created an icon, asserted Anderson, when it “projected into a position of world eminence...a young Georgia-born Negro minister, Martin Luther King, Jr., who was named to head the movement strictly by force of circumstances and not by any planned action.” Anderson reminded readers that E.D. Nixon had been a long-time organizer in the state of Alabama, he was “the true leader of Montgomery’s Negroes over a span of a quarter century” and was the one “who really put the boycott into action on a “we-mean-business” basis.” Thus the bus boycott was just the continued expression of dissatisfaction among local African Americans for treatment they received in a society that allowed them to be discriminated against.⁸

⁷ Trezzvant W. Anderson, “How Has Dramatic Bus Boycott Affected Montgomery Negroes,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 9 November 1957, pg. B1. Anderson was likely referencing the media led white supremacy campaigns at the turn of the century, which portrayed the South being in danger of succumbing to “negro rule.” Newspapers suggested that there needed to be some kind of united effort to return black men, who were portrayed by newspapers as incubuses and incompetent leaders, back in their pre-Civil War subservient status.

⁸ Ibid, Also see: Tim Tyson’s *Radio Free Dixie*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), pg. 117; Tyson highlights a letter from Nixon to George Weissman, in which Nixon writes about his longtime commitment to organizing in Montgomery and acknowledges his disappointment for being overlooked. While Anderson does not reflect Rosa Parks in the same light as Nixon, it should be noted that she and a number of other Montgomery women had also been organizing in the city and throughout the state for at least a decade through organizations like the Committee for Equal Justice for Ms. Recy Taylor (1944) and the Women’s Political Council (1946). See Danielle L. McGuire’s *At the Dark End of the Street: Black Women, Rape, and Resistance—a New History of the Civil Rights Movement from Rosa Parks to the Rise of Black Power*, (New York: Vintage Books, 2010); McGuire explores this reality about Parks.

Several years following the appearance of his articles on Montgomery, and weeks before his death, Anderson addressed the growing belief that the bus boycott had activated the struggle for African American civil rights. He asserted: “the Negro’s bold fight for first class citizenship didn’t start with the highly publicized Montgomery bus boycott.” To be certain, the developments in Montgomery and later Little Rock, which eventually led to the sit-ins, Freedom Rides, and the Birmingham campaign serve as proof that the black freedom movement did gain substantial momentum in the late 1950s and 1960s. But this momentum served to fixate historical memory and examinations of the movement squarely on integration progress and access to voting rights, while the longer struggle for economic parity that emerged in the 1930s was overshadowed. Trezzvant Anderson witnessed the groundswell of activism in the 1930s and he called it the “awakening” of the “bold fight for first class citizenship.”

The depression era brought about an expansion of the federal government. Black communities across the country, and particularly in South, united their efforts to fight against exclusion from federal jobs and New Deal programs. Blacks used many of the same tactics in the 1930s as Anderson witnessed in the 1950s: mass meetings, boycotts, and lobbying. The infrastructure, through fraternal lodges, NAACP chapters, churches, and the homes and businesses of activists, as one prominent scholar calls it, was strengthened in the 1930s.⁹ There were also many initiatives to organize labor. In his critique of Montgomery Anderson pointed to the events that unfolded in Washington, D.C. in 1933, when a visionary group of “young crusaders” formed the New Negro Alliance (NNA). Anderson was among its members and helped organize “boycott and

⁹ Vincent Harding, “Community as a Liberating Theme in Civil Rights History,” in *New Directions in Civil Rights Studies* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1991), 17.

picket lines” protesting discriminatory employment practices of “People’s Grocery chain.” He joined other young black activists like Thurgood S. Marshall, William “Bill” Hastie, Robert “Bob” Weaver, Belford Lawson, Louis Lautier, and Charles H. Houston, whom he referred to as “the father of civil rights.”¹⁰ The NNA was part of a mass movement that had its origins in boycotts that started in Chicago in late 1929 and spread to other cities like Los Angeles, Detroit, Cleveland, New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore and finally Washington, D.C. in 1933. By then, Anderson suggested “that the movement [was] well organized,” and he believed “it [was] going to spread in America like wildfire,” especially “with the young Negroes.”¹¹ In fact, he attempted to take it into the South when he began to encourage black folk in his hometown of Charlotte “to buy where they could work” and boycott businesses where they could not.¹²

For Anderson, this earlier phase of the struggle provided the core and sustaining vision of the twentieth century civil rights movement, as well as, expressed its hope and direction. A close examination of his life and work illustrates two key concepts. First, it underscores the idea of a protracted freedom struggle. Indeed, Anderson’s life ended precisely the year many associate with early events of the modern Civil Rights Movement, yet his activism far predates the 1963 March on Washington. Secondly, it forces us to reconsider the crucial dimension of economic justice in the black freedom

¹⁰ Trezzvant W. Anderson, “Report From Dixie: To the Victor,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 5 January 1963, pg. 8; Marshall became the first black Supreme Court Justice, Hastie, as a federal judge, became the first African American to serve governor of the United States Virgin Islands, Weaver served as the first US Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, Lawson was the first African American to win a case before the Supreme Court and one of the founders of the NNA, Louis Lautier was the first African American admitted in White House Press Conference, and Houston was the Dean of Howard Law School.

¹¹ Trezzvant Anderson, “Hoary Heads Served Notice to Keep Out of New Negro Alliance Affairs,” *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, 1933 December 2, pg. 6

¹² Anonymous article, “Support Business, Says N.C. League,” *Afro-American*, 1933 November 11, pg. 23

struggle for first class citizenship. The belief that racial integration was the cornerstone of the modern Civil Rights Movement has been cultivated over the course of several decades. However, when we consider economic justice as the cornerstone we can better analyze the legacy of structural inequity in areas such as employment, education, housing, and generational wealth.

Trezzvant Anderson serves as the ideal lens through which to explore this development because he was both a documentarian of the struggle and an active participant. He wedded journalism and activism to challenge economic inequality in federal and municipal policies, shape grassroots organizing, and leverage economic opportunities for African Americans through labor unions and labor rights organizations. He organized journalists at the height of the New Deal, lobbied for access to information on black soldiers during World War II, critiqued American diplomacy during the Cold War, and chronicled the unfolding of the classical phase of the Civil Rights Movement.

On April 6, 1963, the *Pittsburgh Courier* informed its readers they had read the last “Report From Dixie.” Two weeks earlier, on March 25, Anderson died in a motel room in Macon, Georgia. He was fifty-six years old. Upon learning of his death, black newspapers around the country acknowledged the significance of his legacy. The *Atlanta Daily World* described him as a “trail blazer in twentieth century reporting of Negro events,” asserting that he had “dedicated himself to the cause of equality and justice.” The *Afro-American* wrote that ‘Trezz,’ as he was popularly known among colleagues, “kept pace with the changing South,” and exhibited “clear and concise reporting” on the most important racial developments in the country. The *Philadelphia Tribune* simply noted that he was a “pioneer journalist and roving reporter.” The *Courier*, then the most

influential of all black newspapers, wrote that Anderson was a “legendary figure who roamed the highways and byways” and was “one of the nation’s truly great newspaper reporters.” Anderson “knew the Southland as did no other reporter. He ‘dug’ for the truth and he uncovered ‘scoop’ on top of ‘scoop.’ He was respected, feared, admired,” and was more than just a reporter, he was a “crusader.”¹³

This dissertation is a multilayered biography of Trezzvant William Anderson. It is primarily about, as one resident of his hometown remembered, a man who “used the *power of the pen*” and “would dare to do things that others wouldn’t do.”¹⁴ He was fearless and unapologetic. Anderson used the pen to agitate, organize, inflame, critique, and expose. But most importantly he used the pen to create change. This is also a study about African Americans defining their own *place* in larger American society; it traces their mid-twentieth century struggle for economic justice and first class citizenship rights. Anderson’s life forces us to reopen the contested debates on the origins, trajectory, and politics of the Civil Rights Movement. Historians and other social scientists began seriously examining the Civil Rights Movement in the 1970s. The earliest literature followed the movement’s media coverage and adopted what scholars now refer to as top-down analytical frameworks, many of them focused on Martin Luther King, Jr. Most research narrowly highlighted the importance of influential leaders, national organizations, landmark judicial rulings, and breakthrough legislation.¹⁵ The scholarship

¹³ “Newspaperman Anderson Dies In Macon Ga.,” *Atlanta Daily World*, 28 March 1963, pg. 1; “Going Home,” (Political Cartoon and Obituary) *Pittsburgh Courier*, 6 April 1963, pg. 3; “Trezzvant Anderson, Roving Newsman, Dies,” *Philadelphia Tribune*, 6 April 1963, pg.1; “Trezz Anderson dead; former *Afro* newsman,” *Afro-American*, 13 April 1963, pg. 15; “Trezzvant Anderson Buried,” *Carolina Times*, 13 April 1963, pg. 1

¹⁴ Daisy S. Stroud interview by Melinda Desmarais, 2001 June 20, J. Murrey Atkins Library, New South Voices Oral History Collection, University of North Carolina at Charlotte

ultimately helped cement popular perception that the movement was best understood through the actions of the federal government and iconic figures such as King. Yet, by the mid-1980s, scholars began to complicate this vision of the black freedom struggle by posing serious questions—many of them the same questions that Trezzvant Anderson had raised three decades earlier. Scholars sought to fill gaps in the traditional story, by documenting the collective experiences of local African American communities at the grassroots level.¹⁶

Beginning in the 1990s the field saw a proliferation of studies devoted to bottom-up analysis that illuminated local community experiences, explored women's roles and debated ideas about the roots of Black Power and armed self-defense. Other scholars explored connections between local and national movements.¹⁷ In the twenty-first

¹⁵ August Meier and Elliot Rudwick's, *CORE: A Study in the Civil Rights Movement, 1942-1968*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), highlights early direct action techniques; Richard Kluger's, *Simple Justice: The History of Brown v. Board of Education and Black America's Struggle for Equality*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1975), offers earliest and one of most cited histories of Supreme Court case; David Garrow's, *Protest at Selma: Martin Luther King, Jr. and Voting Rights Act of 1965*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1978), offered the first exploration of what was widely considered most pivotal civil rights victory. In the 1980s, scholarship continued this pattern and included works like: Clayborn Carson's, *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), which is still the definitive study on the role of youth in the movement; Genna Rae McNeil's, *Groundwork: Charles Hamilton Houston and the Struggle for Civil Rights*, (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983); explored the extensive legal foundation for landmark civil right cases of 1950s and 1960s; Adam Fairclough's, *To Redeem the Soul of America: The Southern Christian Leadership Conference and Martin Luther King, Jr.*, (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1987), provided the definitive history of the King led SCLC; Taylor Branch's, *Parting the Waters: America in the King Years, 1954-1963*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1988), was the first part of his landmark trilogy biography of King, many more biographies of King would follow.

¹⁶ Chafe's, *Civilities and Civil Rights: Greensboro, North Carolina, and the Black Struggle for Freedom*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), provided the first important local study of the movement; Aldon D. Morris', *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement: Black Communities Organizing for Change*, (New York: Free Press, 1984), classic work was the first to spark debates about movement origins; Robert J. Norrell's, *Reaping the Whirlwind: The Civil Rights Movement in Tuskegee*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1985), offered another important local study off the beaten path.

¹⁷ Vicki Crawford, Jacqueline Anne Rouse, and Barbara Woods', *Women in the Civil Rights Movement: Trailblazers & Torchbearers 1941-1965*, (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1993), is a classic study of the then understudied critical role that women played in the movement; Both John Dittmer's, *Local People* and Payne's, *I've Got the Light of Freedom* followed the lead of Chafe and offered now

century, historians increasingly stressed linkages between labor unionism and civil rights. Important local studies continued to highlight both the urban and rural South; additionally, much needed attention was finally given to movements in the urban North.¹⁸ More recently scholarly discussions have intensified over the chronology of the movement, as more academics are now accepting and adopting the idea of a longer civil rights narrative—exactly the focus Anderson had called for in the 1950s.¹⁹ This biography joins the ongoing dialogue by offering a fresh interpretation of the evolution of the movement through the lens of Trezzvant Anderson, one of the twentieth century's most enigmatic and significant writer-activists.

classic works highlighting the essential role that local people played in one the most repressive southern states; Glenn T. Eskew's, *But For Birmingham: The Local and National Movements in Civil Rights Struggle*, (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), offered another classic study that connected the local to the national; Timothy Tyson's, *Radio Free Dixie: Robert F. Williams and the Roots of Black Power*, (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), challenged the widely accepted idea that the Black Power Movement was separate from the Civil Rights Movement.

¹⁸ Robert R. Korstad, *Civil Rights Unionism: Tobacco Workers and the Struggle for Democracy in the Mid-Twentieth Century South*, (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2003); Jeanne Theoharis and Komozi Woodard, *Freedom North: Black Freedom Struggles Outside the South, 1940-1980*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); Matthew J. Countryman, *Up South: Civil Rights and Black Power in Philadelphia*, (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006); Thomas J. Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the North*, (New York: Random House, 2009); Hasan K. Jefferies, *Bloody Lowndes: Civil Rights and Black Power in Alabama's Black Belt*, (New York: New York University, 2009); Patricia Sullivan, *Lift Every Voice: The NAACP and the Making of the Civil Rights Movement*, (New York: The New Press, 2009)

¹⁹ While Theoharis and Woodard's *Freedom North* coined the phrase 'Long Movement,' Jacquelyn D. Hall's article, 'The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past,' *Journal of American History*, Vol. 91, No. 4 (Mar. 2005), has been the source of lively debates among scholars interested in the Civil Rights Movement; Hall primarily argued that the modern movement has, in its neat package, from *Brown* to King's death, been used for political purposes by politicians to suggest that the movement was a success and the country has come a long way in overcoming its dark history; she suggested that the movement could be traced back to labor struggles of the mid to late 1930s. Sundiata K. Cha-Jua and Clarence E. Lang's article, 'The Long Movement' as Vampire: Temporal and Spatial Fallacies in Recent Black Freedom Studies,' *Journal of African American History*, Vol. 92, No. 2 (2007), argues that 'Long Movement' paradigms undermines established periodization and ignores natural historical peaks and valleys of movement momentum. Like Hall, decades earlier, Anderson pointed to the movement's beginnings in the 1930s around labor issues. Anderson, however, suggested it began more specifically with widespread boycotts against labor discrimination during the New Deal and was initiated by young black intellectuals in Washington, D.C. who formed the New Negro Alliance, they articulated their grievances through an economic lens.

Anderson operated within the margins of this history. He was a middleman interacting at the intersections of national and local developments in the South. A study of him and his writings provide a more holistic view of the movement in all its variety across the twentieth century. Such understanding is usually obtained only through combined readings of top-down and bottom-up histories. An examination of his life and work teaches us that some activists found alternate ways to organize and protest. Although today virtually an unknown figure, Anderson played a central role in helping mobilize the modern Civil Rights Movement, in particular, and the twentieth-century struggle for African American economic rights in general. This study is important because it synthesizes material that has been scattered for over half a century; it forces scholars to consider new ways for understanding the development of the movement and, in turn, begins new discussions about the legacy of activism among black journalists

The role of the media during the civil rights movement has been widely studied. The media empowered activists by broadcasting their campaigns across the world; likewise, the “first rough draft of history,” as journalism has been called, has shaped the historical narrative to a great extent.²⁰ But the journalists themselves have usually

²⁰Gene Roberts and Hank Klibanoff's, *The Race Beat: The Press, the Civil Rights Struggle, and the Awakening of America*, (New York: Vintage Books, 2006), Pulitzer Prize winning work is the most popular work on the media and the Civil Rights Movement, it highlights the critical role that mainstream media played in bringing attention to white America about the movement; Other important studies related to the media and the movement include; Maurice Berger, *For All the World to See: Visual Culture and the Struggle for Civil Rights*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010); Aniko Bodroghkozy, *Equal Time: Television and the Civil Rights Movement*, (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2012); The phrase “first rough draft of history” was first unspooled by Alan Barth, a journalist for the *New Republic*, in a 1943 book review; Ted Poston's autobiography, edited by Kathleen Hauke, was entitled *A First Rough Draft of History*. Poston, born the same year as Anderson, is often referred to as the dean of black journalists because he was believed to be the first black to be employed by a mainstream newspaper (*New York Post*). However, there were many black journalists who worked for mainstream newspapers before and after the turn of the twentieth century. See John Edward Bruce, also known as Bruce Grit and J. E. Bruce-Grit, and James Finley Wilson, who was Anderson's mentor.

remained offstage, except for the occasional memoir or biography.²¹ Historical examinations of individual journalists' lives as major historical actors, rather than just key observers, of the modern Civil Rights Movement are unprecedented. And yet some journalists cast a long shadow across the civil rights era, even when their names are forgotten. Trezzvant Anderson's story and his use of news media as a weapon to expose and combat Jim Crow policies throughout the South are both telling and significant. A prominent journalist of the era, John H. Britton Jr. recalled, Anderson "was going into areas [of the South] that were considered rather dangerous for black people and he was coming out with stories and that appeared to me at the time, and it still does, to sort of indicate a sense of courageousness that a lot of people did not have because a lot of people were not doing that."²²

Three years after Anderson's death, Niles M. Jackson, chief librarian at Atlanta University, noted that his "writings preceded the start of the Negro Revolution in the United States and gave encouragement and support to the Negro and civil rights efforts in the beginning of the Negro Revolution."²³ He immediately began archiving Anderson's news articles, correspondence and other literary effects, believing that in the years to come future scholars could better understand the movement's history by researching the

²¹ Memoirs and/or biographies of some of the most notable black journalists include; Kathleen A. Hauke's, *Ted Poston: Pioneer American Journalist*, (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1998); Simeon Booker, *Shocking the Conscience: A Reporter's Account of the Civil Rights Movement*, (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2013); Alice Dunnigan, *Alone atop the Hill: The Autobiography of Alice Dunnigan, Pioneer of the National Black Press*, (Athens GA: University of Georgia Press, 2015); James M. Morris, *Eye on the Struggle: Ethel Payne, The First Lady of the Black Press*, (New York, Harper Collins, 2015); What sets Anderson apart from other journalists of his era is that he worked primarily in the South, while most all other journalist of his era worked in the North.

²² John H. Britton telephone interview with author, 2010 January 11; None of Anderson's contemporaries operated out of the South until the emergence of the classical phase of the Civil Rights Movement in the 1950s and 60s. There were some significant editors of black newspapers operating out of the South with the *Carolina Times*, *Atlanta Daily World*, and *Norfolk Journal and Guide*.

²³ "Anderson of Courier: To Honor Deceased Reporter," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 12 February 1966, pg. 9A.

journalist's life and writings. Until now, scholars have yet to fully explore Anderson's life or the contributions of his writings. Instead, his articles have been littered throughout the footnotes of numerous scholarly works exploring important twentieth-century civil rights developments, often without attribution.²⁴

My aim is not to create another icon of the Civil Rights Movement. Indeed, Anderson's story is important but it is the questions that are raised by a study of his life that are more salient. How does our understanding of the movement change when more credence is given to economic justice rather than integration and voting rights? What was required to sustain this movement for economic rights and how did this process change across intergenerational shifts? In light of his work and travels throughout the South, what happens to our historical perceptions of the movement when we consider the importance of geographical place, as well as in what ways did local black struggles help push the boundaries of social place? What can scholarship gain from the study of the collective lived experiences of local people? The black press in America has always been a heavily scrutinized and sometimes silenced institution, whether through violence or federal intervention.²⁵ How did Anderson navigate this sometime hostile terrain to maintain his fight for black citizenship rights over three decades? How did his activism function in relation to traditional twentieth century black activists and did his

²⁴ There are at least thirty-five scholarly works, and likely many more anonymously, that make use of Trezzvant Anderson's writing; they explore various aspects of African Americans struggle during the New Deal, World War II, Cold War, and Civil Rights Movement eras. This number would likely be increased exponentially had Anderson not have been forced to use pseudonyms throughout the early part of his career.

²⁵ See Patrick Washburn's, *A Question of Sedition: The Federal Governments Investigation of the Black Press During World War II*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), Washburn has explored how the black press was censored during World War I and investigated during World War II.

involvement contribute to civil, political and economic equality for African Americans in the periods leading up to the televised civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s?

Throughout his professional career, Trezzvant Anderson took advantage of black newspapers and technological communication advancements of newswires as a journalist, postal worker, publicist, political strategist, soldier, labor organizer and a human and civil rights activist. I argue that he offered a critical vision of what black empowerment and first-class citizenship rights looked like, grounded in keeping African Americans informed on how to use local, regional, national and international developments as leverage in their struggles for economic parity. A central element in committing his life to this ideal was Anderson's belief that "an informed public is an intelligent public." He aimed to inform, inspire and empower black Americans by providing grassroots news of important struggles and suggestions on the best strategies for winning civil, political and economic equality, from the Great Depression into the 1960s.

Scholarly descriptions of modern civil rights activists have usually placed them at the head of large or small grassroots organizations, in the field of law, labor or as prominent religious leaders. With the exception of A. Phillip Randolph, journalists and labor activists who used the black press to fight for equality have typically remained invisible. Ironically, historians of nineteenth century movements for black equality have not ignored journalists but instead have seen them as they were, as activists in their own right. The nineteenth century saw the earliest developments in black activism through the consistent use of black newspapers to fight against slavery, but also to combat negative stereotypes and public degeneration of African Americans, which developed into a national pastime in the traditional white press. A century before Trezzvant Anderson

officially entered the newspaper profession Samuel Cornish and John B. Russworm founded America's first black newspaper—*Freedom's Journal*—in 1827. In order to sustain their freedom, Cornish and Russworm dedicated the newspaper's mission to serve as a "people's paper," to provide useful knowledge to black readers and transmit news that helped children become productive members of society. They intended for the newspaper to become a vehicle for community building and bonding. One of its earliest and most well known writers was North Carolina native David Walker who in 1829 published *David Walker's Appeal to the Colored Peoples of the World* calling for militant action against slavery the same year that the *Freedom's Journal* folded. Other black newspapers like *The Struggler*, *Weekly Advocate*, *Colored American* and *Alienated American*, followed in an attempt to fill the void from the 1830s through the 1850s. Probably the most famous black activists who made use of the early black press were Frederick Douglass and his *North Star* (1847) and Ida B. Wells and her *Free Speech and Headlight* (1889).²⁶

Wells is well documented as the most outspoken voice against lynching to emerge in the South after the Civil War and during the Progressive era.²⁷ She is representative of the southern black newspaper tradition that was most active during the last quarter of the nineteenth century through the first two decades of the twentieth century. This is the tradition from which Trezzvant Anderson emerged. Like Wells, he traveled the region secretly exposing the vicious, uncivilized practice of mob violence

²⁶ Clint C. Wilson II, *Whither the Black Press? : Glorious Past, Uncertain Future*, (Lexington, KY: Xlibris LLC, 2014).

²⁷ Paula Giddings, *Ida: A Sword Among Lions: Ida B. Wells and the Campaign Against Lynching*, (New York: Harper Collins, 2008), Giddings has produced the most authoritative work on Wells.

and reporting accounts and causes of lynching in black newspapers. Wells operated during the height of brutality of Jim Crow, while Anderson emerged during Jim Crow's effort to accommodate white supremacy to a modern world. Because of her activism, Wells was eventually forced to flee the South. In order for Anderson to remain in the South, he was often forced to veil his activism under the cloak of a number of pseudonyms that were not only used to protect his life but also his livelihood as a railway mail clerk. He used the mobility of this position to quickly build a reputation as a reliable news gathering journalist who could travel in and out of the South undetected. This secrecy may in some respects account for historians' lack of attention to his work. Using the few clues Anderson left, I acted as a detective and dug through mountains and mountains of microfilm and digitized newspapers to find enough articles to reconstruct a coherent narrative of his life.

Trezzvant Anderson's journalism career began in late 1927 when he dropped out of Johnson C. Smith University. He was fortunate to secure a prestigious job as a railway mail clerk and, after realizing that his mobility could help increase its circulation, a local black newspaper, the *Charlotte Post*, quickly employed him as its contributing editor. Anderson's ability as a writer and his flare for news influenced the national head of a black fraternal order—the Prince Hall Shriners—to hire him as his publicist. Soon afterwards the head of the Elks, too, sought his services. These roles made Anderson an influential insider in the powerful political circles of national middle-class black leadership that were tied to the fraternal world.²⁸ By 1929, the Associated Negro Press

²⁸ Theda Skocpol, Ariane Liazos and Marshall Ganz, eds, *What A Mighty Power We Could Be: African American Fraternal Groups and the Struggle for Racial Equality*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006); these authors demonstrate the key role that black fraternal groups played in the struggle for civil rights.

(ANP) appointed him as a key executive correspondent benefitting from his continued travels throughout the South as a railway mail clerk. His ANP appointment placed his articles in most major black newspapers across the country. In addition, he served as a staff member of the *Afro-American*, *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, *Carolina Times* and *Atlanta Daily World*. Due to his work as a railway mail clerk, Anderson also developed into an important labor organizer within the National Alliance of Postal Employees, then the nation's oldest existing black labor union. He used the pages of newspapers to organize black labor unions and fought for black labor rights and to end discriminatory employment policies in the nation's civil service system.

By 1941, Anderson's demands for improved black labor opportunities in the nation's post offices eventually led to his firing from the Railway Mail Service. However, the official entrance of the United States into World War II convinced him to volunteer for the draft so that he could more closely document black experiences during the war. Anderson flooded black newspapers with reports throughout the period and subsequently wrote *Come Out Fighting: The Epic Tale of the 761st Tank Battalion, 1942 - 1945*, a history of the nation's first all-black tank battalion to enter combat. Following the war, Anderson briefly published two labor-oriented newspapers in his hometown—*The Charlotte Eagle* and *The Charlottean*. He used the newspapers to help organize returning black war veterans during the height of the failed region-wide labor organizing drive, Operation Dixie. In 1947, Anderson joined the staff of the *Pittsburgh Courier*, first in Pittsburgh and later in Washington, D.C. He spent his first seven years with the newspaper investigating and critiquing American foreign and domestic policies during

the height of the Cold War. In 1956, Anderson became the newspaper's roving reporter in the South until his death in 1963.

I discovered Trezzvant Anderson in graduate school, soon after I became interested in the Civil Rights Movement as I read about the life of Robert F. Williams and his influence on the Black Power Movement.²⁹ Williams was from Monroe, North Carolina, on the outskirts of Charlotte, my hometown. As a native, I wondered why the city remained absent from the national civil rights narrative until the rendering of *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education* (1971), a landmark Supreme Court case that rendered busing as an appropriate remedy for desegregating public schools. Because the scholarly sources on the city's place in the civil rights trajectory only examined the history of this one case, I decided to explore indigenous black organizing efforts in Charlotte for my master's thesis. I ran across a shadow of Anderson in one of three scholarly works on the city; it simply described him as a reporter from the *Pittsburgh Courier* who, in 1942, led black college students in a march that protested discriminatory employment practices in Charlotte's postal service. This source also acknowledged that the march, led by the unnamed journalist, was the first example of direct-action protest in the city since streetcar boycotts swept across the South in the 1910s.³⁰

²⁹ Tyson, *Radio Free Dixie: Robert F. Williams and the Roots of Black Power*; After reading Tyson's work, I contacted him about my interest in pursuing research on Charlotte and he sent much of the information I needed to help ground me in civil rights historiography, including the research that had been done on Charlotte and North Carolina.

³⁰ Davidson M. Douglas, *Reading, Writing & Race: The Desegregation of the Charlotte Schools*, (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), pg. 85; When I began my master research, Douglas was the only scholar that referenced Trezzvant Anderson's activism, though not by name. Other sources on school desegregation efforts in Charlotte include: Bernard Schwartz, *Swann's Way: The School Busing Case and The Supreme Court*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); Frye Gaillard, *The Dream Long Deferred*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988); Also see Blair Kelly's *Right to Ride: Streetcar Boycotts and African American Citizenship in the Era of Plessy V. Ferguson*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010)

In the course of my research, Reginald Hawkins, a local activist whom I interviewed, revealed that Trezzvant Anderson was more than a journalist that worked for the *Courier*. He was, in fact, a native Charlottean who had recruited Hawkins to help organize Johnson C. Smith students to march on the local post office for refusing to hire black mail carriers. Hawkins recalled, in 1942, he “came on the campus and had talks, and I would arrange for the students to be at the meetings. So we organized very much like we did with the sit-ins and all the other” civil rights demonstrations.³¹ Upon mentioning Anderson to James F. Richardson, he remarked: “Now that’s who you should be asking about. Trezzvant Anderson was the Civil Rights Movement. You don’t hear much about Trezzvant; I’m probably a part of the last generation that remembers him.”³² Richardson credited Anderson with helping him secure a job as a railway mail clerk. Despite these leads, none of my other interviewees recalled Anderson and I discovered little else about him during the course of my master’s research.

As I looked for ways to redevelop my thesis into a dissertation, I was initially committed to writing a local study of Charlotte’s civil rights movement. In the course of my dissertation prospectus research, I revisited nagging questions like, why would a reporter be leading a march, and what did Richardson mean by suggesting that ‘Anderson was the Civil Rights Movement.’ After finding Anderson’s personal papers at the Atlanta University Center’s Robert W. Woodruff Library, I began in earnest to tell his

³¹ Reginald Hawkins interview by author, 27 December 2002, Tega Cay, SC.

³² James (Jim) F. Richardson interview by author, 29 January 2003, Charlotte, NC.

story.³³ I became more intrigued about how someone, who seemingly made important contributions to history, had remained an unknown figure in civil rights history.

To write this biography, I use a conventional narrative that makes use of both primary and secondary sources. Because Trezzvant Anderson died in 1963 and left behind no known relatives, I have primarily relied on newspaper articles from microfilm and databases, employment records from the National Personnel Records Center, and personal papers, census records, and correspondence from archives scattered across the country to reconstruct his life. Despite this, the material on Trezzvant Anderson's life is unbelievably rich. I have been aided tremendously from nationwide efforts to digitize newspapers that are available through various university library databases. This has allowed me to collect nearly a thousand news articles. I have uncovered some of the many different pseudonyms that Anderson used, like Andy Anderson, T.W. Anderson, The Sideliner, Joe Squawk, I.M. Hooth, Eric Horn, Bart Logan and a number of others from over a dozen regionally and nationally distributed black newspapers. These articles span from 1929 through 1963 and document his activism across three decades. They have been scanned from microfilm and from Pro Quest Historical Newspapers Databases. Anderson's personal papers have been equally important. These records range from 1932 through 1963, the bulk of which relate to the latter portions of his life. I have obtained official copies of the majority of this collection during several research trips. Anderson also served as an executive member of the Associated Negro Press (ANP) and was its most important correspondent in the South from the late 1920s throughout the 1930s. I

³³ Even though Niles M. Jackson began archiving Anderson's personal papers at the Atlanta University Center's Robert W. Woodruff, in 1966, the papers were not officially processed and catalogued until 2004, just as I was completing the research for my thesis.

have digitally copied materials relating to his time with the ANP from microfilm of the Claude A. Barnett Papers.

I have secured over two hundred pages of Trezzvant Anderson's postal employee records from the National Personnel Records Center in St. Louis; they document employment correspondence and federal investigations into his writings. My visits to archives in Washington, D.C. and Hyde Park, New York, have uncovered information related to Anderson's efforts to organize black journalists to gain access to White House press conferences and report on discrimination in the administration of New Deal programs. Lastly, I have conducted a number of oral history interviews with the University of North Carolina's Long Civil Rights Movement Project and the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History's Civil Rights History Project that provide texture to Anderson's story.

I conducted my most significant and revealing interviews outside of these projects, however, with John H. Britton Jr., a longtime journalist, publicist, and education administrator. Britton, an accomplished journalist in his own right who covered the Civil Rights Movement in the late 1950s and 1960s, admitted that he pursued a career in journalism because he was influenced by Anderson's writings. Britton knew and interviewed dozens of the nation's most prominent activists, yet he asserted that Trezzvant Anderson was his personal hero. Julian Bond informed me that any time the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee wanted to get news out about their activities, they always tried to get Anderson to do the press release because they knew more people would read it. Lonnie King, leader of the Atlanta Student Movement, spoke

at length about the multiple interviews that Anderson conducted with him in his effort to thoroughly understand and report on student involvement in the movement.

This dissertation is arranged both chronologically and thematically in six chapters. Chapter one examines Trezzvant Anderson's early life, his transition from poor working-class adolescence into middle-class young adulthood in the New South city of Charlotte, North Carolina. I argue that his early life experiences compelled him to use black newspapers to help provide greater voice for African Americans. Chapter two explores Anderson's political development and his radical use of the black press and the Railway Mail Service to fight Southern Jim Crow culture, a two-front struggle that challenged both the conservative moral and social values of respectability espoused by older black leadership and the white supremacy that permeated the South. Chapter three investigates Anderson's reporting on grassroots organizing in the Depression era South and his pivotal work organizing journalists and investigating discrimination in the administering of New Deal programs.

Chapter four examines Trezzvant Anderson's labor activism within the National Alliance of Postal Employees, an effort largely waged through on the ground activism and through his first successful news column—"News and Views of the Postal Service." Chapter five assesses Anderson's black press activism, at home, in Charlotte, North Carolina and abroad in the war zones of the European Theatre; it provides context to his well documented contribution to the historical record—*Come Out Fighting: The Epic Tale of the 761st Tank Battalion*. Chapter six uncovers Trezzvant Anderson's political and investigative reporting, his critique of American domestic and foreign policy during the Cold War and continued activism that contributed to an increase in global

sociopolitical awareness among black Americans. The epilogue surveys the significance of Anderson's work in the South during the height of the classical phase of the Civil Rights Movement.

Trezzvant Anderson was a radical who operated beneath the surface of important historical events. This dissertation lifts him from the margins of history and provides an opportunity to revisit the idea of journalist as activist, to reposition the importance of economic justice as a major component of first class citizenship, and to explore African Americans' long walk to freedom in this country.

CHAPTER ONE
**“This One’s Too Little”: The Birth and Preparation of an Activist,
1906-1928**

In 1949, two weeks after Frank Porter Graham, a heralded Southern liberal and longtime president of the University of North Carolina, took office as U.S. Senator, Trezzvant Anderson wrote “he may not be aware of it,” but “the new senator from the Tar Heel state is permanently tied up with my past through circumstances which have affected my entire life.” It was the 1913-1914 school year when Anderson “was a youngster in second grade” at Biddleville School in Charlotte that Graham’s late father Dr. Alexander Graham ignited his fiery spirit and ultimately set him on a path of activism. He recalled the elder Graham, “came into our classroom. He stood and looked around at the room and its pupils...he saw me...he paused and then he spoke those fatal words I’ll never forget: ‘This one’s too little to be in second grade; put him back in the first grade.’”¹ Perhaps it was the disdainful way the slender, gray, and balding former Confederate officer gazed upon Anderson and his black classmates that bothered him most. It was as if they were being examined like post-emancipation slaves on an auction block. Or it could have been the way blacks in positions of influence, like his teacher, were forced to defer authority to white counterparts that made the event even more troubling. One thing was for certain, in the coming years as he journeyed from childhood into adulthood, he vowed to never let anyone control his thinking or be made to feel

¹ Trezzvant. W. Anderson, “World News In A Nutshell: ‘Dr. Frank Porter Graham,’” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1949 April 9, p. 17.

inadequate again. This was the event that encouraged Anderson to seek out a life in which his voice could never be silenced. He wrote, “I was built on a small frame...then.”²

After two decades scuffling to make a name for himself as a reliable front-line reporter, the five foot eight, forty-two year old college dropout experienced a career upswing. He had gained national recognition as a World War II correspondent and recalled afterwards that the editor of the most widely circulated black newspaper in the United States—*The Pittsburgh Courier*—“wanted him in the *Courier* organization.”³ It was a golden era for the newspaper as more and more African Americans avidly bought the twelve-cent copies from corner stores, street carriers and other run of the mill vendors. The *Courier* provided the perfect platform for Anderson’s edgy columns and he used it to extend his network and keep readers politicized. He had come a long way; from a tiny, poor, voiceless black kid educated in segregated Jim Crow schools. He had carved out place for himself as a man of the world whose political views commanded nation-wide attention. His talents, training, and courage took him quickly from a poor working-class background to middle-class status and journalistic legend. A closer examination of the circumstances of Anderson’s birth, along with analysis of how he was shaped by the place and time in which he was born reveal that he was part of a new generation of blacks in the South that sought to challenge the inconsistencies of black leadership by abandoning the ideals of respectability for demands of citizenship rights.

² Ibid

³ Complete Biography of Trezzvant W. Anderson (Courier Roving Reporter), (4-pages) Box 12, Folder 10, Trezzvant W. Anderson Papers, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Atlanta University Center.

Charlotte, North Carolina

Trezzvant William Anderson was born in Charlotte, North Carolina, on November 22, 1906, to the union of Amanda (Dixon) Anderson and Trezzvant Edward Anderson. It is unclear how his parents met, but they married just four months before his birth and separated shortly afterwards for unknown reasons. Their marriage was officially dissolved in April 1910.⁴ The elder Trezzvant was from Sumter, South Carolina, and was born on February 22, 1880. As a young man, he worked as a blacksmith. He joined the Army and fought in the Spanish American War as a member of the famed 10th Calvary (D Troop) that helped storm and capture San Juan Hill in Cuba.⁵ Like other returning black veterans, upon his discharge in April 1902, he headed for a place closest to home where he thought he might find better living and employment conditions. Unfortunately, he was among the first group of black American war veterans baptized in the fire of disillusionment, believing that their services would translate into improved opportunities at home. The war hero's relationship with eighteen year old Amanda produced a namesake but was not enough to keep him in Charlotte; he

⁴ Affidavit, T.E. Anderson vs. Amanda Anderson, 1910 April 16, Carolina Reading Room (Micro-film), Charlotte Mecklenburg Public Library; According to the affidavit, Anderson's parents were married in June 1906. The elder Trezzvant filed for divorce on April 16, 1910, on the grounds that Amanda "separated herself from" him shortly after they were married and "has since then committed devious acts of adultery with several persons," who were unknown to the plaintiff.

⁵ United States, Register of Enlistments in the U.S. Army, 1899, Trezzvant Anderson, blacksmith, 19 years old; also see United States, Census of Navy and Military Population, 1900, Company/Troop D, Tenth Calvary.

eventually returned to Sumter and was out of Amanda and young Trezzvant's life by the time the boy was three years old.⁶

Little is known about Trezzvant Anderson's paternal or maternal grandfathers, but his maternal grandmother Ellen (Bogan) Dixon was born in 1872, less than a decade after Emancipation. She gave birth to his mother, Amanda in September 1887, at the age of fifteen. Neither his mother nor his grandmother, who washed clothes for whites, appeared to have had much formal education beyond grade school. Amanda attended Myers Street Graded School, which had been founded the year before her birth in 1886. The school was located in the city's Brooklyn community. An ungainly structure with wooden exterior stairways, it "was the hubcap in the spoke wheel of Brooklyn," observed one longtime resident.⁷ Residents often referred to it as "Jacobs Ladder." This type of biblical reference lent itself to the idea, which one noted authority suggests, that "African American parents often saw education as a commodity, making direct links between schooling and upward mobility."⁸ Students day in and day out climbed the mythical staircases to heaven believing that they were securing better lives for themselves and future families on earth. Years later, Trezzvant recalled listening to people in the community talk about the cadre of excellent teachers at Myers Street. One such teacher was Miss Hannah Stewart. When students left her "classes they were definitely ready

⁶ Thirteenth Census of the United States 1910-Population, Mecklenburg County, NC; Ellen Dixon, 38, Mulatto, mother, washerwoman; Amanda Dixon, 23, Mulatto, daughter, insurance agent; Trezzvant Anderson, 3, Mulatto, grandson. Trezzvant Edward Anderson eventually returned home to Sumter, SC, married Elizabeth Johnson, and fathered two other children—Trezzvant Edward Anderson Jr. (1915) and Mildred J. Anderson (1918).

⁷ Rose Leary Love, *Plum Thickets and Field Daisies*, (Charlotte, NC: Public Library of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County, 1996) p. 163

⁸ Heather A. Williams, *Self-Taught: African American Education in Slavery and Freedom*, (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2005) p. 140

for the next step.”⁹ However, like most graded schools for black children of the time, once they completed ninth grade, they had to go elsewhere for high school training. Typically, in order to receive a high school education, one had to attend a college or university high school department. Financial restraints likely prevented Amanda from pursuing more education herself, but she would see to it that Anderson did.

Realizing that she had to raise her son without much assistance from his father, Amanda Dixon set out to do everything in her power to ensure he had a loving and normal childhood. While she spent the majority of her life as a domestic, for a short period she was one of the few black women who found expanding opportunities in insurance sales. This was an industry that began expanding for both black and white women in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. One historian revealed that, “sales positions were particularly attractive to women, who might be single mothers or have other responsibilities.”¹⁰ Both North Carolina Mutual Life Insurance and Afro-American Mutual Insurance Companies had branches in Charlotte. Either may have offered opportunities to Amanda. These companies wanted to do business with the extremely large pool of black women who worked as domestic laborers, so it made perfect sense to hire a woman like her who was familiar with their needs.

Amanda Dixon married Robert Hezekiah Alexander in 1911 when Trezzvant Anderson was five. Alexander was a year older than Dixon and was a church-going man. Originally Methodist, he was a loyal member of Clinton Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, the oldest black congregation in Charlotte. However, Amanda

⁹ Trezzvant W. Anderson, “Miss Hannah Stewart A Fabulous Institution: They “Hated” Her, But They Loved Her, Too!” *The Carolinian*, 1956 February 25

¹⁰ “The African American Financial Industries: Issues of Class, Race and Gender in the early 20th Century,” Angel Kwolek-Folland, *Business and Economic History*, Volume 23, no. 2, Winter 1994, p. 95.

“turned him into [a] Baptist,” and he joined Mount Carmel Baptist Church. “Papa” or “Uncle Rob,” as Anderson sometimes referred to him, became the most important father figure during his early childhood. He taught him the ethics of hard work. Trezzvant recalled during Alexander’s 52 years of employment, “he was never out of a job for even five minutes.” When Trezzvant was six years old, R.R. Beatty Drug Company employed Robert as the city’s first motorcycle deliveryman. He earned “the magnificent” salary of \$7.50 per week. In 1915, when Anderson was nine, Alexander gave up driving the one cylinder “Pope motorcycle” for a “strange and new big Harley-Davidson” after another company offered him \$8.00 per week. Trezzvant held fond memories of his stepfather and years later remarked “if any woman, anywhere, gets a husband who is just one-half the husband to her that my stepfather was to my late mother, that woman has really got something very-extra special!”¹¹

Trezzvant Anderson grew up on Beatty’s (now Beatties) Ford Road and spent his formative years between 1920-1927 in and around Biddleville, the third largest of six black neighborhoods in the city. Charlotte, a city of 46,338 in 1920, was home to almost 14,000 African American residents of Brooklyn, Greenville/Irwinville, Biddleville, Cherry, and sections of First and Third Wards. Brooklyn was the heart of black Charlotte and boasted a main street business, entertainment, and shopping district. During Trezzvant Anderson’s childhood, Biddleville transformed from a small “rim village” into an urban neighborhood just three quarters of a mile west of the city. It was home to Biddle University (which in 1924 became Johnson C. Smith University), where he would later enroll. A source of great pride for the black community, Biddle was a Presbyterian

¹¹ Trezzvant W. Anderson, “Uncle Rob Has Retired: He Rode First Delivery Motorcycle in Charlotte,” *The Carolinian*, 1956 March 31

school founded in 1867 for freedmen to prepare them for careers in education and the ministry. By the 1920s many prosperous middle-class families as well as working-class laborers sought residence in the Biddleville neighborhood as the school became one of the most prominent black colleges in the South.¹²

Throughout the 1920s, Anderson watched the city grow up all around him, as industrialists built more and more cotton mills in the region. Charlotte and the small towns around it became the textile capital of the world, leading the industrial renaissance of the New South. Yet at every turn Anderson observed that African Americans were not a valued part of the *new* emerging South. Textile mills offered only “white jobs” with the exception of janitorial and loading dock positions. The white supremacy campaign that swept across the state a decade earlier had firmly entrenched a separate and unequal place for African Americans. His black neighbors complained about Southern Asbestos Company spewing trash and lint around their Greenville/Irwinville homes. In 1924, James and Rosa Lee Robinson sued Southern Asbestos because of the damage to their property and health. Greenville resident Thereasea Elder witnessed the sickness and eventual loss of her younger brother and sister due to asbestos pollution from the Eleventh Street factory.¹³

¹² Thomas Hanchett, *Sorting Out the New South City: Race Class and Urban Development in Charlotte 1875-1975*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998) pgs. 43, 117; US Census 1920, Charlotte, N.C., ‘Population Statistics,’ quoted in LeGette Blythe and Charles R. Brockmann, Co-Eds, *Hornets’ Nest: The Story of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County* (Charlotte NC: McNally of Charlotte, 1961), Appendix, 449. Remainders of total population include whites, native and foreign born.

¹³ “Renaissance in South’s Status Seen by Forbes,” *Charlotte Observer*, 1924 February 24; Jacquelyn Hall Et al., *Like a Family: The Making of a Southern Cotton Mill World*, (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1987), This work provides the most thorough discussion of the growth of the textile industry in the region; “Southern Asbestos Co. Defendant in Civil Suit,” *Charlotte Observer*, 1924 February 17, pg. 4; Thereasea Elder, interview by Willie Griffin, 28 December 2002, Charlotte NC.; Elder stated that years later when she became a nurse, she found out that the deaths occurred from exposure to one of two national asbestos plants, Southern Asbestos was located on Eleventh Street, near part of the old

To be sure, poor whites and their neighborhoods were equally susceptible to these types of environmental hazards, but Anderson recognized that black lives mattered even less. This clarity emerged when he read local newspapers, like the *Charlotte Observer* and the *Charlotte News*, where “Colored News” rated little ink and rested on the fringes of normality, mostly associated with crime. An instance of this can be seen in three separate stories prominently placed in the *Charlotte Observer* over the span of a week in February 1924. One article proved that intent alone was enough to charge blacks with burglary especially if they were guilty of vagrancy, a sixty-year old violation that originated in the state’s Black Codes. Another story revealed how a white court official imposed the exorbitant fine of \$150 on a black man for the simple possession of two pints of liquor. Anderson likely saw or heard of dozens of innocent African American men rounded up throughout the city during the sweeping manhunts for the murder of police officer John Fesperman.¹⁴

By the late 1920s, police harassment had become so commonplace in black neighborhoods that some residents sought assistance from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. These struggles, sights, sounds, and ideas influenced Anderson as a teenager and compelled him to seek change as he became an adult. His own experiences bound him to the enduring struggle for the recognition of

Greenville neighborhood. The other plant was located somewhere in California, Charlotte’s plant eventually closed, compensating the workers and leaving the city.

¹⁴ “Man Hunt is on for Slayer of John Fesperman,” *Charlotte Observer*, 1924 February 18; “Three Negroes to Face Burglary Charges Soon,” *Charlotte Observer*, 1924 February 19, pg. 3; “Heavy Fine Imposed on Negro by the Recorder,” *Charlotte Observer*, 1924 February 28

African Americans' citizenship rights, first in his native Charlotte and later throughout the South.¹⁵

Anderson began to develop both the political and literacy tools he needed when he first enrolled in Biddle University's High School Department. By the time he arrived in 1920, the school's curriculum combined an interesting mix of educational philosophies. The High School Department featured an industrial education program offering trades in carpentry, bricklaying, plastering, tailoring, blacksmithing, broom making, mattress making, and, most appropriate for Anderson, printing. Students in the high school were required to pick two trades; Anderson chose bricklaying as his second trade. Biddle's undergraduate Arts and Sciences Department embraced both classical and scientific courses of study, while its Theology Department offered both undergraduate and graduate degrees.¹⁶

Along with Scotia College in Concord, twenty-five miles northeast, and Livingstone College, forty miles northeast in Salisbury, Biddle offered the only high school educational opportunities for African Americans in the region. White Presbyterians from the North founded Scotia in 1867 as Biddle's sister school to prepare black women for careers in social work and education. Livingstone was co-ed and also offered classical and theological educations. The African Methodist Episcopal Church established Livingstone in 1879. Presbyterians and Methodists, along with Baptists were all denominations that sometime separated the education of black men and women in the

¹⁵ Vann Newkirk, Ph.D. dissertation, "The Development of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People in Metropolitan Charlotte, North Carolina 1919-1965," (Washington, D.C.: Howard University, 2002), Newkirk argues that the prevalence of police harassment as one reason Charlotte's black community began organizing.

¹⁶ Student Catalog, 1920-1924, James B. Duke Memorial Library, Inez Moore Parker Archives and Research Center, Johnson C. Smith University, Charlotte, North Carolina

effort to instill a Victorian style value system common in upper class white institutions.

These schools became the most popular destinations for children of the “better classes” of blacks.¹⁷

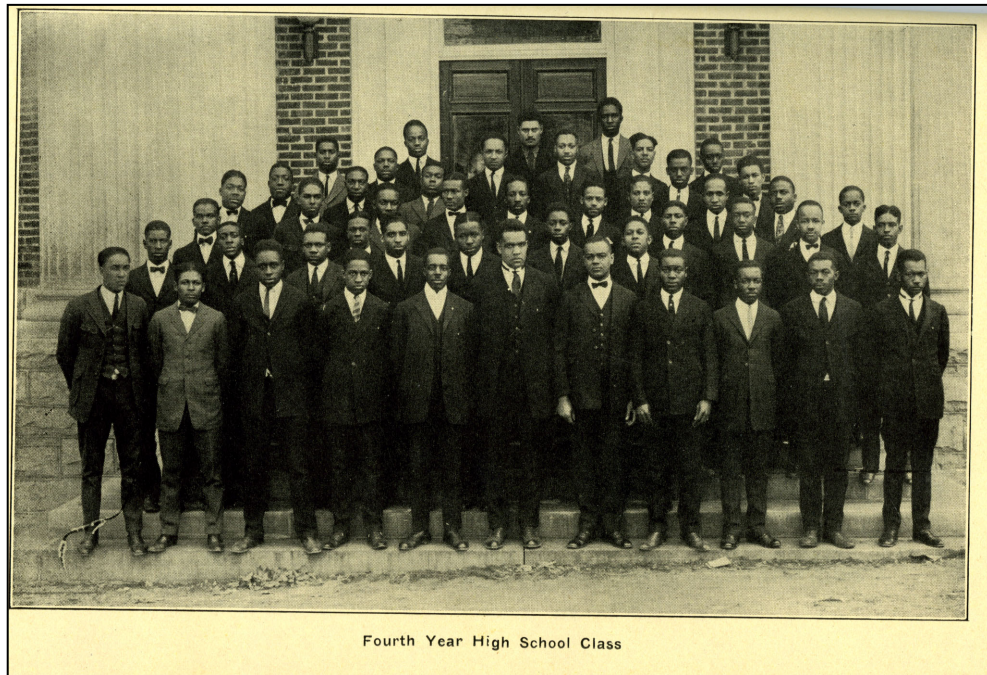


Figure 1.1 Graduate Class of 1924, Biddle University’s High School Department. Trezzvant Anderson is the third student from the right on the second row (*Photo Courtesy of James B. Duke Library, Johnson C. Smith University*)

At Biddle, Anderson first began to grapple with ideas about class, leadership and respectability. His evolving analysis of privilege and abuse of power in society also began at Biddle. The lived experience of working class people was another crucial school for Anderson; both his mother and grandmother were domestics, and his stepfather an unskilled laborer. He was not a member of the better classes, nor did he readily identify with them. Biddle was the only high school open for blacks within Charlotte city limits, and it was not a public institution. Charlotte’s first public high

¹⁷ Glenda Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow: Women and the Politics of White Supremacy in North Carolina, 1896-1920*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), pg. 39-41; Janette Greenwood, *Bittersweet Legacy: The Black and White “Better Classes” in Charlotte, 1850-1910*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994) p. 242;

school for African Americans—Second Ward—was not founded until 1923; three years after Anderson entered high school. Thus, his family made financial sacrifices to afford him the opportunity to attend Biddle.

Anderson gained first-hand knowledge of presswork in Biddle's high school program while serving as an apprentice in the print shop that published the *Biddle Outlook*, the school's college newspaper, and the official organ of black Presbyterians, the *Afro-Presbyterian*. Daniel J. Sanders founded the *Afro-Presbyterian* in 1879 and brought the weekly religious newspaper to Biddle University in 1891 when the school appointed him president.¹⁸ When Anderson graduated from Biddle's high school program, the university was in transition. The school adopted its name in honor of Union Major Henry J. Biddle, killed in action during the Civil War, after his wife provided considerable financial support. Sanders became the institution's first African American to serve as president and the first black leader of a four-year college or university in the South. Some local whites thought it was too soon to place an African American in charge of black education and some professors left, but Sanders—described as “bright, cool and level-headed”—proved an amicable leader. He served as president until his death in 1907. Biddle alumnus Henry Lawrence McCrorey assumed the presidency following Sanders. Under McCrorey's leadership Biddle increased its physical plant and endowment through significant gifts from James B. Duke and Jane Berry Smith. Smith funded several buildings and established an endowment in honor of her late husband, Johnson Crayne Smith, a prominent Pittsburgh businessman (also a former Union Civil War officer). As a result, in 1923 the school voted to change its name to Johnson C.

¹⁸ I. Garland Penn, *The Afro-American Press and Its Editors*, (Springfield, MA: Willey & Company Publishers, 1891), p. 270-273, Penn offers brief discussions of some of America's first black journalists and editors.

Smith University (JCSU). Anderson later wrote that by this time the school “progressed into the ranks of America’s foremost Negro institutions.”¹⁹



Figure 1.2 Undated Photograph of JCSU printing press, probably 1920s or early 1930s. (Photo Courtesy of James B. Duke Library, Johnson C. Smith University)

Trezzvant enrolled in JCSU’s college program in 1924 and immersed himself in the school’s stimulating classical arts program. He became the feature editor of the renamed student newspaper—*The University Student*.²⁰ It was Anderson’s first position of leadership. Soon he found himself in what would become a familiar role: spokesman for the disenfranchised. Trezzvant found that the local press often praised the

¹⁹ Trezzvant W. Anderson, “College President and Race Leader,” *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, 1931 January 3; Also see George W. Brown, “Johnson C. Smith University,” *The Crisis*, April 1930; Brown wrote that per capita of its student body JCSU was the most richly endowed institution for blacks in the world.

²⁰ Complete Biography of Trezzvant W. Anderson (Courier Roving Reporter), Trezzvant W. Anderson Papers, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Atlanta University Center

administration for keeping true to its Presbyterian roots, stressing proper behavior among its faculty and student body, and for the deep Christian values in its curriculum. One such article applauded the school's administration for accomplishing "excellent results" through the "co-operation of the best type of Christian leaders of [their] own race and of the white race of the South."²¹ Anderson himself found these virtues that stressed respectability were often a source of discontent among students and faculty. Mary Jackson-McCrorey, wife of the president, was central to their complaints. They accused her of enforcing stringent rules in her effort to usurp authority at the all-male school. "It is no secret that she controls the workings of the school," Anderson wrote, "and many members of the faculty who express privately their opinions of the school, are afraid to do so openly because they fear the power of Mrs. McCrorey."²²

Anderson's first run-in with Jackson McCrorey occurred during his freshman year while he was member of the varsity basketball team. School authorities discovered that two team members had cut classes. Mrs. Jackson-McCrorey canceled part of the team's annually scheduled games with rival northern black colleges and universities because of their indiscretions. Anderson doubtlessly looked forward to the popular "long northern tour," because it offered him a rare opportunity to travel to parts of the country that he had not seen. He was oblivious, or possibly simply did not care, about the unstated social decorum of not questioning older black leadership. Anderson exhibited this character trait throughout his life repeatedly. Incensed, after Mrs. McCrorey canceled the trip, he

²¹ "State Takes Big Stride For Negro Education: Wife of Biddle Univ., in Grand Rapids Meeting, Tells of Progress Here," *Charlotte Observer*, 1 June 1924

²² "Untitled Article," dated 1929, by Trezzvant W. Anderson, The Claude A. Barnett Papers, Part One Associated Negro Press (ANP) News Releases, Series A (1928-1944), Trezzvant Anderson Files

immediately set out to survey faculty members' and other students' opinions about her. Anderson discovered a wellspring of complaints objecting to a litany of rules imposed on faculty and students; these included responsibility for an unusually high teacher turnover rate due largely to her strictly enforced rules that forbade smoking and dancing by faculty and students. He also found that Jackson-McCrorey quelled open complaints by purposefully not holding faculty meetings. In one instance, he noted that a popular professor who dared speak out "about the slipshod manner of administration" lost his position. Particularly disturbing to Trezzvant was that she was behind the forced Saturday prayer meetings to discourage students from venturing into the city for weekend entertainment. Anderson found traditional notions of respectability burdensome and antiquated.²³

Trezzvant Anderson used his position as a feature editor of the *University Student* to incite campus-wide discussion of these issues. He and other students and faculty used aliases like Lone Wolf and Exalted Grand Gink in the editorial column, "The Social Whirl," to retell gossip and complaints about conditions on campus. In a 1926 fall edition the Exalted Grand Gink asserted: "It is a constant whirr of things, ever supplemented and facilitated by the multitudinous and variety of auxiliaries at Johnson C. Smith University, which tend toward social promulgation and exhilaration."²⁴ Some of the bolder students on campus refused to conform and referred to themselves as the

²³ Ibid; Also see: "Fill Posts of Six Smith Professors," *Afro-American*, 1929 June 29; "Smith College Professors Forbidden to Dance or Smoke," *Afro-American*, 1929 July 13; "Many Things Wrong at Smith U," (editorial) 1929 August 10

²⁴ Exalted Grand Gink, "The Social Whirl," *The University Student*, 1926 December, Vol. 3 No. 2, pg. 8; Future additions of "The Social Whirl" used various other bylines like Lone Wolf, issues from the year Anderson served as feature editor were not available in JCSU's archive, but the latter issue uses similar language that can be found in Anderson's future editorial pieces.

O.I.T.S. Club (Out-in-the-Streeters). They enjoyed going into the city on weekends to dance to the latest music that blared from the juke joints in Brooklyn's entertainment district. They looked forward to annual sporting events against their archrival Livingstone, and many bragged about treks to Concord to pursue the young women at Scotia College. Not all embraced the O.I.T.S. A faction of students who considered them disreputable deviants organized a mock club with the same acronym called the Obviously I Take Stuff Club, insinuating the group's members were derelicts that took for granted their access to such a prestigious university. Still, many students aspired to be a part of the Pi Gamma Club, a selective academic honor society favored by the administration. The Exalted Grand Gink disliked and referred to them as, "the more or less unfortunate and fortunate collegians [that] happen to be under 'petticoat government.'"²⁵

Anderson was more frank about his discontent with Johnson C. Smith after he left, which might have contributed to his decision to leave the university and launch his professional career as a journalist. In 1929 he wrote a series of expose editorials where he employed some of the same language used anonymously in the *University Student* to critique the school's leadership. Anderson attempted to have the Associated Negro Press (ANP) publish his articles that suggested students had grown increasingly impatient with the school's administration and its "petticoat government." The school's dean, however, threatened a liability suit that convinced Claude Barnett, head of the ANP, not to submit the articles to his newswire. Anderson nevertheless anonymously submitted editorial letters about JCSU to the *Afro-American* and the *Carolina Times*. One headline read 'Charlotte, N.C. Graduate Would Rally Alumni to Remedy Alleged Evils.' He exhibited

²⁵ Ibid

early a keen understanding of the power of the press when he asserted, “the stories form the basis of a movement to force Mrs. McCrorey to desist from her imperialistic attitude at Johnson C. Smith and give over actual control of the University to her husband.”²⁶

From late June through late August in 1929, seven of these articles appeared in the *Afro-American*. In one particularly scathing editorial, ‘From the Kitchen to the Theological Department *Petticoat* Government is Alleged at Johnson C. Smith University,’ Anderson asserted that Mrs. McCrorey was actually the president of the school. “She projects herself into everything, public and private, as it relates to the students and faculty. She meets students on campus or in the halls of buildings and bawls them out if they do not please her.” In another editorial he criticized McCrorey for being out of touch and only selecting acquaintances to speak at the school’s lyceum series. “Race artists are often omitted because this lady does not know them,” Anderson argued. He believed that students, as paying customers, had rights and should have some level of input. “One would certainly think that the aim of the students would be to help the administration build up the school and sell it to the public,” he declared. Anderson railed at the poor living conditions for both students and faculty, while the president and his wife lived lavishly in the “executive mansion.”²⁷

²⁶ “Untitled Article,” dated 1929, by Trezzvant W. Anderson, The Claude A. Barnett Papers; the article provides detail about his dispute with McCrorey and Dean *Theophilus E. McKinney who attempted to have his articles suppressed; The series of articles include: ‘Johnson C. Smith President, a Good Road Builder, But a Poor Educator,’ Afro-American*, 29 June 1929; ‘Fill Posts of Six Smith Professors,’ *Afro-American*, 29 June 1929; ‘From the Kitchen to the Theological Department *Petticoat* Government is Alleged at Johnson C. Smith University,’ *Afro-American*, 13 July 1929, pg.6; ‘Smith Professors Forbidden to Dance or Smoke,’ *Afro-American*, 13 July 1929; ‘Survey of the Training of College Presidents is Suggested by Student of Johnson C. Smith University,’ (editorial) *Afro-American*, 3 August 1929; “Many Things Wrong at Smith U,” *Afro-American*, 10 August 1929; ‘\$6000 for Walks, \$450 for Library,’ *Afro-American*, 24 August 1929

²⁷ “From the Kitchen to the Theological Department *Petticoat* Government is Alleged at Johnson C. Smith University,” *Afro-American*, 13 July 1929, pg.6; “Many Things Wrong at Smith,” 10 August 1929, pg. 6

Anderson wrote other editorials focused solely on the president and depicted him as ‘A Good Road Builder, but a Poor Educator.’ “I found buildings, but no great personalities at Johnson C. Smith University. I found appearances, but no real spirit behind these appearances. I found unrest and dissatisfaction among the entire student body, and teachers,” claimed Anderson. He compared McCrorey’s education with that of other historically black colleges and universities’ presidents; “the president of Johnson C. Smith University brings up the rear and appears to be the poorest trained man of any of the presidents of large colleges of the East and Southeast.” Anderson contended that, “a poorly trained president cannot get and keep the respect of highly trained faculty. Intelligence will not be directed by ignorance.” There was a running joke on campus, according to Anderson, that the president annually told new students in his opening addresses, “the important thing is to be religious for the only claim that Robert G. Ingersoll, the infidel, had to fame was that he invented the Ingersoll watch.” Ingersoll was a leading American political figure from the mid to late nineteenth century, a Union Civil War officer and an agnostic who advocated free thought and humanism. The irony in the joke was that if McCrorey’s statement was an attempt to disparage Ingersoll’s support of agnosticism, he was ignorant of the fact that Robert G. Ingersoll was not the same Robert Ingersoll, who along with his brother Charles, were the prominent manufacturers of the popular American watch brand.²⁸ Anderson later employed the same style of tactics, used in these articles, to help create public debates and encourage

²⁸ “Johnson C. Smith President, a Good Road Builder, But a Poor Educator,” *Afro-American*, 29 June 1929; Trezzvant Anderson’s time at JCSU paralleled Ella Baker’s at nearby Shaw University and their experiences were strikingly similar in that both were leaders within their respective campus’ student bodies and they rebelled against ideas that they should respect and not question authority; see Barbara Ransby, *Ella Baker & the Black Freedom Movement*.

organizing that initiated social movements around much more serious issues that impacted African Americans all over the South.

During Trezzvant Anderson's six years at Biddle and later Johnson C. Smith University, he built good relationships with his professors, despite his collisions with the administration. One professor, in particular, Sidney D. Williams, he recalled, told him, "if you decide to stop school, be sure to take the examination for the railway mail service." Though disillusioned with his university experiences, Anderson probably left JCSU because of his mother's declining health. In early 1927 his mother fell ill with a serious case of tuberculosis, which prevented her from working any longer. Perhaps in an effort to help support the family, Anderson decided that work and not school was his best option. He briefly found employment as a chauffeur for Edwin Y. Webb, a federal judge and former Democratic United States Congressman from nearby Shelby, North Carolina. While serving as a chauffeur for someone of Webb's stature may have carried with it certain benefits, for Anderson, being a chauffeur most likely resembled the life of working-class menial labor into which his mother, grandmother, and stepfather had been trapped and so badly wanted him to escape.²⁹

A career in the Railway Mail Service (RMS), as his professor may have recognized, allowed Anderson to lay claim to the sense of manhood often denied African American men living in the Jim Crow South. There were limited employment opportunities even for college-educated blacks. A position with the RMS provided a salary sufficient enough to support his ailing mother, the ability to travel, and a work

²⁹ Trezzvant W. Anderson, "News and Views of the Postal Service," *Afro-American*, 23 December 1939, pg. 10; Letter, Charlotte Postmaster, J.D. Albright to Greensboro Chief Clerk, C.F. Honeycutt, 1927 October 7, Trezzvant Anderson Files, Civilian Personnel Records, National Personnel Records Center, St. Louis, Missouri.

schedule conducive to embarking on a career in journalism. Upon Professor Williams' advice, Anderson took and successfully passed the civil-service examination. "At least twenty J.C. Smith juniors and seniors took the exam for the service at the same time I did," he recalled. "From that exam, I alone was given a job. Others flunked, some passed, but marks were so low that it would have taken years to reach them on the [civil-service] list." Anderson received an appointment as a Substitute Railway Post Office (RPO) Clerk on November 12, 1927. His elation over securing the position was short lived, however, as three days after his appointment his mother passed away. He never wrote much about his mother. On the only photograph found of her among Anderson's scattered historical records, he wrote simply, "the finest ever, my mother."³⁰

The death of Anderson's mother and his appointment to the RMS motivated him to seek the opportunity to write. Because of his educational background and his newfound ability to travel, he gained the chance to prove his abilities with *The Charlotte Post*. Henry H. Houston had founded the newspaper three years earlier in 1925. It was a small upstart and Anderson assumed the position of Contributing Editor. When he joined the staff in early 1928, black newspapers were experiencing a renaissance in urban areas across the South. The period saw the establishment of influential newspapers in North Carolina: cities like Charlotte (*Charlotte Post* in 1925), Wilmington (*Cape Fear Journal* in 1927), Durham (*Carolina Times* in 1928) and further south in Atlanta, Georgia (*Atlanta World* in 1931). In addition to the larger, more established newspapers such as Baltimore's *Afro-American*, *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, *Chicago Defender* and

³⁰ Ibid; Trezzvant W. Anderson, "News and Views of the Postal Service," 9 November 1940, pg. 9; Oath of Office, Railway Mail Service, signed 12 November 1927, stamped approval 17 December 1927, Trezzvant Anderson Files, Civilian Personnel Records, National Personnel Records Center, St. Louis, Missouri; Amanda Alexander, North Carolina Death Certificate; Amanda Alexander, Photograph, Trezzvant W. Anderson Papers, Box 19, Folder 1.

Pittsburgh Courier, these newspapers emerged in an effort to take advantage of the growing black markets fueled by urban migration.³¹ “In the years to come,” it was under Houston that Trezzvant Anderson admitted that he truly learned to understand the black press.³²

Conclusion

When Trezzvant’s parents and grandparents were born and coming of age, African Americans established dozens of black newspapers across the South to help create and stabilize black communities. For instance, in Charlotte, Bishop John Walker Hood published and edited the *Star of Zion* (1876), the official organ of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church. A former employee of the *Star of Zion*, William Caswell Smith later founded the *Messenger* (1882) in the city as its first secular newspaper before abandoning the endeavor in 1890. Editors of these early newspapers, like Hood and Smith, wielded great influence and often led uncompromising campaigns against lynching, sexual violence, racial discrimination, intemperance, and for education and universal suffrage. But most of these early newspapers such as the *Messenger* were short-lived. Mob violence shut down some newspapers like Ida B. Wells’ *Free Speech and Headlight* (founded in Memphis, Tennessee in 1888) and Alexander Manly’s *Wilmington Daily Record* (founded in Wilmington, North Carolina in 1892); white supremacy campaigns forced these editors to flee the South.³³

³¹ Henry Lewis Suggs, *The Black Press in the South, 1865-1979*, (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1983)

³² Complete Biography of Trezzvant W. Anderson (Courier Roving Reporter), Trezzvant W. Anderson Papers

These fleeting efforts inspired new generations of black community newspapers at the turn of the twentieth century. “Although similar to the pre-1900 papers, these new newspapers quickly went out of business,” wrote one scholar of the early black press. Some of these short-lived papers encouraged blacks to fight for suffrage. Others followed the lead of Booker T. Washington, preaching the wisdom of accommodation and self-help. Those newspapers that strayed from Washington’s message and encouraged African Americans to organize against the injustices of Jim Crow continued to be the targets of violence. For example, in 1919, African American newspapers began to voice frustration after their overwhelming support of America’s World War I efforts did nothing to ease even the most blatant injustice. United States Representative James F. Byrnes of South Carolina urged stricter laws to regulate admission of printed matter to the mail. He and others blamed the black press for “race antagonism” in the South. Byrnes complained to the Department of Justice about of *The Crisis*’ W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Boston Guardian*’s William Monroe Trotter, and *The Messenger*’s A. Phillip Randolph and Chandler Owen arguing the government prosecute the editors under the federal Espionage Act. Byrnes pointed to Du Bois’ now classic “Returning Soldiers” editorial in which Du Bois asserted: “We sing: This country of ours, despite all its better souls have done and dreamed, is yet a shameful land. It lynches. It disfranchises its own citizens. It encourages ignorance. It steals from us. It insults us.” Byrnes claimed that Randolph and Owen deliberately planned campaigns of violence when, in fact, they encouraged blacks to assemble to show lynch mobs and authorities alike that they would not accept mob law.³⁴

³³ Suggs, pg. 263-265; I. Garland Penn, *The Afro-American Press and Its Editors*, (Springfield, MA: Willey & Company Publishers, 1891), p. 270-273, Penn offers brief discussions of some of America’s first black

When Trezzvant Anderson entered the newspaper profession, vitriolic attacks against black journalists and editors were still common. Whites in Little Rock ran correspondent Theodore Holmes out of the city after he wired details of the 1927 lynching of John Carter to the Associated Negro Press (ANP). Holmes had witnessed the lynching firsthand. The authorities in Little Rock confiscated all newspapers carrying the ANP story, though that hardly kept the grisly tale from spreading to other newspapers across the country. Holmes' friends persuaded him to leave town in the wake of numerous threats and efforts to find him. He sought refuge in St. Louis, but later moved further north. This incident points to the validity of Du Bois' decade-old observation regarding two major goals of Jim Crow. First, whites sought to repress black citizens through threats and acts of violence, including spectacles of lynching watched by crowds in the thousands. Secondly, Du Bois continued, whites tried to control the flow of information about racial injustice, mob violence, and any efforts by blacks to address them. Such were the challenges editors of black newspapers faced in covering the South.³⁵

Against this backdrop, it is not surprising that Trezzvant Anderson became such a critical asset to the black press. His position in the RMS literally provided him with federal imprimatur, which allowed him to slip virtually undetected in and out of cities and small towns, even places considered dangerous for black journalists. He quickly realized that the job enabled him to build an impeccable network that made him a prize correspondent. He used his skills as a journalist to lead a radical two-front struggle that

³⁴ Ibid, Suggs, pg.267; "Negro Papers May Be Banned," *Charlotte Observer*, 27 August 1919; "Blames Race Riots on Negro Leaders," *New York Times*, 26 August 1919.

³⁵ "Newspaper Man Flees Little Rock Lynchers," *Afro-American*, 1927 May 21, pg. 6

challenged both the conservative culture of older black leadership and the Jim Crow racism that permeated the New South like a vise grip. Though he crisscrossed the region, much of the coverage of news about the South would come through Anderson, especially dispatches from North Carolina.³⁶

³⁶ Philip F. Rubio, *There's Always Work at the Post Office: African American Postal Workers and the Fight for Jobs, Justice, and Equality*, (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), pgs. 30-31. Rubio offers a great discussion of the mobility and official nature of Railway Mail Clerks.

CHAPTER TWO
“I Am Interested in My People Too”:
The Political Development of a Southern Journalist, 1928-1931

Riding the rails as a Railway Mail Clerk bolstered Trezzvant Anderson's journalism career and in 1930 he joined the ranks of other “high caliber” newsmen on the executive staff of the Associated Negro Press (ANP). Anderson introduced himself in a letter to William Pickens, fellow ANP executive and Field Secretary of the fastest growing civil rights organization in the country—the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). He was using the job as way to forge a career in journalism and told Pickens as much, writing: “In connection with my real labor as a Substitute Railway Postal Clerk I give my hand writing things for the ANP and several newspapers.” Anderson indicated that as a substitute clerk his travels “were not confined to any particular points,” and he had “the privilege to make numerous contacts in different places.” He believed he could help facilitate the NAACP's growth in the South. “I am interested in my people too,” he asserted, “nowhere else is in as much need as my section of the country.” “If in any way I can help the work of your organization please call on me, and you would find a ready response”; he guaranteed . . . “I'll roast them alive in my column.”¹

Trezzvant Anderson intended to use journalism to make his mark. Throughout his career he would come to be known as a journalist who was fearless and reckless,

¹ Letter, Trezzvant W. Anderson to William Pickens, 1930 December 25, Box G-146, Group 1, Charlotte Files, NAACP Papers, Library of Congress

confident and arrogant, loyal and brutally frank. Between 1928 and 1931, he was not a household name but referred to himself as “the reporter who started at the top with the top contacts.”² The dual nature of Anderson’s work as a railway mail clerk and journalist was unique insofar as it allowed him to collect news firsthand *and* distribute it. His writing during this period covered the NAACP, black fraternal orders, lynching, and judicial injustice and was instrumental in getting news about Charlotte into larger national newspapers. Anderson, fishing for an opportunity, contacted Pickens at a time when the NAACP was looking for a regional field secretary in the South.³ Although the position never materialized for Anderson, many other influential people in the black newspaper and civic leadership world took notice of his talent and recognized the benefit of his mobility as a railway mail clerk.

Henry Houston, founder and editor of *The Charlotte Post*, first recognized Anderson’s skill and in 1928 made him a featured contributor. As a Charlotte native, he founded the newspaper in 1925, promoted it as “the voice of the black community,” and aimed to attract readers throughout the Carolinas.⁴ Houston was moderate leader, who was a proud, self-made man who “never had but one job outside the newspaper business.” He began in the industry as a young “‘devil’ or office boy” at the Southern Newspaper Union of Charlotte, a printing service that produced hundreds of regional

² ‘Complete Biography of Trezzvant W. Anderson’ (Courier Roving Reporter), (4-page draft) Box 12, Folder 10, Trezzvant W. Anderson Papers, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Atlanta University Center.

³ Patricia Sullivan, *Lift Every Voice and Sing: The NAACP and the Making of the Civil Rights Movement*, (New York, NY: The New Press, 2009), pg. 137; According to Sullivan, Pickens and Robert Bagnall, National Director of Branches, had just spent two consecutive springs, in 1928 and 1929, touring the South. They reported that the “old timidity” was gone and enthusiasm for the NAACP was growing, but they stressed that the board of directors “badly needed” to hire a full-time regional secretary to realize the potential of a strong NAACP presence throughout the region.

⁴ Roland E. Wolseley, *The Black Press, U.S.A.*, (Ames, IA: Iowa State University, 1990), pg. 118

weeklies. “[F]or eighteen years” he worked there and “learned all about [newspaper] work.” Houston had little education beyond grade school but asserted, “that did not keep me from aspiring to make good in the world.”⁵ Houston’s initiative and commitment to the local black community compelled him to establish the *Charlotte Post*. When Anderson joined the staff in late 1927, the small newspaper operated out of a small-framed building behind Houston’s home at 624 East Second Street. By 1930, Anderson reported the *Post* “owns a one-cylinder press, two job presses, and other equipment, which is totally paid for.”⁶ He asserted that it was during those years, as a “young man,” he “learned to truly evaluate Houston and know what the Negro newspaper really meant.”⁷

The *Charlotte Post* held membership in the ANP but until Anderson joined the staff much of the news it covered was relegated to Charlotte readers. The ANP was founded in 1919 by Claude Barnett to provide a nationwide news service to black newspapers around the country. As a member, newspapers were asked to share news with the ANP in exchange for access to their news wire. From its inception, according to one historian, Barnett experienced problems finding “skilled reporting from quality people on a regular basis,” due to “the limited funds he had at his disposal.” Throughout the first decade, Barnett was fortunate to find volunteers willing to send him dispatches without compensation. He described them as his “army of volunteer reporters,” and

⁵ Interview with Henry Houston by J.R. Glenn, 29 August 1939, WPA Life Histories Collection, Library of Congress

⁶ “Charlotte Post in Fifth Year, Has Plant Paid For,” *Afro-American*, 1930 December 20

⁷ ‘Complete Biography of Trezzvant W. Anderson

provided them with ANP press cards “designating them as news gatherers.”⁸ By 1926, the ANP sought to build “a permanent staff of reporters,” who were well-trained and from “every strategic part of the country.” “Their sole business,” Barnett wrote, “would be to get news to us.”⁹ In Trezzvant he found a zealous worker.

Anderson used the railways to establish an extensive regional network that proved to be an asset to both the *Charlotte Post* and the ANP. The Railway Mail Service provided not only mobility for its employees, it also provided social status, particularly in the black community, lucrative pay, and, for many, was a breeding ground for civic politicization. Blacks filled many positions within the postal service including “clerks, carriers, special delivery messengers, laborers, custodians, and motor vehicle mechanics.”¹⁰ However, discrimination precluded their work as railway mail service clerks. Exclusion from this elite position and from the Railway Mail Association prompted the formation of the National Alliance of Postal Employees (NAPE), a black railway postal employees’ union founded in 1913. Most African American railway mail clerks, including Anderson, were members of NAPE. In 1923 NAPE became the first black industrial union recognized by the federal government, meaning it welcomed skilled and unskilled labor. According to one scholar, its leaders were college educated, its political ideology was far more pro-working class and left than white unions, and it gave its members the “opportunity to fight for both civil rights and labor rights.”¹¹

⁸ Lawrence D. Hogan, *A Black National News Service: The Associated Negro Press and Claude Barnett, 1919-1945*, (Teaneck, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1984), pg. 82-83

⁹ Ibid, pg. 84

¹⁰ Philip F. Rubio, *There’s Always Work at the Post Office*, (University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 2010), pg. 30.

¹¹ Ibid

A.L. Glenn, long time RMS employee, union leader, and historian, wrote that black railway mail clerks were “rated along with or just behind the professional group.” They were “always up-to-date on local and national events of importance,” and their “ideas were sought often on all civic matters.”¹² When Anderson joined the RMS in 1927 he joined a small cadre of influential, well-established members of Charlotte’s black middle class.¹³ Like them, Anderson became an active participant in the city’s black community, though he remained critical of older, conservative black leadership.

Journalists were not well paid, thus work as a substitute railway mail clerk sustained Anderson financially. He earned \$154 per month, \$1850 annually for several days’ worth of work.¹⁴ He acknowledged that the job was beneficial to his pursuits as a journalist because much of the month was at his disposal; “It must be considered that the usual work period per month consumes from ten to twelve days, depending upon the length of the run with the remainder of the month free at the clerk’s disposal.”¹⁵ During Anderson’s first three and half years as a substitute railway mail clerk, his postal runs took him as far north as Washington, D.C., as far south as Atlanta, as far west as

¹² A. L. Glenn, *History of the National Alliance of Postal Employees, 1913-1955*, (Washington, D.C., National Alliance of Postal Employees, 1955), pg. 16

¹³ (Caesar Blake Sr., Robert S. Bampfield, Zoel S. Hargrave, Frank Y. Ellison, and Jacob Thompson were all local railway mail clerks); See following sources for more information: ‘Aged Clerk is Paid Tribute on Retirement,’ *The Chicago Defender*, 1929 March 23, Article, likely written by Anderson, highlights the career of Caesar Blake Sr.; A.L. Glenn, *History of the National Alliance*, pg. 19, Glenn states that Blake, in 1913, was a key contact for establishing NAPE in North Carolina; ‘Southerners are Making Progress,’ *Afro-American*, 1913 February 8, Article list both Ellison and Blake as prominent leaders in Charlotte who played hosts to John S. Murphy (*Afro-American* founder) as he traveled through the city; ‘Prize Beauty Well Again,’ *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, 1931 June 27, Article discusses the health of the wife of Bampfield but identifies him as a railway mail clerk, grandson of Robert Smalls and son of Elizabeth Bampfield; Both Hargrave and Thompson were involved in civil rights activity in 1920s and 1930s; NAACP Charter Application, 1927 March 9, Box G-146, Group 1, Charlotte Files, NAACP Papers, Library of Congress

¹⁴ Record of Retirement Deductions/Grade and Salary, 1927 November 5, Trezzvant W. Anderson Files, Civilian Personnel Records, National Personnel Records Center, St. Louis, Missouri.

¹⁵ Trezzvant W. Anderson, “News and Views of the Postal Service,” *Afro-American*, 1939 May 13

Knoxville and through practically every small and large town in between, especially throughout North and South Carolina. Pay, leisure time, and mobility all favorably contributed to Anderson's ascension in the black newspaper world.

The *Charlotte Post* gave Trezzvant Anderson a platform from which he reported major news stories in his first column, "Current Comment," and contributed to other newspapers such as the *Carolina Times*, *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, and *Afro American*. More importantly, it got him involved in civic activism.¹⁶ In 1929 Anderson covered the trial of Clyde Fowler, who had been convicted of killing a white police officer and who was represented by the Charlotte chapter of the NAACP. Anderson covered the trial as only a native insider could, a style of reporting that he honed in the *Charlotte Post* and that characterized his writing throughout his career. Mainstream media, namely the *Charlotte Observer*, convicted Fowler before he had been arrested, let alone tried. The paper led efforts to raise funds for the dead officer's widow and attempted to influence public opinion with sensational headlines that referred to Fowler as "murderer," "killer," and "outlaw."¹⁷ Fowler evaded arrest for three weeks, and, in the wake of the officer's death, the police set up blockades on all highways and barricaded black neighborhoods; officers entered homes without warrants, airplanes and bloodhounds combed wooded areas, and they arrested dozens of blacks in surrounding towns. Anderson acted as an

¹⁶ Ibid; also see: "Journal And Guide Staff Writer To Washington," *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, 1931 July 11, pg. 3, for information about Anderson's earliest columns, in addition to 'Current Comment' there was also 'Spotlight' in the *Carolina Times*

¹⁷ Vann Newkirk, Ph.D. dissertation, "The Development of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People in Metropolitan Charlotte, North Carolina 1919-1965," (Washington, D.C.: Howard University, 2002)

inside reporter and published critical information regarding the circumstances that surrounded the incident and the officer's record in his column and national newspapers.¹⁸

The officer, Edgar Correll, and his partner obtained a warrant to apprehend a suspect for breaking and entering. They forcefully entered the boarding house where Fowler resided but did not identify themselves as police officers. Correll barged into Fowler's room and was fatally shot by Fowler. Fowler fled the scene as he heard Correll's partner approaching. Anderson highlighted the strategy that Fowler's lawyer, Thomas L. Kirkpatrick, used during the trial. He "brought out the fact that the officer did not read the warrant," which made the search illegal. Kirkpatrick also reported that, "Correll's record [was] said to have included the killings of two Negroes." Though indeed guilty of having shot the officer, the NAACP sought and successfully secured a fair trial for Fowler before he was automatically given the death penalty. Anderson concluded his coverage of the trial with the article entitled: "Slayer of N.C. Killer Cop is Given 20 Yrs."¹⁹

The Charlotte NAACP hailed the verdict as a huge victory because it marked the first time in state history that a black convicted of murdering a police officer escaped the electric chair.²⁰ Anderson interviewed local black citizens to get their impression on the ruling. One anonymous Charlotte citizen, likely Anderson, expressed the sentiment that the trial results put the world on notice, especially northern blacks, that "there [were] some Negroes in the South who [had] 'guts' enough to fight for a brother even if he [was]

¹⁸ Ibid

¹⁹ 'Slayer of N.C. Killer Cop is Given 20 Yrs.,' *Afro-American*, 1929 March 16, pg. 2.

²⁰ Newkirk, Ph.D. dissertation, "The Development of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People in Metropolitan Charlotte, North Carolina 1919-1965," pg. 57, Newkirk reveals that Taylor Jackson relocated to Talladega College in Alabama.

a gambler of the lowest class.”²¹ Older, conservative middle-class black members of the branch, including administrators at Johnson C. Smith University (JCSU), worried about white backlash. As a result Taylor S. Jackson, president of the Charlotte NAACP chapter and full-time philosophy professor at the school, was dismissed from his job and was forced to relinquish the presidency. Jackson was Anderson’s former professor and the university’s decision to dismiss Jackson prematurely triggered Anderson’s criticism of the administration of his former school.²²

With Taylor Jackson’s dismissal, the Charlotte NAACP branch disintegrated. This disintegration took place at a time when the NAACP was gaining traction in other parts of the South. Anderson believed his access to black newspapers could help increase NAACP membership, give voice, direction, and power to local branches, particularly in Charlotte.²³ In late 1930 and early 1931, Anderson corresponded with William Pickens to re-organize the defunct Charlotte chapter. In one letter he noted that Zachariah Alexander, a prominent fraternal figure and funeral director, had assumed leadership of the branch and “has asked me if I would accept the secretaryship of the local branch.” Anderson wrote: “I stated to him [Alexander] that I would be honored to have the position, and if I could serve them effectively I would accept the task. I hope that my service will not be in any sense ‘dead,’ but active to such an extent that we will grow to large proportions, not only in Charlotte, but throughout North Carolina.” Along with the

²¹ “Charlotte Citizens Win Hot Fight To Save Fowler From Chair,” *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, 1929 March 30; this is likely one of Anderson’s earliest articles, which were published without a byline likely to conceal his identity so as not to endanger his new job.

²² See chapter one, Anderson’s articles criticizing the administration came shortly after the Fowler case and Jackson’s dismissal.

²³ Letter, Trezzvant W. Anderson to William Pickens, 1930 December 25, Box G-146, Group 1, Charlotte Files, NAACP Papers, Library of Congress

letter, he sent “a copy of the *Charlotte Post*,” so Pickens might read his ‘Current Comment’ column on “N.A.A.C.P. and Charlotte.”²⁴

Anderson found that rallying the masses of local black citizens around the idea of reorganizing the NAACP branch required more than rhetoric in weekly editorials. After initial calls for a meeting of interested citizens resulted in a poor turnout, he and Alexander abandoned their efforts because the gathering failed to produce the required fifty signatures for a new charter. Anderson noted, “citizens are not giving their full support to the movement,” only “six persons attended the meeting out of a 32,000 (black) population.”²⁵ He did not speculate about why there was a general lack of interest in reviving the local NAACP branch; however, one source suggests that many former members disliked Alexander and elected to abandon the chapter during his tenure.²⁶ This rift was likely due to Alexander’s social standing within the community. Members of the black middle-class had exhibited their unwillingness to help defend lower-class blacks in the Fowler case. While Anderson was attempting to change the direction of the local NAACP chapter, he had only achieved some local name recognition as a journalist. This was not enough to command African Americans into action.

In Charlotte, inter-racial political alliances were built between “the better classes,” based on ideas of respectability. In this regard, white leadership did not have a favorable

²⁴ Trezzvant W. Anderson to William Pickens, 25 December 1930; William Pickens to T.W. Anderson, 5 January 1931; Trezzvant W. Anderson to William Pickens, 14 January 1931; William Pickens to T.W. Anderson, 16 January 1931, Box G146, Group I, NAACP Papers; Newkirk, in his dissertation, provides a detailed discussion of the problems Jackson experienced as NAACP head, particularly those that related to his insistence that the branch support potential black criminals whom he argued were also victims of illegal police harassment. This was the period of the infamous Scottsboro case and middle class blacks wanted the organization to steer clear of controversial cases. The actual clipping from the *Charlotte Post*, although listed on the finding aid, was missing from the NAACP files.

²⁵ “Charlotteans Fail to Support National Association,” *Afro-American*, 14 February 1931

²⁶ Newkirk, Ph.D. dissertation, pg. 58

view of the NAACP and considered it an outside, instigating organization. To maintain good relationships with white leaders, black leadership acquiesced and thus stymied support of the NAACP. Support might have been met with reprisals: if teachers joined they could be fired, if business owners joined, negative things could be printed in local newspapers about them. In fact, local white leaders, especially those associated with “the *Charlotte Observer* [had] pushed black elites to guard against the infection of the NAACP,” since its first emergence in 1919.²⁷ The NAACP, despite several attempts, did not regain a strong foothold in Charlotte until 1940. Henry Houston, one of the many black leaders absent from Alexander and Anderson’s call to action, instead took a leading role in the formation of the Colored Civic League (CCL) and the Negro Citizen’s League (NCL). These were homegrown organizations focused on community revitalization and voting rights. Because of Henry Houston’s close working relationship with Anderson, he used him to publicize the activities of these organizations, and in turn these organizations allowed Anderson to engage readers about crucial public issues. Anderson’s writings brought national attention to his hometown and his own talents.²⁸

The work of the CCL and NCL shaped Anderson’s early ideas about black citizenship in the South, the importance of civic engagement, and voting as the key component of citizenship rights. Under the veil of an afternoon church service, the CCL held its first community-wide meeting in September of 1930. “Five hundred citizens gathered in a mass meeting,” reported Anderson, “at Grace A.M.E. Zion Church to draw

²⁷ Vann R. Newkirk, *Lynching in North Carolina: A History, 1865-1941*, (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2009), pg. 43

²⁸ Charlotte, NC NAACP Membership Report, 1928 June 15, Box G146, Group I, NAACP Papers, Library of Congress; Interview with Henry Houston by J.R. Glenn, 1939 August 29, From The WPA Life Histories Collection

up a resolution to urge city officials to erect a new school building to replace the old Myers Street graded school.”²⁹ For twenty-five years black leaders petitioned white city officials to replace the old dilapidated building. Myers Street graded school (the same school that Anderson’s mother attended) was a barn-like, “ramshackle, wooden firetrap” with eight classrooms accessible only by exterior stairs. In his article “1,200 Attend School in Unfit Building,” which appeared in the *Afro-American*, Anderson wrote that the structure, “has been condemned as unfit by state and municipal authorities,” but “no action has been taken.” He was using his platform to inform black citizens about municipal politics, specifically reporting that a bond issue, placed on local ballots, passed and yielded enough to build a new \$500,000 high school for white students, yet the school board declared that it had no funds to construct a school for black children.³⁰

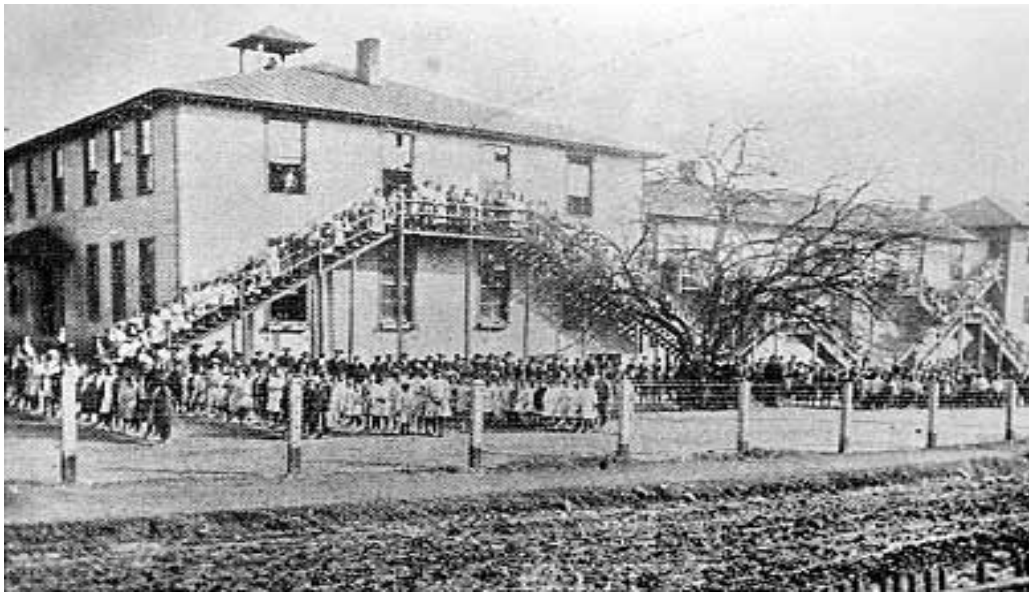


Figure 2.1 Myers Street Graded School. Students and parents referred to it as ‘Jacob’s ladder.’
(Photo Courtesy of Charlotte-Mecklenburg Library)

²⁹ “1,200 Attend School in Unfit Building,” *Afro-American*, 1930 September 20, pg.3; Rose Leary Love, *Plum Thickets & Field Daisies*, (Charlotte, NC: Public Library of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County, 1996), Love provides rich details about the Brooklyn neighborhood in which she grew up.

³⁰ Ibid; also see *The Right Time: The Autobiography of Harry Golden*, pg. 242-243

The NCL, which was a part of a larger statewide consortium of Citizens' Leagues, worked in tandem with the CCL to achieve its civic objectives. The league's primary focus was voter registration. In Charlotte the NCL conducted weekly 'Sunday Afternoon Forums,' which hosted prominent members of the black community to educate local residents about the importance of voting. Anderson attended these forums and used national newspapers to school the public on the differences voting could make. He asserted, there were "75,000 Negroes eligible to vote, yet only a few are availing themselves the privilege, thus making it hard on the small minority which does vote."³¹ By the summer of 1931 the combined efforts of the CCL and NCL proved to be effective when the school board finally voted to build a new twenty-five room fireproof building on Myers Street and another fifteen-room building in nearby Third Ward. Anderson reported that, "the victory and procuring of the school buildings, incidentally demonstrate how important the ballot is to any people." He proclaimed that, "for years the people had begged and pleaded with the various school boards, but boards came and went heedless to their pleas. But prior to the last city election, a few leaders, backed by the [Negro] Citizen's League, urged the colored people to register and vote for those who would be willing to support the school program."³²

Trezzvant Anderson's work with Henry Houston, his column in the *Charlotte Post*, and his affiliation with Claude Barnett and the ANP not only brought national attention to the city, it also caught the attention of Caesar Blake. Blake, a native of Charlotte, fellow JCSU alumnus, and former railway mail clerk was the national leader or

³¹ Trezzvant W. Anderson, "North Carolina Banker Urges Larger Use of Voting Power," *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, 1930 December 20, pg. 14.

³² "N.C. Town Wins 25-Year Fight," *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, 1931 September 5, pg.3

Imperial Potentate of the Ancient Egyptian Arabic Order of the Mystic and Noble Shrine (AEAOMNS) or Prince Hall Shriners. Since 1919 Blake served the Shriners in this capacity and in 1929 he hired Anderson as his press agent and speechwriter. Blake used Anderson primarily to help expand membership, cover national conventions and publicize his activities. His skill as an organizer and orator greatly impressed Anderson, and Anderson was encouraged by Blake's seeming militancy and political savvy; he later asserted Blake is "my choice as the hometown's No. 1 citizen."³³

Fraternal orders were significant in the black community, and they, like churches, and black newspapers, helped stabilize and mobilize black communities. The first black fraternal orders included the Prince Hall Masons (1775) and Grand United Order of Odd Fellows (1843). They emerged long before the Civil War in response to white Masons' and Odd Fellows' refusal to extend the universal principles of brotherhood, love, and truth to free blacks in the United States. Dozens of fraternal orders arose following Emancipation and hundreds of thousands of African American men and women sought membership to these sisterhoods and brotherhoods, because they exemplified the self-respect and equal treatment that had been denied them. These orders, like their white counterparts, became vehicles for honing individual resources and building social networks capable of forging vibrant community institutions. Out of fraternal orders grew major black businesses including banks, real estate and insurance companies, benevolent societies, and funeral homes. African Americans turned the walls of segregation, designed to keep blacks in subordinate roles, into powerful sources of influence that helped insulate their communities. This kind of economic autonomy threatened the

³³ Trezzvant W. Anderson, "News and Views of the Postal Service," *Afro-American*, 17 February 1940; Complete Biography of Trezzvant W. Anderson (Courier Roving Reporter), Trezzvant Anderson Papers

predominant social structure that kept blacks in subservient positions, and black fraternal orders became targets during the Jim Crow era as legal campaigns challenged their right to organize.³⁴

Caesar Blake led the Shriners through the most critical time of its existence, when fear and hostility towards most forms of organized black life was arguably at an all-time high. He endured ten long years of lawsuits that denied the black fraternal order the right to use the same symbols, rituals, and names as their white counterparts. In 1922, the Shriners claimed just 2,000 members nationwide. Blake used his position as a railway mail clerk and traveled around the country, organized lodges, and raised funds to combat the onslaught of lawsuits. By 1929 he expanded membership to over 9,000 members. Blake urged African Americans to showcase their “racial consciousness,” and encourage them to “support the black community, patronize African American businesses, get involved in politics,” and moreover “demand the enforcement of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments.”³⁵

Caesar Blake emerged as one of the most prominent black fraternal and civil rights leaders in the country, according to one historian. In 1927, he and other leaders, including James Finley Wilson (Elks), Nannie H. Burroughs (National Association of Colored Women) and William Pickens (NAACP), sent “a memorial to Congress concerning the wrongs inflicted upon the Negro people.” They “dedicated themselves to continue their cooperation so that their influences might be felt in the circles of the

³⁴ Marshall Ganz, Ariane Liazos and Theda Skocpol, *What a Mighty Power We Can Be: African American Fraternal Groups and the Struggle for Racial Equality*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), pg. 11; This work offers the most extensive research on the twentieth-century struggles of black fraternal orders to exist and their dedication to fighting for black civic freedoms.

³⁵ Nina Mjagkij, ed., *Organizing Black America: An Encyclopedia of African American Associations*, (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 2001), pg. 62-63

National Government and that the status of Negroes would be advanced.”³⁶ Blake’s efforts to defend black fraternal orders’ right to organize, ultimately led to the Supreme Court decision, *Ancient Egyptian Arabic Order v. Michaux of Nobles of the Mystic Shrine* (1929), to endorse the right of black fraternal orders to exist. The federal courts ended decades of legal harassment, in which white parallel organizations sought injunctions to prevent the legality of black Shriners’ and other fraternal orders’ activities.³⁷

Between 1928 and 1931, fraternal orders had broad social, political, and economic reach, and Anderson’s association with as prominent a leader as Blake increased his own professional network. Anderson used his access to ANP wires as a way to spread information about Blake’s accomplishments and to promote the progressive policies that helped the black Shriners increase its membership. He drew attention to the order’s first annual Jubilee Day when it celebrated the Supreme Court decision. Anderson quoted Blake: “The infamous Dred Scott decision in 1857 declared the Negro to be nothing more than chattel slaves. The Supreme Court decision of 1929 recognizes the Negro as an American citizen with property and fraternal rights which must be respected by all.” While Blake viewed the ruling as a mandate for the enforcement of the Fourteenth Amendment, the court did not. The decision was not based on arguments of infringement of the Fourteenth Amendment but rather that white Shriners were guilty of ‘laches,’ a legal term that simply meant they had waited too long to claim exclusivity of naming

³⁶ Charles H. Wesley, *History of the Improved Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks of the World, 1898-1954*, (Washington, DC: Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, Inc., 1955), pg. 214-215

³⁷ For information on Blake’s role as leader of the Shriners see: Joseph A. Walkes, *History of the Shrine: Ancient Egyptian Arabic Order Nobles of the Mystic Shrine, Inc. 1893-1993*, (Detroit, MI: AEONMS Inc., 1993); and Marshall Ganz, Ariane Liazos and Theda Skocpol, *What a Mighty Power We Can Be*.

rights.³⁸ Nevertheless, it was a moral victory for black fraternal orders all over the country, but especially in the South, where members had suffered through a long period of harassment and intimidation.

Trezzvant Anderson covered the 31st Annual Session of the AEAONMS, held in Charlotte. It was the order's first meeting held in the South and dignitaries from all over the country attended, including Congressman Oscar DePriest. Blake delivered the convention's opening speech and, very uncharacteristically, tempered his usual radical rhetoric. Blake suggested that, "there was better understanding and feeling among the races in the southland," and that "there is no possibility of social equality. It is undesired and would not be accepted by any Negro even if there was a possibility of such a thing." Infuriated by the gesture, Anderson felt that Blake made a deliberate attempt to appease local white leaders. The newspaperman promptly used his pen to condemn Blake publicly. With the headline, "Shrine Leader Says He Wants No Equality: Uncle Tom Blake, Speaker at Charlotte Session," Anderson articulated pointed, blunt, criticism of his mentor.³⁹ The incident made Anderson believe that despite all of the noble work, that Blake's organization would never fully represent the masses of working-class African Americans. After a year as Blake's press agent and speechwriter, Anderson split with the Shrine leader.⁴⁰

³⁸ Complete Biography of Trezzvant W. Anderson; ANP-"White Shriners Row to Supreme Court," *Afro-American*, 30 November 1929; ANP-"Shriners Still Legally Barred from Georgia," *Afro-American*, 15 March 1930; "Masonic Jubilee Celebrates Victory of Shriners; Phillips Mourned," *Afro-American*, 31 May 1930; *ibid*, *What a Mighty Power We Can Be*, p. 162-163

³⁹ ANP-"Shrine Leader Says He Wants No Equality," *Afro-American*, 16 August 1930.

⁴⁰ Complete Biography of Trezzvant W. Anderson (Courier Roving Reporter), Trezzvant Anderson Papers

Blake and Anderson's relationship underscores philosophical differences between older and younger generations of African American leadership and ideas about respectability; a key issue that Anderson continued to confront throughout his life. After his split with Blake, Anderson gradually took an even bolder stance in his journalism. His writing reflected the everyday realities of black life in the South, confronted lynching head on and mirrored community outrage. He wanted to show that Blake's words rang hollow; better understanding among the races was a farce. African Americans really did desire and would accept social equality if it were remotely possible. Anderson understood that equal citizenship rights had to be won and would not be realized without a long arduous fight.

In Charlotte race relations were governed by ideas of respectability between the better classes of blacks and whites. To highlight that hospitable race relations did not eradicate injustice, Anderson reported on the experiences of Lillian Redding, who was subjected to flagrant disregard for justice. Redding was a schoolteacher, and, on the evening of September 23, 1930, after a long day of work at Fairview Graded School, Redding caught the trolley from Biddleville headed towards uptown. Anderson recounted her ride for readers: "After she had ridden nearly a mile and a half" at the front of the car, the conductor, ordered her to the back. He yelled, "Hey, you! Get back there." Redding looked at him confused. "Yes, you!" The driver said. "Why?" She asked. With the exception of one white man who had just boarded, she had observed the rest of the passengers were black. He replied, "don't ask why, just get back!" With subtle indignation, Redding moved back just one seat. Outraged by her defiance the driver summoned the police when he stopped at the city square. An officer boarded the trolley

“and with his hands forcibly removed her, meanwhile using abusive language.” He threw the young schoolteacher into a patrol car and took her to the jail, “where she was placed in a cell without being allowed to communicate with her friends.” After much trouble, she was finally released on the following day with a twenty-five dollars bond.⁴¹

With the article, Anderson openly publicized racial injustice in Charlotte. Lillian Redding’s ordeal was prominently carried in three of the nation’s largest black newspapers, including the *Pittsburgh Courier*, *Afro-American*, and *Norfolk Journal and Guide* and was the first to carry his own name as a byline. His open indictment of public officials differed from previous efforts that encouraged blacks to organize. His article did not spark a social movement (nor does it appear to have been his intention), but it did mark a clear shift towards his style of activism.

Such public condemnation gradually convinced Anderson to turn his attention to lynching. Since the 1880s reporting on lynching was a dangerous enterprise and continued to be into the 1930s. The last ANP correspondent to do so, Theodore Holmes, was forced to flee the South in 1927. Walter White, an executive of the national NAACP, whose complexion allowed him to pass for white, secretly took on the role of an undercover investigator into the practice of lynching. His efforts provided the most notable insights into this era of lynching.⁴² Several months after reporting on Blake’s speech at the Shriners’ convention in Charlotte, Trezzvant Anderson cautiously directed

⁴¹ Trezzvant W. Anderson (ANP), “Delaware Girl Arrested For Violating Jim Crow Law,” *Afro-American*, 1930 September 27, pg. A3; Trezzvant W. Anderson (ANP), “Teacher Arrested for Riding Front Seat of Jim Crow Street Car,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1930 September 27, pg. 1; ANP, “Northern Girl Abused By Ruffian Conductor and Cop,” *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, 1930 October 4, pg. 2; This was actually the second article that he openly used his own name as his byline. A week earlier, on September 20, he wrote an article about the rating of black colleges by the Southern Association for Education.

⁴² ANP, “Newspaper Man Flees Little Rock Lynchers,” *Afro-American*, 21 May 1927, pg. 6; See Walter White, *Rope and Faggot: A Biography of Judge Lynch*, (New York: Knopf Publishing, 1929)

his attention to Tarboro, North Carolina, where a gruesome lynching had taken place. He reminded readers that such violence had a long history in the state. In fact, thirty-three African Americans had been lynched in the South in 1930 by September.⁴³

In covering the event, Anderson carefully reported the grisly details to the *Chicago Defender* and the *Afro-American*. In the *Defender* he wrote: “Oliver Moore, 29-year-old tenant farmer, on the night of Aug. 19, has gone on record as another of the unsolved mob murders of America.” He was accused of attacking two young girls, but he denied the charge to the last. Moore managed to remain “out of the hands of the sheriff and his ‘posse’ for a month,” but after “thinking the excitement had subsided returned to Edgecombe County and was arrested at the home of his brother.” Around nine o’clock that evening a “mob, 200 strong, and composed of men and women,” removed Moore from the “frail lockup.” Anderson revealed that Moore “was taken across the county line into Wilson County and hanged. The rope was not placed about his neck, but under his arms so that he would not die at once. Then his body was riddled with bullets—bullets fired, not altogether in a volley, but individually as in target practice.” Moore was shot more than a hundred times. Afterwards, “the mob dispersed, leaving the body suspended and horribly mutilated with gun shot wounds.” It was not cut down until a day later, “after thousands of men, women, and children had come from miles around to see it.” Moore’s lynching at the hands of a mob was North Carolina’s worst in nine years.⁴⁴

⁴³ “1930 Lynching List Continues to Mount by Leaps and Bounds: 34 Persons Lynched During First Nine Months,” *Afro-American*, 11 October 1930

⁴⁴ “Women Bring Children to See Brutal Lynching,” *Chicago Defender*, 30 August 1930, pg. 3; also see: ANP (Tarboro), “Lynch League Totals Rise,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 30 August 1930, pg. A1, the latter article was safer to use his ANP byline because it did not go into any detail about the actual lynching.

Certainly Anderson recognized that a first hand account of a lynching came at great personal and professional risk. Yet, he took the extraordinary step highlighting the personal sacrifices he had made. In “Women, Children Turn Lynching Into Picnic,” Anderson took on the persona of a reader and disclosed the circumstances of writing the story. He recruited a friend to take him out to the scene where Moore was “strung up to a tree and riddled with bullets.” “This was one of the worst sights I ever saw, and it made me sick,” the reader proclaimed, but it appeared to have “no effect at all on the delicate white women, girls and children at the scene.” “There was no sign of terror in their faces,” he wrote, “There was nothing but giggles and laughter as the blood dripped from the nose and from the bullet-riddled body of the victim. I wanted to get a picture of Moore but before I got close enough Moore was cut down from the tree.” As the body hit the ground, “I heard one man say, as they turned him over, ‘don’t move him. You don’t know what the law will do to you.’ The man said it was left to him and that he could move all the ‘niggers’ he wanted to. At that time, one of my friends said, ‘let’s go.’”⁴⁵

Anderson assumed the role of activist in his dispatch to the *Pittsburgh Courier*. In an effort to seek justice for Moore he contacted Governor O. Max Gardner, who “was on his vacation in the western part of the state,” to assess his views of the lynching and inquire whether he planned to prosecute the mob. Anderson revealed that Gardner “characterized the lynching as a disgrace to North Carolina,” and “declared that he intended to see that the mobbists are brought justice.” He stopped short of initiating any type of state probe and instead maintained that “the state [would] back (Sheriff W. E.

⁴⁵ “Women, Children Turn Lynching Into Picnic,” *Afro-American*, 30 August 1930, pg. 4

Bardin's) county forces.”⁴⁶ Anderson was not naïve; he wrote, “it is known that every governor of a lynch state has made the same declaration,” and “that no lyncher has yet been convicted in the South for his crime.”⁴⁷

In his “first feature article,” Trezzvant boldly declared lynching as a flagrant transgression of justice, noting that lynching was often the result of “white persons who blamed crimes on innocent Negroes.”⁴⁸ The *Norfolk Journal and Guide* carried his combined reports in an article, entitled “Three Alibis of ‘Negro Did It’ Are Discredited,” which spotlighted similar incidents in Lexington, North Carolina, Bristol, a border town on the Virginia/Tennessee state line, and St. Genevieve, Missouri. On the night of October 4, 1930, in Lexington, Thomas Marion maintained that, “the car in which they (he and his wife-Susie) were riding on the Highpoint-Thomasville Road was held up by a Negro who robbed” him of twenty dollars, “and shot his wife through the breast.” A week later, on the morning of October 12, in Bristol, Mrs. Sam Hagy “staggered into the kitchen of her father-in-law,” bleeding profusely from slashes to her wrists and throat, sobbing and claiming, “A Negro attacked me.” In Ste. Genevieve, on the evening of October 19, Lonie Taylor and Columbus Jennings were accused of robbing, shooting, and dumping the wounded bodies of Harry Panchot and Paul Ritter into the Mississippi River.

Anderson pointed out the contradictions in the events and details Thomas Marion recounted to police officers. Apparently once his wife was shot, Marion drove her body

⁴⁶ ANP (Raleigh), “Governor ‘Promises’ To Prosecute Lynchers,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 30 August 1930, pg. A1

⁴⁷ “Women Bring Children to See Brutal Lynching,” *Chicago Defender*, 30 August 1930, pg. 3

⁴⁸ Complete Biography of Trezzvant W. Anderson (Courier Roving Reporter), Trezzvant Anderson Papers; “Three Alibis of ‘Negro Did It’ Are Discredited,” *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, 25 October 1930, pg. 1; Anderson asserted, in the four page draft, that “his first feature article in 1930 when he exposed a white man who had killed his wife and claimed a Negro did it.” He claimed that, “the white man got life imprisonment as a result of Trezz’s article in October 1930.” Anderson was likely exaggerating.

home, but he did not call the police for several hours. As Anderson explained, authorities said that Marion first only “reported the robbery and told of the killing upon being questioned by police for details of the holdup.” The officers grew suspicious of his emphasis on the “robbery” and “black highwayman,” while his wife’s murder seemed secondary. Marion was detained for ten hours following the discovery of his wife’s death but was eventually released “when the Davidson [County] coroner’s jury found that there was insufficient evidence to hold him.” An investigation ensued in which white witnesses came forward to corroborate Marion’s story. However, the combination of the arresting officer’s suspicion along with the emergence of counter witnesses who disputed Marion’s story led to him being rearrested. One witness testified that, “Marion’s car was not on the road he said it was at the time of the killing.” Another attested that, “an unidentified man was seen to stop his automobile, get out and then drive away again toward the Marion home. While the man was out of the car, the witness said a report like that of a pistol shot was heard.”⁴⁹ Ironically, no mob ever formed to hunt down the imaginary “black highwayman.” Years later, Anderson bragged that it was his reports that helped contradict Marion’s testimony and were responsible for Marion receiving a life sentence.⁵⁰

Trezzvant connected the event in Lexington to an allegation of attempted murder in the twin city of Bristol. He reported that, “Mrs. Hagy is just 24 years old and

⁴⁹ “Three Alibis of ‘Negro Did It’ Are Discredited,” *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, 25 October 1930, pg. 1; also see: “Mother Slain; Babe in Lap is Unhurt,” *Afro-American*, 11 October 1930, pg. 1; “Arrest White Man for Murder; Blamed Race,” *Chicago Defender*, 18 October 1930, pg. 2; It is highly likely that Anderson reported in more detail of the on the events surrounding the murder of Susie Marion in the *Carolina Times* and *Charlotte Post*.

⁵⁰ Complete Biography of Trezzvant W. Anderson (Courier Roving Reporter), Trezzvant Anderson Papers

considered comely for a backwoods girl,” but added that, “Both she and her husband are known as “nigger haters” by people in the vicinity.” She “arose at 6:30 a.m., kissed her four year old child goodbye, told her husband she was going to feed the hogs, and left. Instead of going to the barnyard she walked across two fields and into Cowan’s Woods, a quarter of a mile away.” Hagy returned minutes later, “bleeding freely from the throat and wrists,” claimed that a “Negro” had attacked her, and then collapsed onto the floor. Anderson reported that after Hagy was revived, she “described the supposed attacker minutely as to size and sort of clothing. She was walking through the woods, she said, when he jumped from behind a stump, seized her, cut her throat and wrists and fled.”⁵¹

In less than half an hour, Anderson wrote, a mob quickly gathered:

So accurate was her description that the mob had a clear conception of the man it meant to lynch. More than 300 men and women in automobiles and on foot, armed with rifles, pistols, garden implements and clubs, tilled the woods near where the Hagys lived. Systematically the men began to beat the woods while women watched all lanes. It is certain that had an unfortunate man been in the woods at the time he would have been lynched before anyone could have interfered.⁵²

In the midst of the search, the doctors’ examination of the woman revealed that all her “wounds were self-inflicted and that she had not been assaulted,” which they relayed to leaders of the mob and thus prevented an unnecessary lynching.⁵³

In his final case, Anderson offered some insight into one of the more extreme outcomes that African Americans faced when mob violence went unchecked. In Ste. Genevieve, Missouri 150 black families were forcibly driven from town after a four day

⁵¹ “Three Alibis of ‘Negro Did It’ Are Discredited,” *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, 25 October 1930, pg. 1

⁵² “Physicians Prevent Lynching: Find Dixie Woman Cut Herself,” *Chicago Defender*, 18 October 1930, pg. 1; the *Defender* carried only one of Anderson’s three articles.

⁵³ “Three Alibis of ‘Negro Did It’ Are Discredited”

race riot incited by the deaths of two white men at the hands of two black men.

According to the only two mainstream newspapers that covered the story, robbery was the motive. In the wake of the riot, two black families defiantly stayed in Ste. Genevieve. Louis Ribeau, a member of one of the families and a postal mail carrier, helped Anderson dispel the accusations and flesh out the story. “Much has been said in the daily papers as to what happened down at [Ste.] Genevieve a few days ago which caused the white people of that community to rise up against the colored people,” he wrote. Apparently, on that Sunday night, Lonie Taylor and Columbus Jennings, along with Vera Rodgers, asked two white men, Harry Panchot and Paul Ritter, “to take them to a place near [Ste.] Genevieve known as Little Rock.” Vera paid the men one dollar for the ride. “Enroute [sic], the white men began making insulting remarks to the colored girl offering her fifty cents if she would have illicit relations with them,” Anderson revealed. Taylor and Jennings, offended by the tasteless advancements “remonstrated with the white men about the same, telling them that white men would not stand for Negro men to make such advances to white women.” The argument quickly turned into a fistfight, “guns were drawn,” and Taylor shot Panchot and then Ritter, who was getting the best of Jennings. The white men’s bodies were then thrown into the Mississippi river.⁵⁴

In contrast to southern black editors and journalists, many of whom were reluctant to speak up about the injustices that African Americans faced, Anderson carved out a unique path for himself. He saw himself in a different light than others and took a verbal jab at these figures when he saluted John Murphy Jr., editor of the *Afro-American*. “Just a word to commend you for your fearless and worthwhile editorials, which strike

⁵⁴ “Three Alibis of ‘Negro Did It’ Are Discredited,” *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, 25 October 1930, pg. 1; also see “True Story Told Of Missouri Race Riot,” *Afro-American*, 25 October 1930, pg. 4

the keynote of the southern situation, in a way which cannot be done so fearlessly by southern editors of Negro papers. You are doing for them just what they want to do,” Anderson proclaimed.⁵⁵ Proof that he was willing push the envelope for southern black journalism can be seen in Anderson’s publicizing of his letter writing campaign against news announcer Grady Cole. Anderson indicated that Cole was WBT’s most prominent radio host, was responsible for reading *Charlotte News*’ daily “news flashes,” and incessantly and purposefully mispronounced the word “Negro” as “Nigra.” To Anderson and many other blacks that tuned in, it was a sign of the blatant contempt directed towards them in the region’s major radio news broadcast.⁵⁶ Anderson’s letter campaign demonstrated that he was a reporter who was willing to publicly take white leaders to task.

Trezzvant Anderson’s journalism during this period continued to evolve and encompassed a number of issues related to African Americans in the Depression Era South. While many blacks flocked to northern, mid-western, and western cities in search of better living conditions, many other African Americans remained in the South and sought to improve their circumstances within the region. For instance, he showcased and praised the educational work of an ordinary citizen named Mary Elizabeth Moore. Moore was principal of The Farm Life School located just five miles from Taylorsville in Hiddenite, North Carolina. In “A Small Woman Who is Doing Big Work in Real Way,” he asserted that her efforts were as important as Charlotte Hawkins Brown, Mary

⁵⁵ Editorial, T.W. Anderson, ‘Keynote of the Southern Situation,’ *Afro-American*, 1931 May 9, pg. 6

⁵⁶ LeGette Blythe and Charles R. Brockmann, eds., *Hornets’ Nest: The Story of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County* (Charlotte: McNally of Charlotte, 1961) discusses the founding of WBT; ANP, “Makes Announcer Use ‘Negro’ Correctly,” *The Pittsburgh Courier*, 28 March 1931; ANP, “Makes Announcer Use “Negro” Correctly,” *Afro-American*, 28 March 1931; Trezzvant W. Anderson, “Charlotte, N.C.,” *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, 4 April 1931

McLeod Bethune or Nannie Burroughs. "I sat in a seat in a large southern church and listened to a tiny woman, frail of body, but immensely big in soul, spirit, and energy who made me realize what true service and greatness really means." He described Moore as a "Moses in the Wilderness" because she sacrificed and remained "in the dark forests of the western mountains of North Carolina," for the sole purpose of devoting her life to the education of the 2,000 blacks who lived in the isolated region. He stressed that while she only produced small graduating classes each year, one only has to "look at the conditions" under which she is forced to work to understand her accomplishments. Anderson specifically cited the success story of one of her graduates who matriculated at North Carolina A&T College in Greensboro. He "finished over the heads of city-trained students, and today is Farm Demonstration Agent for his section of Iredell County."⁵⁷

Anderson also used his writings to denounce 'northerners,' who he felt were unqualified to critique southern conditions. Northerners, he argued, continuously encouraged African Americans to leave the region and wrongly criticized those who urged them to stay. "So those mouthy critics who so quickly and eagerly hop on men who are in the South, and who are not cognizant of the real condition of the Southern Negro, should wait a while, and get some first-hand information as to the real truth, rather than use idle vapping to try to discredit their efforts." He defended southern black leaders, like Benjamin Hubert of Savannah, Georgia, and Bishop L. W. Kyles of Winston Salem, North Carolina, for advocating a back-to-farm movement. Anderson admitted that there were more opportunities in the North, but he also pointed to the fact that many

⁵⁷ Trezzvant W. Anderson, "A Small Woman Who Is Doing Big Work in Real Way," *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, 14 March 1931; Trezzvant W. Anderson, "Career for Woman May Mean No Husband," *Afro-American*, 1931 August 1; Trezzvant W. Anderson, *Philadelphia Tribune*, 1931 August 6; Trezzvant W. Anderson, "Are Women Coming Into Their Own," *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, 1931 August 8

African Americans who ventured north returned disappointed. “I have seen a lot of Negroes go and come back home (South) broke and hungry. And it happens every day. Trains are filled with them returning home.” He did not suggest that blacks return to sharecropping on white-owned farms, but rather that they should seek other opportunities, take advantage of farm demonstration bureaus, and learn the simple methods of crop rotation. Anderson pointed to the efforts of Hubert and Kyles, who both purchased large tracts of land in the effort to create model-farming villages.⁵⁸

Trezzvant offered West Southern Pines, North Carolina, as an example of what African Americans could accomplish when they banded together, organized, and resolved to stay in the South. Chartered in 1923, it was one of a handful of towns incorporated and operated solely by blacks in North Carolina. West Southern Pines was located on the southern fringes of the Piedmont section of the state on over fifty acres of land and consisted of over two hundred homes, a school, stores, and municipal buildings. Anderson broke news that the citizens there were desperately fighting to save their town from incorporation by leaders of the neighboring all-white Southern Pines in national newspapers and sought to breathe new life into their struggle for the basic right to own their own homes. Anderson asserted that very few of the town’s citizens possessed more than a formal education. When they elected the mayor and other officials, they established an affordable property tax rate of fifty cents per one hundred dollars of property value. This fact incensed their white neighbors, who paid over four times as much, at two dollars and fifteen cents per one hundred dollars of property value. The mayor and commissioners of the all-white Southern Pines petitioned the North Carolina

⁵⁸ ANP-Charlotte, “Bishop Kyles Urges Back-To-Farm Movement,” *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, 1930 August 30; Trezzvant W. Anderson, “Hits Back at Northerners Who Lack Information as to Southern Conditions,” *Afro-American*, 1931 June 13

General Assembly to enforce a new tax rate in West Southern Pines, which increased the prospects of mass foreclosures. Readers of the *Afro-American* and the *Pittsburgh Courier* found that national organizations, such as the NAACP and the Elks' Commission of Civil Liberties along with interracial commissions from both North Carolina and Georgia, were already leading this community's fight. While efforts to save West Southern Pines from incorporation failed, Anderson continued to search for stories that informed his readers about infringements upon their rights as citizens.⁵⁹

Conclusion

In early 1931 Anderson was approached by a group of prominent African American leaders, including Claude Barnett, James A. Jackson (Department of Commerce), John Murphy Jr. (*Afro-American*), and William C. Hueston (Assistant Solicitor, U.S. Post Office), who wanted him to serve the Elks' national leader, James Finley Wilson, as he had Caesar Blake.⁶⁰

J. Finley Wilson, as he was popularly known, was Grand Exalted Ruler of the Improved Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks of the World (IBPOEW) and quite possibly the most powerful and well-connected African American leader from the 1920s through the early 1950s. More than any other person, Trezzvant Anderson credited

⁵⁹ Trezzvant W. Anderson, "West Southern Pines Seeks Its Town Status Again," *Afro-American*, 1931 August 15; Trezzvant W. Anderson, "Fight To Return All-Negro Town," *The Pittsburgh Courier*, 1931 August 29; There is evidence that the struggles of the West Southern Pines' community may have been one the very first articles that Anderson wrote on in 1927, "Experimental Town Fights For Freedom: Only Race Settlement in North Carolina," *Chicago Defender*, 1927 December 31

⁶⁰ In 1927 James 'Billboard' Jackson was designated to head the first Negro Affairs Division in the Department of Commerce. After joining *Billboard Magazine* in 1919, Jackson became the most important promoter of black cultural and economic development during the first half of the twentieth century. William C. Hueston was the African American graduate of the University of Chicago Law School, and became the first black judge in Gary, Indiana and Kansas City. In 1929 Hueston was appointed as Assistant Solicitor with the U.S. Post Office and became an important contact for Anderson. All of the mentioned men were prominent fraternal order figures.

Wilson with having catapulted his journalism career. Unlike Blake whose actions disappointed him, Wilson's leadership did not falter. He spent twenty-one years (1931-1952), which he described as "the most wonderful years of my life," as Wilson's "personal publicity man." "[I] was like a member of the Finley Wilson family and had all the contacts that Dr. Wilson had. [I was] the reporter who started at the top with the top contacts."⁶¹

Before Wilson led the Elks, he worked a number of odd jobs, including; railroad porter, miner, waiter and cowboy. However, his most significant employment was that of reporter and editor. He began his journalism career in 1905 as a reporter for the *Baltimore Times*, later edited the *Salt Lake City Plaindealer*, and wrote for the *New York Age* and the *Harrisburg (Pennsylvania) Advocate-Verdict*. Wilson was also instrumental in the founding of the *Norfolk Journal and Guide*. From 1921 through 1923, he served as president of the National Negro Press Association, which was founded in 1909 by journalists and editors in an effort to strengthen the influence of the African American press. In 1922 he was elected to lead an Elks' organization that then claimed 30,000 members. In his ascent to Elk's leadership Wilson used journalism to promote the group's program and served as "Grand Organizer" for each of his predecessors. He was much more aggressive in his stances and actions than Caesar Blake Jr. and once defended himself with a handgun after he refused to be forced off of a Pullman train because of his race. One scholar recounted this legendary tale in his history of the organization. In 1924 Wilson was apparently returning northward aboard a first-class railway car with his wife. "A group of Southerners attempted to break into his Drawing Room, but he

⁶¹ Complete Biography of Trezzvant W. Anderson (Roving Courier), Trezzvant Anderson Papers. I use brackets in these quotes, not because I take them out of context, but because Anderson wrote his four-page biography in third person

displayed such courage with his blue steel trusty forty-five, that he and his bride were not disturbed.” The story was often told among the Elks’ membership in hopes that Wilson's actions serve as an example “to the oppressed Negroes of this country” and offer “the beautiful lesson of self-defense, although numbers prevail against them.”⁶²

In just three years, Anderson had established an extensive professional network, had grown into the Carolina’s leading newspaper correspondent, and was promoted from substitute to regular railway mail clerk. He held staff positions with the ANP, *Afro-American*, *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, *Charlotte Post* (contributing editor and columnist), and the *Carolina Times* (columnist). The elevation of his status in the RMS not only gave him an increase in income, it created a more stable work schedule and gave him job security. He in turn became much more strident in his writing. Wilson helped move Anderson onto the national stage and further into national circles of leadership and provided him with the status and confidence to become more assertive in his own actions.⁶³

⁶² Bruce Guy Chabot, “Wilson, J. Finley,” *American National Biography Online*, (Oxford University Press), <http://www.anb.org.libproxy.lib.unc.edu/articles/16/1603278.html?a=1&n=J.%20Finley%20Wilson&d=10&ss=0&q=1>; Charles H. Wesley, *History of the Improved Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks of the World, 1898-1954*, Reprint (Washington, D.C.: The Association for the Study of African American Life and History, Inc., 2010), pg. 184-185. Wesley offers the only in-depth scholarly discussion of Wilson’s early life and contributions to the Elks organization.

⁶³ Trezzvant W. Anderson, Oath of Office, Railway Mail Service, 11 July 1931, Civilian Personnel Records; ANP, “Guide Correspondent Becomes a Columnist,” *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, 27 June 1931; ANP, “Journal and Guide Staff Writer to Washington,” *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, 11 July 1931.

CHAPTER THREE

Pressing for a New Deal: The “Awakening” of the Black Freedom Struggle for Economic Justice, 1931-1934

Thousands of veterans, “from all parts of the United States,” converged upon the Capital, wrote Trezzvant Anderson in June 1932. They demanded immediate payment of the \$1000 bonus bonds promised in a 1924 Congressional Act for reimbursement of lost wages during the war. The bonds were not scheduled to mature until 1945, but the veterans argued that the economic crisis warranted early payment. Anderson covered the event for the Associated Negro Press (ANP), *Afro-American* and the *Atlanta Daily World*. He observed that the veterans had “grown in number to about ten thousand, two thousand of whom [were] colored.” While the group referred to themselves as the Bonus Expeditionary Force (BEF), mainstream newspapers dubbed them the Bonus Army. With an overwhelming sense of determination, many veterans vowed to remain in the nation’s capital all summer long if necessary. “We are not here to take anything or make anybody give us [something], we are here because we need that which we want, that which we are asking for, and we are here as American citizens,” declared one black veteran. “We want our bonuses,” he asserted.¹

The BEF set up several large “Hooverville” campsites around Washington, D.C. In the daytime they not only lobbied congress but also marched, “colored and white, shoulder to shoulder, down historic Pennsylvania Avenue.” At night, the veterans lived in

¹ Andy Anderson, “3000 Negroes in Bonus Army Encamped at Capital,” *Atlanta Daily World*, 1932 June 13, pg. 1; Andy Anderson, “Blacks, Whites in B.E.F. March in Washington,” *Afro-American*, 1932 June 11, pg.1

racially mixed shantytowns. Trezzvant ventured into the muddy grounds of the marchers' makeshift camps to bare witness and document this monumental moment in history. He recalled that, "batteries of newsreel cameras and photographers with bursting flashes, gave the scene a holiday appearance, rather than the serious tread of a host of broke and hungry vets."² Anderson spent the first week mingling among the veterans and captured the story of interracial cooperation that went largely unreported in mainstream newspapers. Ironically in Washington D.C., the national seat of government, racial segregation reigned supreme on buses, in schools, restaurants, movies and government buildings.³ America exported its Jim Crow practices during wartime and black soldiers endured the humiliation of segregation even while fighting abroad. But, "Mister James Crow," he wrote, "pestilence of the South is conspicuous by his absence here." Blacks and whites "are here as American citizens, and sleeping under the same flag for which [they] fought." Anderson suggested that the interracial makeup of the Bonus Army was the event's most important aspect since black Americans were usually segregated and forced to march in the rear. They now "marched at the front, middle and both sides. Not only did they parade together, but many who hiked here from distant points, ate and slept together."⁴

President Herbert Hoover wanted to maintain the government's laissez-faire approach to economic policy even in the midst of the Great Depression. However, the Bonus Army underscored the need for a *new deal*. Veterans, men who had put their lives

² Ibid

³ Paul Dickson and Thomas B. Allen, *The Bonus Army: An American Epic*, (New York: Walker & Company, 2005), pg. 117

⁴ Andy Anderson, "3000 Negroes in Bonus Army Encamped at Capital," *Atlanta Daily World*, 1932 June 13, pg. 1

on the line in defense of their country, believed that their wartime sacrifices merited more generous treatment from the federal government. Their plight mirrored the dire conditions of millions of American citizens.

Under pressure from the Bonus Army, the House of Representatives passed the Patman Bill, spearheaded by Texas Congressman John William Wright Patman. The bill was supposed to release the bonuses but a few days later the Senate defeated the bill. Most veterans expressed their willingness to stay “till Congress [gave] them some consideration.”⁵ However, by late July, spurred by pleas from district police, Hoover decided to evict the Bonus Army after one veteran was killed and another was critically injured while being forced to vacate an illegally occupied abandoned building. Prodded further by Army Chief of Staff General Douglas McArthur, Hoover called out the standing Army to forcibly remove the protestors. General McArthur led the assault supported by a small tank division under the direction of Major George Patton. “The entire camp was set afire by troops of the regular United States Army, who came into the city, at the command of President Hoover,” wrote Anderson.⁶

The president’s executive decision and the melee that ensued was an irreparable public relations disaster for Hoover’s administration. Anderson recounted details of the events that resulted in the death of one veteran and injuries to sixteen others, including nine policemen. Shortly before noon, on July 28 Private George Shinault shot and killed William J. Hushka, a white bonus marcher from Chicago. However, Anderson pointed out the fact that “the first bonus marcher to actually resist the efforts at eviction made by police shortly after ten o’clock Thursday morning was a Negro, and after violent

⁵ Andy Anderson, “3000 Negroes in Bonus Army at Capital,” *Atlanta Daily World*, 13 June 1932

⁶ T.W. Anderson, “Negro Vets Part Told By Scribe,” *Atlanta Daily World*, 4 August 1932

resistance and much squirming he was finally overcome by three policemen.” Another African American, who played a prominent role, was thirty-two year-old Broadus Faulkner who was described as “a huge bulky Negro, weighing about 280 pounds.” “It was he,” wrote Anderson, “who led a band of over one hundred vets in a general resistance of police shortly afternoon Thursday after Hushka had been killed.” Faulkner directed the group “brandishing his arms, [he] resisted the on rush of the police. He was finally subdued when seven policemen tackled him, and carried him away.”⁷ “Negroes played a large part in this chapter of American history,” he wrote, it was:

A chapter filled to brim with the faces of Negroes; Negroes who led in the actual conflict: Negroes who vainly urged their whipped comrades to stem the tide of defeat; Negroes who resisted to the very last effort to move them; Negroes who tried, equally vainly, to show their comrades the benefits of discretion, and prudence; Negroes who cautioned, and Negroes who cussed. They were all these, all kinds; Negroes from the South, Negroes from the West; from the North and East. In the front ranks, in the middle, and in the rear, they were there. Right or wrong, they were there.⁸

The sad aftermath gripped the nation. The disgraceful and dispiriting handling of the Bonus Expeditionary Force put the proverbial nail in the coffin for Herbert Hoover and the Republican Party. The Hoover administration’s detachment from the plight of Americans during economic crisis was nowhere more evident than in its treatment of World War I veterans both black *and* white. The Bonus Army debacle and a series of unsound fiscal policies decimated Hoover’s chances of reelection. Franklin Delano Roosevelt assumed the presidency in 1933 and responded to the Great Depression with a New Deal for Americans.

⁷ “Negro Vets’ Part By Scribe,” *Atlanta Daily World*

⁸ Ibid; Also see: Trezzvant W. Anderson, “Took 7 Cops to Subdue Bonus Vet Leader,” *Afro-American*, 1932 August 6

The election of Roosevelt ushered in a new era of the American welfare state, which brought about an expansion of the federal government. This development was not completely responsible for altering African Americans voting habits. Those who could vote prior to the election did so pragmatically and not by blind allegiance, but were spurred by economic need. Black communities across the country and particularly in the South had already begun to unite efforts to fight for economic justice during Hoover's administration. Their struggle intensified after Roosevelt assumed office, as they fought against exclusion from federal jobs and New Deal programs. Civil and economic rights became national issues not only because the Roosevelt administration sought to establish a new deal coalition between blacks and whites, but also because a groundswell of black activism swept across the South.⁹ Anderson both documented and participated in these organizing efforts; he positioned himself at the forefront of the struggle for black rights in the American South. How black Americans viewed themselves as a larger community of citizens within the United States was of crucial importance to him and he pursued his labors accordingly. Using newswires and black newspapers, he saw himself as a journalist who could help shape the national dialogue in ways that would help black communities tear down social and economic barriers erected by turn of the century white supremacy campaigns.

Anderson had a deep-set belief that many African Americans, not just black veterans, were fed up and more ready to voice their rights as citizens. The gathering of

⁹ Harvard Sitkoff, *A New Deal for Blacks—The Emergence of Civil Rights as a National Issue: The Depression Decade*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978); Sitkoff was the first scholar to offer a book length treatment of the black experience during the Great Depression and New Deal; Also see Patricia Sullivan's *Days of Hope: Race and Democracy in the New Deal Era*, (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); and Nancy J. Weiss', *Farewell To The Party Of Lincoln: Black Politics in the Age of FDR*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983)

the Bonus Army proved that blacks and whites could cooperate and that artificial separation could be overcome when people shared common needs. The protests in Washington also displayed, for Anderson, a level of activism among African Americans that was unprecedented. To corroborate his belief, Anderson interrupted his coverage of the Bonus march with a tour of the South. Just before midnight on June 17, as the Bonus camp slept in the nation's capital, Anderson boarded the Piedmont Limited in Union Station headed south. He had been living in Washington and traveling into the region as a railway mail clerk since 1931. But when he got on the train this time, he did so not as an employee of the federal government, but as a Washington news correspondent for the ANP. Anderson announced plans in several newspapers including the *Afro*, *Daily World* and *Pittsburgh Courier* a week before his departure. His 2,500-mile tour was "designed to gather material for special articles." and expose African Americans' living and working conditions in the South.¹⁰ Even though he left behind perhaps the most significant protest demonstration that had ever developed in Washington, D.C., Anderson wanted to shine light on an even more significant event unfolding in the South—the beginnings of widespread black mobilization against Jim Crow.

Over nine days, Trezzvant Anderson uncovered a range of important developments, including pivotal grassroots organizing in states like North Carolina and Tennessee, where African Americans registered and tested their voting power as Democrats. In states where African Americans were more aggressively impeded in their right to vote, such as Louisiana and Mississippi, he found black communities still unbowed by Jim Crow, that met openly in protest and "resolved" to fight state and

¹⁰ "Afro Writer Off to South," *Afro-American*, 1932 June 18, pg. 7; "A.N.P. Staff Writer On Tour," *Atlanta Daily World*, 1932 June 23, pg. 1A; ANP, "Staff Writer On Tour," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1932 June 25, pg. 3

municipal efforts to deny them access to the economic fruits of local industry and federally sponsored relief projects.

By the end of his trip, Anderson had collected material for close to three-dozen articles. Over the course of two months he released them to ANP newswires. He remarked upon completion of the tour that there appeared to be “an awakening in the duty of the Negroes towards the state and municipal governments, which is sure sign of the trend of the times.” More than any other black newspaper that ran his articles, the Mid-Western *Wyandotte Echo* (Kansas City) best expressed the hope and purpose of publishing Anderson’s findings. Isaac F. Bradley, the newspaper’s editor, devoted several weeks of front-page coverage to Anderson’s articles. They “ought to [have] an *awakening* affect upon us, everywhere,” he suggested. Bradley urged his *Echo* subscribers to “read, study, and assimilate,” and “draw upon the knowledge” they acquired. The general response of Southern blacks to the Great Depression, the editor believed, was a sign that a “NEW BIRTH OF BLACK MEN IN THE SOUTH” had emerged who were not unwilling to organize for and demand their economic and political citizenship rights.¹¹

Reporting from Washington, D.C. during the Hoover Years

In the summer of 1931, a year before the Bonus Army arrived, and while thousands of African Americans were abandoning the South for better opportunities, twenty-five year-old Trezzvant Anderson migrated to Washington, D.C. Unlike many

¹¹ “The New Birth Of Black Men In The South,” *Wyandotte Echo*, 1932 July 8, pg.1; Isaac F. Bradley, in 1887, became one of the first black graduates of University of Kansas Law School. He served as a Kansas City Justice of the Peace from 1889 to 1891, and became one of the state's first African American judges. From 1894 to 1898, he was the First Assistant Attorney in Wyandotte County. Bradley was also charter member of Niagara Movement in 1905. In 1930, he became both owner and editor of the *Wyandotte Echo*.

other black migrants bound for the Promised Land, Anderson had not given up on the South. He was, instead galvanized by greater personal and political opportunity, and a network of seasoned journalists, businessmen and political leaders willing to move his professional career forward. Washington became Anderson's home for the next three and half years. One scholar suggested that up and down the East Coast, the District of Columbia was the border crossing for Jim Crow. A Georgia migrant, who had worked as a tailor, attested to the fact that he left the South for Washington simply "to be as near the flag as I can."¹² While the majority of black Americans in the Great Migration left under clouds of uncertainty, they all hoped that they would bask in the sunlight of freedom and justice that the flag symbolized. While Trezzvant Anderson most certainly desired the same freedom and justice that the flag represented, he wanted to be closer to the seat of power so that he might learn to better utilize its levers of influence.

The capital city offered many significant contrasts to the small, sleepy city of Charlotte, where he had grown up a poor working-class boy. Washington's black population had ballooned from 109,966 in 1920 to 132,068 a decade later.¹³ It was the fifth most heavily black populated city in the country after New York, Chicago, Philadelphia and Baltimore. Anderson moved into the very heart of the city's bustling northwest quadrant, residing in a brownstone at 1211 Harvard Street, a mere two blocks from Howard University. Howard was black America's flagship university, chartered by

¹² Isabel Wilkerson, *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration*, (New York: Vintage Books, 2010); Wilkerson, using countless oral histories of actual migrants, provides a well researched work on the Great Migration.

¹³ 'D.C. Population Jumps to 132,068 Now,' *Afro-American*, 1930 November 29, pg. 2; Wilkerson, *Warmth of Other Suns*, pg. 200; Elizabeth Clark-Lewis, *Living In, Living Out: African American Domestic in Washington, D.C., 1910-1940*, (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Books, 1994, 2010), Clark-Lewis provides an in-depth discussion of reality that many black women who left the South to escape domestic labor for the nation's capital often ended up in the same kinds of positions.

the United States' Congress in 1867 shortly after the Civil War to educate newly freed black people. A mix of prominent African American neighborhoods surrounded the university including LeDroit Park, Mount Vernon Square, Logan and Dupont Circles, and the famed U Street Corridor. This thoroughfare passed through one of the most vibrant cultural, residential and business districts in America, rivaled only by Harlem's 125th Street and Chicago's Stroll (State Street between 26th and 39th). It was a forty-block section of the capital city that boasted hundreds of black-owned businesses: movie theatres, hotels, banks, newspapers, pharmacies, restaurants, and cabarets. The community was a mixture of poor, working-class and middle-class blacks. This last group consisted of professionals, among them, some of the most influential artists, writers, entertainers, politicians, business leaders, and scholars in the country. It was here in the midst of a thriving, diverse and progressive community that Anderson began to carve out a place for himself as one of the country's leading black journalists in one of the nation's most important urban centers of black political and intellectual life.¹⁴

Anderson was not well known in Washington, and initially he had to craft ways to attract readers to his articles. In late 1931 he began using Andy Anderson as his byline. It had become a nickname among his close associates, and was one of many pseudonyms he would employ throughout his early career to elude scrutiny from postal supervisors. He began experimenting with this particular byline by writing articles under the headline "Capitol City Notes," which appealed to local and Southern readers who wanted to learn

¹⁴ Letter, Assistant Chief Clerk at Large R.M.S., Emory A. Bryant Jr. to Trezzvant W. Anderson, 1932 February 11, Trezzvant Anderson Files, Civilian Personnel Records, National Personnel Records Center, St. Louis, Missouri. This document provides the earliest known address of Anderson, 1211 Harvard Street, in Washington, D.C., just two blocks from Howard University; <http://www.culturaltourismdc.org/>, this website provides the most accurate historical information on prominent African American neighborhoods in the nation's capital.; also see Tucker Carlson, 'Washington's Lost Black Aristocracy,' *City Journal*, Autumn 1996; "D.C. Population Jumps to 132,068 Now," *Afro-American*, 1930 November 29, pg. 2; "Auto City's Population Jumps, Now Almost Equal to Washington, D.C.," *Afro-American*, 1931 May 9, pg.17.

about the latest entertainment news that covered nightlife, gossip, and socialite celebrities. However, interlaced in Anderson's commentary of who's who in the nation's capitol was more politically charged information about the President, civic activism, and national civil rights conferences. For instance, he concluded an article about the performances of big band leader Elmer Calloway (Cab's brother) and the famous Vaudeville Whitman Sisters with an important announcement. He wrote:

Three very important meetings occupied the attention of local citizens during the week. They are, the meeting of the Equal Rights League, at the John Wesley Church, the DePriest Non-Partisan Conference and the President's conference on Home Ownership and Housing. These are three of the most momentous meetings of the year, where the race is concerned, and will attract some of the leading figures in national life... What national political policies the Negro will adopt were expected to be worked out at these affairs.¹⁵

For Anderson, entertainment news was a way to get recognized on a much larger playing field. The more famous people that he rubbed elbows with and interviewed, the more people began to look for his "Andy" byline. While he reported on quite a bit of entertainment and sporting news during his early career, he was more committed to heightening readers' consciousness about issues of social equality and struggles for citizenship rights.

The White House Conference on Home Ownership and Housing, the Equal Rights League's annual meeting, along with the DePriest Non-Partisan convention were the kinds of events that Anderson intended to cover when he decided to move to the nation's capital. He found them significant, as he insinuated, because they revealed "national political policies" that were being formulated and adopted by African American leaders across the country who were seeking to unite a movement against racial discrimination at

¹⁵ Andy [Anderson] (for the Associated Negro Press), "Capitol City Notes," *Atlanta Daily World*, 13 December 1931; Andy [Anderson] (for the Associated Negro Press), "Capitol City Notes," *San Antonio Register*, 18 December 1931

the height of the Great Depression. They not only provided important context for African Americans historical exodus from the Republican to the Democratic Party, but they also exposed the kinds of important discussions that helped shape Anderson's early thinking and future activism.

Leading up to the 1932 presidential election, President Herbert Hoover and the larger Republican Party's electoral misfortune seemed certain. It was also clear that the Republicans had begun to lose their longstanding hold on black voters. Historians have suggested that Hoover's presidency took a major hit due to his initial assessment, when the stock market crashed, that the economy was sound and that government should maintain its laissez-faire policy. His position proved to be misguided. One significant example of Hoover's imprudence occurred on July 11, when he vetoed the Garner-Wagner Bill, an over \$2 billion dollar proposal approved by Congress designed to provide relief to states committed to aid individuals and partnerships engaged in agriculture and other important industries. Ten days afterwards, he reluctantly agreed to a compromise when he signed the Relief and Reconstruction Act, which instead designated \$1.5 billion to public works and \$300 million to states. This was a vain effort to backtrack and as one scholar suggested: "Hoover's somersault came too late to bring him political credit."¹⁶ His unsound fiscal policies were a large part of the reason that politicians and other state officials lost faith in his presidency; African Americans severed their ties for different reasons.

Since Reconstruction, black Americans had traditionally voted Republican when they could vote, but their loyalty began slipping noticeably at the onset of the Great

¹⁶ David M. Kennedy, *Freedom From Fear: The American People in Depression and War, 1929-1945*, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1999), pg. 91

Depression. Preceded by three decades of disappointment with the GOP, Hoover came to power and proved that he was clearly unwilling to do anything for blacks, especially relating to issues arising from overt racial bigotry.¹⁷ To be sure, Hoover failed to address unemployment among African Americans. But even more pronounced was the President's blatant encouragement of the formation of "lily-white" Republican organizations to compete with states' rights Democrats that controlled the "solid South." He continued the long tradition of ignoring racial violence and remained indifferent to the fate of proposed anti-lynching bills during his tenure. In comparison to previous Republican presidents, Hoover's record of black federal appointments was almost nonexistent. Yet his most publicized offenses where African Americans were concerned dealt with his refusal to intercede on the behalf of black veteran-Gold Star Mothers and his nomination of openly racist Judge John J. Parker.¹⁸

In late August 1931, in what can only be viewed as a last minute effort to repair his image among the American public, Hoover appointed thirty-one special interest committees to present their findings at a White House Conference on Home Building and Home Ownership.¹⁹ The announcement was another too-late-gesture to prove that he

¹⁷ Nancy J. Weiss, *Farewell To The Party Of Lincoln: Black Politics in the Age of FDR*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983), pg. 8, 15-18.

¹⁸ Ibid, pg.16-17; William E. Leuchtenburg's, *Herbert Hoover: The American Presidents Series: The 31st President, 1929-1933*, (New York: Macmillan Publishers, 2007), pg. 99; Gold Star Mothers were the black and white mothers of World War I veterans who died in combat. The NAACP protested their segregation on a visit to the son's graves in Europe. According Leuchtenburg, while white mother traveled in style aboard a luxury liner, black mothers were forced to travel aboard 'cattle ships.' Weiss suggests that Parker's nomination carried the most significant political repercussions for Hoover. Parker, a former North Carolina gubernatorial candidate, had openly supported the disfranchisement of African Americans and upheld injunctions against AFL affiliate labor unions. Both the NAACP and the AFL mounted successful campaigns against Parker's nomination.

¹⁹ Herbert Hoover, "Statement Announcing the White House Conference on Home Building and Home Ownership," 15 September 1931, Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=22804>;

was indeed concerned about the economic hardships facing Americans. Next to food and clothing, housing was the country's most critical social and economic problem during the Great Depression. Hoover surprisingly included a special Committee on Negro Housing designed to research fair housing practices and impediments to home ownership for blacks. The President surely understood that African Americans suffered disproportionately from this problem and he likely hoped that this appointment alone would engender black leaders to endorse him in the upcoming election. Nannie H. Burroughs, head of the National Training School for Women and Girls in Washington, D.C., was chosen to lead the committee in presenting their findings in early December. The *New York Amsterdam News*, the *Atlanta Daily World* and the *Norfolk Journal and Guide* all printed Trezzvant Anderson's detailed reports from ANP newswires on the committees' findings and recommendations and carried them prominently in their newspapers.²⁰

Even though President Hoover had taken the initiative to appoint the committee, many African American leaders, including Congressman Oscar DePriest, doubted he would act upon its findings. In 1928, DePriest had become the first African American elected to the U.S. House of Representatives since 1898. And while he was elected as a

²⁰ T.W. Anderson, "Propose Steps to Remedy Bad Housing Conditions," *New York Amsterdam News*, 9 December 1931; T.W. Anderson, "Hoover Housing Conference Suggest Home Improvements," *Atlanta World*, 9 December 1931; T.W. Anderson, "Better Housing Need of Negroes, Hoover is Told," *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, 12 December 1931; The group revealed that the terrible housing conditions were exacerbated by migration "to large cities of the North and South." Coupled with rampant housing discrimination, caused massive expansion of unregulated black neighborhoods. "Negro density was twice as great as the average in Chicago and nearly five times as great in Philadelphia." In New York, the average total density for the city was 223 persons per acre, while the African Americans density was 336 persons per acre. Discrepancies of rental rates for low-income families were equally appalling; in New York, for example, the typical rental for poor families was \$316 annually, whereas for blacks it was \$490. Poor quality of housing, the committee argued, related directly to an unusually high rate of delinquency, mortality, and a "distorted standard of living." The committee suggested establishing a national housing commission to pass and enforce housing laws; insuring adequate financing with reasonable interest rates; and addressing changes in land value that occurred when blacks moved into certain areas.

Republican, DePriest had only nominal party loyalties and came to Washington, D.C. intent on improving the economic and social conditions of African Americans.²¹ Shortly after Hoover announced plans for the housing conference, DePriest devised his own strategy to show the President that he could not afford to take the black vote for granted. A year earlier, the congressman had taken a nationwide tour and professed that his observations on the state of black Americans during the Great Depression gave him reason to organize a Non-Partisan Conference. DePriest pushed for mass “concerted action” to address the “serious and deep-seated dissatisfaction among all classes of Negroes in every section of the country” with Republican led federal government.²² He scheduled the meeting for the same weekend as Hoover’s housing conference to demonstrate that African American allegiance to any particular party could not be purchased with insignificant appointments.

DePriest encouraged other black organizations like the NAACP and Equal Rights League (ERL) to reschedule their annual meetings to coincide with the president’s housing conference and his non-partisan convention. Founded in 1864, the ERL was the oldest civil and human rights organization of its kind. Following Reconstruction, it fell into dysfunction but was revived in 1908 by William Monroe Trotter, editor of the

²¹ According to David S. Day, in “Herbert Hoover and Racial Politics: The DePriest Incident,” *Journal of African American History*, Volume 65, No. 1 (Winter, 1980), p. 6-17; DePriest was constant thorn in the side of Hoover. A year into Hoover’s presidency Southern politicians and the press ridiculed him for defiling the White House by inviting DePriest’s wife Jesse to a customary tea for congressional wives. Hoover maintained that he had done so out of Constitutional responsibility and with less enthusiasm than any of his predecessors who had ever received black guests in the White House. In response to publicity surrounding what came to be known as the DePriest Tea Incident, the Congressman DePriest skillfully manipulated the public notoriety created by his wife by announcing a fundraising event less than a week afterward for the NAACP. He effectively transformed the incident into \$200,000 worth of contributions for NAACP. In the process, he confirmed Southern predictions that open invitations for African Americans into the White House would lead to black aggressiveness. Day suggested that perhaps the DePriest Tea Incident should be known as the DePriest Tea and Musicale Incidents.

²² Oscar DePriest, ‘Letter to the Editor,’ *Philadelphia Tribune*, 1931 November 12, pg. 16

Boston Guardian. Since reorganization its leadership regularly sent delegations to the White House to ask for presidential support in eliminating the social and economic barriers that undermined African Americans progress. In late 1931, convinced that their demands would again go unanswered, members decided to support DePriest's call and unite their fight against racial discrimination.²³ Their gathering signaled the generalized discontent with the Republican Party and symbolized the birth of a new united black political philosophy. The conference's primary objective was the permanent formation and organization of a National Non-Partisan Political Association in which committees drew up constitutions, to be carried out by branches of the association in their different locales.²⁴

Even before Anderson had come to Washington, he and many black leaders in Charlotte had worked to liberate local blacks from sentimental allegiances to the Republican Party. They adopted the view that the country's two dominant political parties should simply be viewed as tools to gain influence and convinced black Charlotteans to operate as a "political unit" that supported white Democrats in return for updated educational facilities. These were the same goals and views that leaders of the DePriest Non-Partisan Conference sought to promote. Conference organizers also

²³ "Equal Rights League To Support DePriest," *Philadelphia Tribune*, 1931 November 5, pg. 3; ANP, "President Asked to Wipe Out Army's Secret 'Color Line,'" *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1931 December 5, pg. 1; This was likely Anderson's article; During the week of the conferences, the Equal Rights League sent its delegation to the White House to recommend federal anti-lynching legislation, ban segregation of federal employees, replace photograph identification in favor of fingerprints for applicants seeking federal employment, and halting segregation in and reduction of military service opportunities. Many of these continued to be primary issues that African Americans fought for and against throughout the 1930s, leading up to World War II.

²⁴ Special for Journal, "26 States Represented at the DePriest Non-Partisan Conference," *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, 1931 December 12, pg.9; Henry Lewis Suggs', "The Washingtonian Legacy: A History of Black Political Conservatism in American, 1915-1944," in Peter Eisenstadt's, *Black Conservatism: Essays on Intellectual and Political History*, (New York: Garland Publishing, 1999); It's unclear how many chapters of the National Non-Partisan Political Association actually formed, but Suggs suggested that Virginia did have active chapters and adopted many of the strategies formulated at the conference.

rejected ideas that black Americans should align themselves with Communism as a viable method for throwing “off the shackles of oppression.” This too resonated with Anderson, given that several of his earliest articles pointed out that communist recruiters preyed on poor, illiterate working class blacks who were easily swayed. He had also used his journalism to promote the work of the NAACP and denounce lynching, two other critical objectives highlighted at the conference. For Anderson, the most important goals discussed at the DePriest Non-Partisan Conference dealt with dismantling widespread economic and civil service discrimination.²⁵

Employment discrimination against African Americans was thrust into the national spotlight in the mid to late 1920s and the 1930s. The deep depression and accelerated migration of blacks out of the South effectively pushed the black unemployment crisis to the fore. Leaders at the DePriest Non-Partisan Conference recognized this and placed W. E. B. Du Bois at the head of its national committee on economic discrimination. Under his leadership the committee built a platform that encouraged local bodies to urge “capitalists and masters of industry to apportion fairly among black and white workers alike,” and white laborers and their unions “to lay aside their customary intolerance against Negro laborers.” Local bodies faced an uphill battle because addressing employment discrimination required cooperation of private enterprise, and it was highly unlikely that businesses would condemn practices that were viewed as an economic, cost cutting benefit. However there were other major areas of

²⁵ T.W. Anderson, “DePriest Has Conference Started: Leader Of Interest Rally To Call For Political Emancipation,” *Kansas City and Topeka Plaindealer*, 11 December 1931; Also see, T. W. Anderson, “DePriest Non-Partisan Confab Meets With 275 Delegates,” *Atlanta Daily World*, 9 December 1931; Special to Afro, “Findings of the Non-Partisan Conference in D.C.,” *Afro-American*, 12 December 1931; Special to Journal, “26 States Represented at DePriest Conference,” *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, 12 December 1931

employment discrimination, in the civil service industry for example, for which the federal government could be held responsible.²⁶

Civil service reform had swept across the nation to stamp out political corruption before the turn of the twentieth century, but African Americans noticed racial discrimination began to become a factor in appointment of federal jobs during the Taft administration. Black Americans believed photograph requirements for civil service job applicants were implemented, under President Wilson, so that heads of federal departments could “effectively block the appointment of colored men and women.” The Non-Partisan Political Association believed President Hoover was ultimately responsible for continued racial discrimination in the civil service industry and believed he should issue an executive order. In the years that followed, Anderson would become a foot soldier for this cause, fighting relentlessly against economic and civil service discrimination.

The Awakening

Following Trezzvant Anderson’s coverage of the DePriest Non-Partisan Conference, he became even more anchored to the idea of mobilizing Southern blacks and felt he could accomplish this through the use of newswires that allowed him to feed stories into black newspapers around the country. Anderson wanted people to know there was a new birth of black courage in the South; in places where they could vote they were “demanding all citizenship rights due to them.” He wrote to mobilize public opinion and keep readers informed and connected to each other’s struggles. Anderson understood that Jim Crow, much like the institution of slavery, thrived by alienating African Americans from basic information about themselves. He also saw the beginning of a

²⁶ Ibid, ‘Findings of the Non-Partisan Conference in D.C.’

revolution occurring in black communities across the South. Simple proof of this could be seen in the mere presence of black veterans from the region who courageously traveled with white veterans to demand what they felt were rights due them.

Trezzvant Anderson acted as a documentarian of the social conditions and political activities of African Americans living across a two thousand mile stretch of the Southern Piedmont.²⁷ From late June through late August 1932, he submitted dozens of articles to black newspapers across the country under the names Andy Anderson and T.W. Anderson, but mostly using the ANP byline. Anderson also used the names of fellow journalists and or fictitious figures when writing articles about topics close to home. For instance, when he submitted an article highlighting the reality that no African Americans were gainfully employed in any of the “86 cotton and textile mills” or other industrial plants in Charlotte, he did so using Ralph Matthews as his byline.²⁸ Anderson used the larger series as a way to continue building a reputation for himself as a traveling reporter with the ability move freely throughout the South.

“Well folks,” his first entry read, “here’s your little Andy again, this time broadcasting from the vast stretches of Sunny Southland away down in [the] Carolinas, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana and bringing you a program full of interesting reviews and observations on that part of the United States where we, the sons and daughters of Ham, dwell so very abundantly.”²⁹ Anderson found commonalities between local black communities’ stories and their struggles against Jim Crow. His

²⁷ “*Afro* Writer Off to South,” *Afro-American*, 18 June 1932; “ANP Staff Writer on Tour,” *Atlanta Daily World*, 23 June 1932; “Staff Writer On Tour,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 25 June 1932

²⁸ Ralph Matthews, “Only Ofays in Charlotte, N.C. Cotton Mills,” *Afro-American*, 9 July 1932; Matthews had no connections to the South and was a columnist and Anderson’s colleagues at the *Afro*.

²⁹ Andy Anderson, “South Dried Up and Broke Says Traveling Reporter,” *Atlanta Daily World*, 28 June 1932;

articles detailed their efforts to gain their constitutional rights to franchise and politically organize. While he jokingly described the South as “dried up and broke” and suggested that it was “in need of a sore bath,” he argued that, “the North has a greatly mistaken idea about the South, and the conditions of Negroes there.” Even though the general condition and outlook for black southerners “is truly lamentable,” he maintained, “the same was true of the entire nation.” Anderson was engaging the ongoing debate between northern and southern blacks about which region provided the best access routes to better living conditions.

He wrote that “on the whole the southern Negro [was] in better shape than some of his northern brothers, who claim superior knowledge.” Their pockets may not have been comparatively bulging and business interest not as extensive, but there were not as many “bread or soup lines” he reasoned. “There are fewer cases of starvation in the South than will ever be counted in the North,” he wrote. He also added that black businesses in the South were more generally on a “sound basis,” they were “less disturbed by outside fluctuations than northern and western businesses.” This, Anderson believed, was because southern black businesses only catered to southerners, “without trying to throw [their] tentacles over the whole country, in a task too big for its capacity.” Southern African Americans generally supported black-owned businesses wherever they were, even “in the face of the fact that hard times are prevalent everywhere in the dear old southland,” he wrote.³⁰ He also offered reason to believe that it was southern blacks that were more united, cooperative and community oriented.

³⁰ Andy Anderson, “South Shows Trend Toward Racial Unity,” *Wyandotte Echo* (Kansas City), 8 July 1931, Front Page

Anderson's most convincing observations came from his home state of North Carolina, which he asserted offered proof that the South was trending "toward racial unity." Black political development and action in "The Old North State," he argued, should have "an awakening affect upon us, everywhere." African Americans were beginning to recognize it was their duty to seek the ballot to affect the affairs of "the state and municipal government," which they deemed as most vital to their day-to-day welfare. Anderson offered a brief history of the North Carolina Negro Voters League. The league was founded in Durham on May 31, 1930, for the express "purposes of creating a state Negro machine to direct and interest the Negro in the use of his most valuable power: the ballot." Black leaders from all over the state attended this meeting, and as a result branches were established in Charlotte, Wilmington, Salisbury, Greensboro, Raleigh, Winston-Salem "and all of the larger cities." Anderson specifically used cases in Charlotte, Greensboro and Raleigh to further demonstrate how blacks in North Carolina were "pressing on in [the] battle for citizenship rights."³¹

In Charlotte, he recounted the struggles and triumphs of his hometown's fight to stimulate black electoral mobilization around the issue of new modern elementary schools, which were "finally won by the Negro citizens of that place," only after they began to strategically use the ballot in local elections.³² In Greensboro, he revealed how a fight to disfranchise black voters had started "a movement." Anderson highlighted the sentiments of Johnson J. Hayes, a U.S. District Court Judge, who in his October 1931 ruling against a white registrar that refused to register African Americans, stated:

³¹ Ibid

³² The fight to get updated schools in Charlotte is detailed in chapter two.

I think the friends of both races would do well to recognize that it is not conducive to the best interest of either race or the state, or of the nation to encourage a practice by which an uneducated white man may register and vote, and a college graduate of the Negro race is deprived of the privilege of voting, all under the guise of a literacy test. Such flagrant abuses of the law are calculated to endanger its very existence and its validity.³³

Hayes' ruling resulted in the conviction and sentencing of white registrar, S. S. Sechrest.

These examples and others, Anderson argued, "tell their own story of the awakening which is coming to pass in North Carolina."

In Raleigh, Anderson described what he viewed as the symbolic and historic end of the widespread disfranchisement that followed the 1898 Wilmington Race Riots and white supremacy campaign. "For thirty years and more, through the use of tricks and subterfuge, white North Carolinians have assumed all the privileges and prerogatives of citizenship," he wrote, "leaving to the Negro only his duty to pay taxes." Anderson believed the recent "campaign of education in citizenship" had aroused blacks that had been "ordinarily lethargic in regard to election matters, to seek to get their names on the polls."³⁴ The awakening could clearly be seen in the state capital where "the mass of the Negro population possesses the potential voting strength to become the 'balance of power' in primaries and elections." The Raleigh branch of the North Carolina Voters' League carried out "an industrious campaign to encourage Negroes to qualify as voters either Republican or Democrats."³⁵

Anderson drew attention to the work of black lawyers throughout the state, like R. McCants Andrews, Roger O'Kelly, and F. J. Carnage, who were lending "their efforts to

³³ Andy Anderson, "South Shows Trend Toward Racial Unity," *Wyandotte Echo* (Kansas City), 8 July 1932, Front Page

³⁴ ANP, "North Carolina Negroes Pressing On In Battle For Citizenship Rights," *Wyandotte Echo* (Kansas City), 8 July 1932, Front Page

³⁵ Ibid

the movement and blasting away at the legal devices and barriers erected by white officials to bar Negroes from the ballot.” The first clash occurred prior to the June 1932 primary election, when unfriendly white Democratic candidates were “awakened to the fact in some way 2,000 Negroes had registered as Democrats in Wake County.” “One red neck,” Anderson wrote, “a candidate for the state senate,” arose in a mass protest meeting of whites and, “like the defeated Judge Parker, declared that if he had to be elected by porters, janitors and washer women, he did not wish to be elected.” He warned that blacks registering as Democrats presented “dire pictures” for whites, especially “if the negro got hold in the Democratic Party and became the balance of power.”³⁶

When the week of the primaries arrived and the 2,000 blacks remained on the registration books, whites pressed the attorney general to force African Americans who had registered to appear before officials to prove their qualifications for voting. If they “did not appear, their names might be stricken from the ballot.” Andrews and his colleagues filed suit on behalf of Maurice Curtiss, claiming that he had not received any notice. They also added the names of 209 other “co-plaintiffs in the suit.” Judge Vernor Cowper ruled in their favor, holding that “the men and women challenged had not been given sufficient opportunity to qualify and ordered that another date be set when all the Negroes challenged might have an opportunity to justify their position on the Democratic registration blanks.” According to Anderson, Andrews planned to follow the same course

³⁶ Ibid; also see Henry Lee Moon, *Balance of Power: The Negro Vote*, (New York, Doubleday Publishing, 1948). Moon offers one of the earliest studies of black voting. He argued that partisan competition for African American voters would expand the Civil Rights Movement both by reinforcing the emergent left-turn within the Democratic Party and encouraging Republicans in competitive districts to endorse civil rights agendas.

in respect to other precincts but died due to sudden illness.³⁷ While black electoral mobilization was spreading across the state of North Carolina in the early 1930s, Memphis, Tennessee, the seat of Shelby County, was also a hotbed of political organizing.³⁸ But other states, like Louisiana and Mississippi, where voting rights were restricted Anderson found African Americans organizing for economic rights.

During his time in Louisiana, Trezzvant Anderson visited Baton Rouge and noted the irony that one could find a new \$5,000,000 state capitol building where “black faces and black bodies are displayed in conspicuous places to the stares of thousands who [had] made their way to Louisiana’s mecca on the Mississippi since its dedication.”³⁹ The presence of black bodies sculpted into building’s design acknowledged the prominent role they had played in the state’s history. Yet, in New Orleans, African Americans were mobilizing to remain employed in the city’s oldest and primary industry. Anderson learned that Mayor Thomas S. Wamsley proposed to ban “age-old opportunities for jobs as longshoreman” for those workers who were not registered to vote. As a result, “several hundred [black] citizens packed the auditorium of the Pythian temple in a mammoth protest meeting aimed against the proposed river ordinance.” Since longshoreman jobs were already divided equally, surprisingly, white newspapers, political and labor leaders alike, spoke out against the measure. “Since it invites racial

³⁷ Ibid; ANP, “R. McCants Andrews Dies at Durham,” *Philadelphia Tribune*, 14 July 1932; Anderson reported that the “champion of equal racial rights” died a week later of sudden illness.

³⁸ Elizabeth Gritter, *River of Hope: Black Politics and the Memphis Freedom Movement, 1865-1954*, (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2014), see chapter 3, “Come...and See What a Negro Democrat Looks Like,” the information Anderson collected on Tennessee during his tour of the South produced articles on similar political organizing in Memphis, his writings are sighted in Gritter’s work.

³⁹ Ollie Stewart, ANP, “Use Negro Figures to Dedicate \$5,000,000 Louisiana Capital,” *Atlanta Daily World*, 27 July 1932; Stewart was also a close colleague of Anderson, and likely allowed him to use his name.

bitterness and hostilities and must, if judicially sanctioned and enforced,” some reasoned would, “bring back the Negro voter as a factor in city and state politics.”⁴⁰

In Jackson, Mississippi Anderson reported a similar development. “Weary of standing by hungry while they watch the poor white men of the state gobble up every laboring job of any consequence,” he asserted, “Negroes are being aroused at last to the point of protest.” A mass meeting was held following the revelation that the Relief and Reconstruction Act, approved by President Hoover, had provided several millions of dollars to Mississippi for road building and unemployment relief. The fact that the money was being spent through the state highway commission was an issue because it was widely known that they did not employ African Americans.⁴¹ Even though there was a larger percentage of blacks in the state, Anderson noted, “practically every dollar of the state’s money comes from agricultural pursuits which miserably paid black men support and where a great proportion of the taxes are paid directly and indirectly by black people.” “Since they do not have the ballot, the only thing they [could] do was to resolve.” They “passed resolutions plentiful” and sent them to elected officials, from the Governor of Mississippi to the President of the United States.⁴²

⁴⁰ ANP, “New Orleans Citizens Turn To Council To Balk Mayor’s Job Ban Proposal,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 13 August 1932; ANP, ‘New Orleans Mayor Would Bar Negro Labor,’ *Afro-American*, 13 August 1932

⁴¹ ANP, “Mississippians Ask Jobs on State Highways,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 20 August 1932

⁴² ANP, “Voteless Mississippi Can Only Resolve,” *Afro-American*, 20 August 1932; Anderson also visited and wrote articles on South Carolina, Georgia and Alabama. Alabama was the only state in which Anderson found no political mobilizing. He could only report on the appallingly high incarceration rates of the state’s black citizens. Although they made up only thirty-six percent of the state’s population, blacks constituted sixty-five percent of the prison population.

Forced to the ‘Sideline’

Trezzvant Anderson’s writings gained him widespread attention. One contributor to the *Atlanta Daily World* wrote that “the articles by the Associated Negro Press writers, Business and Industry by William Occomy; William Pickens, Digesting the News by Clifford C. Mitchell and the articles by Kelly Miller and Andy Anderson are much sought after and widely read by your readers ‘DOWN SOUTH.’”⁴³ This growing popularity emboldened him but it also posed problems with the Railway Mail Service. Postal officials first became aware of Anderson’s journalistic activity in September 1932.⁴⁴ He was forced to promise his supervisor that he would refrain from writing articles “of any nature for publication,” and if he did the case would be closed. Trezzvant Anderson did promise to stop writing, but only about certain topics.⁴⁵

For ten months, from October 1932 through July 1933, Anderson used The Sideline as his byline to conceal his identity. During this time he began writing two columns, the “Washington Whiteway” (*Afro-American*) and “In the Nation’s Capital” (*Norfolk Journal and Guide*), on Washington, D.C.’s entertainment and nightlife. While using this alias, Anderson also hatched a plan that allowed him a more legitimate way to

⁴³ John T. Amey, ‘Open Letter To Mr. W.A. Scott and Mr. Frank Marshall Davis, Founder and Managing Editor of The Atlanta Daily World, Respectively,’ *Atlanta Daily World*, 8 August 1932

⁴⁴ Letter to General Superintendent of RMS from Emory A. Bryant Jr., 1932 September 29, Trezzvant W. Anderson Files, Civilian Personnel Records, St. Louis, MO; The Dean of his alma mater, Johnson C. Smith University, Theophilus E. McKinney wrote to Assistant Chief Clerk of the RMS, Emory A. Bryant Jr. charging “that Anderson [had] a grudge and [had] written several articles for publication that are misleading about the school, its officials and citizens of that community.” They were “incensed over the articles and [believed] that Anderson had abused his privilege as a government employee and should be punished by his superiors.” Anderson, already on thin ice, was just getting off probation for an “unsatisfactory [work] record.” McKinney discovered the articles in the *Carolina Times*.

⁴⁵ Memo, to Superintendent of Railway Mail Service from Emory A. Bryant, Jr., Assistant Chief Clerk, 1932 October 3, Trezzvant Anderson Files, Civilian Personnel Records, memo states that Anderson [was] “writing articles in *Carolina Times* of Durham, N.C. detrimental to Johnson C. Smith University”; Subsequent correspondence between Anderson and Bryant shows that Anderson promised to refrain from writing about JCSU.

write publically about political issues affecting African Americans. He announced his candidacy for Editorship of the *Postal Alliance* in April 1933.⁴⁶ The *Alliance* was the official organ of National Alliance of Postal Employees (NAPE), which represented approximately 32,000 postal workers. While it was perhaps one of the less widely heralded of national labor unions, it was one that “played a tremendous part in the many communities throughout which its membership [was] scattered.”⁴⁷ Black postal workers drew a combined annual salary of \$45,000,000 and comprised of more college graduates than any other single profession, outside of education work. The majority of the past NAPE officers hailed from major mid-western cities, and Anderson was the only eastern candidate to run in 1933. He eventually gained the “support of the eastern branches of the organization along with that of many prominent business and fraternal leaders.”⁴⁸

While Anderson’s candidacy may seem as though it was an attempt to keep his head down, he continued to write articles using his ANP byline. As a way to boost his chances in the election for the editorship, he made efforts to show he understood the immediate issues facing black postal workers by employing accusatory headlines when interviewing NAPE leader, Roy O Wilhoit. For instance, in “Postal Economies To Hit Race Hard” and “N.A.P.E Not Asleep, Says Roy Wilhoit,” Anderson attempted to show he would force the labor leader to answer tough questions. The Post Office was faced with \$72 million in proposed budget cuts; it was part of the second emergency measure Roosevelt made to Congress, calling for \$500 million in cuts from the federal budget.

⁴⁶ ANP, “Anderson Seeks Editorship of *Postal Alliance* Mag,” *Afro-American*, 1933 April 8; ANP, “Anderson Seeks Editorship of P.O. Alliance Magazine,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1933 April 8; ANP, “Anderson Seeks Editorship of Postal Journal,” *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, 1933 April 15

⁴⁷ ANP, “Postal Men Scramble For Several National Offices,” *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, 1933 June 24

⁴⁸ Ibid.

For the post office it threatened to abandon “delivery service in small towns and curtailment in large cities, or discharge all letter carriers and award contracts under competitive bidding.” Anderson published Wilhoit’s response: “Of course this is economy but poor efficiency. We know that the contractors would hire few, if any, Negroes and we have at present about 10,000 letter carriers of our group.”⁴⁹ The second article questioned how Wilhoit had been “functioning effectively from month to month in the interest of 32,000 colored postal employees.” Wilhoit cited his successful fight against using seniority rules in airmail appointments and his efforts to break the “budding practice of separate swing (lunch and recreation) rooms in new postal buildings and defense of many individuals who were being victimized.”⁵⁰

Trezzvant Anderson believed NAPE could become a more powerful organization if it recommitted itself to eradicating discrimination leveled at black clerks who were bypassed for appointments, subjected to segregation and targeted for unfair ethical evaluations on the job. Anderson felt the organization could benefit from having the *Postal Alliance* published in Washington, where politicians and the central Post Office Department would be forced to pay attention to news regarding the work of activist Alliance members fighting discrimination around the country.⁵¹ In the middle of his

⁴⁹ ANP, “Postal Economies To Hit Race Hard,” *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, 6 May 1933

⁵⁰ ANP, “NAPE Not Asleep Says Roy Wilhoit,” *Afro-American*, 15 July 1933

⁵¹ The Sideliner, “Whiteway,” *Afro-American*, 24 December 1932, in this particular column Anderson states that a certain Washington newspaper correspondent’s name had not been seen in “bylines” for the past three months, but that correspondent was laying campaign plans for election to the editorship of a large important organizations magazine; Rubio, *There’s Always Work at the Post Office*, pg. 31-32; ANP, “Anderson Seeks Editorship of P.O. Alliance Magazine,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1933 April 8; ANP, “Anderson Seeks Editorship of P.O. Alliance Magazine,” *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, 1933 April 15; ANP, “Postal Men Scramble for Several National Office,” *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, 1933 June 24; ANP, “Postal Alliance to Have National Meet,” *Afro-American*, 1933 June 24; ANP, “N.A.P.E. Not Asleep, Says Roy Wilhoit,” *Afro-American*, 1933 July 15; “Wilhoit Heads Postal Group Fifth Time,” *Afro-American*, 1933 August 26

campaign travels throughout the southeast, and with the election looming, the perfect opportunity to promote himself as an effective leader in the organization came on July 2, 1933, when he was denied passage on a flight from Charlotte to Augusta, Georgia, a strategic campaign site. Anderson had made reservations by telephone but when he showed up for the flight he was told by the airfield manager, “Since you made your reservations we have sold out.” He replied, to the blatant oxymoron, that the purpose of a reservation was to avoid such situations accusing the manager of showing prejudice towards him because he was a “Negro.” Anderson walked to the airfield and peered into the plane but failed to see a capacity load, and tried in vain to contact the district manager of Eastern Air Transport Company. Finally, Anderson, as a postal official and executive of the ANP, wired the Postmaster General and the NAACP, giving full details of the affair and requesting an official investigation into the matter.

Trezzvant Anderson made plans to file a \$75,000 lawsuit against Eastern Air Transport. The postmaster general asked the superintendent of the Air Mail Service to look into the incident, and a two months-long investigation ensued. Pursuant to Anderson’s publicizing the incident and the investigation on September 9, the United States Post Office officially suspended airmail service with Eastern Air Transport Company. Satisfied, Trezzvant dropped the lawsuit, hoping Alliance members would get the message that he would vigorously challenge discrimination wherever postal workers were concerned.⁵² Anderson had only worked for the Railway Mail Service for five

⁵² ANP, “Correspondent Denied Air Passage in N.C.,” *Afro-American*, 1933 July 15; ANP, “Probes Charge of J.C. at N.C. Airport,” *Afro-American*, 1933 July 29; ANP, “Farley Probes Airport Bias,” *The Pittsburgh Courier*, 1933 July 29; ANP, “Postmaster General Investigates Airport Discrimination,” *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, 1933 July 29; ANP, “Sues Air Transport Company for \$75,000,” *The Philadelphia Tribune*, 1933 August 3; ANP, “Company Which Refused Negro Seat Loses Air Mail Contract,” *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, 1933 September 30.

years, but had a widespread reputation as a journalist who periodically wrote news about the postal service and the need of more African Americans to apply. However, union members were inclined to support older clerks with longer commitments to fighting for postal workers' rights. A twenty-year veteran railway mail clerk and president of the local Memphis NAPE chapter, Mack D. Anderson eventually beat out Trezzvant for the editorship. Certainly, Anderson was the most outspoken of the candidates, but his relatively new career in the service did not compare to other veteran candidates. Alliance members felt he was somewhat unseasoned, overambitious and a troublemaker. With the loss, he eventually turned his full attention to national politics.

Pressing for a New Deal

Anderson brought more attention to himself than he perhaps wanted, and with Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal taking shape he found it harder to remain sidelined on national politics. The President had campaigned on the "forgotten man" platform; he swept the Democratic Party into power strategizing to take advantage of Republican failures to enact broad, transformative legislation to address the plight of American masses. Roosevelt's bold declaration in Topeka, Kansas, in the reception room of Governor Harry Woodring's executive mansion, that he "included the Negro when he [was] talking about the famous forgotten man" made it into major black newspapers and gave hope to African Americans.⁵³ One scholar of the Roosevelt Presidency wrote that it was "during the New Deal that the silent, invisible hand of racism was fully exposed as a national issue; as a problem that needed to be recognized; and as a problem that the country could no longer pretend did not exist." It was a time when black Americans and

⁵³ E. W. Wilkins, "Forgotten Man Includes All—Roosevelt," *The Afro-American*, 24 September 1932

their allies could begin to struggle with some expectations of success.⁵⁴ Anderson played an instrumental role in this early fight, making sure African Americans understood their rights as citizens and that their voices did not go unheard.

Once inaugurated, Roosevelt wasted no time in his effort to revive the American people's hope in the government. He adopted the Keynesian philosophy that a government's deficit spending could jump-start a depressed economy, and created a series of government agencies to lead the country out of the depression. Through enactment of key pieces of legislation, during his first one hundred days in office (May 4 through June 16, 1933), the President initiated the first phase of his New Deal. The new agencies he created aimed to restructure the economy, from banking to agriculture to industry to labor relations. According to one historian, however, the decentralized nature in the administration of these programs placed most African Americans in the South, where the majority still resided, at a decided disadvantage—they seemed to be getting the same old deal. While Representative Oscar DePriest fought and succeeded in getting a clause that banned discrimination based on race, creed or religion into one of the original acts, it was simply ignored by administrators. The NAACP also did its part by sending telegrams to Roosevelt urging him to do something about discrimination in the registration offices in the South.⁵⁵ However, black southerners “could do nothing to counter the control over the early New Deal exercised by Southern congressmen in

⁵⁴ David Woolner, ‘African Americans and the New Deal: A Look Back in History,’ <http://www.rooseveltinstitute.org/new-roosevelt/african-americans-and-new-deal-look-back-history>; Woolner, Senior Fellow and Hyde Park Resident Historian of the Roosevelt Institute, references Harvard Sitkoff's work as the providing the most precise analysis of the New Deal's role in black Americans struggle to secure equal citizenship rights.

⁵⁵ ‘NAACP Asks F. D. To Watch Forest Jobs,’ *Afro-American*, 15 April 1933

alliance with well-financed industrial associations, local unions, and farm lobbies.”⁵⁶

These groups made it their mission to have African Americans ‘remain the mudsill’ of southern society. One black newspaper wondered: “Does this presage the end of that heralded concern for the Forgotten Man?”⁵⁷

Trezzvant Anderson worked to bring widespread racial discrimination into the forefront. In a nationally distributed piece, he critiqued the implementation of the National Industrial Recovery Act (NIRA). “‘Keep an Eye on the NIRA,’ he warned, while “it was designed to give workers, black and white, the chance to make a decent living,” for some whites, it appeared “in the shape of a dark cloud which threatened, unless something is quickly done, to impose a new, legalized and permanent form of modified slavery upon the Negroes of the South.”⁵⁸ Anderson understood that implementation of the NIRA would challenge the region’s practice of ensnaring black men and women into menial low paying non-skilled positions. Many white southerners feared the NIRA’s intention to regulate the country’s wages and hours, while allowing workers to unionize, would loosen their control over black labor. Anderson had already witnessed widespread resistance to granting black Americans access to government programs designed to help citizens cope with the depression under the Hoover administration, and this continued into Roosevelt’s tenure. In every industry where African Americans were employed in large numbers in the South, “southern businessmen

⁵⁶ Harvard Sitkoff, *A New Deal For Blacks, The Emergence of Civil Rights as a National Issue: The Depression Decade*, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1978), pg. 47

⁵⁷ Ibid, pg. 49

⁵⁸ Kennedy, *Freedom From Fear*, pgs. 151-153; T. W. Anderson, “Keep Eye On NIRA,” *The New York Amsterdam News*, 9 August 1933; Trezzvant W. Anderson, “Industrial Code May Handicap Southern Worker: New Kind of Slavery Faces Dixie Worker,” *Kansas City and Topeka Plaindealer*, 11 August 1933; Also see editorial that mentions Anderson’s ‘dispatch’: “National Recovery Codes Seen As Hardship To Negro Labor,” *Philadelphia Tribune*, 17 August 1933

have gone to Washington and sought to have different scales set up for white and for colored workers.” They threatened to “discharge Negro workers and hire whites,” if they were required to abide by the industry codes in laundry, steel and lumber. This type of blatant injustice was often overlooked, “the federal government countenanced discrimination and its Negro critics howled.”⁵⁹

Anderson was one of the loudest critics of the New Deal administration, but he found covert ways to voice his opinions. “They do not realize that any system,” he wrote, “which reduces the purchasing power of the millions of Negroes in the South, likewise holds the white South down economically and makes charges of Negroes.” He wondered how whites could “forego the economic advantages of a fair play and work system in order to perpetuate racial differences based upon prejudices.”⁶⁰ Trezzvant penned two anecdotes to reiterate this point. The editor of the *Pittsburgh Courier* published them using alias bylines—Harry Robinson and Samuel Trice, Anderson hoped to “arouse public opinion to a high enough pitch to get some kind of result,” without bringing too much attention to himself. Anderson often sent directives to editors who used his stories to credit them to fictitious individuals because he felt it was better he remain “non de plume,” understanding that “there would be efforts to intimidate me, or perhaps, even lynch me, should my name appear over the story,” he wrote during one instance.⁶¹ The stories were important because they illustrated that there was hope

⁵⁹ Ibid

⁶⁰ Ibid

⁶¹ Confidential Newswire to All Editors from Trezzvant W. Anderson, partial affidavit, 31 July 1940, Trezzvant Anderson Files, *Afro-American* Newspapers Archive, Baltimore, MD; also see Confidential Newswire to Claude Barnett from Trezzvant W. Anderson, 6 July 1948; Trezzvant Anderson Files, Claude Barnett (ANP) Papers (Microfilm), Chicago, IL; Anderson reveals to Barnett that he would be “sending you some ‘inside’ tips,” he wrote “for publication and byline purposes” the stories should use “Eric Horne.”

because some whites had begun to realize that there were no inherent benefits of a Jim Crow society.

In “White South Hurts Self By Submerging Negro,” he told the story of the courageous fight being waged against the bi-racial system by William Thomas Anderson, Editor of *Macon Telegraph*—“one of the most militant and intelligent champions of fair play for the Negro in the South.” The phantom ANP writer argued that “while Negroes have found it difficult to get together to protect their interests under the terms of various industrial codes being promulgated from Washington under the National Industrial Recovery Act,” the *Telegraph*, “has boldly risen to criticize those elements of the South, which would cheat the Negro elements out of the benefits to be derived from the new industrial code.” A letter from one reader suggested that the editor’s “speeches and editorials” praising the New Deal for the “greater things promised the South” were fine and “every word is gospel.” However, when the *Telegraph* editor talked “about being fair and generous toward the Negro,” the reader wrote “you are on an unpopular side, and you had better watch out.” In response, the southern editor described to the reader in some detail how the *Telegraph*’s “campaign of friendship toward the Negro [had] begun twenty years ago.”⁶²

Three years after William T. Anderson purchased the *Macon Telegraph*, in 1917, not only did the newspaper become more progressive on racial issues, it also began campaigning for African American economic opportunities and even added a section devoted to the black community in the American South called “Social and Personal News

⁶² Harry Robinson (For the Associated Negro Press), “White South Hurts Self By Submerging Negro,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1933 August 19, pg. 2; Harry Robinson was most likely another alias for Trezzvant Anderson, as there was no records of a Harry Robinson affiliated with the ANP. Also see previous footnote.

of Our Colored Community.”⁶³ This was in stark contrast to most southern white-owned newspapers that relied on stereotypes of blacks and reported on their criminal and lazy nature. W. T. Anderson came to view black stereotyping as a detriment after his newspaper unsuccessfully “sought national advertising based upon the city’s population of 50,000 of whom 20,000 were Negroes.” But the national advertising agency pointed out that “inasmuch as the Negroes were more poorly paid than whites, they were not as good purchasers, and that a city with a population of 30,000 with 20,000 Negroes could not be rated as a 50,000 city for advertising purposes.” The editor came to an early understanding that national companies viewed the 20,000 underpaid black residents of Macon as blight to the business of the 30,000 whites. Because of W. T. Anderson’s efforts, the *Telegraph*’s circulation of 300 among local African Americans grew to 5,000; they went from spending \$2,700 a year to \$45,000 on the newspaper, which ultimately helped the *Telegraph* receive the national advertising it sought.⁶⁴

The editor further pointed out the irrationality of southern whites stances on race to the letter writer, arguing “that we are so blinded with our prejudice and jealousy of the Negro,” that if a proposal “that all of the Southern whites and Negroes were to be paid \$10,000 each without any cost whatsoever to a Southerner, and it were left to a vote of the Southern whites as to the Negroes receiving it, the whites would vote against it, for fear of spoiling the Negroes, or letting them get away from some of their poverty.” He felt that it was “grand and glorious” that poor whites were “given benefits under the New Deal,” such as increased wages, shorter hours and better living conditions. For sure, the

⁶³ Nicholas Wooten, “W.T. Anderson: A Man Ahead of His Times,” *The Telegraph*, 4 January 2015

⁶⁴ Harry Robinson (For the Associated Negro Press), “White South Hurts Self By Submerging Negro,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1933 August 19, pg. 2

southern white editor argued, “that will have its effect upon the entire section. But this other race that is ever with us must be carried along to better things also. They help us or they will hinder us,” he wrote.⁶⁵

The following week the *Pittsburgh Courier* published a second article by Trezzvant Anderson under the assumed name, Samuel Trice. This time, he highlighted the work of Jonathan Daniels, who had recently assumed the editorship of Raleigh, North Carolina’s *News and Observer*. Trice posed as a nationwide traveler, during which he claimed to frequently encounter two burning questions on the minds of blacks living outside of the South. When asked why southern blacks did not “encourage a blanket hatred of whites,” he simply responded it was irrational to think that blacks in the South were capable of “blanket hatred.” However, the more pressing query he maintained was, “Why Don’t Negroes Rise Up and Fight The White Race.” He insisted that “there are many answers to those questions, but one of the most important is found in the existence of white southerners,” like Daniels, “who undertake with all their power to see that the abuses visited on the Negro are ended.” Under his lead, the *News and Observer* is “staunchly demanding equal justice in the courts, equal pay for equal work and equal education advantages for Negroes.” Trice specifically used the dispatch to shed light on the newspapers’ impressive stance on the Scottsboro Case and the unjust state of Alabama’s justice system.⁶⁶

Due to the dramatic retrial of the Scottsboro defendants in the spring of 1933, Alabama was back in the national spotlight. “It was a great shock to a large number of

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Samuel Trice, “Why Don’t Negroes Rise Up and Fight The White Race”? Southerner Questions,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 26 August 1933

people,” and it made many “face up to a situation which they would have not faced up to before,” recalled one observer.⁶⁷ Nine young black men were again tried, convicted and sentenced to death for allegedly raping two white women on a freight train near Scottsboro, Alabama in March 1931. All of this in spite of clear evidence that the rape story was fabricated and the United States Supreme Court had overturned previous verdicts. To the *News and Observer* and the rest of the country this was proof that “there was no justice in Alabama.”⁶⁸ To make matters worse, a mob, with assistance from local law officials, had recently lynched two young black men in the vicinity of Tuscaloosa (in Woodstock). The two teenagers, along with another that managed to escape, were accused of killing a young white woman. Because the NAACP and the International Labor Defense, a communist linked organization, blacks expressed the sentiment that the mob formed in retaliation to the perceived radical outside interference into “Alabama’s idea of the due process of law.”⁶⁹ After hearing news of the retaliated lynching, Jonathan Daniels responded in the *News and Observer*. “As the sun rose on Sunday morning in Alabama, it fell brightly upon the riddled bodies of two dead Negroes, but the light that came with the morning sun,” the southern editor pointed out, “disclosed not so much black carrion as the utter impotence of Alabama as a civilized State able to give justice to its citizens.”⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Quote from Robert Weaver, in Patricia’s *Days of Hope: Race and Democracy in the New Deal Era*, (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), pg. 87

⁶⁸ Samuel Trice, “Why Don’t Negroes Rise Up and Fight The White Race”? *Southerner Questions*,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 26 August 1933

⁶⁹ “Alabama on a Lynching Spree,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 9 September 1933, pg. 10

⁷⁰ Ibid

The message that Alabama represented the worst of the potential crisis facing black American workers, if they hoped to equally benefit from New Deal programs in the South, did apparently come through. “As might be expected,” one of Trezzvant Anderson’s readers wrote, “Alabama has gone all of the other states one better and arbitrarily set up its own code for Negro labor.” The editorial praised the executive ANP dispatcher’s clarion call for more black representation during the regulation of labor codes in Washington, D.C. by the National Recovery Administration (NRA).⁷¹ The NRA was the second phase of Roosevelt’s National Industrial Recovery Act. This administration was theoretically charged, “with overseeing a vast process of government—sanctioned cartelization.”⁷² More plainly put, it was supposed to regulate various industries efforts to control their own production, minimum wages and maximum work hours for laborers. The reader pointed out that Anderson argued given “its [black labor] peculiar position in the American economic set-up, should have some special provisions.”⁷³

Trezzvant Anderson urged black communities to rise to the demands of this crisis and take advantage of the new legislation. “The time is at hand,” he wrote, “when the brother must marshal his resources of intelligence and money and set up agencies in Washington that shall be able to represent him effectively.”⁷⁴ Beyond the Negro Industrial League led by John P. Davis, Harvard lawyer, and Robert Weaver, Economics doctoral candidate from Harvard, there were few Washington voices articulating African

⁷¹ “National Recovery Codes Seen As Hardship To Negro Labor,” *Philadelphia Tribune*, 17 August 1933

⁷² Kennedy, *Freedom From Fear*, pg. 151

⁷³ “National Recovery Codes Seen As Hardship To Negro Labor,” *Philadelphia Tribune*, 17 August 1933

⁷⁴ Ibid

American interests during congressional hearings on the adoption of employment regulations and specific codes enforcing equitable work practices and pay structures. “Both these men,” Anderson contended, “have labored practically alone, but intelligently, to present the Negro’s case.” He pointed out “there have been hundreds of representatives of other groups and causes on behalf of their groups.”⁷⁵

The New Negro Alliance

In the following weeks one grassroots group, the New Negro Alliance (NNA), emerged as an answer to Anderson’s call to cultivate the human and social capital of black people by marshaling their “resources of intelligence and money.” The NNA began to take shape in D.C. in September 1933, after the Hamburger Grill, a white-owned business located in a black neighborhood fired all three of its black employees and replaced them with white workers. Anderson had previously reported with disgust that, “beneath the very shadow of Howard University, which [was] busily engaged in turning out trained Negroes to take places in professional and business life of the race, it [had] been revealed that there are a total of one hundred and nineteen white business concerns, against twenty-seven Negro operated concerns.”⁷⁶ The day following the Hamburger Grill firings, a twenty-one-year-old, John Aubrey Davis organized a group of black neighborhood men and women to picket and boycott the restaurant. Two days later, the Hamburger Grill rehired the three black workers.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Ibid

⁷⁶ Trezzvant W. Anderson, “Ofays Have 119 Businesses in Howard U. Area,” *Afro-American*, 1932 August 27

⁷⁷ Derek C. Catsam, ‘New Negro Alliance,’ in *Organizing Black America: An Encyclopedia of African American Associations*, (New York, NY: Garland Publishing, 2001), pg. 514, Nina Mjagkij, Editor

Davis was emboldened by the boycott's success. He was a Washington D.C. native, recent Williams College graduate and political science Ph.D. student at Columbia University, and was able to connect with other well-educated and equally well-connected locals such as: Belford Lawson Jr., a recent Howard University Law School graduate; Frank Thorne, a property manager; Clyde McDuffie, a school district executive; and Howard Fitzhugh, a Howard University Marketing Professor. They founded the NNA in late August 1933. The organization's membership was largely comprised of other young middle-class blacks in their twenties and thirties. The NNA committed itself to using direct-action protests, such as pickets and economic boycotts, to "protect the employment of Negroes under the NRA."⁷⁸ According to one scholar, the alliance "mobilized Washington's black residents to challenge the discriminatory hiring practices of white businesses operating in the city's black neighborhoods and sought to increase employment opportunities for African Americans, particularly in white-collar positions."⁷⁹

Trezzvant Anderson was drawn to the NNA primarily because of its use of direct action tactics to achieve its goals. He proudly noted, "The young Negro is coming to the fore, not by leaps and bounds, but slowly and by sure steps, taking his time, in a most effective manner." He was especially supportive of the Alliance's insistence on

⁷⁸ "Boycott Conducted By Negro Alliance," *Washington Post*, 1933 September 3

⁷⁹ Catsam, 'New Negro Alliance'; also see: 'Theory of the Alliance,' Eugene C. Davidson Papers, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C.; Davidson was also a prominent journalist, who, along with Anderson, were the sole ANP representatives in the nation's capital. His collection contains the most extensive records of the New Negro Alliance including pamphlets, mission statements, and copies of its newspaper (*New Negro Opinion*) that ran from 1934 to 1939; Kelly Miller, "Boycott Seen as Effective Weapon in Hands of Group: Success in Densely Populated Sections of Major Cities," *Afro-American*, 1933 December 23, Miller and a few others responded to the Alliance's use of boycotts and the term New Negro to demonstrate that their tactics were not as fresh as they would have liked to believe.

excluding older black leaders in its organizational decision-making process. “We do not--positively do not want--any old ‘Negro Leaders’ in the New Negro Alliance,” he boldly asserted in an article entitled, ‘Hoary Heads Served Notice to Keep Out of New Negro Alliance Affairs.’⁸⁰ Anderson referred to old guard African American leaders as “hold-backers”; they purposely held younger black people back because they preferred “to be at the head of everything.” He suggested they enjoyed meeting for ‘fact-finding conferences’ that never led to large-scale mobilization of black citizens. Here he was taking a direct stab at the DePriest Non-Partisan Conference for failing to have any lasting impact. The goals and ideas of the NNA represented the spirit of cohesive support and unity that the twenty-six year-old Trezzvant predicted would not only spread across the South, but the entire country; he wrote: “now that the movement is well organized, it is going to spread in America like wildfire.”⁸¹ The NNA, in fact, was an outgrowth of the “don’t buy where you can’t work” campaign that first emerged in Chicago and spread throughout Mid-Western and Northeastern cities. Anderson attempted to get blacks in his hometown to support the idea “that colored folk should buy where they can work,” however the movement did not catch on in the South.⁸²

Trezzvant Anderson saw his involvement with NNA as an extension of his reporting. It was always his fundamental belief that black journalists could and should serve as key representatives for the citizenship rights of southern blacks. “Through the cooperation of Paul G. Croghan, the chief of Public Relations for the Department of

⁸⁰ Trezzvant Anderson, “The Open Forum: Hoary Heads Served Notice to Keep Out of New Negro Alliance Affairs,” *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, 2 December 1933, pg. 6.

⁸¹ Ibid

⁸² “Support Business, N.C. League,” *Afro-American*, 11 November 1933, pg. 23

Commerce, and arrangement with the National Recovery Administration,” newspapers announced that the “Washington correspondent of the Associated Negro Press [would] become the “contact man” for the Negro Press.”⁸³ Croghan had spent eighteen years over the department’s newsroom and was described as one of the most well connected men in the capital, who understood “the problems of newspaper men and women.”⁸⁴ He made arrangements with Charles L. Mickelson, the chief of publicity of the NRA and former chief of publicity for Roosevelt’s presidential campaign. Mickelson had read Anderson’s ANP dispatches and thought it might improve the negative publicity if he granted him access to the press conferences of General Hugh S. Johnson—head of the NRA. In exchange, Anderson was expected to write “informative and illuminative” articles on the administration’s activities and was allowed to present questions sent from ANP readers regarding black Americans and the NRA to Johnson.⁸⁵ The appointment came a week following the successful boycotts and formation of the NNA, and while it is not clear who initiated it, Anderson used it to his advantage.

In response, Trezzvant Anderson organized the Washington Press Club (later known as the Capital Press Club) so that black journalists might collectively direct a strategic effort to cover New Deal developments. Along with Anderson as president the club’s officers included: “Colonel West A. Hamilton, vice-president; E. W. Baker, secretary; and James H. Murphy, treasurer.” Hamilton owned a printing company with

⁸³ ANP, “Anderson To Report NRA Meets,” *San Antonio Register*, 8 September 1933

⁸⁴ George D. Riley, “The Federal Diary,” *The Washington Post*, 27 February 1933

⁸⁵ “Cover NRA Conferences,” *Afro-American*, 9 September 1933; also see Blanche Wiesen Cook, *Eleanor Roosevelt: Volume II*, work on and assessment of Hugh Johnson. I have only been able to locate eight articles with ANP bylines that discuss Hugh S. Johnson press conferences addressing letters and telegrams complaining about racial discrimination.

his brother Percival and was a widely respected World War I veteran. Baker was correspondent for the *Pittsburgh Courier* and Murphy was a member of the prominent family that owned the *Afro-American*. The club's membership also included the likes of other notable Washington, D.C. journalists such as Frederick S. Weaver, a Howard University faculty member and correspondent for the *Atlanta Daily World* and Louis Lautier who became Anderson's "successor" as head of the club in 1934. As important voices representing African Americans they aimed to increase pressure upon the Roosevelt Administration to address the protection of black citizenship rights.⁸⁶

Trezzvant Anderson used the Washington Press Club as a platform to urge the White House Press Correspondents Association to admit African American journalists into its ranks. More than a matter of admission it was a concern for direct representation of the black community and direct access. If black journalists were allowed to pose direct questions not only to the White House staff members, but to the President, African American newspapers would be able to better inform readers about the inner (and unknown) machinations of the government and the particular issues that most affected their lives. Anderson pressured Stephen Early, Roosevelt's press secretary, and argued that, "if the welfare of 14,000,000 colored people in the United States is of no consequence to those in the administration who are in position to do something for them, then I ask you to ignore this letter." While Early did reply, in many ways, it was dismissive. He explained, "newspaper men desiring to attend the President's conferences

⁸⁶ "Form Press Club," *Afro-American*, 1933 October 14, pg.3; "Press Head D.C. Press Club," *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, 25 November 1933; "Capital Press Club To Seek Privileges," *New York Amsterdam News*, 20 December 1933; "D.C. Press Club Seeks Equal Privileges," *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, 23 December 1933; Hamilton's military and public service garnered both national and local recognition in Washington, D.C.'s black middle-class. He served in the D.C. National Guard under General Pershing in the 1916 Mexican Border Campaign and honorably commanded the 372nd Infantry during WWI

should obtain admission to the House or Senate Gallery or the White Correspondents' Association." "Such admission," Early added, "automatically would admit any newspaperman to the President's conferences." According to scholars, his explanation shielded the Roosevelt Administration from accusations of being complicit in any type of racial discrimination.⁸⁷

While African American political involvement was strategically valued, it was not Stephen Early's intention to have the President directly respond to black journalists' concerns. He knew it would potentially offend powerful southern Democrats in Congress and threaten future re-election efforts. Part of the nation's first official press secretary's role was to maintain a respectable image for Roosevelt and keep news emerging from the White House as centralized as possible. Even though the black press was overall favorable to Roosevelt and his New Deal, Early had to keep the President from engaging its journalists or run the risk of political suicide. Early's uniformed response to both Anderson and Frederick Weaver showed his lack of intention to assist Anderson or any other black journalist trying to gain admission to the President's press conferences.⁸⁸

The Roosevelt press meetings were a big-ticket event in Washington, and of the 504 accredited local correspondents "only 100 to 200 would cover the president at any one time." Regular admission to president's press conferences required official correspondent status, one with "a reputable standing who represented daily newspapers or

⁸⁷ Trezzvant W. Anderson to Stephen Early, Letter, 23 October 1933; Stephen Early to Trezzvant W. Anderson, Letter, 25 October 1933; Colored Matters File, Box 36, Franklin D. Roosevelt Papers, Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum, Hyde Park, NY

⁸⁸ Ibid; also see Linda L. Levin, *The Making of FDR: The Story of Stephen T. Early, America's First Modern Press Secretary*, (New York, NY: Prometheus Books, 2008), Levin provides the most expansive treatment of Early's views on the black press; also see Donald A. Ritchie's, *Reporting from Washington: The History of the Washington Press Corps*, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2005)

newspaper association requiring telegraphic service.”⁸⁹ The rules dated back to 1884, and effectively barred African American reporters and others from covering the White House even though the President was not obligated to follow the rules adopted by the House and Senate. Members of the Washington Press Club were well aware of White House admission guidelines and strategically sent at least two letters requesting Early’s help. The first was sent from Weaver, a correspondent with the *Atlanta Daily World*.⁹⁰ The following day, Early received Anderson’s request as a staff member of the Associated Negro Press and president of the Washington Press Club.

Shortly following Early’s reply, Anderson made arrangements to meet with three leading white newspapermen in Washington to discuss his desire to attend White House press conferences. These men included George R. Holmes, chief of International News Service, C. Gould Lincoln, a political analyst for the *Washington Star*, and Paul R. Croghan. Croghan, a month earlier, had helped Anderson gain access to Hugh Johnson’s NRA conferences. It is unclear whether the white newsmen were sympathetic to the Washington Press Club’s plan to fight for White House admittance. Yet, even if they were it would have been an uphill battle, as other white members who refused to break the age-old social tradition outnumbered them. While Trezzvant Anderson’s tactic did not result in access for black correspondents, it did lay the groundwork for future attempts and eventual admission.⁹¹

⁸⁹ Betty Houchin Winfield, *FDR and the News Media*, (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1994), pg. 55

⁹⁰ Frederick S. Weaver to Stephen Early, Letter, 22 October 1933; Stephen Early to Frederick S. Weaver, Letter, 25 October 1933, Colored Matters File, Box 36, Franklin D. Roosevelt Papers, Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum, Hyde Park, NY

Trezzvant Anderson's activism had not gone unnoticed in White House circles. In fact, James A. Farley, Postmaster General of the Post Office, and Roosevelt's campaign manager, suddenly found reason to look into Anderson's postal records. He realized that Anderson had already been investigated and warned about his writing being a detriment to his employment in the RMS. Farley sent a letter to the Superintendent of the Railway Mail Service pointing out "that Clerk Anderson promised to abstain from future writing for publication while in the service," and insisted that he "look into [the] matter and return the file to him with comments."⁹² However, this was not the entire truth. While Assistant Chief Clerk Emory Bryant, a year earlier, investigated complaints by a Johnson C. Smith University administrator, he wrote in his original report that Anderson promised to refrain from writing "articles for publication about the University."⁹³ Farley conveniently overlooked this small, but important, detail. Yet, his message was clear; Anderson was creating unwanted problems for the Roosevelt Administration, and some work related "disciplinary action" needed to be taken. This would, hopefully press upon him the importance of keeping his job in the RMS and convince him to refrain from journalistic activity.

When the matter was finally brought to Anderson's attention, he was asked to "show cause why he should not be charged with 25 demerits under Item (3a) Major

⁹² "Press Head D.C. Press Club," *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, 25 November 1933; Complete Biography of Trezzvant Anderson, Trezzvant Anderson Papers; also see Earnest L. Perry Jr.'s Conference Paper - 'We Want In: The African American Press Negotiation for a White House Correspondent,' presented at the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, 2002 Annual Conference, Miami, Florida.

⁹² Acting General Superintendent to Superintendent of RMS, Letter, 21 October 1933, Trezzvant Anderson Files, Civilian Personnel Records

⁹³ Emory A. Bryant, Assistant Chief of Clerk to Superintendent of RMS, Letter, 29 September 1932 Trezzvant Anderson Files, Civilian Personnel Records, St. Louis, MO.

irregularities, derelictions and misconduct.” Believing that he had done nothing wrong, he replied, “Mr. Bryant advised him in 1932, when the previous case was under investigation, that there would be no objection, as far as he could see, on the part of the Department to occasionally writing articles for publication provided they were not of the harshly critical nature as those which drew the previous complaint from outside persons.” Anderson’s supervisor responded to Farley that while the most recent article “may not be intended to be especially critical, there [were], two or three paragraphs containing insinuations that the colored people are not receiving fair treatment at the hands of the Administration.” In his judgment, he wrote, Anderson should be “charged 75 demerits under Item (31) False statement to a supervisory official.” The supervisor obviously did not care much for Anderson and went on to say, “inasmuch as he seems to be unable to abstain from including objectionable criticisms in his articles written for publication, it is suggested that he be informed that he must discontinue his journalistic work entirely while a clerk in this service.”⁹⁴ Any postal employee that gained 100 or more demerits was up for immediate termination. Anderson’s supervisor understood this, he had good reason to believe that he was a troublemaker and needed to be reprimanded severely.

A week after Anderson was confronted about his journalism his supervisor received more news validating his belief that the railway mail clerk was becoming a menace. He was made aware of complaints from the Postmaster in Rocky Mount, North Carolina that “some colored railway mail clerks” from his Washington to Rocky Mount line “insist on using our swing room and toilet, towels.” “Some of them,” unbelievably, “come in and use same when *not* on duty.” The postmaster pleaded for something to be

⁹⁴ Superintendent (eligible first name) T. Elam to General Superintendent of RMS, Letter, 9 November 1933, Trezzvant Anderson Files, Civilian Personnel Records

done: “We have a large sign in our back lobby which reads as follows: KEEP OUT if not employed in this office. This also applies to employees not on duty.”⁹⁵ When the supervisor inquired about identities of the clerks in question, the postmaster responded: “We have had only one of the colored railway mail clerks to do this and that was Trezzvant Anderson.”⁹⁶ Almost as if he was anticipating the complaint, Anderson requested and quietly obtained approval to transfer to the Washington to Florence, SC line two weeks earlier. This managed to save him from further reprimand, but he did receive 25 demerits for supposedly failing to keep his promise to stop writing.⁹⁷

Trezzvant Anderson was only twenty-eight years old, and in just seven years his journalism career had advanced immeasurably, perhaps to the point that it fostered feelings of invincibility. However, he quickly learned that his writings and personal stances were freighted with real and lasting penalties that he had to be willing to accept. Anderson took a calculated risk when he decided to report on corruption in the National Alliance of Postal Employees’ (NAPE) leadership ranks. He might have believed that the only way to justify his writing and force his supervisors to accept his alternate career was to report on work related issues. Previously, he had coyly questioned the commitment and effectiveness of NAPE’s president, Roy Wilhoit. After Wilhoit was fired because a mistress filed charges with postal officials revealing his scandalous affair with her and another woman outside of his marriage, Anderson fed the firestorm by releasing details of

⁹⁵ Louis Brehm to Second Assistant Postmaster General, Letter, 3 November 1933, Trezzvant Anderson Files, Civilian Personnel Records

⁹⁶ Chief Clerk of Richmond to the Postmaster of Rocky Mount, Letter, 9 November 1933; W. N. Crucifer to Chief Clerk of Richmond, Letter, 15 November 1933, Trezzvant Anderson Files, Civilian Personnel Records

⁹⁷ Z.T. Elam to General Superintendent of RMS, Letter, 16 November 1933, Trezzvant Anderson Files, Civilian Personnel Records

the affair. He used his ANP byline to wire the story to major newspapers across the country, fully disclosing Wilhoit's infidelity and his apparent abuses of power as the Alliance's president.⁹⁸

Both the *Chicago Defender* and *The Pittsburgh Courier* placed Anderson's story on its front page. The *Courier* stamped in bold caps across its headlines: "WILHOIT FIRED: HEAD OF POSTAL ALLIANCE 'LOVED TOO MANY WOMEN.'" "Wilhoit has been "keeping" Mrs. Angie Younge, of 3167 Sheridan Avenue, St. Louis, and providing her with an apartment and clothes, and other necessities for a period of five years," he surmised from Younge's statement to postal investigators. "Mr. Wilhoit is a married man, living with his wife," in St. Louis, "and it is understood that his wife is a white woman," Anderson revealed.⁹⁹ News of the labor leaders' misconduct emerged following a fight that took place at Younge's apartment between herself and another woman—Johnetta Ward Suggs. She "was replacing Mrs. Younge as the object of the affections of the Postal Alliance head." Younge naturally resented this and, "when Miss Suggs came to Mrs. Younge's apartment, finding Mr. Wilhoit there, the two women fought." Younge also claimed "Mr. Wilhoit held her while the Suggs woman beat her," added Anderson.¹⁰⁰

The most damaging information to surface from this fiasco, however, related to kickbacks that Wilhoit received for delivering Alliance members to the Abraham Lincoln

⁹⁸ Complete Biography of Trezzvant W. Anderson (Courier Roving Reporter), (4-pages) Box 12, Trezzvant W. Anderson Papers, Atlanta University Center; ANP, "Wilhoit Fired: Head of Postal Alliance 'Loved' Too Many Women," *The Pittsburgh Courier*, 23 December 1933; "Mail Clerks Seek To Oust Roy Wilhoit," *Chicago Defender*, 16 December, 1933

⁹⁹ Ibid

¹⁰⁰ Ibid

Life Insurance Company as subscribers. Wilhoit was eventually forced to resign his NAPE presidency. While Anderson's reporting was not solely responsible for this, it did contribute to Wilhoit's loss of support among fellow Alliance officers. Conversely, Anderson's reporting also severely damaged his own relationship with Claude Barnett, because it revealed that Wilhoit kept the ANP head "on the payroll at a salary of \$25 per month for "publicity services." Throughout the entire ordeal, Wilhoit denied the charges, claiming "political enemies within the National Alliance have contrived to set up a series of circumstances against me in order to get rid of me." "The plot of my enemies has caused me much embarrassment," he admitted, but he took "solace in the thought that they have erected a structure, which will be the death of them."¹⁰¹

Trezzvant Anderson's decision to report on the "misfortunes" of Wilhoit and his arrangements with Claude Barnett brought swift and decisive repercussions. "We are notifying the papers whom we serve today that Anderson is no longer connected with us," Barnett assured Wilhoit, going forward "he has no authority to submit to them any material for us." Anderson's ANP press card was revoked which meant he could no longer wire news to large and small black newspapers across the country. This worked to diminish his voice, but he still held individual press cards with major newspapers, like the *Afro-American*, *Norfolk Journal and Guide* and the *Atlanta Daily World*. Additionally, Anderson remained in good standing with other newspapers like the *Philadelphia Tribune*, *The Pittsburgh Courier*, *The Charlotte Post* and *The Carolina Times*. However, his open criticism of the federal government's ostensible acquiescence to unfair treatment of African Americans in New Deal programs brought increased scrutiny by postal

¹⁰¹ "Wilhoit Denies Ugly Charges; Avers Frame-up," *Afro-American*, 6 January 1934, pg. 1; also see "Wilhoit Quits Under Fire As Postal Prexy," *Afro-American*, 10 February 1934; Letter, Claude Barnett to Roy Wilhoit, 22 December 1933, Claude Barnett (ANP) Papers, Trezzvant W. Anderson File, 1935-1955.

officials. Anderson had already received twenty-five demerits to his postal records for writing.¹⁰² He understood that the policy going forward was that if he decided to persist and the demerits accumulated, it would first lead to demotion and ensuing dismissal.

In the face of this tension between himself and his employer Anderson continued to publish anonymously for several months afterwards. The loss of his ANP card was a blow but Trezzvant was still a proven correspondent with important connections in the black newspaper world. He was determined to continue helping lead the movement to pressure Roosevelt's administration for equal access to New Deal programs for black Americans.

Anderson turned his full attention to unfolding developments in the New Deal—the launching of the Civil Works Administration (CWA). The CWA was supposed to be an answer to the failures of the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA). One historian argued that FERA was the federal government's first step toward the modern American welfare state, but this initial effort was doomed from the start due to “intractable difficulties in the domains of social attitudes and deeply embedded cultural values.”¹⁰³ Harry Hopkins, one of President Roosevelt's closest advisors, headed FERA and was responsible for dispensing \$500 million in federal relief money to states on a matching basis. Early on Hopkins came to the realization that the misery of the Depression did not evoke universal sympathy and that most state administrators believed the needy were personally culpable in their plight and did not deserve any handouts. He expressed his lament that relief applicants were, by and large, being treated as if they

¹⁰² Official Transcript of Service Rating Record of Trezzvant W. Anderson, Grade 3 Clerk, Trezzvant Anderson Files, Civilian Personnel Records

¹⁰³ Kennedy, *Freedom of Fear*, pg. 170-173,

were “in some way morally deficient.” This was especially true for most African Americans, who constituted one-fifth of all people on the FERA relief rolls. This was proportionately double to their presence in the population and most applicants were in the South, where they were usually denied relief due to the fear of creating “spoiled Niggers.”¹⁰⁴

Persistent attitudes that New Deal programs discouraged people from working convinced both Hopkins and Roosevelt that the federal government needed to “quit this business of relief,” of giving cash for a few hours of “cutting grass, raking leaves or picking up paper in the public parks.” Roosevelt came to share Herbert Hoover’s belief that this type of relief induced “spiritual and moral disintegration,” which was destructive to the national fiber.¹⁰⁵ Thus, the CWA was created in November 1933 to put people to work, a step which Roosevelt believed would nurture self-respect, self-reliance, courage and determination. The CWA was closely associated with the Public Works Administration (PWA) because its funding was directly allocated from the PWA’s budget. The PWA was the third component of the National Industrial Recovery Act and was designed to undertake an ambitious public construction program that would provide employment to stabilize purchasing power, improve public welfare and American industry. The CWA aimed to use the largely unspent funds to provide jobs for the unemployed to improve and construct buildings and bridges as part of the PWA’s national infrastructure development.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ Ibid

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, pg. 250-251

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, pg. 175-176

Trezzvant Anderson was especially encouraged by the liberal nature of Harold L. Ickes, who was Secretary of the Interior and head administrator of the PWA. Ickes was “a former president of the NAACP chapter in Chicago” and in 1933 he ended segregation in Washington, D.C.’s federal departments’ cafeterias and restrooms.¹⁰⁷ Anderson informed readers about Ickes’ “letter of warning to all state engineers” that “the Public Works Administration is for the benefit of all the people of the country.” There is to “be no discrimination exercised against any person because of color or religious affiliation,” he asserted, “this policy is in accord with section 206 (4) of the National Industrial Recovery Act.” Ickes’ chief deputy administrator, Henry M. Waite “told representatives of five southern states that the minimum wages must be paid to black and white laborers alike.” While these were certainly bold statements, the administration stopped short of guaranteeing jobs based on race alone. Ickes stressed that “community needs rather than the needs of any racial group” would be the basis for distribution of jobs in New Deal programs. This was the loophole that protected southern white administrators from threats of prosecution for continuously discriminating against African Americans.¹⁰⁸

It must be stated that southern administrators were equal opportunity discriminators, but they were especially careful to never openly admit to racial discrimination. One letter, for example, from the president of the Builders and Trade Consul of Columbia, South Carolina to Harry Hopkins, inquired about a more accurate “scale of wages.” The writer complained about six workers having their pay decreased

¹⁰⁷ Sitkoff, *A New Deal For Blacks*, pg. 66

¹⁰⁸ ANP, “Ickes Warns States Against Discrimination In Giving Out U.S. Public Work Jobs,” *The Pittsburgh Courier*, 7 October 1933; ANP, “Ickes Cannot Guarantee Jobs He Tells Afro,” *The Afro-American*, 15 July 1933, Front page

from forty to thirty cents per hour. “These persons are white women,” he pointed out. He went on to write that, “while we are not making discrimination in color,” he assured Hopkins, “we also have a statement from colored women, who are only getting four hours a day and two days a week.” The “work orders are marked on the back at forty cent per hour,” but up to this point “they [black women] have not received any pay.”¹⁰⁹

In the first months of 1934 thousands of similar complaints were received by the CWA alone. When Trezzvant Anderson and others sought to make these complaints more public, CWA head, Oliver Griswold, “told [the] *Afro* reporter that the letters could not be made public due to their *personal tone*.” Griswold downplayed the presence of widespread complaints of racial discrimination in the over 37,000 letters. Only “3.6 per cent came from colored persons, and that more than 25 per cent of the total number of letters complained of discrimination,” and “racial discrimination was listed as third in order of importance.”¹¹⁰ But Anderson knew this not to be the case because for months John P. Davis reported almost weekly about “hundreds of provisions in codes” that created inequities between occupational positions in the cotton textile industry, regional pay differences between the South and the North, and even an “economic grandfather clause.”¹¹¹ Davis had recently been appointed executive secretary of the joint committee on national recovery, and he continued to “receive a large number of letters from workers throughout the country.” These mainly came “from the South, laying bare the unfair

¹⁰⁹ G. E. Harvey to Harry Hopkins, Letter, 16 December 1933, Civil Works Administration: South Carolina, National Archives and Records Administration

¹¹⁰ “CWA Secretive on Complaints from Workers,” *Afro-American*, 3 February 1934, pg. 6

¹¹¹ “Hundreds of Codes Violate N.R.A. Tenets, Says Davis,” *The Afro-American*, 3 Mar. 1934, Page two; Revolt is Sure, John P. Davis Tells Lid Body, *The Afro-American*, 1934 March 10, pg. 25; There are numerous other articles published in *The Afro-American* between 1933 and 1934 about Davis’ effort push equal benefits for African Americans in various New Deal Programs.

conditions under which they are laboring.”¹¹² It was clear that the administration wanted to avoid as much negative publicity as it could, thus the information was treated as undocumented and unconfirmed, and subsequently refused to make provisions that protected or guaranteed equal citizenship rights for blacks.

President Roosevelt and other high-ranking officials, however, knew that the New Deal administration had a serious problem with what one mainstream newspaper referred to as “grafters” and “chiselers.” In late January 1934, he declared war on those who were “using recovery activities for personal gain.” He equipped his top administrators with “sweeping authority to take whatever steps” deemed necessary to halt corruption. Harold Ickes quickly moved to set up the machinery “to protect men from any form of extortion” and asserted, “it needs only their cooperation to make it absolutely effective.” Joseph B. Keenan, the Assistant Attorney General, in charge of the criminal division announced that he had begun inquiries into complaints sent to Harry Hopkins from all parts of the country. A Washington CWA survey supervisor had already been arrested for extortion and accepting bribes. Additionally, the Department of Justice also announced it was launching two separate investigations into New Deal corruption of its own.¹¹³

These events were not lost upon Anderson. He came to understand that more than just news reports and letters charging discrimination were needed for the federal government to legally take action. Anderson decided to take another of what he had come to call tours through the southern states so that he could conduct his own research and lay bare the “exploitation of workers by white PWA and CWA officials” for himself.

¹¹² “CWA Secretive on Complaints from Workers,” *Afro-American*, 3 February 1934, pg. 6; Also see “Dixie Employs Many Devices to Void NRA,” *Afro-American*, 17 February 1934

¹¹³ “U.S. Declares War on Graft in PWA and CWA,” *The Baltimore Sun*, 24 January 1934

Anderson reported his findings and actions to major black newspapers across the country. In Charlotte, North Carolina, he revealed the black “female workers, doing needle work, are requested to make ‘donations’ each pay day to the person who brings the money to pay them.” If these blatant forms of extortion were “not made voluntarily, then they are taken out of their pay just the same.” In Florence, South Carolina, Anderson found that black laborers who were contracted to work thirty hours per week at forty cents per hour, for a twelve-dollar weekly salary, “were receiving only \$9.00 per week, or \$3.00 per week less than stipulated by the Government act.” In Montgomery, Alabama Anderson found African Americans formally registered on eligible work lists being completely overlooked for PWA and CWA jobs in favor of white workers not even registered. In the coastal town of Pas Christian, Mississippi Anderson found similar abuses in work schedules where African Americans were “receiving only two days’ work each week, while whites were getting in the full week.”¹¹⁴

Upon his return, Anderson commented: “these conditions are alarming.” “Take for instance,” the case in Florence, “if there are 100 workers, then there is a bulk sum of \$300 per week difference.” “That money goes somewhere,” he suggested. But, “where does the balance go,” he asked. “Into the pockets of grafters,” he insisted; “and meanwhile Washington goes on thinking the laborers are all getting \$12.00 per man.” Anderson avowed: “such injustice deserves official investigation.” He sent a letter to Harry Hopkins, citing the cases that he had learned of and the names of the white

¹¹⁴ “Bare Exploitation in Dixie Under CWA, PWA: D.C. Press Club President Makes 3000 Mile Tour to Obtain Facts,” *Atlanta Daily World*, 14 February 1934; “Capital Correspondent Finds CWA Blank Failure in South,” *Philadelphia Tribune*, 15 February 1934; “PWA, CWA GYP Labor in South,” *The Afro-American*, 17 February 1934; “Bares Exploitation of CWA Workers in South: Trezzvant W. Anderson Files Charges With Harry L. Hopkins Following 3,000 Mile Tour,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 17 February 1934; Also see ‘Trezzvant Anderson Complete Biography,’ Trezzvant Anderson Papers.

officials involved in the violations along with witnesses willing to furnish affidavits.

“Negroes in these Southern states are, in a large number of cases, afraid to disclose these facts because as one Birmingham, Alabama Negro told” Anderson: “We would tell all about these things but we are scared to, these white folks would come to our house at night and mob us and kill us.”¹¹⁵ It was important that he published the details that the government had knowledge of the blatant discrimination occurring in the South, and that people were willing to testify. This afforded highly visible pressure on government officials to redress this situation by seeking justice.

“His exposé of racial abuses,” a *Pittsburgh Courier* editor claimed years later, “gained [him] national recognition.” Hopkins eventually had to take action. Anderson took satisfaction in knowing that, as a direct result of his investigative reporting, administrators were fired in South Carolina, reprimanded in North Carolina, jailed in Alabama, and fined in Mississippi.¹¹⁶ For all its timidity, one historian pointed out that, “The federal government was emerging as African Americans’ most reliable political ally.”¹¹⁷ However, after months of hearing complaints of discrimination, a New Deal official finally admitted what many black leaders already knew; “colored workers would not benefit as much as the whites from the recovery program,” under the NRA.¹¹⁸ This was largely due to the fact that most African Americans worked as farm laborers or domestic servants, two industries that were purposefully overlooked. The NRA was short

¹¹⁵ “Capital Correspondent Finds CWA Blank Failure in South,” *Philadelphia Tribune*, 15 February 1934

¹¹⁶ “Meet the Person: Trezzvant W. Anderson, The Nation’s Number One Reporter,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 22 September 1962; See also ‘Trezzvant Anderson Complete Biography,’ Trezzvant Anderson Papers; The latter is a typed draft of the former.

¹¹⁷ Kennedy, *Freedom From Fear*, pg. 254

¹¹⁸ “NRA Harmful to Colored Labor, Official Admits,” *Afro-American*, 28 July 1934

lived and largely viewed as a failure by American business owners in the South, who used all types of grafting schemes to avoid fully paying their workers. By early 1935, the NRA was declared unconstitutional because of enforced mandatory price and wage codes.¹¹⁹

Conclusion

Black Americans responded to the nationwide dilemma of the Great Depression by expanding their organizing efforts from primarily seeking anti-lynching measures and voting rights, to include demands for economic citizenship through not only equal access to private employment opportunities, but also civil service industry jobs and federally sponsored relief programs. The depression awakened African Americans to the reality that they could no longer afford to show blind allegiance to the party of Emancipation. Instead where they possessed the rights, they were encouraged to adopt strategies of leveraging their ballot in exchange for policies that favorably advanced their communities. Trezzvant Anderson's journalism worked both to document these developments and spur the movements forward. He sought to become a voice for black postal workers by seeking the editorship of the official organ of the National Alliance of Postal Employees. Anderson joined the New Negro Alliance to protest black consumer exploitation and organized black journalists into the Washington Press Club to gain access to White House Press conferences and better cover the misadministration of New Deal Programs. His activism continued to bring him scrutiny from postal officials and it

¹¹⁹ The Works Progress Administration (WPA) eventually replaced FERA in early 1935 and became one of the only New Deal administrations that were historically recognized for granting African Americans equal access to its various projects that included: the Federal Arts Project (FAP), the Federal Writers' Project (FWP) and the Federal Theatre Project (FTP). For a more in depth study on how African Americans contributed to and benefitted from this phase of the New Deal see: Lauren R. Sklaroff, *Black Culture and the New Deal: The Quest for Civil Rights in the Roosevelt Era*, (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2009).

was for this reason that he decided to slow his journalism career down. Over the next four and half years, between November 1934 and May 1939, none of his usual bylines appeared in major newspapers. However, his name did surface from time to time as a candidate for the editorship of the *Postal Alliance*.

CHAPTER FOUR

“News and Views of the Postal Service”: Equal Labor Rights in the Federal Civil Service System, 1938-1941

When Trezzvant W. Anderson revived his journalism career in spring of 1939, he waded into dangerous waters. By the summer of 1940, he recalled, “everybody in my block had been warned to not look out after dark, a backfire from an auto might not be that, but a gunshot.” During the long hot nights of August, Kelly Alexander and members of the newly re-organized chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) regularly armed themselves with “rifles and pistols” and gathered inside Anderson’s West Charlotte home to guard him against Ku Klux Klan retaliation. Angered by his activism and incensed at his audacity to instigate a federal investigation into the corrupt political practices of the local postmaster, Paul R. Younts, they roamed Beatties Ford Road where his home was located. Anderson admitted to Ed Scheidt, a Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) agent, “I ain’t no hero. I’m scared and I don’t want to be lynched.”¹

Anderson openly defied a direct mandate from President Roosevelt’s inner circle to abandon journalism when he began his first successful news column, “News and Views of the Postal Service,” in the *Afro-American*. It regularly printed his Charlotte address and highlighted black Americans struggle to gain employment opportunities and promotions in the nation’s postal service. He had used it, along with other black

¹ Trezzvant W. Anderson, “Dateline: Georgia,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1962 July 12; Letter, Kelly M. Alexander to Officers of the National Alliance of Postal Employees, 23 May 1941, Box 3, Folder 65, Trezzvant W. Anderson Papers, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Atlanta University Center, Atlanta, Georgia

newspapers, to organize a national publicity campaign against racially biased policies in the civil service system. A great deal of the publicity he generated was directed towards the blatant bigotry of Younts, who refused to appoint a black letter carrier to the city's local post office. Anderson exploited Younts' influential position in the National Association of Postmasters "to show [how] narrow-mindedness on the race question" by such an influential federal official was unacceptable. He spearheaded a letter writing drive to persuade Younts to make the appointment, and purposefully ramped up negative publicity at strategic moments during the state and national election cycle of 1940 to illustrate the "bad effect" that ignoring pleas for equal justice would "have upon the Negro vote."²

Younts wanted Anderson silenced because he exposed emerging chinks in Southern white supremacy's armor. The power dynamics between the national Democratic Party and 'Solid South' Democrats had shifted. When Younts remained defiant, Anderson directed federal attention to his questionable history as campaign manager for Democratic Congressman, Alfred L. Bulwinkle, and the postmaster's use of postal jobs to influence the outcome of local elections. This was a direct violation of the newly enacted Hatch Act, which prohibited federal employees from participating in partisan politics. Anderson's efforts resulted in a publicity nightmare for Charlotte—a

²ANP, "Emmett Scott Flays Carolina P.O. Bias," *New York Amsterdam News*, 1940 May 18; "Richmond Again Denied PO," *Afro-American*, 1940 May 18; ANP, Scott Flays Bar in Dixie Post Office," *The Chicago Defender*, 1940 May 18; "Postmaster Dedicates New School Building: Sidesteps Issue on Race Carriers in Charlotte," *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, 1940 June 8; ANP, "GOP Blasts Postmaster for Bias: Promise to Incite Race Voters in West," *The Carolina Times*, 1940 August 3; ANP, "GOP Leaders Blast Dixie Postmaster For Refusal To Appoint Negro Clerk," *Cleveland Call and Post*, 1940 August 3; "Shriners Protest P.O. Discrimination to FDR," *Afro-American*, 1940 August 24; ANP, "Elks Protest to FDR About Post Office Bias," *Philadelphia Tribune*, 1940 September 5; "Elks Join Shriners in Bias Protest to FDR," *New York Amsterdam News*, 1940 September 7; ANP, "Elks Protest Discrimination in Post Office," 1940 September 9

nationally publicized federal investigation and the conviction and eventual firing of Younts.³

By late 1930s Trezzvant Anderson recognized that federal New Deal initiatives legislated by Franklin Roosevelt along with continued local black organizing efforts in his home state of North Carolina had the potential to challenge the powerful hold southern white Democrats had long exercised across the region. Inspired by these twin developments, the journalist waged a relentless battle for equal employment rights in the postal service. In his column “News and Views of the Postal Service,” Anderson directed his full attention on the agency. He used the column to educate black readers about the potential opportunities available through the service, while documenting instances of labor abuses and discrimination that existed. In Charlotte Anderson led a successful grassroots effort for the prosecution of the postmaster. The campaign, which brought together black fraternal groups and political leaders, signaled the blossoming of a black political presence in the urban South that would help champion the gradual destruction of Jim Crow.

“News and Views” marked a pivotal point in Anderson’s life and his activism surrounding it became indicative of the ways he would employ the black press for the remainder of his career. He unapologetically entered the war against the federal government’s unfettered support of white supremacy in the civil service system fully aware of the risks, personally and professionally. Anderson was strategically connected and had a clear sense of what needed to be done. His activities illustrate that he was a indispensable part of a larger regional and national struggle not only involving the

³ “Charlotte Postmaster and Negro Employees May Face Federal Court: Eleven Whites and Two Negroes to go on Trial April 1,” *The Carolina Times*, 1940 November 2

National Alliance of Postal Employees (NAPE or Alliance), but also the NAACP and other groups interested in the advancement of black labor rights. Charles H. Houston, head of the NAACP's Legal Department, had written numerous letters demanding that Roosevelt and the Postmaster General, James Farley, investigate postmasters in the South who, he argued, had deliberately set out to "embarrass and drive out" black employees by refusing appointments and promotions. Houston urged the Washington Post Office Department to provide equal protection for employees as well as those seeking seniority promotions and general employment opportunities.⁴

Sanctioned discrimination in civil service enjoyed a long history. It began in 1914 when President Woodrow Wilson backed the Civil Service Commission's decision to require job applicants to provide photographs with their applications. This was likely the first photograph rule used to deny Americans citizenship rights. They were supposed to prevent impersonation, but they were, in fact, used as a deterrent to screen out black applicants. The NAPE, joined by the NAACP, led the fight in protest of this new federal Jim Crow policy.⁵ However, little progress to overturn the photograph requirement was made until the late 1930s when the Alliance and the NAACP gained a congressional ally in Arthur W. Mitchell, the first African American elected to Congress as a Democrat.⁶

⁴ "Campaign To Eliminate Negro From Postal Service Charged By NAACP," *The Carolina Times*, 9 October 1937, pg. 3

⁵ Philip Rubio's, *There's Always Work at the Post Office: African American Postal Workers and the Fight for Jobs, Justice, and Equality*, (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), pg. 29; Rubio provides the most definite study on the legacy of black postal worker activism. In many ways Anderson was the full embodiment of the radical, leftist, labor and civil rights activists that Rubio suggests that NAPE came to represent. His work primarily covers the period from the 1940s to the 1970s.

⁶ Paul N. Tennessee, *History of the National Alliance of Postal and Federal Employees, 1913-1945: "Treat Us Right Not White,"* (Bloomington, IN: iUniverse Books, 2011), pg. 56-57; Tennessee was granted access to official NAPE records to tell the story of the organization from its inception in 1913 to 1945. According to Tennessee, Mitchell began delivering speeches in Congress and writing letters to President Roosevelt about human rights violations within the Post Office Department.

Younger members of NAPE made calls for more militant and radical activism. They had grown weary of the old-guard leadership “crowd of social climbers and political aspirants” who relied solely on backdoor lobbying and negotiations.⁷ Anderson was among the loudest of this former group from mid-1930s to the early 1940s, and he used “News and Views” to advance this cause.

Historians contend that the early 1940s represented “a watershed moment in the history of the Alliance,” as the union began to combine direct action with social and legal protest to adopt a more radical approach to labor and build the organization into a reputable civil rights institution.⁸ Absent from the scholarly treatments of the union and more importantly the broader struggle of blacks to end civil service discrimination has been the kind of activism that Trezzvant Anderson represented and the significant role he played in cultivating a more aggressive stance in the fight against the federal government and how the Roosevelt administration responded. On November 7, 1940, President Roosevelt finally ended the application photograph requirements when he issued Executive Order 8587, two days after reelection and less than a week after the official indictment of postmaster Younts. The following week, Anderson wrote an open letter in “News and Views” to thank Roosevelt “on behalf of the 20,000 colored postal workers.” He then quietly discontinued the column two weeks later.

⁷ Rubio, pg. 29; Because of Rubio’s periodization, coupled with the fact Anderson was fired from his position in 1941, meant that Anderson was absent from many of the records that he examined.

⁸ Ibid, pg. 56-57; Also see Tennessee’s chapter 5: ‘NAPE Comes of Age’



Figure 4.1 Trezzvant W. Anderson, Railway Postal Service Photograph, 1938 (*Courtesy of Robert W. Woodruff Library of Atlanta University Center*)

In January 1938, Trezzvant Anderson was exploring ways to revive his journalism career when he contacted Claude Barnett about resuming his relationship with the Associated Negro Press (ANP). He wrote, “I am growing absolutely restless, and feel a great yearning to ‘hunt and peck’ on my typewriter again. I guess it’s something that has gotten in my blood and I haven’t felt satisfied since I did my last bit of newspaper work.” Anderson assured Barnett that his years of inactivity, had “given the ‘enthusiast’ a rather more conservative” viewpoint. He acknowledged that, while they “might have perhaps differed in ideas about some things,” he was sure they were “quite capable of seeing eye to eye.” He stressed the strength of his political connections in Washington, D.C., his good standing in the railway mail service, and his continued commitment to eschew financial gain. I “prefer the activity, for it was on that that I thrived,” Anderson

confided.⁹ From his perspective, he had served as the ANP's top news gatherer and knew the organization benefited from his coverage of Washington, D.C. and the larger South. Barnett may well have recognized this, but was not persuaded. He had been burned by Anderson before and was hesitant to bring him back into the ANP's fold.

Anderson had already been actively writing for the *Carolina Times* and other newspapers with which he maintained good relationships. He often used pseudonyms to do this, such as Bart Logan, which allowed him to write about topics close to home without bringing unwanted attention. He covered topics such as the Charlotte branch of the NAACP and its continued pursuit of justice against rampant police violence.¹⁰ Yet the most revealing news, which appeared under the Logan byline, suggests that Anderson had maintained a close watch on important national labor developments.

Earlier New Deal programs had proven not to be the panacea that Roosevelt hoped would revive the economy and improve the lives of average citizens. Coupled with growing national industrial labor unrest, his administration was forced to issue sweeping reforms to improve treatment of workers in the United States. In 1935, Roosevelt signed the National Labor Relations Act (also known as the Wagner Act) into law and created the legal framework guaranteeing workers' right to organize and employer requirements

⁹ Letter, Trezzvant W. Anderson to Claude Barnett, 10 January 1938; Letter, Trezzvant W. Anderson to Claude Barnett, 7 February 1938; Letter, Claude Barnett to Trezzvant W. Anderson, 22 February 1938; Letter, Trezzvant W. Anderson to Claude Barnett, 9 May 1938; Claude Barnett (ANP) Papers.

¹⁰ Bart Logan, "Charlotte Police Guilty of Murdering Negro," *The Carolina Times*, 1937 December 11, pg. 1; I recognize that Bart Logan was a real person who two months earlier was appointed district organizer for the Communist Party in North Carolina. Logan relocated from Bessemer City, Alabama to Greensboro in September 1937. While it is possible that Logan did write the articles, it is also highly likely that Anderson used Logan's name because there were only three articles appearing under the Logan byline. These articles all focused on developments in Charlotte and police corruption had long been an issue for the local NAACP branch in Charlotte, see chapter 2.

to bargain with recognized union representatives.¹¹ This set off a chain of events that led to the splintering of the American Federation of Labor (AFL) and the formation of the Committee for Industrial Organization (CIO), later Congress of Industrial Organizations.

Historically, since its birth in the 1880s, the AFL's membership had never risen above 10 percent of the American work force due largely to its commitment to protect only the rights of skilled workers. John L. Lewis broke away from the AFL and founded the CIO, as the Wagner Act convinced him of the need to escort the masses of unskilled workers aboard labor's ark. He sought to unify previously organized black and white workers in the nation's largest industries including steel, autoworkers and textile.¹² The latter's industry was centered in the South, in and around Charlotte, and thus would prove difficult to organize.

When local industry representatives at an open Charlotte Chamber of Commerce hearing spoke out against the CIO and its support of the newly proposed Wage-Hour Bill (later known as the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938), Anderson used the fictitious Logan byline to critique the representatives and politicians who opposed fair labor practices. Anderson was profoundly aware of the shared conditions of black and white workers shared. Industrialists who held fast to notions of "white superiority" argued that "there ain't no Negro worth 40 cents per hour." However, Anderson, or Logan in this instance, asserted what the CIO knew to be true, "low wages for Negro workers mean low wages for all workers." He placed emphasis on the fact that industrialists not only misguided white workers but that industry in the South was owned and controlled by

¹¹ David M. Kennedy, *Freedom From Fear: The American People in Depression and War, 1929-1945*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999) pg. 290

¹² Ibid, 300-303

northern capitalists who did everything to discredit the potentially progressive programs of President Roosevelt and the CIO. He warned that, “Wall Street is making its voice heard in Washington through such people as Congressman [Arthur L.] Bulwinkle and Senator [Josiah] Baily”; both, he warned *Times* readers, were opposed to not only the Wage-Hour Bill but the Anti-Lynching Bill as well. These were states’ rights Democrats who wholeheartedly supported white supremacy. According to Bart Logan, they served “Wall Street and the Ku Klux Klan rather than the masses of the people.”¹³

Without the ability to report in an official capacity, Anderson felt he languished on the sidelines. While he observed allies of white supremacy attempt to assert their authority to sabotage New Deal legislation by not only supporting private industry efforts to scale back the progress of the labor movement, but also to fortify barriers to decent paying jobs in the civil service system, which was the largest employer in the nation. For him, and many other black leaders, it was apparent that whether in private or the federal government, Southern politicians and industry leaders were hell bent on denying African Americans access to equal employment opportunities. Getting private industry to commit to non-discriminatory policies would be an uphill battle, but Anderson and others argued that “Washington, D.C., seat of the National Government—a democratic form of government—should be the last place in the nation where a bad example of democratic spirit should be shown.”¹⁴ While organizations like the National Negro Congress, CIO, and the NAACP had become more militant in their stances, Anderson recognized that the

¹³ Bart Logan, “The Special Session Of Congress and the Negro,” *The Carolina Times*, 1937 December 18, pg. 1; Senator Josiah Baily is popularly known as the leading Southern Democrat who helped pen the “Conservative Manifesto,” and effort to appose New Deal spending and influence to turn to the political right.

¹⁴ “News and Views of the Postal Service,” *Afro-American*, 17 June 1939

NAPE could play a leading role in combating labor bias in the civil service industry, but it needed to be more visible.¹⁵ In fact, this had been his goal when he unsuccessfully vied for the editorship of *The Alliance*, the official organ of the NAPE, in 1933 and again in 1935.

In Anderson's 1935 campaign speech at the annual meeting in Jacksonville, Florida, he preached to NAPE members: "We need men who are not afraid to stand up for their rights and use as much strategy and just as much diplomacy as the other fellow uses. When you have men like that in your organization, able men, and trained men, you had better use them, for they are valuable and sometimes limitless in the scope of what they can do for you in a national way." Even though he lost both elections, his 1935 opponent, Percy Hines conceded that Anderson had rendered the Alliance a great service in addressing the convention and suggested that his message was just as critical as any other given during the assembly, "I am certain that [your] influence yet lingers with our comrades in all sections of the United States," he confided.¹⁶

Anderson's failure to gain the editorship of the *Alliance* was directly linked to the same rationale that influenced Claude Barnett's decision to initially refuse restoration of his ANP card, the constant tension between Anderson and older black leadership. He had proven time and again that he was unwilling to compromise; and always committed to saying what he felt needed to be said, no matter who he offended in the process. What established leaders of NAPE viewed as diplomacy, Anderson viewed as outdated respectability politics that ultimately only benefitted those whites and blacks that sought

¹⁵ Bart Logan, "Fascism and the Negro People," *The Carolina Times*, 1938 January 1, pg. 4

¹⁶ "News and Views of the Postal Service," *Afro-American*, 1 June 1940; also see Tennessee, pg. 87-88; He writes that there was a "clear mandate to the leadership to focus on welfare issues."

to protect their positions of influence. He had exhibited this behavior in the 1920s while enrolled at Johnson C. Smith University where he criticized the school's administration and again as a member of the New Negro Alliance when he called for the exclusion of 'hoary heads' that he viewed as 'hold backers.' Barnett understood that Anderson was a renegade by nature, so he wanted to be sure that the relationships the ANP had worked so hard to establish would not be ruined if Anderson rejoined the organization. After months of back and forth communication, Barnett agreed to reissue Anderson's ANP card despite the fact that many older black leaders despised his brash nature.¹⁷

The ANP affiliation reestablished Anderson's ability to wire news to black newspapers across the country. This was essential because black newspapers were the vehicles for Anderson's activism. He aroused public opinion, organized groups and mobilized communities through newspapers. His agenda was to increase the volume of protest on issues of economic discrimination until it reached a pitch high enough to create groundswell and force change. On May 13, 1939, Anderson reemerged onto the political journalism scene and initiated his most successful and longest running news column to date, "News and Views in the Postal Service." It was carried in Baltimore's *Afro-American* and grew increasingly in popularity over the nineteen months it appeared.¹⁸

Anderson's initial goals for "News and Views" was to document various forms of discrimination in the postal service's employment practices, stress the need for NAPE to adopt more aggressive means in dealing with discrimination, inform readers on how they

¹⁷ Letters, McKinney to Barnett, 1938 September 30; Barnett to McKinney, 1938 October 10; McKinney to Barnett, 1938 October 12, Associated Negro Press Papers, Trezzvant Anderson Files

¹⁸ Ibid.; from the late 1930s until after World War II, the *Afro* was the most widely distributed black newspaper in the country, with five regionally marketed newspapers in Newark, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington and Richmond, and a national edition that was circulated throughout the South.

could help improve the overall welfare of black postal workers, and encourage more African Americans to apply for employment.¹⁹ In his first entry, the cases of three black railway mail clerks that worked with him on the Washington, DC to Florence, SC mail lines were used to bring attention to the typical kinds of inequalities African Americans faced in the postal service. Clarence Murray of Alexandria, Virginia, and Caesar Barron and George Bannister, of Washington D.C., were all due seniority promotions but were overlooked in favor of white clerks with less experience.²⁰ Murray was promoted, but later removed, after the all-white Railway Mail Association waged protests to have one of its members gain the promotion, “on the ground that [Murray’s] hearing was defective.” In contrast, Barron was never considered for promotion. In spite of his role as the vice president of the Washington branch of the NAPE, the labor union lacked the same kind of influence as the Railway Mail Association. Anderson wrote that the Alliance “made a vigorous but futile effort to gain [Barron’s] promotion.” Bannister, the third black clerk, was denied promotion due to past difficulties paying off debts.²¹ Anderson presented these as examples of why a general uprising within the ranks of the Alliance was evident.

In the years leading up to the appearance of “News and Views,” younger NAPE membership expressed dissatisfaction with union leaders’ reliance on merely writing letters when its members faced discrimination. They insisted the organization needed a Washington D.C. based welfare advocate and in 1936 George N. T. Gray, a retired postal employee, was appointed to fill this role.²² Gray represented what Anderson referred to

¹⁹ “News and Views of the Postal Service,” *Afro-American*, 17 June 1939.

²⁰ “News and Views of the Postal Service,” *Afro-American*, 13 May 1939.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Tennessee, pg. 52-54

as the “old-liners,” who continued to support the outdated policy of backdoor diplomacy. Anderson praised the emergence of a new group that referred to themselves as “Independents” because they were organizing a “general house-cleaning.” In order to thrive, they believed the Alliance needed to become more attractive to younger postal workers who constituted the vast majority of blacks in the service. They argued increased membership would bring the labor union more respect and leverage when challenging discrimination. Anderson contended that many people had never heard of the Alliance, and that this “lack of national acquaintance with [the] organization, as well as the failure of the N.A.P.E. to properly publicize its own activities,” stifled its national influence.²³

Anderson was ambitious and had proven he desired a leadership position in the Alliance. ‘News and Views’ allowed him to bill himself nationally as a champion of postal workers’ rights. In it he modeled the kind of innovative leadership he envisioned for the labor union by increasing concern among ordinary people who read the *Afro-American*. “If any of you who read this column wish to show you are interested in the welfare of the colored postal employee,” he wrote, “you have a chance to show it now.” He insisted that if congressmen and senators from various districts listened to white constituents, “they will also receive your letters, if you write them.” He was, in essence, encouraging blacks to stake claim to the rights of American citizenship and let their voices be heard. Seeing white clerks repeatedly selected over senior black clerks for

²³ “News and Views of the Postal Service,” *Afro-American*, 24 June 1939. Both Rubio and Tennessee suggest that much of the early national leadership of the Alliance came out of mid-West branches like Chicago’s.

promotions would continue, Anderson warned, if black Americans did not take the opportunity to write.²⁴

Arousing public sentiment through his column in support of black postal workers' struggles was just one example of Anderson's activism. He also urged more African Americans to take the civil service exam and apply for postal positions. He did not want readers to think that discrimination was so pervasive that it should discourage the idea that postal employment was not desirable or unattainable. "Colored people should get into the service," Anderson declared. He noted that the benefits of employment in branches such as the Railway Mail Service included pay that ranged from \$150 to \$250 per month, and a work schedule that required only ten to twelve days a month. The postal service offered the best salaries that African American men or women could obtain in any semi-professional field.²⁵ So it made perfect sense that Anderson focused his attention on encouraging both high school and college students, approaching graduation, to seek employment. He believed that every black "college president and high school principal in the nation should try to instill into the minds of their students that a postal job, while not a white-collar job, offered a economic security to be found in few other fields."²⁶

Anderson cautioned, however, that obtaining positions in the postal service were more complicated than just filling out applications, for it required above average performances on the civil service examination. The civil service exam, in addition to the

²⁴ "News and Views in the Postal Service," *Afro-American*, 17 June 1939.

²⁵ "News and Views of the Postal Service," *Afro-American*, 24 June 1939; Anderson indicated that there were 243 black women working in all 98 terminals throughout the country.

²⁶ "News and Views of the Postal Service," *Afro-American*, 13 May 1939; "News and Views of the Postal Service," *Afro-American*, 7 October 1939

photograph requirements, had become a major hurdle to African Americans securing postal positions.²⁷ Even with World War II in the offing and vacancies in the post office at an all time high, Anderson indicated that to assure placement on the list of eligible applicants, African Americans needed to score 96 or better on the examination to even be considered for appointment. During the most recent hiring period, there were 2,500 vacancies and over 300,000 applicants. Of these applicants, five of whom obtained perfect scores, only one was black, and the average score for African Americans consistently ranged from 80 to 90 percent. Anderson proposed that heads of colleges needed to “consider some method of installing such courses” in their curriculum that would prepare “their students for taking Civil Service examinations.” Advice such as this served to only increase the popularity of “News and Views.” After four months Anderson began printing his address above the column with this message: “Persons, who care to, may address contributions or grievances to Mr. Anderson at 1907 Beatties Ford Road, Charlotte, N.C.” He was hunting for more news and found himself receiving letters from readers all over the country. Some were postal employees who wanted to share their experience with discrimination, while others wanted to know more about what the civil service exam was like. College students requested that copies of the column, “be sent to each college and university president in the country.”²⁸

Not only did black applicants have to score extremely well on the exam to gain consideration for an appointment, they also had to deal with the whims of postmasters who ultimately made the final decisions on who would be hired. Anderson exposed a

²⁷ Rubio, 29

²⁸ “News and Views of the Postal Service,” *Afro-American*, 7 October 1939; “News and Views of the Postal Service,” *Afro-American*, 21 October 1939

number of instances in which African Americans with higher scores were passed over in favor of whites with lower scores. None of these were more important to his goal of ending discrimination in the postal service than the case of John T. Richmond. In spring 1939 Richmond took and successfully passed the civil service examination to become a mail carrier, but was appointed as a postal custodian by Paul Younts. Richmond joined a group of other black postal custodians that included Joseph Young and Frank M. James. Younts denied Richmond the mail carrier's position, rationalizing that there were no black mail carriers in the city's local post office and white mail carriers would not agree to work with one.²⁹

Anderson did not simply rely on "News and Views" to bring attention to the Richmond case, in 1939 he also convinced Louis Austin, editor of *The Carolina Times*, to open an editorial office in Charlotte and publish a local edition of the paper. This was a move mutually beneficial to both men; Austin would profit from increased circulation, while Anderson used the newspaper to build grassroots support for Richmond and place added pressure on the local postmaster. The NAPE did not have a local chapter in Charlotte and unlike the *Carolina Times*, *The Charlotte Post* refused to speak out on the issue.³⁰ Incensed both by Younts' decision and *The Charlotte Post*'s seeming acceptance, Trezzvant Anderson decided the best way to fight this local injustice was to join his already vigorous publicity campaign against nationwide discrimination together with a more focused grassroots organizing effort. For Anderson and countless others,

²⁹ "News and Views of the Postal Service," *Afro-American*, 18 November 1939

³⁰ In 1939, Dr. Nathaniel Tross assumed the editor's position of *Charlotte Post*, replacing Henry Houston who had given Anderson his first newspaper job. While both men were conservative to some extent, Tross developed the reputation for being opposed to any type of overt protest for racial equality.

Younts' willingness to discriminate against black postal employees, as vice-president and soon to be president of the National Association of Postmasters, made him an unfit leader and a ripe target for a nationally politicized campaign against racism in the post office.³¹

In its inaugural edition, Anderson expressed his hope that the *Carolina Times* would use its columns to help change the direction of the city's black leadership. He wrote, "Charlotte needs everything that a good newspaper can fight for, and coming to Charlotte will certainly be one step in the right direction, for Charlotte has never had a mouthpiece which demanded the respect of the people at large." Over the past twenty-five years, Anderson explained, his hometown had lacked capable and intelligent leadership and had become the "laughing stock" of North Carolina. He accused some older black leaders, whom he and others often referred to as "ward heelers," of being the most available for purchase in the state, "selling out" their fellow citizens for cash and other goods during important election cycles. Anderson supplied a list of things for which he hoped the paper would arduously campaign. In addition to the inclusion of African Americans in the city's postal workforce, he also called for the "revival" of the recently defunct NAACP chapter under proper leadership.³²

The Times adjoined Anderson's editorial that welcomed the newspaper with an article entitled "Hundreds Sign Petition," under massive banner headlines, "Charlotte Fighting for Mailman." Anderson had organized "a committee of Negroes" to lead the fight to compel the local postmaster to "employ at least one Negro mail carrier." Among

³¹ "Hundreds Sign Petition," *The Carolina Times*, 22 July 1939, pg. 6; Like Anderson or Richmond, African Americans working in Charlotte's post office were either railway mail clerks or custodial workers, respectively.

³² "Times Welcomed To Charlotte," *The Carolina Times*, 22 July 1939, pg. 6; Anderson also wanted the newspaper to help encourage a stronger Parent Teacher Association in the city schools, and the elimination of immoral relationships between male high school teachers and female students.

this group was: Henry L. McCrorey, president of Johnson C. Smith University; Frank C. Shirley, member of the executive board of the Federal Council of Churches; Zack Alexander, Sr., Deputy Imperial Potentate of the Shriners; and Kelly Alexander, Zack's son, who represented the more youthful and aggressive leadership that Anderson hoped would emerge in his hometown. Alexander eventually took the lead in reorganizing the local NAACP and guided it into becoming one of the most successful chapters in the South. He asserted that this group of black leaders was "undaunted by their recent failure to get a Negro employed" and vowed that they intended to "take the matter to Washington if they [could] not get satisfaction in Charlotte." Richmond had scored "one of the highest marks of the many who took the examination for mail carrier," and they believed that "post office authorities in Washington [would] not endorse the action of the local postmaster."³³

In the same *Times* issue, Anderson placed another article indicating that he had already begun to carry out his plan of bringing the case before officials in Washington. He requested, as a representative of the ANP, that the U.S. Civil Service Commission respond in writing to several questions pertaining to "its view of the photograph requirement and its authority for not directing that the person receiving the highest mark in an examination be given the first appointment." The same article also appeared in the *Atlanta Daily World*, and illustrates Anderson's efforts to politicize black newspaper readers across the South around the issue of the outdated civil service rule. He revealed the names of all the members of the commission and hoped to get them to express a more favorable view that postal officials should accept "the highest man or woman on the certification list." This change in policy, he believed, would have eliminated much of the

³³ "Hundreds Sign Petition," *The Carolina Times*, 22 July 1939, pg. 6

discrimination African Americans faced when applying for civil service positions. The commission refused to add kindling to the fire that Anderson was fanning, and took the stance that at present it could not “restrict the choice of the head of a department,” in so far as it would require “an act of Congress or a rule promulgated by the President.”³⁴ Anderson recognized that continued concerted negative publicity would eventually force the Roosevelt administration to pass legislation to discontinue the photograph system.

In reality, Roosevelt was already under pressure to reform the way the civil service appointments were made. Months earlier he formed the President’s Committee on Merit System Improvement in the Civil Service after influential interest groups, including the National League of Women Voters complained that a large number of women were being overlooked for civil service jobs. The most visible representative of African Americans before this committee was Edgar G. Brown. In 1936, Brown organized the United Government Employees (UGE), a labor union formed to advance the rights of black federally employed domestic service workers. He had served as editor of the *Standard News* in St. Louis and regularly contributed articles to black newspapers about black labor rights. Like Anderson, he too called for new leaders and more aggressive tactics in addressing the problems confronting African Americans. Unlike Anderson, however, Brown was no longer a federal employee, thus he could openly write about discrimination in the civil service industry and as the head of a labor union of federal employees was able to speak before a number of hearings about the need to

³⁴ Associated Negro Press, “‘Civil Service Explains ‘Photograph Rule’ For Identifying Competitors,” *The Carolina Times*, 22 July 1939, pg. 4; The same article was also wired to the *Atlanta Daily World*, See: ANP, “United States Civil Service Explains Photograph Rule,” *The Atlanta Daily World*, 23 July 1939, pg. A5; The *Atlanta Daily World* was widely distributed throughout the South.

improve civil service hiring and promotion practices. He was often asked to cite specific cases where blacks had been subjected to discrimination.³⁵

Anderson's writings provided the evidence Brown needed and he continued to look for ways to create the political climate necessary to convince the committee to make recommendations for legislative changes. He wanted to turn the Richmond case into a national referendum that determined once and for all that current federal policies actually sanctioned unfair treatment of African Americans. To accomplish this, Anderson began to direct attention to the grassroots movement taking shape around Younts' discrimination in Charlotte. He used "News and Views" to announce plans for "a huge mass meeting," during which he asserted, "the issue of 35,000 colored citizens versus 70 white Charlotte letter carriers [would] be aired." "Since Mr. Younts is slated to become head of the Association of Postmasters in their October convention," he wrote, "it would be well for outside Aframerica to know just what disposition this future head of postmasters has towards the race question."³⁶ Anderson contacted Walter White, executive secretary of the NAACP, and Emmett J. Scott, the long-time chief aide to Booker T. Washington, to recruit letters of support that he planned to read before the mass meeting. "I am writing you," he informed Scott, "hoping to enlist your aid in

³⁵ See: "U.S. Employees Form Alliance," *Afro-American*, 28 November 1936; "Edgar Brown Gives Appraisal of New Civil Service Method," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1938 December 3; "FDR to Hear Views of Four Prominent Colored Leaders," *Atlanta Daily World*, 1939 July 20; ANP, "Discrimination in Civil Service Set-Up Is Exposed," *Atlanta Daily World*, 1939 November 5; "Edgar Brown Addresses President's Committee," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1939 November 11; "Committee Gets Data On U.S. Civil Service," 1939 November 11; ANP, "Edgar Brown Cites Need of 'New Leaders,'" *Chicago Defender*, 1941 February 8; Brown had briefly worked with Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC).

³⁶ "News and Views of the Postal Service," *Afro-American*, 23 September 1939; Also see "G. T. Gray Rates Carrier Higher Than Red Cap," *Afro-American*, 23 September 1939

fighting a battle against a certain type of discrimination against our group being practiced” in this city.³⁷

Anderson knew the Republican Party had recently appointed Scott to its national staff to handle publicity in the black press. According to one prominent historian, his appointment was a move by the GOP to help “recapture black allegiance.”³⁸ Anderson was aware of the growing competition for the black vote between the Republican and Democratic parties and understood the black population in places like Charlotte could represent a balance of power in the upcoming state and national elections. He asserted, we “have in Charlotte, 35,000 Negroes, one-third of the total population, and they have the right of the ballot for every party.” Anderson stated, “I am trying to bring pressure to bear upon the Postmaster to make him change his attitude, and give us this carrier to avoid trouble in 1940...and if we get this one, we are going to yell for more, later on.”³⁹ In reply, Scott commended Anderson for his efforts in seeking justice for Richmond, so that he “would not be denied the recognition he [had] won on merit.” He offered assurance that this “object lesson of hypocrisy and injustice will be brought to the attention of colored people in the north who vote and have their votes counted.”⁴⁰ Scott

³⁷ Letter, Trezzvant W. Anderson to Emmett J. Scott, 15 September 1939, Box 5, Folder 16; Trezzvant W. Anderson Papers

³⁸ Nancy J. Weiss, *Farewell to the Party of Lincoln: Black Politics in the Age of FDR*, (Princeton University Press, 1983), pg. 267-269

³⁹ Letter, Trezzvant W. Anderson to Emmett J. Scott, 15 September 1939

⁴⁰ Letter, Emmett J. Scott to Trezzvant W. Anderson, 16 September 1939, Box 5, Folder 16; Trezzvant W. Anderson Papers

and Anderson provided each other with mutual ammunition that served to amplify the failure of the Roosevelt administration to address civil service discrimination.⁴¹

Trezzvant Anderson's plan was to read Walter White and Scott's letter at the September 17, 1939 mass meeting, and he also invited the Welfare Director of the NAPE, George N. T. Gray and Samuel J. McDonald, a high-ranking regional official, as keynote speakers. This might have been done to illustrate to Gray and other leaders within the ranks of the Alliance, the utility of adopting more aggressive tactics in bringing discrimination issues to light. If this was the case, it almost backfired when Anderson was arrested and badly beaten days before the meeting during a confrontation with the stationmaster in Washington, D.C.'s Union Station. He was en route to Charlotte on Friday night, September 15 to meet Gray, who planned to arrive and stay with Anderson the day before the mass meeting. Anderson was required to provide details of the incident to his supervisor, who was alerted by post office inspectors that were customarily contacted when post office employees were in trouble with the law.

While awaiting the 11:59 pm train home, Anderson recalled chatting with a young railroad baggage handler, a red cap, about the unfair conditions under which he and other red caps labored. He lectured the young man about their rights as American citizens: "Why don't you all take them to the court? Colored folks don't have to let white folks kick them around like dogs anymore! The same laws that are made to convict you are

⁴¹ Weiss, pg. 270; According to Weiss, Scott headed a committee that included Ralph J. Bunche and it stressed the need to end discrimination in the civil service, the army, navy, and all other branches of the government; Also see: ANP, "Emmett Scott Flays Carolina P.O. Bias," *New York Amsterdam News*, 1940 May 18; ANP, "Scott Flays Bar in Dixie Post Office," *The Chicago Defender*, 1940 May 18; ANP, "GOP Blasts Postmaster for Bias: Promise to Incite Race Voters in West," *The Carolina Times*, 1940 August 3; ANP, "GOP Leaders Blast Dixie Postmaster For Refusal To Appoint Negro Clerk," *Cleveland Call and Post*, 1940 August 3; Anderson continued to publicize Scott's letter in black newspapers leading up to and after the National Democratic Convention held in Chicago in July 1940.

made to defend you! Take ‘em to Court!” he recounted.⁴² Anderson asserted that the white stationmaster overheard this discussion and became incensed by his confident and authoritative behavior. The stationmaster let his annoyance be known as Anderson sought to board the train. Anderson expressed his belief to his supervisor, “I was, as you gather, merely doing what I thought was standing up for my rights as an American citizen.” “The Constitution gave me the right to express my opinion in this free country,” he wrote. The official police report, however, provided a different account; it indicated Anderson was intoxicated, “loud and disorderly when he got to the gate.” The stationmaster informed the post office inspector, “Anderson [was] a very mean and hard to handle person.” It took the assistance of two metro police officers to place Trezzvant under arrest, at which time they sought to move him to a detainment room. The officers stated that Anderson gave them “a tussle on the way to the police room and continued to curse very loud.” The report made no mention of the beating that Anderson claimed he took from the three men armed with nightsticks and a black jack, nor the huge gash that they left in his head.⁴³

He was released from jail the following morning, after posting a fifteen-dollar bond, just in time to catch the next train to Charlotte to meet Gray and prepare for the mass meeting. The meeting was held in Second Ward High School’s auditorium, where Gray addressed several hundred concerned African Americans. He noted that there was definitely “something wrong somewhere” when there had been no “Negro letter carrier”

⁴² Letter, Trezzvant W. Anderson to D. D. Brown (Dist. 2 RMS Supervisor), 1939 September 22

⁴³ Captain W. A. Palmer, Police Report, Trezzvant W. Anderson, 15 September 1939; Letter, N. E. Murray (Acting Inspector in Charge) to Superintendent of Third Division, 18 September 1939; Letter, Chief Clerk D.D. Brower to Trezzvant W. Anderson, 19 September 1939; Letter, Trezzvant W. Anderson to Chief Clerk D.D. Brower, 22, Civilian Personnel Records, National Personnel Records Center, St. Louis, Missouri Trezzvant Anderson Files.

in Charlotte for the past twenty years. He bemoaned the fact that college and university graduates were forced to take lower paying jobs as teachers because they were being denied positions in the local post office. Gray applauded their efforts and urged them to remain vigilant, “You will fall short of the full stature of American citizens if you drop this fight before you,” he asserted. Samuel McDonald from nearby Sumter, South Carolina, was President of the Fourth District of the NAPE, which included North Carolina. He echoed Gray’s sentiments and stressed that “everything worth having is worth fighting for, and that this might be a long fight but the reward more than justifies any effort spent.”⁴⁴ While news about the gathering was carried in both the *Carolina Times* and the *Afro-American*, it was the *Norfolk Journal Guide* that exposed more revealing details about the meeting. *Guide* readers were informed that, “plans were made to lay the foundation for a superior voting strength for the next elections, to vote against anything or anybody favored by Younts.” Additionally, representatives of the NAACP, recalled the organization’s efforts to block the nomination of Judge John J. Parker from the Supreme Court a decade earlier, vowed to protest and prevent the election of Younts to the presidency of the National Association of Postmasters.⁴⁵

Gray met with Younts the day following the mass meeting, after which he requested that Anderson “hold off [the] contemplated protest against Younts’ elevation to National President of the Postmasters Association.” The welfare director divulged no details about their talk and Younts also asserted he “had nothing to say” about their

⁴⁴ “No Action Taken On Postal Appointment,” *The Carolina Times*, 23 September 1939; “G. T. Gray Rates Carrier Higher Than Red Cap: Welfare Director Urges Citizens to Fight For Positions,” *Afro-American*, 1939 September 23

⁴⁵ ANP, “Charlotte Citizens Seek Colored Letter Carriers: Postmaster is Charged With Discrimination,” *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, 1939 September 30

meeting.⁴⁶ This secrecy, Anderson later admitted, alarmed him and other black leaders. However, he had bigger issues to deal with. The ramifications from his arrest days earlier were already beginning to mount. Though accounts differed, the fact remained that Anderson was arrested which reflected poorly on his postal record. He received 125 demerits pursuant to his arrest, which, when combined with his existing record of twenty demerits, brought his total number to one hundred forty-five. According to postal laws and regulations, Trezzvant's accumulation of demerits warranted consideration for dismissal and/or a pay grade demotion. As Anderson and others interpreted it, his return to journalism and the ensuing embarrassment he caused his hometown postmaster was at the root of the decision. Every notification that Anderson received regarding his employment, he addressed with lengthy responses that showcased his understanding of postal regulations.

His letters along with those of influential and supportive political figures demonstrated that he was well connected and that rash decisions based on his political activity should be avoided. One longtime close and influential confidant, William J. Thompkins, Washington, D. C.'s Recorder of Deeds, wrote to the Assistant Postmaster General that Anderson was in fact being targeted, and "forced to 'put out his chin.'" Thompkins asserted that "while the Negro civic movement was in progress, Anderson was approached one night by a white person who provoked an altercation."⁴⁷ While the incident did not appear to have been in direct response to Anderson's political activity, it

⁴⁶ Letter, Zechariah Alexander Sr. to Officers and Members of the National Alliance of Postal Employees, 1941 May 23, Civilian Personnel Records, National Personnel Records Center, St. Louis, Missouri Trezzvant Anderson Files; "No Action Taken On Postal Appointment," *The Carolina Times*, 23 September 1939

⁴⁷ Letter, William J. Thompkins to Ambrose O'Connell (Asst. Postmaster-General), 1939 November 3; Civilian Personnel Records, National Personnel Records Center, St. Louis, Missouri Trezzvant Anderson Files

did occur more likely due to his combative nature also expressed in political disposition. One anonymous letter of support detailed, “Anderson is one of the active Democrats of Charlotte, N.C. and is a newspaper correspondent. He has splendid organizing ability in the state. If you can give him an audience my statements will be confirmed. He is ‘on the spot’ in the interest of his people.”⁴⁸ The emphasis placed on his political affiliation and his organizing ability is significant, in that the letter suggested that postal officials were being encouraged to consider Anderson as an asset during the upcoming 1940 election. It also points to the reality that the black vote had increasingly more valued by the Roosevelt administration.

While these letters of support may have helped convince officials to reconsider terminating Anderson’s employment, they annoyed the General Superintendent—J. D. Hardy. He noted to Anderson that the letters he received in reference to his arrest “contained the statement that you are a newspaper correspondent. I trust this statement is incorrect,” he warned, “because the Railway Mail Service is full-time work, and, as you know, it is contrary to the regulations to engage in outside business.”⁴⁹ Anderson sent Hardy’s letter to Barnett, Carl Murphy (head of *Afro-American*), and Walter White and expressed his concern that the post office was attempting to muzzle him indirectly. After

⁴⁸ Letter, D. D. Brower (Chief Clerk, Second District) to T. W. Anderson, 19 September 1939; Letter, Trezzvant W. Anderson to D. D. Brower, 22 September 1939; Letter, D. D. Brower to T. W. Anderson, 2 October 1939; Letter, D. D. Brower to T. W. Anderson, 19 October 1939; Letter, Trezzvant W. Anderson to Chief Clerk-District 2, 22 October 1939; Letter, Trezzvant W. Anderson to The Post Office Department, 27 October 1939; Letter, William J. Thompkins (Recorder of Deeds) to Ambrose O’Connell (Asst. Postmaster General), 3 November 1939; Letter, Carl Murphy (President of *Afro-American*) to James Farley (Postmaster General), 18 November 1939; (Anonymous) Confidential Note, Undated; Civilian Personnel Records; Both Murphy and Thompkins were prominent member of Roosevelt’s infamous Black Cabinet.

⁴⁹ Letter, J.D. Hardy (General Superintendent RMS) to Trezzvant W. Anderson, 9 December 1939, Civilian Personnel Records

a month, he defiantly responded with a two-page letter in which he accused the General Superintendent of “misleading” him.

Since Anderson’s first infractions for newspaper reporting which criticized his alma mater and the administration of New Deal programs, he pointed out that postal laws and regulations had been amended concerning employee’s engagement in outside business. The revised version added the words “that will interfere with their official duties.” Anderson stressed that he worked more mail than any other clerk on his route and that his “dabbings in journalism” did not interfere with his official duties. He went on to cite a specific instance in which a white clerk-Ward Threatt regularly wrote a column in the *Charlotte News*. Trezzvant provided a clipping of the column—“The Postman Writes Again”—and snidely suggested that it served as his inspiration for his own writings.⁵⁰

At this point, to protect himself, Anderson began to shift his tactics and make public through “News and Views” his correspondence between himself and postal officials. His superiors surely recognized that this move, in the eyes of his readers, would only serve to position him as a martyr for the cause of racial justice, especially if they continued to threaten his job for writing about civil service discrimination. They naïvely believed that he “was bringing up the race question simply in order to befuddle the issue and distract attention from his disgraceful conduct.”⁵¹ But Anderson understood perfectly well what was at stake after he first discovered that his termination was being

⁵⁰ Letter, Trezzvant W. Anderson to J.D. Hardy, 7 January 1940; Clipping “The Postman Writes Again,” *The Charlotte News*, undated; Civilian Personnel Records; “News and Views of the Postal Service,” *Afro-American*, 30 December 1939.

⁵¹ Disciplinary Recommendations, O’Connell to J. D. Hardy, 1939 November 6, Anderson Civilian Personnel Records

considered. He wrote: “I received what I consider the first broadside as a result of my actions here. As is customary when one does something which someone else does not like, or is contrary to the other person’s wish, the first reaction is to get all riled up, and say: “I’ll get his job for that!”” Anderson asserted:

Regardless of how long I am in the Railway Mail Service, if I am persecuted because I have felt that I am an American, and a good citizen, and proud of my country, and still more proud of my own people, and have lifted my voice and raised my hands because I have felt sorely wounded over injustices to my people, then I go just as proudly to whatever consequences may await me, because I shall have satisfied my own heart that I am a man.⁵²

He was ready to cross any line that had been drawn in the sand. From his perspective, he had an entire community in Charlotte and support from across the nation willing to fight with and for him.

Trezzvant Anderson ramped up his campaign against Younts who, in spite of the negative national attention generated around his refusal to hire a black mail carrier, had successfully been elected to lead the National Postmasters Association.⁵³ Anderson continued to recruit and enlist prominent African American political figures within his network to write to Younts about the Richmond case, including Claude Barnett, Mary McCloud Bethune, Thurgood Marshall, Hobson R. Reynolds (Director of the Civil Liberties Department of the Elks), Lafayette Ford (President of the NAPE), and Charlotte’s own Zechariah Alexander, Sr. (Deputy Imperial Potentate of the Shriners). They all wrote letters to Younts. In fact, as the 1940 election got closer, the Elks and Shriners wired unanimous resolutions from their respective national conventions to

⁵² Anderson, “News and Views,” *Afro-American*, 28 October 1939

⁵³ “Postal Costs Need Not Rise, Farley Asserts,” *The Washington Post*, 1939 October 13

Roosevelt that requested the creation of initiatives to prevent postmasters from refusing to appoint black clerks and carriers in their offices.⁵⁴

Anderson's correspondence with Claude Barnett sheds even more light on his political strategy in North Carolina. He asked Barnett to convey in a letter, his "opinion about the bad effect" that Younts' refusal to appoint Richmond would "have upon the Negro vote," and that he understood, "from a reliable source, that the Negroes in this congressional district are planning a systematic campaign to unhorse Congressman Bulwinkle, who appointed him as Postmaster."⁵⁵ Barnett requested that Younts provide a statement on his "general attitude towards Negro postal workers."⁵⁶ It was no surprise that Younts ignored the request, as well as letters sent by others Anderson recruited. Younts felt it was beneath him to reply to African Americans who questioned his integrity. But this only encouraged Anderson to press harder.

North Carolina was not the battleground state for Roosevelt's Democrats in the way the urban North was, but the state did foreshadow the trouble that the Democratic Solid South faced in the coming decade with the black vote. Black, mostly middle-class, voters had become increasingly active politically as Democrats in the early 1930s in places like Raleigh, Durham, Greensboro, Winston-Salem and Charlotte. The state GOP by 1940 had learned from errors of pursuing "lily white" policies in order to compete

⁵⁴ "Shriners Protest P.O. Discrimination to FDR," *Afro-American*, 1940 August 24; ANP, "Elks Protest to FDR About Post Office Bias," *Philadelphia Tribune*, 1940 September 5; "Elks Join Shriners in Bias Protest to FDR," *New York Amsterdam News*, 1940 September 7; ANP, "Elks Protest Discrimination in Post Office," 1940 September 9

⁵⁵ Letter, From Trezzvant W. Anderson to Claude A. Barnett, 7 December 1939, Associated Negro Press Papers, Trezzvant Anderson Files

⁵⁶ Letter, Claude Barnett to Paul R. Younts, 14 December 1939, Associated Negro Press Papers (ANP), Trezzvant Anderson Files

with the Democratic Party, they had to actively court black voters.⁵⁷ Throughout election cycles of the 1930s, state Democratic politicians had become accustomed to counting on the black vote, but in general they viewed black voters with contempt. Nowhere was this exhibited more than in the behavior of Charlotte's postmaster Paul R. Younts, and the politicians that placed him in power. Trezzvant Anderson crystalized plans to exploit the postmaster's stance on race and his role as campaign manager for Congressman Bulwinkle.

Trezzvant Anderson's activism transcended simply using letter campaigns and black newspapers to do the audacious work of exposing the kind of racism that Younts represented. Most African Americans who were heavily invested in fighting for racial equality knew that people like Younts epitomized the paternalistic and benevolent nature of Southern white politicians who, when publicly confronted about their positions on the race question, expressed the opinion of Younts' words: "there is no one who feels more kindly toward the colored race than I." The truth was he felt that regardless of how well Richmond had done on the civil service exam, he and others should be happy that he was given a job at all.⁵⁸ In June 1940, Anderson sought to unveil Younts' behavior to the larger white community when he submitted an open letter to the "General Mecklenburg" editorial section of the *Charlotte Observer*. It appeared on a Sunday and was an effort to

⁵⁷ Jeffrey Crow, Paul Escott and Flora Hatley, eds., *A History of African Americans in North Carolina*, (Raleigh: Office of Archives and History, North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, 2002), pg. 145; According to these scholars, the state GOP first adopted lily white policies in 1902 in aftermath of the Democratic led white supremacy campaign. In 1921, black North Carolinians bitterly contested the nomination of Frank A. Linney as U.S. Attorney of the Western District of NC and were almost successful. While Linney was confirmed, in 1929 Judge John J. Parker was successfully blocked from nomination to the Supreme Court

⁵⁸ Letter, Paul R. Younts to Senator Robert R. Reynolds, 11 September 1940, Box 5, Folder 8, Trezzvant W. Anderson Papers

appeal to the Christian sensibilities of the newspaper's white readers. On this particular morning, Anderson noted that every black minister in the city "will pray a special prayer upon the conclusion of his sermon" for "Postmaster Younts to appoint a young colored man," the father of six children, "to a post as a letter carrier in his post office." He added, "If pleas to God, Himself, from the pulpits of my people cannot cause us to receive this favor, then our hearts will be heavy tonight." The editorial was laced with lessons on the history of African Americans' loyalty to the country, and ended with a call to the white community whom Anderson believed would not condemn Younts for appointing Richmond to the post.⁵⁹

The editorial appeared on the same day Younts was scheduled to dedicate the groundbreaking of West Charlotte High School's new campus. His dedicatory speech was part of a larger effort to demonstrate he did in fact feel "kindly toward the colored race," and more importantly to secure the black vote in the upcoming election for Congressman Bulwinkle. Given the black community's organizing efforts around the Richmond case and the buzz that Anderson's editorial had created, those who gathered for the dedication anticipated that Younts would publicly address the issue. Yet the editorial only served to anger Younts and he allegedly told one minister present that he was going to do something about the Richmond situation, but he would "be damned if [he was] going to let Trezzvant Anderson force [him] to do it."⁶⁰ The editorial was the tipping point for Younts, as Anderson, and others who followed the case closely, learned

⁵⁹ Editorial clipping, "Urged To Appoint A Negro Letter Carrier," *Charlotte Observer*, 1940 June 2, Civilian Personnel Records, Trezzvant Anderson Files

⁶⁰ Trezzvant W. Anderson, "News and Views of the Postal Service," *Afro-American*, 27 July 1940

that days after it appeared Younts took a special trip to Washington, D.C. for the express purpose of getting Anderson fired.

Zechariah Alexander Sr., who was among the initial group of Charlotteans that requested Younts to appoint Richmond a year earlier, wrote J. D. Hardy (General Superintendent of the Railway Mail Service) about Anderson's editorial and expressed his concern about the impending visit from the postmaster. "Since when has it become an offense against the Government of the United States for a Negro to ask for that which is guaranteed him by the Constitution." "We are bona fide citizens of these United States," he asserted.⁶¹ Anderson also made efforts to beat Younts to the punch and contacted James Farley, the Postmaster General, writing: "My assumption is that he [Younts] will approach you because of your known personal friendship, and official relationship along the lines that 'that Anderson Negro is getting in my hair, and I want him fired!'" Anderson purposely played up past talks given by Farley in Tuskegee, Alabama and Detroit. "I do not believe that you would permit yourself to allow me to be removed to satisfy Mr. Younts' desires, without following out the principles of justice and fair play, which you, in your own words have expressed," he declared.⁶²

Instead of replying to Anderson, Farley deferred the matter to Hardy. The General Superintendent briefly responded to the embattled railway mail clerk, and informed him that the letter would be placed in the files along with "other correspondence indicating that [his] record could be improved by devoting more time to

⁶¹ Letter, Zechariah Alexander to J.D. Hardy, 4 June 1940, Civilian Personnel Records, Trezzvant Anderson Files

⁶² Letter, Trezzvant W. Anderson to James Farley, 4 June 1940, Civilian Personnel Records, Trezzvant Anderson Files

the Railway Mail Service.”⁶³ Hardy provided a more extensive response to Zechariah Alexander. “We quite agree with you,” he wrote, “any citizens of this country is entitled to enjoy the liberties accorded all citizens under our Constitution, but I think it would be well to remind you of the fact that all Federal employees, and especially those in the Railway Mail Service, are expected to comply with rules and regulations.” He went on to state:

We feel that Mr. Anderson has not complied strictly with the regulations regarding the conduct and services of railway postal clerks. Notwithstanding warnings against his activities in setting up race prejudice, he has continued these activities in violation of Departmental instructions and brazenly challenged the right of supervisory officials to question his actions.⁶⁴

Hardy added that Anderson has “deliberately attempted to discredit the National Alliance of Postal Employees,” and was asked by NAPE officers “to refrain from activities which would tend to create a breach in the friendly relationship existing between the Post Office Department and [NAPE].”⁶⁵

Hardy made reference to an apparent rift between Anderson and the leadership of the Alliance, which did not surprise Alexander or Anderson. This only confirmed their suspicion about George Gray’s conference with Paul Younts months earlier. After hearing nothing from Gray following their mass meeting in September 1939, they requested he withdraw from the case so that they could carry on with their plans. Anderson used “News and Views” to publicly express disappointment in Gray’s inability to make any meaningful strides. “Mr. Gray is the welfare department,” he wrote, but

⁶³ Letter, J.D. Hardy to Trezzvant W. Anderson, 10 June 1940, Civilian Personnel Records, Trezzvant W. Anderson Files

⁶⁴ Letter, J.D. Hardy to Zechariah Alexander, 6 June 1940, Civilian Personnel Records, Trezzvant W. Anderson Files

⁶⁵ Ibid

“when recourse is sought from, by, and through him, and is turned down, there is no further step that this huge organization, with its large assets, can take.” Anderson noted that “other service groups maintain paid lobbyists in Washington to look after their interests.” It was his hope that NAPE would consider “creating additional unencumbered members of the welfare commission,” who would not back away when “things get tough and the going gets rough.”⁶⁶ Gray was embarrassed and upset and accused Anderson of disrespecting “the Alliance and the Post Office.” In a vitriolic letter also sent to Younts and Hardy, he lectured Anderson contending that had it not been “but for your ineptitude, something might have been worked out.” He wrote that he had “the highest regard for Mr. Younts” and that Anderson needed to understand that his “best friends” were high-ranking postal officials and “NOT the people who praise [him] for the stuff [he had] been giving to the press.”⁶⁷ Anderson felt that Gray was “grandstanding,” and wrote back to tell him as much.

He provided a scathing four-page retort to Gray’s one page letter. Anderson declared he knew that Gray was an opportunistic social climber, but he hardly thought the welfare director would be “so unkind, and thoughtless,” as to attempt to climb, by using his back. He told Gray he had him figured out for quite sometime and this was the reason he did not contact him following his visit to Charlotte, adding that his conduct impressed him as being that of a “jive,” “Uncle Tom” type and his letter was of no consequence to him. Anderson recalled a long list of questionable actions by Gray, including forcing himself upon the Alliance as its first welfare director and then monopolizing the position.

⁶⁶ Trezzvant W. Anderson, “News and Views of the Postal Service,” *Afro-American*, 6 January 1940

⁶⁷ Letter, G.N.T. Gray to Trezzvant W. Anderson, 14 January 1940, Civilian Personnel Records, Trezzvant W. Anderson Files

While Gray had boasted about his success securing promotions for black postal workers, Anderson questioned the merit of his claims by pointing out that “equal opportunity” should be his aim, not securing positions that were only available because of segregated facilities and rail lines.⁶⁸ More than just conjecture borne of Anderson’s own ambition, many of Gray’s failures as a leader were substantiated in the first official history of the Alliance.

By mid-1937, there were a number of charges leveled at the welfare director by union members, including “arrogance,” a “lack of diplomacy,” “stirring up strife in Alliance politics,” and “not handling Alliance problems in a profitable manner.” Most leaders within the NAPE had become convinced “that ‘[Gray] had outlived his usefulness’ to the Cause.”⁶⁹ Gray did not forcefully push for equal opportunity for black postal workers. Instead he attempted to place himself in the good graces of powerful white political figures, while riding the wave of change of which Anderson was an essential part. As the Welfare Director of the NAPE, he joined the heads of other large influential black organizations that spoke before the President’s Committee on Merit System Improvement in the Civil Service, such as Edgar Brown, Mary McLeod Bethune and J. Finley Wilson.⁷⁰ Unlike Gray, these leaders wholeheartedly supported Anderson’s radical and multifaceted tactics. Reliance on Anderson’s radical journalism was required

⁶⁸ Letter, Trezzvant W. Anderson to G.N.T. Gray, 23 January 1940, Civilian Personnel Records, Trezzvant W. Anderson Files; For good measure, he also informed Gray that he would be sending copies of his letter to Hardy and Younts.

⁶⁹ A.L. Glenn Sr., *History of the National Alliance of Postal Alliance, 1913-1955*, (Cleveland, OH: National Alliance of Postal Employees, 1956) pg. 211, Glenn confirms Anderson’s accusations that as the Welfare Director was a constantly looking to climb the latter. He accused him of creating enemies out the very people that the Alliance needed, like Arthur W. Mitchell, who first introduced the bill calling for legislation outlawing requirements of photographs on civil service applications in 1937. Instead of supporting Mitchell, Gray later convinced a white senator from his home state to reintroduce the bill.

⁷⁰“FDR to Hear Views of Four Prominent Colored Leaders,” *Atlanta Daily World*, 1939 July 20

to convince the committee that blatant abuses of power by civil service officials led to widespread discrimination and presented barriers to African American employment opportunities.

Anderson was relentless in his persecution of Younts. Yet all his efforts only incensed Younts. For more than a year, Younts had ignored Anderson, but he decided to go on the offensive, flex his political muscle, and not only secure the black vote for his candidate, Democratic Congressman Arthur Bulwinkle, but get Anderson fired. For years the postmaster was the equivalent of New York's infamous Tammany Hall in Charlotte, as "the Younts machine" dominated local political elections. In the May and June 1940 primaries, in addition to offering mail carrier positions to local whites if they helped deliver white votes, he threatened to fire black postal custodians if they refused to serve as 'ward heelers' to help deliver the black vote. Younts not only oversaw the local campaign for Congressman Bulwinkle, he also toured the state with Postmaster General James Farley, as he campaigned for the Democratic nomination for President. In turn Farley passed the buck and remained silent on the issue of racial discrimination in the postal service; he did not want to ruin the possibility of securing the Solid South's political support.⁷¹ Farley had no chance against the popularity of Roosevelt, but Younts was able to secure 24,493 votes for Bulwinkle's reelection efforts. The postmaster's political activity was a direct violation of the Hatch Act. Trezzvant Anderson recognized this and instigated an investigation from the Office of Postal Inspectors, the Civil Service

⁷¹ Henry Lee Moon, *Balance of Power: The Negro Vote*, (New York, Doubleday Publishing, 1948), pg. 1-2; Moon offers one of the earliest studies of black voting. He argued that partisan competition for African American voters would expand the Civil Rights Movement both by reinforcing the emergent left-turn within the Democratic Party and encouraging Republicans in competitive districts to endorse civil rights agendas.

Commission and Federal Bureau of Investigation. To accomplish this, he worked closely with Hosie V. Price, a black Winston Salem lawyer who turned over the names of the two black custodians, Joseph Young and Frank M. James, to the District Attorney of the Western District of North Carolina.⁷²

Price was also head of the North Carolina Committee on Negro Affairs (NCCNA), which was founded in 1936 according to the *Carolina Times* to address a “melting pot of problems which [confronted] the Negro in North Carolina.” The NCCNA was the outgrowth of a series of statewide political meetings that were held in Durham beginning in the early 1930s that called for the formation of local Negro voter leagues to oversee the intelligent use of the ballot. As the black vote increased across the state, the NCCNA emerged and focused on such issues as U.S. Senate and House Representative elections, and identified four primary components: education, economics, social and civil welfare, and politics.⁷³ The NCCNA took a special interest in the Younts case, not only because of his refusal to appoint black letter carriers, but also because it exposed the corrupt nature of black ward heelers. Anderson wrote that Price planned to “use this case before the Senate Judiciary Committee as a reason why the Civil Service laws should be

⁷² “Charlotte Postmaster and Negro Employees May Face Federal Court,” *Carolina Times*, 1940 November 2; “U.S. Gets Case of N.C. Postmaster,” *Afro-American*, 1940 November 2; Newswire, Trezzvant W. Anderson to All Editors, Undated, Baltimore Afro-American Papers, Trezzvant W. Anderson Files; One of the more interesting political developments that emerge from Younts’ activity was his support of James Farley, the Postmaster General, who was also running for the Democratic Nominee for President. This likely explains Farley silence on postal discrimination issue, as he did not want to offend Southerners, and risk losing their support.

⁷³ “Committee on Negro Affairs to Hold Statewide Meet: Raleigh To Act Host to Sunday Meeting,” *Carolina Times*, 1937 December 4; Also see chapter two, “The Founding and Early Years of the Durham Committee on Negro Affairs, 1935-1943, Brandon Winford, Masters Thesis...

changed to make it mandatory to appoint employees as their names are come to on the list, and thus open up the way for our Negro applicants.”⁷⁴

In addition to the NCCNA, African Americans also formed the United Negro Democrats of North Carolina, a group of 700 African Americans, who unanimously endorsed President Roosevelt’s bid for a third term. Judge Frederick K. Watkins, organizational president with whom Anderson had also been in contact, wrote North Carolina State Senator Robert Reynolds (Democrat) to ask whether he was aware of the developments taking place in Charlotte. Reynolds, in turn, wrote Paul Younts about his decision to refuse Richmond’s merited appointment. Younts for the first time provided an explicit response to the situation. “We do not have any colored carriers in our personnel at this time but I have hopes that we might be able to place him at some future date in a classified station, in the event that we were successful in obtaining one, in the colored section of our city,” he replied. Younts added, “I have always tried to assist them in every way possible in any of their undertakings which was for their betterment.” Senator Reynolds wrote back to Watkins suggesting that he believed that Richmond had not been “treated unfairly” by Mr. Younts, and that he was “in a position to know that what Mr. Younts says with respect to the colored race in Charlotte is true.”⁷⁵

In October 1940, *The Carolina Times* broke news about a secret investigation conducted by the FBI, the Post Office and Civil Service Commission into whether Paul

⁷⁴ Newswire, Trezzvant W. Anderson to All Editors, Undated, Baltimore Afro-American Papers, Trezzvant W. Anderson Files;

⁷⁵ Jeffrey Crow, Paul Escott, and Flora Hatley, *A History of African American in North Carolina*, (Raleigh: North Carolina Office of Archives and History, 2002), Pg. 145; Letter, From Paul R. Younts to Senator Robert R. Reynolds, 11 September 1940, Box 5, Folder 8; Robert R. Reynolds to Frederick K. Watkins, 14 September 1940, Box 5, Folder 8; Trezzvant Anderson Papers; Watkins, in 1935, became the first black elected as a magistrate judge in a Democratic Party election in North Carolina (Durham). He was also a high-ranking official within the Elks fraternal order; See article: “N.C. Housing Pioneer Lauds Growth of Atlanta Westside,” *Atlanta Daily World*, 12 November 1953, pg. 1

Younts had refused appointment of blacks beyond custodial positions because he was using the jobs of clerks and carriers for political patronage to support current Congressman Alfred L. Bulwinkle. Anderson highlighted Ernest M. Young's accusations that Bulwinkle maintained a "strange silence" while federal investigators explored possible political corruption charges. Young was the Republican candidate for the Tenth District Congressional seat that Bulwinkle held, and he disclosed that Younts was Bulwinkle's campaign manager.

Anderson fueled this political competition and published Young's rhetorical question of why Younts was allowed "to give Negro friends and supporters the run around." He suggested that blacks had sent numerous complaints to Congressman Bulwinkle and that he made promises to address the issue but never fulfilled the promise. Anderson wrote that Young further prodded, "Why is it that these promises have never been carried out?" While Bulwinkle "may not be involved under the Hatch Act or the Civil Service laws, it is incumbent upon him to disavow the alleged acts of his campaign manager, Younts, or the conditions that developed under his management of the Charlotte post office."⁷⁶

On the eve of the November elections, Anderson broke the full details of the investigation and the charges in *The Carolina Times*. He reported that affidavits had been collected that contained statements from employees of the Charlotte post office that they had been required to work on political campaigns. Employees were used to count and check ballots and election books as well as carry voters to the polls. It was further alleged that getting jobs in the post office was contingent upon the willingness of the applicant to work the elections. Blacks who worked against their will were given five,

⁷⁶ "Post Office Probe Cited By Morgan," *The Carolina Times*, 19 October 1940, page 2.

ten and fifteen dollars for their services. However, on election days when they used their cars to carry other blacks to the polls in the effort to get Younts to appoint a “Negro letter carrier” they were met with “rebuffs.” They accused Younts of rewarding members of “his own race with these jobs,” and cited the instance of a brother of a postal employee who contributed forty dollars and received an appointment as a carrier. Although Richmond’s name appeared on the same list he was overlooked in favor of the brother.⁷⁷

The case, which eventually was taken over by Post Office Inspectors, identified thirteen individuals who were in violation of postal laws and regulations, as well as the Hatch Act. Postmaster Younts was among the earliest, if not the first, to ever be charged and prosecuted for violation of the act. Younts was also charged with nine counts of violating Sections 88 and 208 of the Postal Laws and Regulations, which stated that it was unlawful for any officer or employee of the United States receiving any salary or compensation for services from money derived from the Treasury of the United States to directly or indirectly solicit, receive, or be concerned with receiving contributions for any political purpose from other employees or officers of the United States. Section two of the law reiterated part one and added that officials would also be in violation if they purposefully used their employees to promote political objectives. The penalties for violating these laws were punishable by fines of up to five thousand dollars and/or imprisonment for up to three years. Paul Younts was indicted on June 5, 1940 and released from the postal service on July 15, 1941.⁷⁸

⁷⁷ “Eleven Whites and Two Negroes to Go on Trial Apr. 1,” *The Carolina Times*, 2 November 1940, Front Page

⁷⁸ Ibid

The General Superintendent of the RMS wrote of Anderson: “I think it is a case of giving this chap enough rope, and he will eventually hang himself.”⁷⁹ Hardy and other officials wanted to get rid of him. Anderson’s relentless organizing and instigation of the federal investigation of Younts embarrassed the entire United States Postal Service. He then audaciously campaigned to become the president of the NAPE. Anderson was already an influential force, but the prospect of him leading more than 20,000 postal employees was not a palatable idea for postal officials or the organization’s current leadership. He fashioned himself “as the watch dog of the Alliance,” while others within the organization considered him a “stormy petrel” and worried that his uncompromising style of leadership would not place the organization in a positive light among leading officials of the post office. He continued to criticize older leaders in the organization, leveraging his willingness to fight and their lack of initiative as his campaign platform. This criticism negatively influenced older members and compromised his chance of gaining the presidency of the labor union. Anderson came in a distant fourth in the September 1941 elections.⁸⁰

Finally after a two-month long investigation, the head of the RMS fired Anderson on November 7, 1941 after a train conductor filed an “intoxication and misconduct” complaint. Traveling as a passenger, returning from the disappointing bi-annual NAPE convention, and dejected by yet another unsuccessful bid for leadership, Anderson admitted to drinking with a group of college students returning to school. He believed

⁷⁹ Letter, J. D. Hardy to C. M. Dellinger, 4 November 1940; Memorandum, General Superintendent of Railway Mail Service, J.D. Hardy, 7 November 1941, Trezzvant W Anderson Files, Civilian Personnel Records

⁸⁰ “P.O. Alliance Hampered By Its Scheming Leaders,” *The Chicago Defender*, 12 July 1941; “Ford Reelected Head of National Postal Employees,” *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, 6 September 1941.

that what the conductor claimed to be drunkenness was actually excessive fatigue following a continuous schedule of thirty-nine uninterrupted hours of campaign activity. As before, friends and prominent citizens argued on his behalf and expressed the belief that he was being made a scapegoat for his “extended militant fight to place colored letter carriers and clerks in the local post office,” and for his outspoken criticism against discriminatory practices in postal appointments in other parts of the country. But Trezzvant Anderson, this time, did not fight the charges. He did, however, question the severity of his punishment and offered an incident with a white railway employee as proof of a double standard. “[In] view of action taken against a white railway employee who became drunk in the Mecklenburg Hotel two months ago, brandished a pistol and became generally disorderly,” Anderson revealed “the man was convicted and had his gun confiscated in police court here, but was retained in the service.”⁸¹

Conclusion

Trezzvant Anderson grew to fully understand the benefits as well as repercussions of his journalism. He proudly accepted his firing and ironically illustrated that he intended to continue his fight when he filed an application in March 1932 with the United States Civil Service Commission for a \$6000 per year postmaster position, the same position which Paul Younts had been fired from in Charlotte. This was a very real testament to his temerity. Throughout the remainder of that year, he doubled-down on his investigative reporting, became a “one man rights show,” and brought more national attention to his hometown and the New Deal Administration, which had entered its

⁸¹ ‘T. Anderson Is Suspended from Service,’ *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, 22 November 1941; There are literally dozens of support letters from prominent political officials seeking preserve Anderson’s job found in his Civil Personnel Records.

second, and most ambitious, stage. This stage included as a key component a youth division, National Youth Administration (NYA), implemented to provide job training in the expanding war industry. Anderson helped organize local youth in order to demand access to all of the city's civil-service jobs, led demonstration marches on the post office and delegations to local NYA sponsored factories. When the United States finally entered the fray of World War II in December 1941 Anderson demonstrated that he, too, wanted to carry the fight abroad. While he never mentioned the Double-V Campaign in his own writings, he provides a lens through which to examine how it manifested beyond the rhetoric spouted by black newspapers across the country, which called for victory abroad over fascism and victory at home over racism.⁸²

"News and Views" marked a pivotal point in Anderson's life and his activism surrounding it became indicative of the ways he would employ the black press for the remainder of his career. He unapologetically entered the war against Solid South Democracy and the federal government's unfettered support of its white supremacist policy in the civil service system fully aware of the risks, personally and professionally.

⁸² Trezzvant W. Anderson, "News and Views of the Postal Service," *Afro-American*, 28 October 1939; ANP, "Former Mail Clerk Seeks \$6,000 Job," 1942 March 20, pg. 1.

CHAPTER FIVE
Come Out Fighting: The Black Struggle for “Double Victory” during World War II, 1942-1946

On December 3, 1942 Trezzvant Anderson wrote a letter to United States Attorney General, Francis E. Biddle, informing him of his intention to bring civil charges against Charlotte, North Carolina’s Civil Service Board for employment discrimination against seven black men in the police and fire departments. The men had passed the civil service examination and were placed on an eligibility list. However, three had been overlooked for employment in favor of white men with lower scores; the city hired the other four as peace officers without full civil service status. Anderson also questioned whether or not he could file criminal charges with the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the Civil Liberties Division of the Justice Department. With the letter, he included newspaper articles that he had used to publicize the discrimination. Biddle’s Assistant Attorney General replied quickly that it was “the Department’s opinion that the issues which [he raised] could better be determined at the present time in a civil action rather than in a criminal action.” He assured Anderson, “that full consideration [would] be given any evidence submitted to the Department.”¹

Anderson had evidence of employment discrimination in the police and fire departments and also in defense contracting and training programs for youth in defense production. For most of 1942 Anderson tirelessly used the *Afro-American* to document

¹ Letter, Wendell Berge to Trezzvant W. Anderson, 8 December 1942, Trezzvant Anderson Papers, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Atlanta University Center, Box 5, Folder 40.

discrimination and organize people, young and old, to protest and file formal complaints with the Fair Employment Practices Committee (FEPC). Despite Anderson's pleas to Biddle, the Justice Department did not intervene, in part, because to do so would have opened floodgates for similar complaints to be filed. More critically, the Justice Department would have had to acknowledge the unfair employment practices perpetuated by Jim Crow policies and make those policies a national issue. Attacking Jim Crow would have provoked the backlash of white Dixiecrats who held sway in Congress, fed black activism in the South, and inspired further international criticism of U.S. hypocrisy. Anderson wanted a federal investigation, but he was out of strategies. In the *Cleveland Call and Post*, Anderson acknowledged he was teetering on defeat and that if his complaint with the Justice Department failed, he noted that he would have to "admit defeat but not until then."²

Yet, Anderson was unwilling to resign and pledged to push forward. He joined the US Army and took his fight abroad. Convinced that African Americans needed to be informed about the trials and sacrifices of black soldiers, Anderson orchestrated a campaign. He not only used anonymous newspaper articles to spark public debate, he also recruited prominent black leaders and their organizations to petition Army officials to employ an all-black Public Relations Unit with veteran journalists to coordinate news about black soldiers' experiences. Once in the theater of war, Anderson organized news for black correspondents and helped document the experiences of black soldiers, including the first all-black tank battalion. At the end of World War II, he published *Come Out Fighting: The Epic Tale of the 761st Tank Battalion, 1942-1945* and sent

² "Anderson Takes Charlotte Police and Fire Jim-Crow to Atty. Gen Biddle" *Cleveland Call and Post*, 1942 December 26, p. 1B

copies of the book to the nation's premier university libraries as well as to some of the South's most influential, virulent racist politicians.³ Trezzvant Anderson's bold activism helped radicalize a new generation of young people, college students, and laborers to seek change in Charlotte. His coverage of African American soldiers aimed to further inspire change on the ground in the South and promote the image of blacks as worthy and fit for full citizenship rights.

In-depth examinations of the black experience during World War II began to emerge in the late 1960s. Standard interpretation of the connection between the global war and black activism, as one scholar put it, represented the "forgotten years of the Negro Revolution," and was the period in which "the seeds" were sown for the modern Civil Rights Movement.⁴ Since then scholars have referred to the period as a "watershed moment" for black militancy.⁵ The black press has assumed a prominent position in these interpretations, many historians noted that World War II marked a decided shift in black activism, contrasting the move from W.E.B. Du Bois' "Close the Ranks" slogan during World War I to the seemingly more radical "Double V" campaign as proof of a turning point in the long history of black protest. However, this popular thesis did not go unchallenged. At least one scholar of the black press suggested that the rhetoric of the Double V campaign actually had conservative aims designed to restrain "militant

³ Trezzvant W. Anderson, *Come Out Fighting: The Epic Tale of the 761st Tank Battalion, 1942-1945*, (Germany: Salzburger Druckerei Und Verlag, 1945)

⁴ Richard Dalfiume, "The 'Forgotten Years' of the Negro Revolution," *Journal of American History*, Vol. 55, No. 1 (June 1968): p. 106, he was the earliest scholar to call attention to the war's importance as the "forgotten years of the Negro Revolution" and asserted that "the seeds [of the civil rights movement] were indeed sown in the World War II years." Also see: Dalfiume's, *Desegregation of the U.S. Armed Forces: Fighting on Two Fronts 1939-1953*, (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1969)

⁵ Harvard Sitkoff, "Racial Militancy and Interracial Violence in Second World War," *Journal of American History*, Vol. 58, No. 3 (December 1971); Sitkoff is the most notable scholar that supported the thesis that World War II represented a watershed moment.

elements within the black masses.”⁶ Harvard Sitkoff, an earlier supporter of the “seedtime thesis,” also reversed course on this idea suggesting that substantial evidence had yet to emerge proving that World War II was in fact a watershed moment in the twentieth-century black freedom struggle.⁷ Over the past two decades, historians have continued to revisit the period in an effort to pinpoint connections between the war, the nature of black protest and the origins of the modern Civil Rights Movement.⁸

Up until now, much of the scholarship on black protest during World War II has concentrated on shifts in the popular discourse. But using a notable black journalist as an example that expands this point goes beyond simply acknowledging rhetoric of the Double V and allows for a more organic analysis of the black press’ shift and its relationship to on the ground activism. Trezzvant Anderson’s wartime activism and newspaper reporting provides an opportunity for a new discussion of how the black press was used to navigate spaces between local and national black struggles for first-class citizenship, as well as working-class labor activism and middle-class civic leadership. As an Army War Correspondent, Anderson continued to use the black press to further black Americans’ struggle for citizenship rights. A careful analysis of Anderson’s life during this period sheds light on why the federal government viewed the black press as such a threat during World War II and adds a new historiographical channel to those already

⁶ Lee Finkle’s “The Conservative Aims of Militant Rhetoric: Black Protest during World War II,” *Journal of American History*, Vol. 60, No. 3 (December 1973) was likely the first to challenge this thesis; Also see: Finkle’s *Forum for Protest: The Black Press during World War II*

⁷ Harvard Sitkoff, in “American Blacks in World War II: Rethinking the Militancy-Watershed Hypothesis,” in James Titus, ed., *The Home Front and War in the Twentieth Century*, (Washington, D.C., 1984) reversed his earlier support of Dalfiume’s ‘seedtime’ thesis.

⁸ Merl E. Reed’s, *Seedtime for the Modern Civil Rights Movement: The President’s Committee on Fair Employment Practice, 1941-1946*, (Baton Rouge, La.: Louisiana State University, 1991) is probably the most noted extensive work that argues this point; For a more recent and relevant treatment to this debate see: Kevin Kruse and Stephen Tuck, eds, *Fog of War: The Second World War and the Civil Rights Movement*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012)

carved by scholars who consider the outbreak of global war as a moment of democratic renaissance in America. Finally, Anderson's life complicates the idea that the black press's Double V campaign had conservative rather than militant aims. To be sure, African Americans adopted black newspapers' patriotic rhetoric of the campaign; some blacks proudly displayed the "VV" insignia on their lapels, held Double V dances, and women wore their hair in Double V rolls. Black newspapers printed "VV" beneath their stories. Trezzvant Anderson's work suggests that the campaign was sufficiently more substantive, it provided space for people with divergent agendas to unify and take action. Moreover, it can be argued that his World War II activism demonstrates how African Americans turned the global war into a campaign for equal rights at home and abroad.⁹

As a journalist, Anderson not only represents "Double V" newspaper activism, but also with labor leader, A. Phillip Randolph's pressure on the federal apparatus. On June 25, 1941, Franklin Roosevelt signed Executive Order 8802 that banned racial discrimination in wartime industry and created the Fair Employment Practice Commission (FEPC). The President's hand was forced as he faced a public relations nightmare created by threat of a March on Washington led by Randolph. On September 8, 1941, Roosevelt issued Executive Order 8894 that amended the regulations of 8802 to include Federal Civil Service jobs, of which Anderson had been a long-time champion. Executive Order 8894 expanded the scope of the FEPC. Whether Randolph also pushed

⁹ Patrick Washburn, *A Question of Sedition: The Federal Government's Investigation of the Black Press During World War II*, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1986); Washburn provides the most thorough exploration of the black press during World War II; Lee Finkle, *Forum for Protest: The Black Press during World War II*, (); also see Finkle's "The Conservative Aims of Militant Rhetoric: Black Protest during World War II," *Journal of American History*, Vol. 60, No. 3 (December 1973); John D. Stevens, "From the Back of the Foxhole: Black Correspondents in World War II," *Journalism Monographs*, No. 27, February 1973; this is only source that explores the experiences of black newspaper correspondents during the war.

for civil service employment is uncertain, thus the limit of this point is to make him less of a singular figure at the center of black activism during World War II than part of a larger push. Anderson wrote that “order [8894 was] the climax of many years of intensive effort on the part of Negro organizations, and crusading individuals, some of whom took long chances in order to bring proper attention to bear upon the cases which caused the complaints to arise.”¹⁰ Anderson definitely saw himself among those “crusading individuals,” and the “long chances” cost him his job as a Railway Mail Clerk but emboldened his fight. He used the black press and the momentary revolutionary nature of the new FEPC to help organize black citizens and leverage power for those seeking to participate in the benefits of the booming wartime economy in his hometown, Charlotte, N.C.¹¹

The Fight for Black Citizenship Rights at Home

On January 31, 1942, the *Pittsburgh Courier* published a letter to the editor from James G. Thompson, a twenty-six year old black cafeteria worker. His letter questioned whether African Americans should risk their lives fighting to defend America abroad when they only enjoyed second-class citizenship at home. Thompson asked: “Would it be demanding too much to demand full citizenship rights in exchange for sacrificing my life?” “Is the kind of America I know worth defending?” “Will colored Americans suffer

¹⁰ Trezzvant W. Anderson, “FDR Order Aids Postal Group,” *Indianapolis Recorder*, 13 September 1941, pg. 1; ANP, “Roosevelt’s New Order “Godsend” to Postal Men,” *Afro-American*, 13 September 1941, pg. 2

¹¹ As President of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, Randolph had initially gained the support for his “Unemployed March on Washington” from large organizations like the NAACP and the National Urban League (NUL). However, the number of proposed marchers quickly jumped from 50,000 to 100,000 after other groups like the Improved Benevolent and Protective Order of the Elks, National Negro Labor Committee, American Federation of Teachers and Association of Negro College Students threatened to relocate and reschedule their national conferences to coincide with Randolph’s march. Trezzvant Anderson was the publicist for the Elks and its leader J. Finely Wilson, and more than likely he would have played a role in the decision to move the conference. The Elks were the largest black organization in the country, with some 500,000 members nationwide. So, if only a percentage attended the conference, it would have given Randolph more than needed marchers to follow through with the demonstration.

still the indignities that have been heaped upon them in the past?” Thompson asserted that these and other questions needed to be answered, and proposed that African Americans seek a double victory against those who perpetuate “ugly prejudices” at home and against the Axis forces abroad, both were a threat to democracy as far as he was concerned.¹² In the weeks following Thompson’s letter, the *Courier* continuously published an insignia on its front page, replete with an American eagle, VV’s, and the phrase “Democracy: Double Victory At Home [and] Abroad,” to test the slogan’s response and popularity. The catchphrase became an overwhelming success, as thousands of readers expressed support for the *Courier*’s campaign against their “enslavers at home” and “those abroad who would enslave” them.¹³ The newspaper noted that its patriotic drive had found favor within many different groups including: the masses of black churches, civil rights and labor organizations, liberal northern white politicians, and other black newspapers all which joined the campaign.¹⁴

Trezzvant Anderson launched his own World War II campaign in the midst of Double V fervor, when he established a Charlotte office of the *Afro-American* newspaper in early 1942. The *Afro* was already among the nation’s four largest black newspapers but sought to expand its circulation and influence.¹⁵ Anderson had held a press card with the *Afro* since 1930 as one of its most productive news correspondents. In 1933, he had

¹² James G. Thompson, letter to editor, “Should I Sacrifice to Live Half American?” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1942 January 31, pg. 3

¹³ “The Courier’s Double ‘V’ For a Double Victory Campaign Gets Country-Wide Support,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1942 February 14, Front Page

¹⁴ “Patriotic Campaign Finds Favor With Divergent Groups,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1942 April 11, Front Page

¹⁵ At the start of the war the *Afro*’s circulation had reached 230,343, second only to the *Pittsburgh Courier* (276,892), making them the leading black newspapers in the country.

helped organize a group of young *Afro-American* newspaper carriers in Charlotte. Opening an office in the city showed the paper's trust in Anderson and its commitment to a larger presence in the South. Working for the *Afro* connected him to a respected newspaper with a national platform and, given the growth of Double V rhetoric, helped him organize and embolden local youth, working-class blacks and middle-class black leadership. His work with the *Afro* pressured local defense training programs, independent defense contractors and white government officials into finally providing equal access to wartime employment.

Trezzvant Anderson did not work alone in Charlotte, but joined forces with Kelly Alexander, local NAACP leader. The two organized protests that exposed discrimination against black youth in the city's National Youth Administration (NYA) projects. In 1935, the Works Progress Administration (WPA) was established by the NYA to provide work and education for American youth between the ages of sixteen and twenty-five.¹⁶ Adversaries quickly labeled the NYA head, Aubrey Williams, a "nigger lover" and "traitor to his region" because the young Alabamian made the progress of black Americans' education and economic status one of his top priorities. Williams worked to eliminate geographical and racial disparities and demanded that blacks be paid the same as whites. Nationwide ten percent of all youth employed by the NYA were African Americans who worked on assignments that were professionally and semi-professionally related to their interests. At Williams's insistence, the NYA was supposed to fully

¹⁶ Lauren R. Sklaroff, *Black Culture and the New Deal: The Quest for Civil Rights in the Roosevelt Era*, (Chapel Hill N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2009). The WPA was largest and most aggressive of Roosevelt's New Deal agencies; it sought to hire millions of unemployed Americans to implement public works projects. It not only included constructing public buildings and roads, it also hired writers, actors and other artists to document local and state histories and paint murals and other works in and on state and federal buildings. This latter effort came to be known as the Federal Arts Project and according to Sklaroff it provided the clearest examples of how the Roosevelt administration made efforts to involve African Americans in the New Deal.

include black youth in all of its skilled training programs.¹⁷ While he may have demanded such intervention, his reforms did not come to pass without pressure.

The wartime NYA projects were designed to help alleviate the labor shortage that the war generated. The projects were supposed to provide technical training for America's youth and much needed materials for the war. In May 1941, the agency selected Charlotte as headquarters for a nine-county North Carolina district and a \$63,000 metal workers training unit. The local facility taught teenagers lathe cutting, sheet metal and forge work.¹⁸ Several months after the plant was operational, it became clear that local NYA officials were denying local African American youth training opportunities.

In April 1942, Anderson and Alexander decided to confront the discrimination with bold direct-action protests designed, according to the *Afro-American*, to "Crash Color Bars at [the] Charlotte NYA Shop." Both Alexander and Anderson urged the NAACP student council members to apply for appointments in the local NYA shop.¹⁹ When the students were denied appointments, Anderson and Alexander organized weeklong protests outside the shop. Anderson then requested an interview with "dean of the white machinists, and [head of the] local A. F. of L. machinists' union," E. L. Barkley, who had initially refused to grant the black students access. After learning that Anderson and the local NAACP planned to complain to the FEPC, Barkley reversed his decision to avoid the potential increased press coverage. Trezzvant later reported that the

¹⁷ Harvard Sitkoff, *A New Deal for Blacks: The Emergence of Civil Rights as a National Issue: The Depression Decade*, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1978), Pg. 72-73.

¹⁸ "NYA Plans Metal Workers' School in Mecklenburg County," *Charlotte Observer*, 9 May 1941, Pg. 1; "Charlotte Made NYA Area Center," *Charlotte Observer*, 16 May 1941, Pg. 1

¹⁹ Kelly Alexander to Madison Jones, 29 March 1942; "History of the Charlotte Branch," Presented in the Tenth Anniversary Ceremonial Program, 24 September 1950, N.C. Branch Files (Charlotte), Group II, Box C-135, NAACP Papers, Library of Congress

“colored youth began actual training on the machines of the NYA shops on Friday, [May 1] working from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m.” Only after “vigorous protests [were held] last week against the exclusion of colored persons from the training course for machinists here,” Anderson wrote, were doors opened to black youth.²⁰ The protests were a key component of the “‘Double V’ Creed,” to gain “full participation in the fruits of this victory” that America promoted through increased wartime industry production.²¹

Anderson maintained this national push in Charlotte by also organizing adult, working-class blacks searching for jobs in defense industries. In July 1942, Sanderson and Porter, a New York Engineering Firm, was contracted to build a \$75,000,000 anti-aircraft shell-loading plant in Charlotte. After local black carpenters experienced difficulty securing jobs on the project, Anderson helped them form their own union. With a nucleus of twenty-five workers they were granted a charter to establish Local 2380 of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America (UBC), an affiliate of the American Federation of Labor (AFL) since 1886.²²

In most cases, African-American carpenters were not allowed to join the all-white locals. The larger AFL had always viewed unorganized black labor as a threat to the wages and jobs of white union members. Thus, in 1890, the AFL drafted into its official constitution the acceptance of separate charters as “advisable and to the best interests of

²⁰ “Crash Color Bars at Charlotte NYA Shop,” *Afro-American*, 1942 May 2, pg. 11; “Defense Training Discrimination Probed in N.C.,” *Afro-American*, 1942 May 2, pg. 11; That the local NAACP encouraged its youth members to become involved in direct-action demonstrations was not unique to Charlotte, scholarship has shown that the organization was not monolithic and did not use litigation as its only strategy, this was especially true of its youth councils; See: Thomas L. Bynum, “We Must March Forward”: Juanita Jackson and the Origins of the NAACP Youth Movement,” *Journal of African American History*, Vol. 94, No. 4, (Fall 2009), p. 487-508; Also see: August Meier and Elliot Rudwick, *Along the Color Line: Explorations in the Black Experience*, (Chicago, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 2002)

²¹ “‘Double V’ Creed,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1942 April 11, Front Page

²² The UBC was the second largest affiliate of the AFL behind only the United Mine Workers.

the Trade Union movement.”²³ This policy allowed AFL affiliates to turn a blind eye on segregated locals and second-class membership. During World War II, black activists attacked these exclusionary policies.²⁴ A. Phillip Randolph complained that “auxiliary unions” were “undemocratic” and excoriated the AFL for discrimination. However, Anderson saw the all-black Local 2380 UBC as a necessary evil because black carpenters needed to be accredited with some kind of rights by a larger labor federation body.²⁵ Once organized, he directed the newly unionized black carpenters towards wartime loopholes that allowed them to use the FEPC to negotiate for labor rights.

After Local 2380 received its charter, Anderson continued to use the weight of his association with the *Afro*, and arranged a meeting with officers of Sanderson and Porter and William H. Eaves, secretary of the new all-black union. Despite the company having received federal funds to complete the defense project, according to Anderson’s report, its leaders took the stance that it “would hire colored carpenters” only “if we run out of white carpenters.”²⁶ When the firm refused to reconsider, Anderson announced plans in the newspaper that he, Eaves and the local branch of the NAACP would file a complaint

²³ Marc Karson and Ronald Radosh, “The AFL and the Negro Worker,” in *The Negro and the American Labor Movement*, Julius Jacobson, ed., (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1968), pg. 156

²⁴ See Merl Reed, “The Boilermaker Challenge on the West Coast,” in *Seedtime for the Modern Civil Rights Movement*; Blacks successfully protested against these types of “auxiliary unions” in the International Brotherhood of Boilermakers, Iron Shipbuilders, and Helpers (IBB) on the West Coast.

²⁵ The Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) was the only other significant labor governing body; it had been particularly active in places like Winston-Salem organizing the city’s black tobacco workers. But Charlotte was different in that there were no industries that employed a primarily large black labor force (with the exception of the domestic work industry, which was largely filled by black women), thus the CIO ignored black labor so as to not offend white textile mill workers whom represented the largest concentration of the labor force in the city and region. It was for these reasons that Anderson found himself relying on the AFL in order to carry out his plan, in which he directed the newly unionized black carpenters towards wartime loopholes that allowed them to use the FEPC to negotiate for improved labor rights.

²⁶ “Charlotte Carpenters Establish AFL Local,” *Afro-American*, 1942 July 11, pg. 1; “N.C. Carpenters Denied Jobs; FEPC Gets Case,” *Afro-American*, 1942 July 25, pg. 1; See Merl Reed’s, *Seedtime for the Modern Civil Rights Movement*, p. 268

with the FEPC, as well as organize a letter-writing campaign about discrimination in Charlotte. He continued to openly threaten the firm, promising to file complaints with the FEPC as a way to coerce local officials to consider the risk of a federal investigation. He prematurely suggested that the FEPC had “advised that it would investigate the engineering firm immediately.” This threat pushed the engineering firm to reconsider its initial position. Two weeks after “refusing point-blank to hire colored carpenters,” the firm gave fifteen of the twenty-five black carpenters jobs working on the construction of the shell-loading plant.²⁷

Despite these victories, black demands for equality in municipal and civil service jobs met even greater resistance. During World War II, jobs such as those in the post office, police and fire departments proliferated. Civil service jobs were highly sought after during the war because of their potential to translate into more permanent positions. By the summer of 1942 only two African Americans had been able to gain access to local civil service employment in the police department. When Anderson heard that Charlotte’s city council voted on July 15, 1942 not to renew the contracts of two African American police officers, he immediately began to organize. This time Anderson worked with other black middle-class civic leaders, who quickly recruited support for the officers. Anderson informed the public: “A mass meeting is being planned to protest against the council’s action and [to] urge reinstatement of the men.”²⁸

The authorities had appointed James Ross and A. M. Houston to the force in the summer of 1941 after months of similar mass meetings in churches and petitions to the city council to take action. The Community Crusaders, an organization of some 5,000

²⁷ “FEPC Threat Breaks Jim Crow,” *Afro-American*, 1942 August 15, pg. 20

²⁸ “2 Cops Fired in Charlotte,” *Afro-American*, 1 August 1942, pg. 24

blacks with an amalgamation of middle-class business, religious, and educational leaders along with a larger working-class church-affiliated population, led these earlier efforts to get blacks hired to the police force. Dr. Joseph Samuel Nathaniel Tross, a prominent A.M.E. Zion minister and new editor of the *Charlotte Post*, headed the Community Crusaders. Historically, Tross has usually been depicted as an accommodationist leader because he operated in a presentable and often clandestine manner.²⁹

Anderson publicized Tross' reaction to the city council's decision to remove the officers from the police department in the context of larger black unrest in an article entitled, "Charlotte Leaders Fear Racial Strife As Unrest Mounts." He described Tross as a "militant clergyman" who expressed his concern by asserting: "I am afraid for my people. They have grown restless. They are not happy. They no longer laugh. There is a new feeling among them—something strange, perhaps terrible." According to Anderson, Tross's observations rose from the fact that of a total population of 120,000 there were 40,000 African Americans living in Charlotte who were "not represented politically," were "denied municipal jobs and skilled defense work" and lived under "terrible housing conditions."³⁰

Anderson also expressed alarm that the discriminatory policies left black people vulnerable, especially the illiterate, who were now being accused by the FBI as providing inroads for vicious Axis propaganda.³¹ He used the article to praise the ability of African American policemen and extolled the benefits of having them quell potential unrest in the

²⁹ Willie Griffin, "An Indigenous Civil Rights Movement: Charlotte, North Carolina, 1940-1963," Master's Thesis, Morgan State University, Baltimore, Maryland, (2006)

³⁰ "Charlotte Leaders Fear Racial Strife As Unrest Mounts," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1942 August 29, pg. 12

³¹ Ibid; Also see: Stephen H. Dew, *The Queen City at War, Charlotte, North Carolina, During World War II 1939-1945*, (New York, NY: University Press of America, 2001), pg. 65-67.

black community. He wrote, it was “only the brainwork of two Negro policemen [who] prevented the actual lynching of a white tavern owner some weeks ago.” The owner had killed a black woman in his establishment “after an inconsequential argument. To add fuel to the flames, the man was acquitted by an all-white jury.” Anderson accused white politicians of not helping the situation, being complicit and using “double-crossing maneuvers” to keep local blacks out of political office. He asserted that Charlotte’s black leaders “are frankly worried as to how far these incidents can proceed without serious consequences.”³² These efforts can be seen as another example of how goals of double V rhetoric encouraged ‘divergent’ groups to seek out unified efforts to combat racial discrimination at home.

Finally in August, after three weeks of continuous rallying among the black middle-class and working-class church affiliated population, city leaders passed a special ordinance to appoint four African Americans as officers. Anderson complained that it only hired two new officers, because the other two officers were actually those whose contracts had previously expired. He criticized the officers’ relegation to positions as “special peace officers,” with limited authority, no civil service status, and only one year of guaranteed employment. The appointments were an insult considering that authorities added eleven white policemen with full police power alongside the four black peace officers. On October 24th, the *Afro-American* assisted Anderson by dedicating part of its front-page headline to a “S-C-O-O-P” that the FEPC had finally committed to “sift” through “civil service bias” in Charlotte. Anderson was again attempting to use what had become a key strategy of his—the public threat of filing a complaint with FEPC. Again he suggested that a “large number of letters from leading citizens [were] sent to

³² Ibid

Washington repeating these charges of discrimination.”³³ These kinds of letters did little to stamp out injustice because the FEPC only had power to investigate claims of racial discrimination; it lacked the capacity to actually enforce policy.³⁴

Though the mere threat of investigation had secured some opportunities for local blacks, by late 1942 the FEPC faced increased scrutiny from Dixiecrats. This powerful group of white Southern Democrats sought to scale back the commission’s ability to influence Jim Crow policies. Emboldened by their recent defeat of a bill to ban poll taxes, Southern Democrats turned their attention to the FEPC. The commission made headlines with a report acknowledging findings of widespread discrimination in Washington DC’s Capital Transit Company’s hiring policy. Following the report, the Dies Committee or the House of Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) immediately smeared the commission’s report as “Communist” inspired. The *Chicago Tribune* followed the HUAC’s lead with an “inside story” detailing how the Communist Party had been allegedly using the FEPC “to raise racial issues in the nation’s capital.”³⁵

This heightened scrutiny encouraged FEPC members to proceed cautiously. They ultimately refused to investigate violations in Charlotte. Congressman Joe Ervin, a Charlotte lawyer, may have played a decisive role in the committee’s decision to ignore the complaints in his hometown. Ervin was one of the leading southern Dixiecrats who sought to block efforts to make the FEPC a permanent agency with substantive power.

³³ Scoop: Special to the *Afro*, “FEPC to Sift Civil Service Bias in N.C.,” *Afro-American*, 1942 October 24, pg. 1

³⁴ Reed, *Seedtime for the Modern Civil Rights Movement*; Stephen Dew, *The Queen City at War: Charlotte, North Carolina, During World War II 1939-1949*, (New York, NY: University Press of America, 2001), pg. 129

³⁵ “Dixie Bloc Blasts FEPC; Dies Tries ‘Red’ Smear,” *Chicago Defender*, 12 December 1942, pg. 3

He was quoted as saying the FEPC bill “would hound, badger, restrict and discourage private enterprise, destroy local self-government and, in [his] opinion, do more to Hitlerize and communize America than any legislation yet submitted to Congress.”³⁶ To be sure, southern Dixiecrats represented the primary nemesis that supporters of the Double V campaign faced at home. It was this group that sought to keep African Americans politically and economically powerless in order to maintain the social status quo in which white supremacy remained intact.

Despite the opposition, Anderson still hoped to win federal intervention on behalf of black workers by using the press. He sent complete files of evidence to the Assistant Attorney General in charge of the civil liberties division of the Department of Justice. Anderson also reached out to Attorney General Francis E. Biddle requesting the Department of Justice investigate the local Civil Service Commission.³⁷ Anderson publicized much of his efforts in the *Afro*, but also in newspapers as far away as the *Cleveland Call and Post*.³⁸

The FBI did not intervene in the employment practices in Charlotte, but it did investigate the distribution of black newspapers in the region. The *Afro-American*, *Pittsburgh Courier*, *Chicago Defender*, *Norfolk Journal and Guide* and *Charlotte Post* were all listed as locally distributed newspapers and targeted by the FBI for alleged association with Communist claims that blacks were “being discriminated against by white people.” The FBI also kept a close eye on the local NAACP for apparent

³⁶ Stephen Dew, *The Queen City at War, Charlotte, North Carolina, During World War II 1939-1945*, pg. 130

³⁷ “N.C. City Job Trickery Put Before Biddle,” *Afro-American*, 19 December 1942, pg. 3

³⁸ ANP, “Anderson Takes Charlotte Police And Fire Jim-Crow to Atty. Gen. Biddle,” *Cleveland Call and Post*, 26 December 1942, pg. 18; “One-Man Rights Drive,” *Afro-American*, 12 December 1942, pg. 4; Anderson’s audience probably reached into the hundreds of thousands of African American readers.

“Communist influence.”³⁹ Alert to these redbaiting slanders, Anderson always made certain to steer clear of any ties with Communists.

Despite his persistent activism, Anderson finally exhausted all options that might compel the federal government to enforce executive order 8894 in Charlotte. He then began to turn his attention to black soldiers and their military experiences. Military service now became inextricably linked to civil service jobs and wartime industries for Anderson. America’s wartime conscription transformed the military into the largest single civil service employer in the country. Black newspapers had been documenting discrimination against black enlistees and incidences of violence against black soldiers since the bombing of Pearl Harbor. As the war intensified so did general issues of discrimination. It was indeed absurd and newsworthy, Anderson believed, that blacks met discrimination in domestic employment. The racial bias that African Americans met was somewhat expected in dealings with southern municipalities and private companies operating in the South. Yet it was beyond reprehensible that Jim Crow policies and discrimination spilled over into the armed forces. African Americans needed to know what black soldiers were up against and the federal government needed to protect its troops from such treatment in order to maintain a high level of moral.

After the U.S. joined the global conflict, the War Department led efforts to unify the country in the crusade against fascism and made gaining sway over the black press a top priority. Henry L. Stimson, Secretary of War, ordered William H. Hastie, his black civilian aide, to call an emergency meeting with the nation’s leading African American

³⁹ Robert A. Hill, *The FBI’s RACON: Racial Conditions in the United States During World War II*, (Boston, MA: Northeastern University Press, 1995), pg. 276-283; Patrick Washburn, *A Question of Sedition: The Federal Government’s Investigation of the Black Press During World War II*, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1986),

newspaper editors and reporters the day after Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor. Hastie was one of the Roosevelt administration's favorite race relation advisors. He was able to gather more than twenty newspapermen to meet with heads of the various branches of the War Department. Claude Barnett and Roy Wilkins, head of the Associated Negro Press (ANP) and editor of the NAACP's *Crisis*, respectively, acted as spokespersons. The leaders drafted a list of demands that included integration of the armed services, an increase in the number of black military officers, civil authority for black military police, equal policies in court martialing, and stationing black enlistees outside the South.⁴⁰

Trezzvant Anderson and others proposed there be some official role for the black press in covering news about black soldiers. He approached Adjutant General James Ulio, head of Military Morale about an Army commission to serve as a public relations officer. Ulio informed Anderson that the Army had no black public relations officers, "and had no intentions of having any." Blacks confronted the same segregation and discrimination in military life that they had in civilian life. The Army sought to maintain this servile position for black soldiers, most often relegating them to service and supply units. Military leaders had taken the position that they "did not create the problem of racial segregation," they argued, and could not act as a "sociological laboratory."⁴¹

To that end, the War Department deployed civilian aide, William Hastie as a buffer to mediate accusations of racial discrimination. Anderson well knew that Hastie's office was flooded throughout 1942 with stories of inequalities African Americans faced: stories of falsified physical examinations to reveal previously undiagnosed maladies to

⁴⁰ Staff Correspondent, "War Unites All America to Crush Japs: Army Plans New Division, Integration of Both Races in Army Units Held Very Unlikely," *Afro-American*, 1941 December 13, Pg. 1

⁴¹ Ibid

thwart black enlistees and officer candidates, and horrifying accounts of racial violence on military bases. Even more letters detailed problems faced by African Americans seeking civil service employment, many forwarded from the FEPC.⁴² Hastie, like Anderson, had come to the conclusion that the FEPC was not going to be of much help. The breaking point for Hastie came after he was forced to reply to yet another African American hoping to receive an Army commission. "Present restrictions on commissions from civilian life are such that I believe there is no chance for your immediate appointment as an officer," wrote Hastie. According to Anderson, Hastie realized that he was merely serving as a figurehead and was powerless to assist those facing discrimination. His inability to help African Americans address the discrimination they faced led to him resigning on January 15, 1943.⁴³

In the same week that Hastie resigned, Trezzvant Anderson decided to volunteer for the Army. Anderson wasted no time in attempting to place himself in position to keep black Americans informed and place pressure on the War Department to treat black soldiers equally. Because the military used a battery of tests to determine best placement of soldiers by assessing their cognitive and physical skills, Anderson believed this requirement would eventually get him placed in some field close to his desired role as a correspondent. He departed January 24 for Fort Bragg, ten miles outside of Fayetteville, North Carolina.

Fort Bragg had been the site of increasing racial disturbances involving white civilians, military police and black soldiers. The most notable was a riot that led to the

⁴² Apparently a large number of which were black women who had scored well on the civil service exams but were denied positions after their race was revealed.

⁴³ Trezzvant W. Anderson, "World News in a Nutshell: The Negro in the Army," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1948 October 2.

original call from African American leaders to station black soldiers outside the Jim Crow South. One journalist suggested that the “rotteness at Fayetteville and in the army camp nearby” could be traced directly to “the stupidity and temerity of ‘high hats and brass buttons,’” at Fort Bragg, as well as, “‘unreconstructed rebel’ army officers who still follow the mores of the pre-civil war period in their handling of colored soldiers.”⁴⁴ On August 20, 1941 trouble erupted on a local bus used to transport black soldiers from the base to town. The resulting melee caused the deaths of one black soldier and a white military policeman. As similar episodes arose across the country, black newspapers documented this pattern of racial violence. However, authorities ignored the violence directed at black soldiers. In almost every instance white military officials and public relations officers always denied any wrong doing and offered as little information as possible.⁴⁵ These developments, of which Anderson was most certainly aware, greatly contributed to his decision to volunteer. In many ways, this tactic was an integral part of the larger Double V campaign strategy; the move allowed him to get a first-hand view of the experiences that black soldiers faced and subsequently mount even more concerted efforts to fight for their measurably improved treatment.

When Trezzvant Anderson arrived at Fort Bragg he tried to get appointed as a public relations officer. Anonymously, he began to publicize the need for black correspondents, sometimes through fabricated stories. In early February 1943 Anderson

⁴⁴ James M. Reid, “Courier Exposes Bragg: Three Incidents Brought On Trouble at Fort Bragg,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1941 August 23, pg. 1

⁴⁵ Key examples of black newspapers’ reporting included: “5 Agencies Probe Death of Soldiers,” *Afro-American*, 1942 February 14, pg. 14; “‘We’ll Get to the Bottom of it All,’—Col. Hamilton,” *Afro-American*, 1942 March 14, pg. 1; “Fatal Riot at Fort Dix Had Been Brewing Several Weeks,” *Afro-American*, 1942 April 11, pg. 3; “5 Soldiers Go To Jail,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1942 August 15, pg. 15; “Huachuca Official Says No Newsman Jailed There,” *Afro-American*, 1942 August 22, pg. 5; “Army Won’t Aid Soldier Jailed in S.C.,” *Afro-American*, 1942 August 29, pg. 1

submitted to black newspapers several stories about the prospects of the War Department assigning a black press aide in the Public Relations Office. He wrote: "The appointment of a colored representative to assist in preparing news releases for the press will be given consideration, War Department officials promised this week."⁴⁶ Anderson followed up his early efforts to increase public rumors and heightened expectations for appointments with articles, in both the *Journal and Guide* and the *Afro*, announcing that J. Finley Wilson, the Elks national leader, had named him to a "High Elk Post." The Elks were the largest black fraternal order, with some 50,000 members across the country. Wilson appointed Anderson as the "traveling deputy grand exalted ruler of the armed forces for the Elks." Prominent members across the country pushed to have Anderson appointed as a public relations officer. One article in the *Norfolk Journal and Guide* revealed that the "Exalted Rulers Council of Elks, of Eastern Pennsylvania had drafted a letter to Secretary Henry Stimson, urging the secretary to create the position, using a man from the military ranks." It also recounted efforts of the Detroit branch of the NAACP to pressure the War Department to "place a Negro officer in the public relations office."⁴⁷

Adjutant General James Ulio, who had previously told Anderson that the Army had no plans for creating such a position, became the primary target of his criticism. Ulio played a leading role in undergirding the War Department's effort to dodge employing black public relations officers. Anderson decried the "lack of concern over whether or not the activities of Negro troops were covered" in Ulio's response to the head of Eastern Pennsylvania Elks, William P. Webb in the *Pittsburgh Courier*. "While there

⁴⁶ "War Dept. May Appoint Press Aide," *Afro-American*, 1943 February 6, pg. 20

⁴⁷ Trezzvant Anderson, "World News in Nutshell: The Negro in the Army," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1948 November 6, pg. 2

are a goodly number of Negro troops overseas,” Ulio wrote, “they are members of series of small units attached to larger forces. The limited numerical strength of these units precludes the attachment of a separate Public Relations Officer to them.” Ulio went on to state that mainstream news channels would cover black soldiers, noting that, “the larger forces for which they are a part have adequate facilities for the distribution of all news releases to the press in this country.”⁴⁸ But time and time again Anderson observed that white public relations officers gave little coverage to black soldiers’ experiences.

Anderson’s fifteen years as a journalist had given him a robust network for finding support. A letter from Raymond E. Jackson to Anderson in late April 1943 revealed as much. Jackson was the national leader, Imperial Potentate, of the Ancient Egyptian Arabic Order of the Mystic Shrine, or black Shriners. He jokingly addressed Anderson as “America’s Mystery Man #1” and indicated that he and James ‘Billboard’ Jackson, another prominent black leader and longtime mentor to Anderson, had recently discussed the question: “Does the Army need a colored press officer?” They both agreed that black public relations officers would be a great advantage for both blacks and the Armed Forces. He advised Anderson, “in the meantime take it easy, follow your orders and try to place yourself in an outstanding position with your command, thus when it comes time for asking favors, or suggestion made for your transfer, you will be in good position, with all things in your favor.” He wished Anderson “God’s speed and good luck” and counseled “perseverance.”⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Ibid

⁴⁹ (Letter) Raymond E. Jackson to Trezzvant W. Anderson (Fort Dix), 1943 April 22, Trezzvant W. Anderson Papers, Atlanta University Center, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Box 3, Folder 33; Anderson was by then stationed at Fort Dix, New Jersey. Fourteen years in the Railway Mail Service had gotten him transferred from Fort Bragg and assigned to the 44th Replacement Battalion. The 44th was one of the many military units for reserves or replacement soldiers for front-line formations and was part of the larger 9th

Anderson continued to publish news using only an ANP byline. In May 1943 he broke the news that the director of the Navy's Public Relations Department, Captain Leland T. Lovett, instructed his men "to give 'adequate coverage' to the activities of and performance of colored sailors, marines and coast guardsmen."⁵⁰ When the country entered the war, African American sailors had long been limited to positions as mess attendants. But the soon-legendary actions of Doris "Dorie" Miller, a cook aboard the USS West Virginia, who heroically manned a machine gun to fend off Japanese bombers at Pearl Harbor, provided a useful narrative. Miller's bravery gained him a Navy Cross and likely more respect for all black sailors by Navy officials like Captain Lovett. In spite of Lovett's call for more coverage of black sailors, however, Adjutant General Ulio continued to stand firmly against the appointment of black public relations officers. Anderson lamented that the "policy of the War Department has brought severe criticism from leaders and service men who complain that newsreels shown in camps never give any mention of colored troops." He announced that the Elks planned to protest because leaders felt "that the War Department [was] not facing the issue squarely." They argued that with "more than a half million colored troops under arms, with more coming every day," there was "room for development of higher morale" and "desire of the people and the soldiers themselves to know more about what is going on."⁵¹

Replacement Depot. Anderson was part of smaller postal unit within the battalion that handled ingoing and outgoing mail for soldiers.

⁵⁰ ANP, "Navy Orders More News About Colored Seamen," *Afro-American*, 8 May 1943, pg. 3

⁵¹ ANP, "Leaders Critical of Ulio's Policy," *Atlanta Daily World*, 1943 June 7, pg. 3; Anderson continued to play up letters written to the War Department and the President, in a 1948 *Pittsburgh Courier* article, he wrote about a letter sent to President Roosevelt from Woods Morgan, chairman of Charlotte's Citizen's Committee and former North Carolina Legislative candidate. The letter requested that the War Department increase its public relation office staff and that Anderson be transferred from his present post in Louisiana

In the summer of 1943, ANP head Claude Barnett wrote that “the morale of this nation is influenced mainly by what is read in newspapers, magazines and other publications, what is heard on radio sets, and what is shown on the silver screens of thousands of theatres.”⁵² He argued that black Americans responded to media the same way that other Americans did. Because blacks had been “set apart and accorded a special and inferior status,” however, they could be expected to have low morale due to lack of coverage in white publications, over the radio, or in motion pictures. Barnett asserted that African American newspapers and magazines reflected their own thinking and heightened morale by printing articles about blacks and race relations. Yet, he believed that the overall morale of black Americans depended on some combination of what they see in both the white press and the black press. Prior to 1940, the former still portrayed African Americans largely as “servants, comedians, chicken thieves, razor wielders, believers in ghosts and supernatural, and possessing a simple childlike religion.” According to Barnett the new generation of blacks was “more vocal and race conscious today than ever before in his history.” He pointed to the efforts of NAACP’s executive secretary, Walter White, who a year earlier had appeared before a luncheon of Hollywood film executives insisting that they do more to show black Americans as they actually were and renounce old patterns of racist depictions.⁵³

By summer of 1943, the War Department had made attempts to appease the black press by accrediting close to two-dozen civilian black war correspondents on regular

to Washington, D.C. to fill the post of press officer, “to handle news and publicity, in all forms, which deal exclusively with Negro troops.”

⁵² Claude Barnett, “The Role of the Press, Radio, and Motion Picture and Negro Morale,” *Journal of Negro Education*, Vol. 12, No. 3, (Summer 1943), pg. 474-489

⁵³ Ibid

assignment for African American newspapers and news organizations, like Barnett's Associated Negro Press. But this accreditation did not hold the same value as securing an appointment from the Army. Edgar Rouzeau was the first black accredited by the government for the *Pittsburgh Courier* and Rudolph Dunbar for the ANP. Both the *Courier* and the *Afro-American* sent seven correspondents, while the *Chicago Defender* and the *Norfolk Journal and Guide* sent three and four respectively. Rouzeau recalled that the Army controlled the movement of the accredited correspondents and "their stories [were] carefully censored." The policy of the Allied general staff was to allow the widest possible dissemination of news as long as it did not interfere with operations and did not endanger the lives of Allied forces or civilians or "give comfort to the enemy."⁵⁴ This meant that many of the stories that black soldiers told black war correspondents about mistreatment and discrimination could not be reported.⁵⁵ According to Rouzeau, once black correspondents were appointed to a particular area, they could move about with comparative freedom but they had to keep in contact with the public relation office. He wrote: "Every line that came off his typewriter must pass through military channels to be carefully checked and double-checked by military, naval and air censors." There were no accredited black combat photographers, so if there were pictures of black soldiers they came from white photographers.⁵⁶

The War Department began to believe that changes to its public race relations' policy might be critically needed. African American leaders charged that anti-black

⁵⁴ Edgar T. Rouzeau, "Record Number of War Reporters Overseas," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1943 August 7, pg. 24

⁵⁵ John D. Stevens, *From the Back of the Foxhole: Black Correspondents in World War II*, (Minneapolis, MN: Association for Education in Journalism, 1973), pg. 9

⁵⁶ Rouzeau, "Record Number of War Reporters Overseas," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1943 August 7, pg. 24

attitudes in both the country and abroad in the military seriously hampered the war effort. When Henry Stimson toured England, he was bombarded with questions from black correspondents about racial discrimination against black troops. Rudolph Dunbar, the London bureau chief for the ANP, asked Stimson if there was not something he could do about it.⁵⁷ The War Department, responding to questions like these, and to the race riots in Detroit and Harlem in the summer of 1943, promised to investigate any discrimination.

Captain Homer B. Roberts and First Lieutenant Daniel E. Day were the first two blacks appointed public relations officers in August of 1943. Roberts previously served as an assistant to a white public relations officer in Fort Huachuca, Arizona, while Day had served as an associate with Chicago's Robert S. Abbott Publishing Company for the previous four years.⁵⁸ Both likely were deemed safer appointments than Anderson. They "were put in charge of the Negro Interest Section, a group of enlisted civilians who prepared news releases about activities of Negro troops."⁵⁹ Their primary job was to handle news items and pictures dealing with black soldiers and to funnel this information to the two-dozen or so accredited black war correspondents. They had comparatively little more freedom of movement than non-enlisted correspondents and were privy to more internal information. Most importantly they had the power to build a staff of soldiers to gather news they deemed important related to black soldiers.

When Roberts and Day arrived in Europe, Trezzvant Anderson was "the first Negro soldier [they] called into the ETO [European Theatre Operations] Headquarters."

⁵⁷ "Stimson Told of Prejudice in England," *Chicago Defender*, 24 July 1943, pg. 1

⁵⁸ "Two Appointed to Public Relations," *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, 14 August 1943, pg. 3

⁵⁹ "A Precedent Set In Army Public Relations," *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, 28 August 1943, pg. 8; Also see, "Public Relations Men Take Post in War Department," *Afro-American*, 4 September 1943, pg. 6

There he was appointed an official “Army Correspondent.”⁶⁰ Anderson arrived in England in January 1944, several months before D-Day (June 6, 1944). When his articles began to regularly appear he was finally able to use his own name as his byline. His writings dominated the headlines of black newspapers in the South, like the *Atlanta Daily World*, but they also frequently appeared in the *Chicago Defender*, *Afro-American*, *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, and *Pittsburgh Courier*. Anderson initially complained about the censorship that he and other correspondents faced. He felt it would be “almost impossible to get a story through” unless it was “all sweetness and light.”⁶¹ But he had placed himself in perfect position to aid the larger Double V campaign and as he had always done, he found different ways to write and publish what he wanted.

The Fight for Black Citizenship Rights Abroad

A variety of Anderson’s articles appeared throughout 1944. Some focused on pressing the War Department to extend equal rights to black soldiers. In “Men Are Chafing Over The Lack of Opportunity,” he noted a detection of low morale or what he termed as a general “looseness” in black soldiers that “doesn’t indicate the greatest pride in what the men are doing.” Anderson “reached the conclusion that the majority of Negro soldiers show a general lack of interest in the war.” He did not try to mask his feelings. To him there was a general problem with low morale among black men, especially those in non-combat units, they appeared “more concerned with what they [could] get out of doing, than what they can actually contribute to make the fight a success.” Anderson suggested that, “Perhaps if these colored boys were turned loose, and

⁶⁰ ‘Complete Biography of Trezzvant W. Anderson,’ Trezzvant W. Anderson Papers, Atlanta University Center, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Box 12, Folder 10, 4 page draft

⁶¹ Trezzvant W. Anderson, (Somewhere In England), “Censorship is Irritating to Correspondents,” *Atlanta Daily World*, 1944 January 30, pg. 1

given a chance to exercise their own initiative, ingenuity, and capacity for production without hindrance, and away from any racial atmosphere,” in combat units, “it would be a different story.” He pointed to the 99th Pursuit Battalion (popularly known as the Tuskegee Airmen) and the 450th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Battalion as two ‘Negro outfits’ that really took “this thing to heart, and in which every man is filled with a maximum of pride in his organization.”⁶² The 450th was an all-black artillery outfit that like other black combat units of World War II has been overlooked by the celebrated history of the Tuskegee Airmen. These were the only black units engaged in enemy combat when Anderson arrived.

To pose another critique at segregation, Anderson highlighted support for mixed combat units by noting the “growing conviction among some of the soldiers that sooner or later there [would] be mixed combat units among the U.S. forces.” Anderson interviewed one “white adjutant officer,” from an engineer aviation battalion, who boasted about “how his unit was continually augmented by the addition of colored soldiers.” This particular unit, according to the officer, consisted of 160 white and 40 black soldiers. Another soldier, a black first sergeant, suggested to Anderson that it was only a matter of time before “they’re gonna have mixed crews up there in those planes.” For good measure, Anderson told the story of Alvin N. Patrick, a black soldier in the Royal Canadian Army. Born in the West Indies, Patrick was forty-one years old and had spent the previous twenty-one years living in the United States. When the war broke out he went to Canada to enlist because there was no segregation. Patrick professed to Anderson, “There is no such thing as ‘color bar’ in the [Canadian] army. I have been very

⁶² Trezzvant W. Anderson, (Somewhere In England), “Men Are Chafing Over The Lack of Opportunity,” *Atlanta Daily World*, 1944 March 25, pg. 4

happy.” He acknowledged that “War is no paradise, you know, but under the circumstances we get along as one big happy family, with no segregation.”⁶³ Anderson directed articles like this at U.S military officials to convince them that racially mixed Army units were inevitable and that integrated units would represent a clear sign of progress for the country.

Black soldiers were among the first to go overseas. While the majority of African Americans served in non-combat service and labor units, Anderson sought to present these units as essential to the Allied forces’ success. He pointed out how a black engineer aviation battalion built “the smooth paved runways for bombers.”⁶⁴ These runways were the “most vital part of the operation plan of the European theater, [and] were the biggest single job of the war,” wrote Anderson. These black engineers, he asserted, aided the “8th Air Force in its incessant hammering of German military objectives in Northern France.” While the battalion was a service unit, performing what is often referred to as menial labor tasks, Anderson informed readers, “there [is] no slave-driving. It [is] all the coolly calculated efficiency instilled into the outfit by its leaders, well-trained officers who knew their jobs and who worked with their men in a spirit of companionship realizing that the goal ahead was one which meant much for the common good of officers and men alike.”⁶⁵

⁶³ Trezzvant W. Anderson, (Somewhere In England), “Sees Mixed Army Units In Future,” *Atlanta Daily World*, 1944 March 24, pg. 1

⁶⁴ Trezzvant W. Anderson, (Somewhere In England), “Engineers Keep Air Blitz In Full Swing Over Nazis,” *Atlanta Daily World*, 1944 April 22, pg. 1

⁶⁵ Trezzvant W. Anderson, (Somewhere In England), “Engineers Become Army’s Pride,” *Atlanta Daily World*, 1944 March 28, pg. 1

Military leaders could not ignore reports that some white soldiers were attempting to export Jim Crow to war zones abroad. News leaked from Australia that “Southern white soldiers” were seeking to drive black servicemen “from certain streets and areas.” White soldiers visited schools and lectured children “not to associate with colored troops,” and tried to prevent Australian soldiers from associating with or welcoming them. Black soldiers were also barred from attending recreational centers established for American troops. Some whites spread rumors that blacks were stupid, degenerate, untrustworthy, “ridden with venereal diseases,” and only suitable for labor units. Finding material both abroad and in the United States, the Axis powers distributed this type of racial propaganda in hopes that it would divide and demoralize American forces.⁶⁶

Incidents such as these offered critical ammunition for calling attention to the hazards of segregation. When news broke that white soldiers were making efforts to stir up similar feelings against black troops in England, General Dwight H. Eisenhower, commander-in-chief of Allied Forces, quickly moved to quell the efforts. Trezzvant Anderson played up Eisenhower’s directive to military officials that “equal opportunities of service and recreation [were] the right of every American soldier regardless of branch, race, color, or creed.” Soldiers “must train together, work together and live together in order to attain successful teamwork in [this] campaign,” asserted Eisenhower. Anderson argued that the General’s proclamation represented “the cardinal point upon which the struggle of the American Negro in the USA is based.”⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Florence Murray, ed., *The Negro Handbook, 1944: A Manual of Current Facts, Statistics, and General Information Concerning Negroes in the United States*, (Macmillan, 1944), pg. 99

⁶⁷ Trezzvant W. Anderson, (With Invasion Forces In England), “‘Ike’ Says All Men To Be Treated Equal,” *Atlanta Daily World*, 1944 May 21, pg. 1; Trezzvant W. Anderson, (With Invasion Forces In England), “‘Army Chief Wants Equal Rights For All Servicemen,” *Chicago Defender*, 1944 May 27, pg. 3; Trezzvant

Anderson aimed many of his articles towards inspiring pride and hope in black civilians back home, as a way to help them visualize a sense of double victory—black soldiers abroad winning the war against racism and black civilians doing the same at home. In July and August 1944 he filed reports that were clearly meant to rally readers back home and embarrass the War Department and the United States’ government in general. In “Britishers Decry American Race Prejudice,” he reported that the British agreed with black Americans’ struggle to defeat racial inequality. He publicized interviews with several individuals from Essex about their views on American race prejudice. Businessman T. W. Black stated, “It is something of which I have never thought, and have no need to. We are made by one Creator. We are all equals.” Justice Brikett, a British Judge on the High Court of Appeals, considered “the voice of Britain,” declared that “the color bar is vulgar, silly, and utterly alien to the British spirit.”⁶⁸

In “Engineers Abroad 100% for NAACP,” Trezzvant Anderson wrote about the actions of an entire black engineer aviation battalion who purchased NAACP memberships. The idea originated, he explained, “in the mind of Corporal George Jones, a company construction foreman, who comes from 1313 South Dupre Street, New Orleans.” Anderson noted that other servicemen joining were from places such as Louisville, Chicago, Dayton, Fort Worth and New York.⁶⁹ The intended message was perhaps that if black soldiers could join the NAACP abroad, rank and file, rank and file readers would surely have no problem joining local chapters in their own cities and

W. Anderson, (With Invasion Forces In England), “General Eisenhower Issues Equal Opportunity Order,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1944 May 27, pg. 9

⁶⁸ Trezzvant W. Anderson, “Britishers Decry American Race Prejudice,” *Cleveland Plaindealer*, 1944 July 24, pg. 4

⁶⁹ Trezzvant W. Anderson, (Somewhere In England), “Engineers Abroad 100% For NAACP,” *Atlanta Daily World*, 1944 August 25, pg. 1

towns. Domestically, black Americans who joined the NAACP ran the risk of being labeled communist or losing employment opportunities. For soldiers, the decision to join the NAACP may have stemmed from Walter White's visit to Europe and North Africa in early 1944 to look into the treatment of black soldiers. He gained press credentials as a war correspondent and on his tour visited servicemen, public officials and high-ranking officers. With the nation-wide membership campaign fully extended at home, the topic likely came up during his travels abroad visiting black soldiers as White likely recruited when he could.⁷⁰

With American troops approaching a full-scale frontal attack of Germany's West Wall, World War II was barreling towards a strategic turning point—D-Day (June 6, 1944). As a war correspondent, Trezzvant Anderson sought out stories that would make black soldiers' roles central to Allied victory in World War II. But he, and the larger black press, needed more news access to black soldiers, especially those in combat units. In August (1944), the War Department had only three black public relations officers, who all had been promoted to the rank of major. Kenneth E. Campbell, a former field artillery officer with the 596th Signal Company, joined Homer Roberts and Daniel Day. In September, according to Anderson, Major Roberts visited the War Department Bureau of Public Relations in Washington, requesting that the department adopt "his program for a better coordination of the flow of news about colored troops in the theatre," so that he could "assure a greater flow of news copy to the editorial desks of the Negro Press in the U.S." Anderson wrote that Roberts called for the creation of a unit attached to the headquarters of the Allied Forces in the European Theatre that would "serve as the

⁷⁰ "Race Friction Abroad Hampers War Effort," *Chicago Defender*, 1944 May 6, pg. 1, this article reveals White's condemnation of the same racial tension that Anderson writes about, it also talks about 20,000 mile European tour and the nation-wide membership campaign that ran from May 1 through June 30 (1944).

clearing-house for reports from colored units.” The unit would “be staffed by experienced colored newspapermen and officered by a colored chief,” and “move contiguously with the forward movement of the main body of troops and the headquarters staff.” The initiative would allow the black press to maintain “an up-to-the minute report” on the progress of the war.⁷¹

In response to this news, Anderson took a shot at those who wanted to spread the Southland gospel of Jim Crow abroad when he filed “Correspondent Finds Hate Protagonists Fighting Losing Battle in Combat Zone.” He wrote:

It’s a funny thing how it happens, out there is something known as ‘shell-fire’ which preaches a brand-new gospel to the rabid anti-race exponents, and the guys who have been tactlessly demonstrating the wicked and venomous demon of racial strife are taking a beating in the combat zone where the measure of a men are, and not the color of their skins, regardless of rank.⁷²

Anderson traveled with Brigadier General Benjamin O. Davis Sr., the first African American general officer in the United States Army, as he toured the areas where black troops were serving. Anderson asserted that the truth could be observed “in the forward areas, and in the war zone hospitals where the wounded from those advanced areas are brought for treatment.”⁷³ Davis, like Anderson’s father, knew this truth all too well; they had both first served as privates during the Spanish American War. The younger Anderson and the senior Davis surely both noticed, “The tide of common sense has turned so strongly that there isn’t a chance for ‘race-baiters’ to get their dirty work in,” noted the younger Anderson. Davis “extolled the examples of splendid co-operation

⁷¹ Trezzvant W. Anderson, (Headquarters: European Theatre of Operations), “Press Expects More News of Colored Units,” *Philadelphia Tribune*, 1944 September 9, pg. 16

⁷² Trezzvant W. Anderson, (Headquarters: Advance Section: Communications), “Correspondent Finds Hate Protagonists Fighting Battle In Combat Zone,” *Atlanta Daily World*, 1944 September 4, pg. 5

⁷³ Ibid

between the white and colored troops in the combat zones.” Anderson considered “how fine it would be if the race-baiters of both groups could be thrust into these combat zones, and given a course of indoctrination to the accompaniment of the ‘Screaming Minnies,’ the explosion of Jerry bombs, and the rat-tat-tat of the enemy automatic pistol.” He argued, “The front line of fire is a great teacher and builder of fine race relations.”⁷⁴

Anderson used articles to celebrate the vital roles and highlight contributions that southern black soldiers from states like Tennessee and Georgia were making in the war effort. These articles appeared on the front pages of the *Atlanta Daily World*, which was widely distributed throughout these two states. He wrote about the important role that black Tennesseans played in the maintenance and running of the “Red Ball Express,” a highway built to “hi-ball vital supplies” across France. African Americans made up 75 percent of the primary operators and drivers for the enormous convoy system to the frontline. “Three Tennesseans are among the quartermasters Truck company drivers,” in the Motor Transit Brigade, “they are wheeling vital supplies across miles of French soil, on the Army’s newest motor transportation miracle, ‘The Fast Express,’ a new super-duper one-way, high priority highway.”⁷⁵

In other articles, Anderson set out to connect local communities to loved ones serving overseas. He carefully noted the names, families, addresses, and the ranks of soldiers in the articles, because it was important for them to get their names in the paper so their friends and relatives would know they were all right. Anderson told the story of

⁷⁴ Ibid, Also see: Complete Biography of Trezzvant W. Anderson (Courier Roving Reporter), (4-pages) Box 12, Folder 10, Trezzvant W. Anderson Papers, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Atlanta University Center. Trezzvant Edward Anderson served in Troop D, 10th Calvary, while Davis served in Troop I, 9th Calvary.

⁷⁵ Trezzvant W. Anderson, (Headquarters: Advance Section: Communications), “Tennesseans Hi-Ball Vital Supplies On Army’s New ‘Fast Express’ Across France,” *Atlanta Daily World*, 1944 October 4, pg. 4

how Corporal Henry Preston Scales, Jr. from Murfreesboro, Thomas Lovely from Knoxville, and Clarence M. Moore from Lebanon were part of a record setting unit that “operated its full complement of forty-eight trucks for ten straight days, twenty-four hours a day, without having a single truck fall out of line for repairs.” “They gained the commendation from group commanders for hauling more supplies from the beachhead than all seven other trucking companies combined.” Anderson boasted that he was the first army war correspondent “to ride the famed ‘Red Ball Express’ from the beach to its destination on the second day the Red Ball operated beyond Paris.” The highway was built following D-Day, after US forces landed on the beaches of Normandy, and was used for only three months (August 25 to November 16). The highway was instrumental in providing key equipment and weapons that eventually helped penetrate the Siegfried Line and allowed Allied Forces to cross into Germany.⁷⁶

In “Georgians Distinguish Selves on Mozelle,” Anderson wrote about “twenty-eight Georgians” who “were in the Negro Chemical Warfare Smoke Generator Company which performed heroic frontline battle action on the Mozelle River, facing the Siegfried Line near Metz.” It was the first action for black soldiers who were ordered to maintain the operation of twenty-four smoke generators designed to provide cover for black engineers completing a bridge across the Mozelle. The bridge allowed access for additional armored units, tanks, tank destroyers, and infantry that eventually helped pull the Third Army out of a stalemate that had lasted for eight days. The Allied forces were eventually able to break through the Siegfried Line and attack German forces. The unit “maintained, and permitted the engineers to complete the bridge successfully, after three days of continuous efforts during, which time the bridge was knocked out three times by

⁷⁶ Ibid.

enemy shell fire.”⁷⁷ Anderson provided gripping coverage of what he saw: “behind me as I write this column the big eight inch guns of our artillery are banging out their terrific crashes and whirring whistle of the shells, speeding through the air towards the German emplacements across the river, is music to our ears.” Always one to attempt to build special rapport with his readers, Anderson provided candid accounts of what he witnessed and began to address himself as “Your reporter” for his readers, a trend he would continue throughout the remainder of his career.⁷⁸ During World War II his vivid writing afforded readers an authentic sense of connection to the plight of soldiers serving in Europe.

In October 1944, Anderson revealed that the War Department was moving to accept Major Roberts’ proposal and had ordered the creation of an all-black public relation’s unit. Major Kenneth E. Campbell was appointed to “head a staff of public relations officers who would facilitate news collection for the Negro press in the European Theatre of Operations.” Campbell would work with “five experienced [enlisted] newsmen” that included Anderson, Sergeant Payton Grey, of the *Afro-American*, Private John S. Kinloch, of the *California Eagle*, and Private Charles P. Howard, of the *Iowa Bystander*. Sergeant Earl W. Tibbs, a photographer formerly with a lithographic company in Pittsburgh, was also assigned to the new unit. This group of newsmen, like Anderson, joined the military to get closer to the action. Their roles were to “facilitate news collection for the Negro press in the European Theatre of Operations,”

⁷⁷ Trezzvant W. Anderson, (With The U.S. Third Army At The Siegfried Line), “Georgians Distinguish Selves On Mozelle,” *Atlanta Daily World*, 1944 October 3, pg. 1

⁷⁸ Trezzvant W. Anderson, (With The U.S. Third Army At The Siegfried Line), “Our Soldiers Pounce Upon Siegfried Line,” *Atlanta Daily World*, 1944 October 5, pg. 1

largely by supporting “the movement of accredited Negro [newspaper] correspondents” who were overseas.⁷⁹

Leading white Army officials managed to kill the order and thwart the creation of an all-black public relations unit. Trezzvant Anderson later learned that military leaders “were not favorable to the idea of having Negro newsmen at the Army’s headquarters.” He reported that, “the Public Relations office was taken from under ETO command and placed under the Com Z commanded by Lieutenant General John C. H. Lee and Lieutenant Colonel Herbert E. Hall.” Anderson identified Hall as the primary “white officer who didn’t like the idea of Negro newsmen.” While Major Campbell was awaiting transfer to Paris to begin formation of the unit, Anderson learned that Colonel Hall purposely stalled the transfer. Hall used the next several weeks to bend the ear of General Davis, who along with Anderson was awaiting Campbell’s arrival. Anderson wrote, “Hall telephoned General Davis intermittently EVERY DAY about Major Campbell’s arrival, expressing his desire to be with the general on the occasion of his first meeting with Campbell.” Hall carried out his charade until he finally was able to convince Davis “that a Negro section would be self-segregation and,” slyly asking, “you don’t want that now, do you?” Anderson revealed that he later saw a memo from Hall to the Chief Administrative Officer of the replacement pool in Litchfield, England where Campbell had been awaiting his next orders: “Major Campbell is not the man, let’s send him back to the States as liaison officer with the Signal Corps.”⁸⁰

⁷⁹ ANP, “Major Campbell To Head New Army Press Setup,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1944 October 21, pg. 5; ANP, “Campbell Heads Europe News Unit,” *Chicago Defender*, 1944 October 21, pg. 10

⁸⁰ Trezzvant W. Anderson, “World News in a Nutshell: The Negro in the Army,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1948 November 20, pg. 19

Trezzvant Anderson was not deterred. He was determined to continue flooding black newspapers with stories that he felt all black America needed to hear and read about. As one of the few black enlisted Army war correspondents who was not attached to any particular unit, Trezzvant Anderson actually found it more beneficial to move around the European war zone. He had been traveling with General Davis, the military's highest-ranking African American officer. Davis was the key member of the Advisory Committee on Negro Troop Policies during World War II, and responsible for inspection tours of black soldiers at home in the United States and those abroad in Europe. On the morning of October 22, 1944, Anderson waited for General Davis outside General George S. Patton's "war room" at Nancy, France. He revealed his chance encounter with "the taut-faced, keen-eyed American three-star general."⁸¹

Patton "was heading inside to his war room where he would study the big 8x12 foot map on the wall to see what changes had taken place overnight and what he should do during that day." Anderson informed Patton that he "regretted stopping him in such an unmilitary manner," but he "had received the PRO green light to talk with him." "Like a good newspaperman, I took my interviews when and where I could get 'em, and this is was when and where and did he mind?" Anderson noticed, "A faint smile crinkled the corners of his lips. He broke into a wide grin and said 'Okay, Anderson, what do you wanna know?'" Upon his agreement, Anderson abruptly stopped his photographer from taking a picture of Patton and turned to the general asking, "Has the performance of your colored troops been satisfactory to you?" He quickly jotted down Patton's answer word for word: "These Negro troops have done a helluva job. They've hauled troops in

⁸¹ Trezzvant W. Anderson, "In a Nutshell World News: This is What You've Gotta Watch," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1950 August 12, pg. 4

everything from three-quarter ton weapons carriers to the big tank recovery vehicles.” He recalled that Patton then muttered, mad about being stalled there in front of Metz: “If they [Allied forces] don’t start a push pretty soon, I’ll start one of my own!” Anderson subsequently learned that Patton had already decided to activate more of the Army’s black combat units.

Upon learning about the Army’s important shift, Anderson later asserted that he—“ALONE”—took the needed steps to organize and coordinate news stories for the black press. I “took care of [this] from Paris, fed by some thirty-four unit reporters from the First, Third and Ninth Armies, Com Z PRO, the Advanced Section, Com Z First Tactical Air Force and others whom [I] selected and briefed while on tour with General Davis.” Anderson recalled the decisiveness with which he and a colleague, John S. Kinloch, chose to confront the dangers of combat assignments: “we decided we’d pick the hardest fighting Negro units up front, join ‘em and see to it that our few Negro soldiers in those two outfits, at least, got first-hand coverage.” Kinloch became a rifleman in the black platoon of G Company, Thirty-ninth Regiment of the 9th Infantry Division, and according to Anderson was the only black newsman killed in action, “he gave his life as a rifleman.”⁸²

Trezzvant Anderson joined the 761st Black Panther Tank Battalion, which became one of the most decorated and accomplished all-black combat unit. General Patton knew that the black press had eyes and ears abroad. When the 761st Tank Battalion arrived at St. Nicholas De Port, just east of Nancy, on October 28, Patton made reference to the black press. The 761st Tank Battalion’s first task was to provide infantry support for the

⁸² Trezzvant W. Anderson, “World News In a Nutshell,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1949 February 19; Trezzvant W. Anderson, “World News in a Nutshell: The Negro in the Army,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1948 November 20, pg. 19

26th Infantry Division in Patton's Third Army. By most accounts General Patton met with the soldiers of the 761st shortly after they arrived and gave some version of his traditional speech, but he offered what was deemed the needed racial twist, "I don't care what color you are." According to Sergeant Floyd Dade Jr., Patton told them that the whole world was watching—their people, "the negro presses and papers" were all depending on them. "Don't let them down, and, damn you, don't let me down!"⁸³ Patton knew he was right, everyone was watching—especially Trezzvant Anderson—but "[Patton's] views about the limited capabilities of black soldiers remained unchanged." Later that afternoon, according to one source, he wrote in his diary that the 761st "gave a very good first impression, but I have no faith in the inherent fighting ability of the race."⁸⁴

The truth was that Patton had little choice but to put his prejudices aside. His 3rd Army lost nearly one-third of its 232 tanks on D-Day, "leaving them in dire need of replacement armor and skilled tankers."⁸⁵ The 761st received their orders "for overseas movement" on June 9, 1944.⁸⁶ Anderson later surmised that the 761st became "the first of three activated Negro tank units," because most importantly "it had a better training record than the other battalions."⁸⁷ And as he learned from Patton, "the Third Army had been stalled in front of Metz [a city in the northeast of France] since September." The

⁸³ Sergeant Floyd Dade, Jr. interview, *761st: The Story of The Black Panther Tank Battalion*, A Pete Chatmon Picture, (2007); Trezzvant W. Anderson, *Come Out Fighting: The Epic Tale of the 761st Tank Battalion, 1942-1945*, (Germany: Salzburger Druckerei Und Verlag, 1945) pg. 21 Also see: Kareem Abdul-Jabbar and Anthony Walton, *Brothers in Arms: The Epic Story of the 761st Tank Battalion, WWII's Forgotten Heroes*, (New York: Harlem Moon, Broadway Books, 2004), pgs. 86-87

⁸⁴ Abdul-Jabbar and Walton, *Brothers in Arms*, pg. 87

⁸⁵ Commentator, *761st: The Story of The Black Panther Tank Battalion*, A Pete Chatmon Picture, (2007)

⁸⁶ *Come Out Fighting*, pg. 15

⁸⁷ *Ibid*, pg. 17

general alerted Anderson of “reports that a big offensive was about to jump off in the very near future.” This tactical situation showed that “three Third Army Divisions were hammering at Metz on the north of the 26th Division, while the XV Corps of the Seventh Army was holding down the front on the south side.”⁸⁸ The 761st Tank Battalion was to be used in securing a number of key towns and cities where German defenses were strong. The battalion’s first action took place during what is commonly referred to as the Lorraine campaign.

“The day before the tanks rolled into battle,” (November 7) Trezzvant Anderson found the battalion in a field in Saint Nicholas, France. “They had confidence, and with that confidence they were ready to engage the enemy with everything they had.” He arrived “with two Signal Corps photographers” and began taking pictures and getting acquainted with the unit.⁸⁹ Lieutenant Johnny Long recalled that he was “always interviewing men in the battalion.” Long and Lieutenant Ivan Harrison were the first two black officers in the U.S. Tank Corps. When Anderson asked Long why he chose to fight, he answered: “Not for my God and my country, but for me and my people, that’s why I fight.”⁹⁰ According to one scholar, the “Panthers considered [Anderson] a little mad to volunteer like that,” when he did not have to be there.⁹¹ There is no doubt that

⁸⁸ Ibid, pg. 21

⁸⁹ Ibid, pg. 23

⁹⁰ Charles W. Sasser, *Patton’s Panthers: The African American 761st Tank Battalion in World War II*, (New York: Pocket Books, 2004), pg. 98

⁹¹ Ibid, pg. 95, Sasser actually suggests that Anderson “remained [with the 761st] for the duration of the war.”

Anderson feared for his life. He recalled that, “everybody was scared; only a liar would deny that. But then, the job had to be done.”⁹²

Trezzvant Anderson spent an extended amount of time with the 761st throughout the month of November, visiting them three times during that period before they pushed further into enemy territory. He provided eyewitness accounts of the first weeks of battle; he noted, “there was something eerie about that first day, for there was that very definite tension in the minds of all the tankers. That great unspoken question: ‘What’s going to happen? Will I make it?’”⁹³ The first large-scale attack began on November 8, 1944. “The enemy expected an advance towards Dieuze,” but instead the 761st, attached to the 26th Division, headed south “towards Moyenvic and Vic-sur-Seille.” Two platoons of A Company and the C Company of the 761st were ordered to take the towns of Bezange La Grande and Bezange La Petite, respectively. “Able Company made the first contact with the enemy,” Anderson wrote. As they forged through mine fields they lost three tanks but were able to gain their objective. The other platoon, aided by the 101st Regiment, took the town of Moyenvic. “It was here that the first man in the battalion to give his life was killed. Private Clifford C. Adams, of Waco, Texas, member of the Medical Detachment was hit by an exploding shell and died that same day from wounds suffered.”⁹⁴ The black men that Trezzvant Anderson captured in his writing were capable and courageous soldiers, not the caricatures of blacks that white media portrayed as comedic entertainment.

⁹² *Come Out Fighting*, pg. 25

⁹³ *Ibid*, pg. 25

⁹⁴ *Ibid*, pg. 27; the battalion engaged the 13th SS Panzer and the 11 SS Panzer Divisions in their first battle.

Private George McConnell, a member of the Charlie (C) Company, remembered after they seized the towns that he could still hear the “banging and crashing” of fighting beneath the darkening sky. He witnessed American and German soldiers scattered across the landscape, “their bodies broken and grotesquely twisted in the fields, lying out there in the mud among all the busted war equipment.” McConnell expected even more terrible times ahead. He “knew that he would be frightened again and again,” and recalled being compelled to take “out the prayer book Moms [sic] had given him.” McConnell quickly read a passage and then clinched the book hard in his hands and unabashedly prayed: “My dear God, I’m too young to die like this. Please, dear God, don’t let me die.” He did not notice Trezzvant Anderson had been behind him all along; Anderson dropped his hand onto McConnell’s shoulder, and said “Amen.” McConnell was only sixteen and Anderson was approaching his thirty-eighth birthday, he must have seemed more like an older wise uncle than one of McConnell’s battalion brothers. “They stood in the gathering darkness looking out over all that carnage,” when movement from a German soldier they had thought dead caught their attention on the other side of the road. “His bottom jaw had been shot off, leaving nothing but exposed, shattered bone, upper teeth, and a pulpy mass of hanging flesh.” He was in distress. McConnell had never seen anything quite so hideous, he attempted to administer first aid to the wounded soldier, but realized that with no mouth there was not much he could do. “Anderson produced a flask filled with brandy,” and McConnell “dipped battle gauze in the brandy and dabbed at the wound.” Suddenly mortar rounds hit the area, shaking the ground and blasting shockwaves through the air. The men were forced to abandon the wounded soldier and take cover underneath the tank.⁹⁵ The dark and not so distant bombs forced

⁹⁵ Sasser, *Patton’s Panthers*, pg. 93-96

the 761st to pause for the night, “to briefly nurse its wounds, and take stock of the events of the day, which had been their first taste of battle.”⁹⁶

Trezzvant spent the first few days as a combat war correspondent attached to Company C of the 761st. He found himself not only witnessing and recording the heroics of black soldiers like Staff Sergeant Samuel J. Turley from the Bronx, New York, but also providing intelligence that potentially helped save soldiers’ lives. In the early days of battle, “the snow began to fall in ever-increasing quantities, covering the ground with a white mantle, against which the black outline of the tanks stood out like the wart on a proverbial Irishman’s nose.” He added that the “same snow threw a protective cover over the well-camouflaged bazooka positions which the Germans had time to construct.”⁹⁷ While in route to Morville, Anderson received an urgent report from the Public Relations Officer of the 26th Division that was to be passed on to new leadership (Captain McHenry). “There had been a ‘hasty briefing’ and the details of a devilish anti-tank ditch which had been constructed by the Germans, had not been given the fullest attention, there at Morville.” Soon thereafter Company C encountered this ditch, “extending from the woods at the edge of the high ground, down to a road leading through the area, in open country.” The Germans had time to build concrete pillboxes twenty-five to fifty feet behind the ditch. They were “cleverly camouflaged and concealed, and further aided by the snow cover. They contained anti-tank guns, and bazooka teams, and when the tanks moved into range these guns and bazookas opened a devastating fire.” Anderson wrote that the tanks “were immobilized, and halted, and there

⁹⁶ Anderson, *Come Out Fighting*, pg. 28

⁹⁷ Ibid, pg. 29

they were exposed to the fire of the enemy cannons and bazookas.”⁹⁸ He swore that the last image of Turley would forever be etched in the minds of those veterans. Those soldiers “learned *War* that day in that ditch.”⁹⁹

Sergeant Turley had no choice but to organize a dismounted combat team that suddenly found itself pinned down by enemy attack. Anderson captured Turley’s devotion as he placed his life on the line so that his men might escape to fight another day. “Standing behind the ditch, straight up, with a machine gun and an ammo belt around his neck, Turley was spraying the enemy with machine gun shots as fast as they could come out of the muzzle of the red-hot barrel.” As members of the company quickly scattered out of the ditch, out of harms’ way, Turley stood there providing cover. Anderson witnessed the hero fall, “cut through the middle by German machine gun bullets that ripped through his body as he stood there, firing. As his body crumpled to the earth his finger still gripped that trigger.” Anderson thankfully noted, “We made it!”¹⁰⁰

Anderson detailed the dehumanizing effects of war for readers by highlighting some of the battalion’s other legendary members, like Sergeant Warren G. Crecy. Crecy lost his tank but he fought through enemy positions to aid his men armed with a 30-caliber machine gun, and accomplished a similar feat twice the following day. Anderson wrote:

To look at Warren G. H. Crecy [Gamaliel Harding], you’d never think that here was a “killer,” who had slain more men than any man in the 761st. He extracted a toll of lives from the enemy that would have formed the composition of three or four companies with his machine guns alone. And yet, he is such a quiet easy-going, meek looking fellow, that you’d think that the fuzz which a youngster tries

⁹⁸ Ibid, pg. 32, Seven tanks were knocked out, nine enlisted and one officer died.

⁹⁹ Ibid, pg. 34

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, pg. 34

to cultivate for a mustache would never grow on his baby-skinned chin. And that he'd never use a word stronger than "damn." But here was a youth who went so primitively savage on the battlefield that his only thought was to "*kill, kill, and kill,*" and he poured his rain of death pellets into German bodies with so much reckless abandon and joy that he was the nemesis of all the foes of the 761st.¹⁰¹

He also witnessed Ruben Rivers, of Tecumseh, Oklahoma, a Sergeant in Company (A) get "in his most effective work, becoming especially adept at killing Germans with the 50-caliber machine gun. He personally accounted for more than two hundred enemy dead, between Ham Pont and Guebling." In the area between these towns lay Obreck, Dedeline and Chateau Voue, all of which he helped capture against heavy enemy fire.¹⁰²



Figure 5.1 Trezzvant W. Anderson World War II Photographs, (*Courtesy of Robert W. Woodruff Library of Atlanta University Center*)

Trezzvant Anderson insisted on showing readers that interracial cooperation was required on the battlefield. Hate had no choice but to be sacrificed. In the battle at Morville, he noticed what he described as "a beautiful demonstration of comradeship, when Roy King was shot." There were "several white infantrymen [who] tried unsuccessfully to remove King's body from the fire area, and a number of them were killed." A commanding white officer, "Colonel Hunt, expressed his satisfaction over the

¹⁰¹ Ibid, pg. 37

¹⁰² Ibid, pg. 35

fine teamwork between the tankers and the white troopers of the 26th Division.”¹⁰³

According to Phillip W. Latimer, one of the nine white officers in the 761st, there were “two or three” of them who were prejudiced, some of them more than others. One of them was second in command of the battalion; his name was Major Charles M. Wingo Jr. “I remember when the white officers were together, away from the blacks; his favorite expression was ‘when the shooting starts those niggers will run like hell.’” Latimer had chosen to join the 761st. He explained, “I was very fortunate to have parents who were not prejudiced and I was afraid that if those of us who were not prejudiced did not volunteer, then some of us who were prejudice might volunteer.”¹⁰⁴

The unit’s official historian helped place the 761st battalion’s effectiveness in perspective during their first weeks of battle. During this time they participated in the Lorraine Campaign helping capture multiple towns. “That was a very, very important objective because in one of those towns, the town of Vic-sur-Seille, where 761st first saw action, they captured the town that contained the only bridge passable for armor. And because of the 761st action, the 4th Armored Division was able to cross the Seille River.” The battalion suffered some thirty combat killed in action during the first weeks of battle all of them were documented by Anderson.¹⁰⁵ Soldiers like Sergeant Floyd Dade Jr., who was drafted into the US Army during his senior year of high school, found cruel irony in Major Wingo’s skepticism of black soldiers’ bravery. Dade recalled Wingo’s actions on the first day of battle. “He had all of our maps. The first shot came in—‘boom,’ he was

¹⁰³ Ibid, pg. 35

¹⁰⁴ Transcript excerpt from Phillip W. Latimer interview, *761st* (film)

¹⁰⁵ Transcript excerpt from Wayne Robinson interview, *761st* (documentary); Robinson is the National Unit Historian of the 761st Battalion and Allied Veterans Association; also see *Come Out Fighting*.

gone with the maps. And his driver said the last thing he saw was his trench coat tail flying in the air. If he hadn't taken off with those maps, there was a lot of men could have been saved."¹⁰⁶ Then Private McConnell, years later asserted that Wingo "was chicken shit! He deserted us." But, "he's buried in Arlington Cemetery with honor," because "nobody found out about it."¹⁰⁷

For all the Army officers and politicians back home who had been against black combat soldiers and integration of the military forces, Anderson began to flood black newspapers with byline-less stories about the achievements of black tankers. His first articles were in the November 25th editions of the *Afro-American* and *Pittsburgh Courier*. The *Afro* highlighted the capture of a German officer who had been taken prisoner by the 26th Division. The officer paid tribute to the 761st. "Only on the Russian front," he said, "had he seen fighting as determined as that put up by the colored crew of a tank which the Germans had knocked out near Chateau Salins." He recounted how the black soldiers bailed from their disabled tanks, scrambled underneath, "and continued to blaze away at the Germans with tommy guns." This article was adjoined by an editorial from an anonymous American white soldier at Fort Meade (Maryland), who had recently returned from overseas. He wrote:

I believe in democracy. The war would be much nearer to victory for the Allies, and many American soldiers would be living today if more troops like these (in the 761st Tank Battalion) had been activated. But our leading Southern military officers have made a great blunder, which is a disgrace to humanity as well as democracy.

The editorial was simply signed: SOLDIER.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ Transcript excerpt from Sergeant Floyd Dade, Jr. interview, *761st* (documentary)

¹⁰⁷ Transcript excerpt from E.G. McConnell interview, *761st* (documentary)

The *Pittsburgh Courier* carried a much more pronounced story of the prowess of the 761st on its front page. “Negro Units Smash Germans,” read the headlines. “In the early phases of the assault the colored troops crossed three miles of open country in the face of artillery and mortar fire.” Readers knew that the tankers fought with General Patton’s Third Army, with General Courtney Hodges’ First Army, and with General Dwight D. Eisenhower before the newspaper’s double VV insignia alerted them to turn to page four for more of the story. Ollie Stewart, an un-enlisted war correspondent, was the first to write about Anderson and the 761st at Dieuze, signaling that Anderson was indeed coordinating stories with a network of journalists. “Corporal Anderson is just back from visiting a tank battalion and the tank destroyers on the Third Army front, bringing the latest news.”¹⁰⁹

Throughout December of 1944, Anderson filed more articles about the 761st in other prominent black newspapers, including the *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, *Atlanta Daily World*, *Chicago Defender*, and *Cleveland Call and Post*.¹¹⁰ During this time the battalion took the French towns of Attswiller, Pisdorf, and Sarre-Union, and broke through the Maginot Line beginning their push into Germany. They were ordered to help crack the infamous Siegfried Line. The 761st watched as battle weary white soldiers of 26th Infantry Division were relieved by troops from the 87th Infantry, while they received

¹⁰⁸ “Praise to Tankers: Kick to South,” *Afro-American*, 1944 November 25, pg. 4

¹⁰⁹ Ollie Stewart, (Paris), “Stewart Nurses a Cold on 3rd Thanksgiving Overseas,” *Afro-American*, 1944 December 2, pg. 7

¹¹⁰ (With The Third U.S. Army in the Metz Area), “Tank Unit With Patton Proves Mettle In Fierce, Initial Battle,” *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, 1944 December 9, pg. 2; (With The Third U.S. Army in the Metz Area), “Nothing Inferior About Negro Tankmen, Nazi Says,” *Atlanta Daily World*, 1944 December 10, pg. 1; (With The Third U.S. Army in the Metz Area), “Tank Unit Wins High Praise From Nazi Foe,” *Chicago Defender*, 1944 December 16, pg. 1; (With The Third U.S. Army in the Metz Area), “List First Tank Dead,” *Chicago Defender*, 1944 December 16, pg. 1; “Local Officer is Killed With Tank Outfit,” *Cleveland Call and Post*, 1944 December 30, pg. 1A

none. On the morning of December 16, German forces launched a Blitzkrieg counter offensive in the west. The Belgium Port of Antwerp was to be taken at all cost. With orders to make a ninety-degree turn, the 761st Tank Battalion departed Germany, headed for Bastogne, and officially entered the Battle of the Bulge.¹¹¹

According to the unit's official historian, the 761st activities during the Battle of the Bulge should be documented with special regard to the period between January 1 through January 10, 1945. The 761st and elements of 87th Infantry Division were tasked with taking the town of Tillet, where it was very, very important to close the Brussels Bastogne Highway.¹¹² Anderson recalled, "the idea was to prevent the enemy from moving any additional forces to the aid of their troops which had circled the town."¹¹³ "Tillet," he simply put, "was the beginning of the end [for the Germans], and no fancy words are needed to put the proper recollections of that battle into the minds of the 761st Tank Battalion." The battle for the Tillet lasted five days. "The enemy wearied of the persistent and constant attacking of the 761st and finally withdrew."¹¹⁴ The 761st captured the town, but casualties were high. The Battle of the Bulge ended on January 28, 1945, Hitler was forced to divert his army to the eastern front to engage the advancing Russian Army.

The 761st entered their third phase of battle in which they participated in operation "Task Force Rhine." This was the first time the entire battalion fought together as one

¹¹¹ Excerpt from Commentator, *761st: The Story of The Black Panther Tank Battalion*, A Pete Chatmon Picture, (Documentary, 2007)

¹¹² Transcript excerpt from Wayne Robinson interview, *761st* (documentary)

¹¹³ *Come Out Fighting*, pg. 47

¹¹⁴ *Ibid*, pg. 49

unit. Their objective was to cross the Rhine River and destroy German forces that had evaded US capture in the west and eventually link up with Russian forces that were closing from the east. With the end of the war in sight, the 761st Battalion's next objective was to crack the Siegfried Line that they had prepared to breach back in December. One officer recalled that the "Siegfried Line looked like dragon teeth, they had staggered concrete pillars in all different ways, there was no way possible for a tank to penetrate."¹¹⁵ Another asserted that the battalion "fought against fourteen different German divisions during that time and they opened the door and as soon as they got through, in come the 14th Armored Division. I don't think the 761st ever got the clear credit for breaking the Siegfried Line."¹¹⁶ The 761st Tank Battalion pierced the Siegfried Line at its toughest point and did not lose a single soldier.

As the soldiers of the 761st drove deeper into Germany they came face to face with the German enemy that they had been fighting since November. "We were just moving like we were mad and nobody could stop us, the Germans just didn't have the ability to do it anymore," recalled Lieutenant Latimer.¹¹⁷ The war was drawing to a close, and while the average life expectancy of a tanker during World War II was seventeen days, the battalion had spent a total of 183 straight days in battle. The 761st traveled and fought through six European countries, without relief. They killed 6,246 enemy, wounded 650 more, and captured 15,818. They lost a total of 34 soldiers, including three officers.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁵ Transcript excerpt from Sergeant Floyd Dade Jr. interview, *761st* (documentary)

¹¹⁶ Transcript excerpt from Corporal James B. Jones interview, *761st* (documentary)

¹¹⁷ Transcript excerpt from Lieutenant Phillip W. Latimer interview, *761st* (documentary)

Anderson came to the realization that “the life and deeds of the 761st Tank Battalion [were] definitely entitled to a unique niche in history.”¹¹⁹ He decided to publish a book that would document the units’ achievements. He rejoined the battalion in May 1945 and spent close to a year interviewing and gathering the stories of all the battalion members. With the help of the enlisted men of the 761st, he recorded and recreated virtually every phase of the battalion’s activities. He sought to capture their experiences from the unit’s original inception and activation at Fort Knox (Kentucky) on April 1, 1942; through combat training at Camp Livingston (Louisiana), Camp Claiborne (Louisiana) and Camp Hood (Texas); to its departure for battle from Camp Shanks (New York) in October 1944. But more importantly Anderson captured the battalion in battle from November 1944 until May 1945. He published the stories he collected as the book *Come Out Fighting: The Epic Tale of the 761st Tank, 1942-1945*. It became his most important and lasting contribution to the historical record.¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ Transcript excerpt from Wayne Robinson interview, Unit Historian, 761st (documentary); *Come Out Fighting*, pg. XI-XIII

¹¹⁹ *Come Out Fighting*, pg. IX

¹²⁰ Trezzvant W. Anderson, *Come Out Fighting: The Epic Tale of the 761st Tank Battalion, 1942-1945*, (Germany: Salzburger Druckerei Und Verlag, 1945), pg. IX

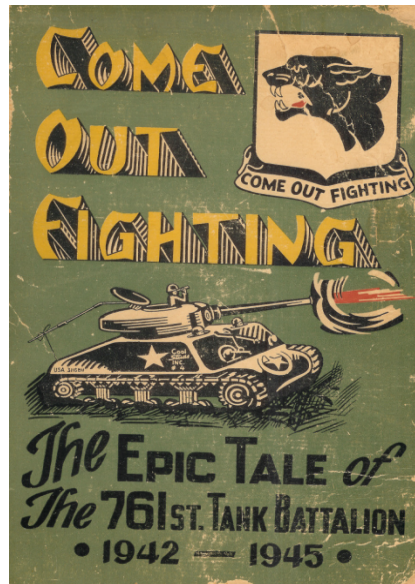


Figure 5.2 COF-Title Page

Trezzvant Anderson released at least two-dozen articles in the black press that highlighted the achievements of the 761st and promoted the book as it neared completion. He initially had Claude Barnett contact Carter G. Woodson, founder of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, to see if the association had any desire to publish the book. Anderson later asked Barnett to recall his manuscript, probably because Woodson did not move fast enough. But the more likely reason was the battalion decided to have the book published in Salzburg, Austria using their own resources, so that members could return home with a copy. In many ways, argued one scholar, it became their official yearbook to ensure that they would have an accurate record of their experiences, achievements, and the sacrifices that were made. Woodson did, however, get a chance to review the book in the *Journal of Negro History*. He remarked on Anderson's efforts, "Only a keen observer and a thinker with a penetrating mind like the

author's could see, record, and evaluate so many significant events and the participants in these adventures.”¹²¹

Anderson made sure that copies of the book were sent to Senators Theodore G. Bilbo and James O. Eastland, and “various other people on a preferred list” who like the Mississippi senators, shared a staunch loyalty to white supremacy and opposition to the idea of black combat soldiers.¹²² With the war in Europe now over, it was this unwavering type of sentiment that Anderson and many other black soldiers were preparing to fight once they returned home. Claude Barnett tried to work out arrangements to get Anderson to do a speaking tour when he returned to the states. The ANP head wrote one college president in Texas describing Anderson as “dashing, alert, courageous and a trifle spectacular.” He “threw himself into the army with the same lack of inhibitions as he exhibited in civil life and had about the same results,” Barnett told another dean of a college in North Carolina.¹²³ It does not appear however that Anderson committed himself to doing the tour. He perhaps envisioned more for himself after the war; he was preparing for a much bigger fight. He whole-heartedly believed and supported Paul Robeson's sentiments. Robeson, an internationally renowned African American singer, actor, intellectual and human rights activist, spent some time with the 761st, and told the battalion to expect things to be different from when they left America.

¹²¹ Carter G. Woodson, Review: *Come Out Fighting* by Trezzvant W. Anderson, *Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 31, No. 2, Apr. 1946, pg. 233-235, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2714774>

¹²² “Chronicler of 761st Tank Battalion Back, Tells Highlights of Unit's Work,” *Afro-American*, 1946 February 23, pg. 7

¹²³ Claude Barnett, ANP to Karl Downs, Samuel Huston College, *Letter*, 1945 September 18; Claude Barnett, ANP to Dean T. E. McKinney, Johnson C. Smith University, *Letter*, 1945 September 20, Claude Barnett Papers, Trezzvant Anderson Files.

“In some cases it will be better, and in others it will be worse. But the people of America must face the race problem, and they realize it, now.”¹²⁴

Always the realist, Trezzvant Anderson himself foresaw “hard days” ahead for returning black veterans. “Returning Negro veterans are not going to have an easy time re-adjusting themselves to the requirements of the postwar world,” he asserted. He expressed his position in terms of labor. “The Negro combat vet is going to have a still harder time than the ex-service troopers.” He argued that those “who were members of units in the service of supply organizations were able to learn many new trades and develop skills in mechanical and technical fields.” Those men who were members of the medical corps, engineers, quartermasters and ordinance units could perform a number of trades. Blacks who were in the medical field had learned to use the latest and most advanced medical equipment and engineers had learned to survey, draft, photo-engrave, bricklaying, and heavy construction machine operation. “But for the combat man from the tank battalions, the tank destroyers, the field artillery battalions, and the infantry, these men learned but one single thing: how to kill. They became vastly proficient in the operation of machines that dealt with death.” This skill would “have no place in the postwar peace-time plans of the U. S.” Anderson suggested that the country would be wise to take this “into consideration when planning how to integrate the returning vet into his proper place in the post-war scheme of things.”¹²⁵

¹²⁴ Trezzvant W. Anderson, (With The 761st Tank Battalion In Europe), ‘Robeson Says Nation Must Face “Problem,”’ *Atlanta Daily World*, 1945 September 26, pg. 1

¹²⁵ Trezzvant W. Anderson, (With The 761st Tank Battalion In Europe) (ANP), “Hard Days Seen For Negro Vets,” *Atlanta Daily World*, 1945 December 4, pg. 1

Conclusion

The *Pittsburgh Courier* fully supported and promoted the Double V Campaign for more than a year. By September 1945 it stopped using the insignia altogether. However, the Double V campaign was larger than just the use of an insignia; to trace the campaign through the *Courier* narrowly construes its meaning and diminishes its impact. The campaign was a fight for economic justice. It attracted and emboldened a divergent group of African Americans who wholeheartedly supported its causes, especially Trezzvant Anderson whose wartime activism broadens our understanding of Double V. He organized labor in civil service and wartime defense industries, pressed for the inclusion of black war correspondents, and reported from the front lines of war. His work also reveals the importance of the black press as a tool for activism. As World War II came to an end, Anderson and thousands of black soldiers returned hoping to share in the unbridled economic prosperity that characterized post-war America. However, despite African Americans' support of the war, many found themselves excluded from post-war prosperity and the bold fight for equal citizenship rights continued.

CHAPTER SIX

“World News in a Nutshell”: the Struggle for Black Economic Justice in the Age of Cold War Politics, 1946-1951

In late March 1949, Trezzvant Anderson wrote: “America might as well shut her mouth, for what’s happening here in this so-called ‘democracy’ reeks of the same skunk odor as that which our bleating press, radio and propagandists try to make the world believe is the sole property of the countries ‘behind the Iron Curtain.’”¹ His criticism came the same day that the United States government celebrated the public opening of both the American Museum of Atomic Energy and Oak Ridge, Tennessee, the birthplace of the atom bomb. The town had been closed to non-residents since its construction began in 1942, and for Anderson, its opening meant a much anticipated unveiling of the “Secret City.” Oak Ridge sat on 60,000 acres nestled amid ninety square miles of foothills along the southwestern ridge of the Appalachian Mountains, and a majority of the town’s 35,607 population worked at the Clinton Engineering Works Y-12 facility. Government officials championed Oak Ridge because its nuclear energy studies program made it “the most important city in the whole world.” Yet, according to Anderson, “in this very same city, things are happening which should make Uncle Sam hang his head in shame before the world.”²

¹ Trezzvant W. Anderson, “World News In A Nutshell: America’s ‘Iron Curtain’ Smells Too,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1949 March 19, pg. 17

² Trezzvant W. Anderson, “Dixie’s Race Pattern Dominates Oak Ridge,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1949 April 9, pg. 1; Editorial, “The Oak Ridge Disgrace,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1949 April 23, pg. 14

Anderson wanted to show how the federal government, by virtue of its ownership of the town, had been “hewing to the Dixie line of racial segregation” and forcing its own black citizens to live under “repugnant” conditions. Blacks lived in slum dwellings without running water, baths, sinks, or windows, and there were no recreational facilities for children. The government relegated local blacks to menial jobs. Anderson also uncovered evidence of employment discrimination against black college students and scientists who sought opportunities at the atomic research facility. Over several weeks the *Pittsburgh Courier* headlined Anderson’s “Atomic City” exposé of government supported “black subjection” in the South. Readers confronted images of substandard housing conditions, systematic economic discrimination and the local black community’s struggle for change. Anderson placed blame for black marginalization in Oak Ridge squarely on the shoulders of David E. Lilienthal, head of the Atomic Energy Commission. Anderson perceived the squalor as a federal problem, and he wanted a federal response.

To exert pressure on Lilienthal Anderson worked to bring national and possibly international attention to conditions in Oak Ridge. He delivered a copy of his first article to the editor of the *Oak Ridger*, a local daily newspaper. The following day, the newspaper carried a version of the story “with big, banner headlines screaming that Oak Ridge had not done right by its Negro citizens.” Larger daily newspapers, such as the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, soon picked up the story from newswires and “hit the streets with front page articles.” That he was the source behind the sudden national interest on the “maladministration of justice” in Oak Ridge mattered little to Anderson.³ He got the desired publicity and the outcry yielded the results he had hoped for. A few months later

³ Ibid.

Lilienthal quietly resigned. In the late 1940s, against the backdrop of the Cold War, Anderson helped sharpen the contradictions and hypocrisy of American political rhetoric.

In 1949 Anderson traveled to Oak Ridge in search of a way to make the federal government assume more responsibility for the mistreatment of its African American citizens. Pressuring federal officials was not his aim alone. The most ardent African American activists of this time wanted the government to do something about the denial of civil and human rights to black Americans, especially for the masses living in the South. Some of them participated in the formation of the United Nations (UN), an international effort to bring about a new postwar world order of peace and democracy in which over two-dozen nations, including America, pledged to combat the oppressive fascist legacy of the Axis Powers. African Americans lobbied the newly established UN to form a Commission on Human Rights, and appealed to the United States to honor its guidelines. They sought to leverage the UN's human rights initiatives in legal arguments to desegregate interstate transportation, procure voting rights, and bar racially restrictive housing codes. To appease black activists, Harry S. Truman established the President's Committee on Civil Rights, but it largely dodged responsibility of protecting African Americans rights. Since the commission lacked the "enforcement mechanisms," the initiative offered little substantive intervention.⁴

Invoking the politics of the Cold War, Anderson sought to mount an assault against the federal government. In spite of the commission launched by Truman, he seemed more committed to diverting public attention away from civil rights than pushing for lasting, meaningful change. Thus, in some ways, when Anderson reflected upon the

⁴ Glenda E. Gilmore, *Defying Dixie: The Radical Roots of Civil Rights, 1919-1950*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2008)

message displayed on a huge billboard beneath an image of Uncle Sam rolling up his sleeves, warning those entering and leaving Oak Ridge, “What you see here...what you hear here, when you leave here, let it stay here,” it perhaps crystallized in his mind what needed to be done.

The investigation at Oak Ridge marked a departure from previous strategies Anderson had mounted. Having once appealed to the federal government to investigate and prosecute state and municipally sponsored discrimination, he now began to push against the federal government itself. Anderson aggressively worked to force the Truman administration to address its own discriminatory policies. This important shift reflected changes brought about the rise of the Cold War and the simultaneous emergence of the United States as a global superpower. These twin developments had a decisive impact on the leverage African Americans could exert. The onset of the Cold War rendered United States racial politics an international embarrassment. Yet the Cold War was also a “double edge sword,” as one scholar wrote, because it narrowed the acceptable range of reform in America, especially in the South, where any serious proposals for social change were quickly labeled “communist” or “communist inspired.”

Anderson learned to navigate the emerging Cold War landscape with considerable skill, but the process was initially slow. On his return home from his military stint in Europe, Anderson moved back to Charlotte where he resumed his focus on rallying blacks in local communities. He was convinced that blacks in his hometown needed “everything that a good newspaper could fight for.”⁵ Partnering with local black leaders, he established *The Charlottean* and the *Charlotte Eagle*. Anderson used the newspapers

⁵ Trezzvant W. Anderson, “Times Welcomed To Charlotte,” *The Carolina Times*, 1939 July 22, pg. 6; Anderson helped bring a Charlotte edition of the *Times* to the city before the war, but after he left for Europe it was discontinued.

to elevate African Americans political awareness, especially as it related to the American Federation of Labor (AFL) and the Congress of Industrial Organizations' (CIO) movement to organize labor in the South. He organized returning black veterans into the Veterans Welfare Association, a short-lived advocacy organization that sought access to improved housing and employment opportunities. Local white reactions against Anderson's activism forced him to leave Charlotte, but he reemerged in Pittsburgh in early 1947 to join the staff of the most widely circulated black newspaper in the country—*The Pittsburgh Courier*. With a larger platform he first used the newspaper to organize *Courier* journalists to coordinate news stories about black teacher struggles across the South. In June 1948, Anderson initiated his column, "World News in Nutshell," and set out to critique the country's continued economic and political exploitation of black Americans and a foreign policy that helped renew subjugation of people of color around the world. In 1951, he relocated to the nation's capitol and assumed editorship of the *Courier*'s Washington, D.C. office, where he focused his attention on national politics and black leadership.

Anderson's work during this period illustrates how some local black communities sought access to the fruits of the United States' postwar prosperity and how he used the black press to connect these local struggles to regional, national and international developments. In the face of stateside calls for loyalty against the spread of communism, Anderson challenged the rising phenomenon of McCarthyism. The black press became a refuge for Anderson, allowing him to continue his fight for equality and human rights and sustaining the struggle through an uncertain period when most other civil rights and labor

organizations retreated. While Cold War politics encouraged Anderson to tone down his criticism of the federal government, he refused to remain completely silent.

The Cold War was a war of ideology, an era of heightened anti-communism, and a time of thinly veiled imperialism. American politicians espoused ideas about democracy, the resistance of free people to subjugation, and armament in the name of national security.⁶ Fear of communism and being labeled a communist permeated many aspects of American life and had dire consequences for government employees, college professors, political activists, and everyday citizens whose activities and affiliations were considered subversive.⁷ In general scholarship has suggested that many black American journalists became victims of censorship, especially when their news stories embarrassed America on the international stage.⁸ As brash and outspoken as Anderson was, he avoided the pitfalls of red-baiting, in large part because he never considered communism a serious vehicle for gaining black Americans equal economic rights, and because he was never closely associated with any organization that was accused of having communist

⁶ Thomas Borstelmann, in *Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2003), argues that it was during the Cold War that the critical tension between the older-vision of America founded on hierarchies of race and gender and a newer ideal of a society free of legalized discrimination and forced inequality was resolved; Mary Dudziak agrees that American diplomats grew increasingly sensitive to the growing media coverage that racial conflict in the South received and moved to distance themselves and the federal government from it; she however questions whether civil rights advocates would have achieved their goals sooner in the absence of vigorous anti-communists campaigns to maintain white supremacy in the South. See her *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy*, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000)

⁷ Gerald Horne's, *Black and Red: W.E.B. Du Bois and the Afro-American Response to the Cold War, 1944-1963*, (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1986), pg. 1; Horne's work is largely acknowledged as the first book-length treatment of African American responses to the Cold War, he argued that the period created a "large fissure" in the black freedom struggle.

⁸ See Penny Von Eschen, *Race Against Empire: Black Americans and Anti-Colonialism, 1937-1957*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997), pg. 118; Von Eschen traces how African Americans agitated for more critical examinations of American imperialism worldwide and made connections between anti-colonial struggles abroad and racial equality movements at home. She does this by primarily exploring the lives of several black journalists, intellectuals and political leaders including Paul Robeson, W.E.B. Du Bois and George Padmore. She, however, admits that a more conclusive story of internal Cold War repression's impact on the African American press remains to be told.

ties.⁹ In that regard, he was a *lone wolf* who, with clear intention, exposed America's underbelly to inform African Americans, stoke activism, and agitate for change.

Local Labor Organizing Newspaper Man

Trezzvant Anderson returned to Charlotte, North Carolina in February 1946 as a war veteran and in that capacity entered the post-war fight for democracy at home. Charlotte and the larger South were in the midst of rapid economic change. Politicians were seeking to attract northern manufacturers to the region to help spawn industrial development. In turn, these capitalists hoped migrating to the South would allow them to escape and perhaps eliminate the power that labor unions had amassed in the North before and during World War II.¹⁰ Anderson had helped organize black labor in Charlotte before he left for the war and he hoped to resume that work when he returned. As before, he planned to use the black press to aid his labor organizing efforts. In less than two months after his return he launched *The Charlottean*, in the same week that the CIO and the AFL initiated their own ambitious labor organizing drives in the South.

Labor unions commonly refer to the Southern interracial labor organizing efforts as Operation Dixie, and it was in this milieu that pro and anti labor forces collided. Operation Dixie was primarily an effort initiated by the CIO to unionize the postwar South. The organization sought to maintain the momentum it gained organizing unions in the North during the war and viewed its plan as a logical and necessary step to remove

⁹ Robert Korstad and Nelson Lichtenstein, "Opportunities Found and Lost: Labor, Radicals, and the Early Civil Rights Movement," *Journal of American History*, Vol. 75, No. 3 (Dec. 1988), Pg. 786-811; Robert Korstad, *Civil Rights Unionism: Tobacco Workers and the Struggle for Democracy in the Mid-Twentieth-Century South*, (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2003) These centered their examination of the Cold War's contribution to a decade-long decline in working-class black activism, most visible in the labor movement's failed Operation Dixie.

¹⁰ Tami J. Friedman, "'How Can Greenville Get New Industry to Come Here If We Get the Label of a C.I.O. Town?': Capital Migration and the Limits of Unionism in the Postwar," in *Life and Labor in the New South*, Robert H. Zieger, Editor, (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2012), pg. 16-45.\

the South as a non-union haven for Northern businesses looking to relocate. Not wanting to be outdone, the AFL attempted to undercut the CIO efforts in the South by running a smear campaign against Operation Dixie.

The phrase “Operation Dixie” became synonymous with the efforts of this period to attract unorganized workers. In April 1946, the CIO announced its plans to initiate an “organizational drive into the Solid South, with 200 organizers and a war chest of \$1,000,000 dollars.”¹¹ Phillip Murray, head of the CIO, described the drive as a “straight, clean-cut, pure, unadulterated campaign to organize that territory.” The primary objective was to organize non-union workers throughout the South’s industries. According to the *Pittsburgh Courier*, agriculture had over 700,000 unorganized workers; the textile and lumber industries had the next largest numbers, with 265,000 and 315,000, respectively; and the chemical industry had 115,000 unorganized workers. Another important component of the CIO’s program was its Political Action Committee, which sought to eliminate poll taxes and “defeat anti-labor, anti-Negro Congressmen and Senators of the South.”¹² Less than a week after the CIO unveiled its program, the AFL revealed plans to counter with its own “Dixie Drive” in which it planned to add 1,000,000 workers to its membership rolls.¹³

Anderson used the *Charlottean* to articulate his hope and vision for these campaigns. He wrote that with the AFL’s big organizing campaign underway, “local workers [were] becoming more and more interested every day, [and] things are looking

¹¹ “Operation Dixie,” *The Pittsburgh Courier*, 1946 April 20, pg. 6; Also see, “CIO Launches New Campaign to Organize Southern Labor,” *Afro-American*, 1946 April 20, pg. 3

¹² Ibid

¹³ “AFL Plans Dixie Drive,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1946 April 27, pg. 1

up for the Negro laborer here.” For him, the presence of James Hampton, an International Representative of the AFL and champion of the black trade unionist cause, lent added gravity to Charlotte’s local drive. Anderson hoped it would “continue, unabatedly, until the majority of Negro workers here are organized.” He stressed, “Labor MUST BE ORGANIZED.”¹⁴ Anderson had always shown interest in labor, and this drive marked the biggest event of the labor movement since the birth of the CIO in 1935.

While he and other black soldiers awaited their military discharges, Anderson predicted that they would face challenges re-adjusting to the postwar world. The paramount issue faced by returning black veterans was finding adequate employment opportunities. By the end of the war black civilians, who had worked in war industries, were forced back into low-paying positions lacking union representation. Anderson believed that joining a union supplied a measure of insurance. The only way black veterans would not be forced into similar low-paying, menial jobs was for them to join unions. In the house of labor they could lay claim to the citizenship rights of equal employment opportunities. Military service had given war-tested soldiers diverse skills. They often had training in brick-laying, heavy construction, and as truck driving-quartermasters, but many also picked up various engineering trades as well. They hoped these skills would translate into higher paying jobs.¹⁵

Anderson planned to use the *Charlottean* to stress the positive economic impact that a racially inclusive labor organizing drive could have on local African Americans. He assured readers that the newspaper would “carry the ball for labor.” He felt “that

¹⁴ Trezzvant W. Anderson, “On The Home Front,” *The Charlottean*, 1946 May 11, pg. 1, (Clipping) Trezzvant Anderson Papers, Atlanta University Center, Woodruff Library, Box 1, Folder 2

¹⁵ Trezzvant W. Anderson, “Hard Days Seen For Negro Vets,” *Atlanta Daily World*, 1945 December 4, pg. 1

even the uninformed Negro worker, skilled or unskilled, must, by now, be aware of the power of organized labor, and its ability to get for him HIGHER WAGES, for that is the fundamental purpose of all labor organizations, to insure better wages and working conditions for their members.”¹⁶ He was likely aware that shortly after he volunteered for the Army, black workers in Charlotte had tried to organize. In 1943, sanitation workers, sixty-percent of who were black, went on strike to protest poor management. In the summer of 1945 laundry workers, most all of them black women, unsuccessfully went on strike for four months in an attempt to organize a union that would procure them higher wages.¹⁷ Many of these black women had worked for significantly higher wages in war industry jobs at the local Navy Shell Plant, managed by the United States Rubber Company. But the war’s end forced them back into low-end domestic employment. Anderson returned and encouraged all local blacks to “take advantage of the gains to be had from affiliation with organized labor.”¹⁸

From the very start Anderson exhibited some skepticism about the CIO goals in Charlotte. He posed the question to his readers, “are Negroes expecting too much from the CIO drive in the South?” Like other parts of North Carolina, Charlotte had a diverse economy, but it remained unwelcoming to unions.¹⁹ The city’s hierarchy of major

¹⁶ Trezzvant W. Anderson editorial, “Carrying the Ball for Labor,” *The Charlottean*, 1946 May 11, pg. 6, Box 1, Folder 2, Trezzvant W. Anderson Papers

¹⁷ Stephen H. Dew, *The Queen City at War: Charlotte, North Carolina, During World War II 1939-1945*, (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2001) pg. 131-132

¹⁸ Trezzvant W. Anderson editorial, “Carrying the Ball for Labor,” *The Charlottean*, 1946 May 11, pg. 6, Box 1, Folder 2, Trezzvant W. Anderson Papers.

¹⁹ For the most comprehensive works on the textile industry see: Hall, Leloudis, Korstad, Murphy, Jones, and Daly, *Like a Family: The Making of a Southern Cotton Mill World*, (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1987) and; For lumber see: William P. Jones, *The Tribe of Black Ulysses: African American Lumber Workers in the Jim Crow South*, (Urbana, Ill: University of Illinois Press, 2005); Also see *Like a Family*’s Robert R. Korstad’s, *Civil Rights Unionism: Tobacco Workers and the Struggle for*

industries included textiles, trucking, construction, railroads, electrical power, city government and the post office. With the exception of the city government, these were the only places where workers enjoyed some union representation, yet many were not organized and none of their unions possessed any real power or influence in the city. The CIO sent one of its top labor representatives to Charlotte to target the city's textile industry. George Baldanzi, vice-president of the Textile Workers Union of America (TWUA) and vice-chairman of Operation Dixie, established a permanent headquarters in the city and swore that he would remain "until everything was organized."²⁰ The textile industry in and around Charlotte, however, hired only a few blacks for its most menial and hazardous low-paying jobs, and Baldanzi did nothing to change this policy. The CIO hoped to achieve their greatest gains in the textile industries. Despite the rhetoric of racial inclusion trumpeted in their original goals, Anderson felt they completely discarded their color-blind ideals when they got to Charlotte.

Anderson saw more opportunity in the AFL's outreach to black workers in Charlotte. James Hampton came to the city to organize and recruit black construction workers. He was from Sheffield, Alabama, and since 1937 was a member of the International Hod Carriers Building and Common Laborers' Union (IHCB&CLU). Hampton rose through the ranks and became a top organizer for the union and was one of a few black AFL International Representatives. During their southern organizing drive he was a key component of its program to organize African American workers in twelve

Democracy in the Mid-Twentieth Century South (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2003) for information on labor organizing in the tobacco industry.

²⁰ Osceola E. McKaine, "Palmetto State," *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, 1946 July 6, pg. 7

southern states.²¹ Hampton either recruited or more likely Anderson offered his services after he joined Local 1094 of IHCB&CLU in Charlotte.²² This connection allowed Anderson to position himself as an AFL representative on the city's local Construction Building and Trades Council. This body consisted of Anderson and thirteen other AFL representatives and aimed to work out a respectable wage scale that common laborers could present to local employers. Anderson, wrote that they would pursue "definite wage increases for workers who [were] hod carriers, mortar handlers, jackhammer men, dynamite men, concrete pourers and mixers and all other trades not covered by union locals in both [un]-skilled and technical fields."²³ These were among the jobs many black soldiers sought when they returned from service.

Trezzvant Anderson knew that any successful undertaking of large-scale labor organizing needed effective grassroots methods of communication. He believed *The Charlottean* could serve as a hotbed for labor news, but he was not a promoter for the unions. Instead Anderson used the newspaper to hold labor unions accountable. "The dawn of a new day has come for Negro workers of this section of North Carolina," he wrote, "with two big unions, the AFL and the CIO, making a definite concerted bid for his membership."²⁴ But he cautioned that the competition between the AFL and CIO might actually do more harm to black workers than good. "The AFL has long stubbornly

²¹ George S. Schuyler, "Views and Reviews: A Hod-Carrier Takes Exception to Recent Remarks," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1954 March 20, pg. 9

²² Local 1094 of IHCB & CLU Membership Card, Trezzvant W. Anderson Papers, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Atlanta University Center, Box 1, Folder 2; In addition to press work, Anderson also was trained in bricklaying at JCSU.

²³ Trezzvant W. Anderson, "AFL Opens Big Local Organizing Drive," *The Charlottean*, 1946 May 11, pg. 3, Box 1, Folder 2, Trezzvant W. Anderson Papers

²⁴ Trezzvant W. Anderson editorial, "Carrying the Ball for Labor," *The Charlottean*, 1946 May 11, pg. 6, Box 1, Folder 2, Trezzvant W. Anderson Papers

refused to interfere with anti-Negro discrimination and segregation in the south,” he acknowledged. In past drives, he noted, some individual AFL unions tried to maintain segregation and discrimination, and fought the CIO by appealing to racial prejudices. In spite of this, however, Anderson still chose to join the AFL’s efforts, mainly because it represented the best chance to organize returning black veterans in Charlotte, given the CIO’s focus on the predominantly white textile industry.²⁵

Another black activist and occasional journalist, Milton M. Weston, who also followed the labor movement closely for the *New York Amsterdam News*, expressed similar sentiments when he suggested that the AFL’s current drive was not much different than the CIO’s. He emphasized the fact that William Green, head of the AFL, upon hearing about the CIO’s plans to launch Operation Dixie, immediately “discovered a ‘communist plot’ to take over the South.” Weston wrote that as a result of Green’s discovery, “the daily press, North and South, took up the cry of ‘Communism,’ charging that the real purpose of the CIO was not to improve the wage and working conditions of the white and colored workers in the South, but to upset the ‘peaceful’ relations between the races.”²⁶ That the CIO faced accusations of communist infiltration was not lost upon Trezzvant Anderson. The real issue for him and black Americans living in the South was whether the CIO would try to strengthen its ability to compete with the AFL and overcome the southern cries of a red scare, or “try to lighten its load by discarding its

²⁵ Trezzvant W. Anderson, “Along the Labor Front,” *The Charlottean*, 1946 May 11, pg. 6, Box 1, Folder 2, Trezzvant W. Anderson Papers

²⁶ Milton M. Moran, “Labor Forum,” *New York Amsterdam News*, 1946 September 14, pg. 8

racial equality program for southern industry.”²⁷ Refusing to invite black workers into its folds was exactly what the CIO had done in Charlotte.

There were earlier indications that the CIO had, in fact, cast aside any possibility that of seeking racial justice before its organizers even reached the South. Anderson was critical of Van A. Bittner, chosen to lead Operation Dixie, for not accepting outside help from groups like Help Organize the South and the Southern Conference for Human Welfare (SCHW). The former was a fundraising campaign initiated by Harlem-based Congressman Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. and Milton Weston. Bittner suggested that their organization and the SCHW had heavy socialist and communist influences.²⁸ “Mr. Bittner,” Anderson pointed out, “is obviously and publically running away from the type of aid which he willingly accepted from 1936 to 1939 to pull the CIO through rough spots during drives to organize steel and meat.”²⁹ Of course, accusations of communism in pre-World War II had carried less weight for labor activists than they did during the emerging Cold War.

Neither federal nor Southern government officials feared a communist revolution in America. They did, however, fear that communist organizing efforts would lead to the mobilization of Southern black workers. Such mobilization was a real possibility, according to one scholar. The United Negro and Allied Veterans of America (UNAVA), which organized in Chicago in April 1946, “was a collective response to growing activism among black veterans and the social, economic and political discrimination they

²⁷ Trezzvant W. Anderson, “Along the Labor Front,” *The Charlottean*, 1946 May 11, pg. 6, Box 1, Folder 2, Trezzvant W. Anderson Papers

²⁸ “CIO Stands Alone Organizing the South,” *The New York Times*, 1946 April 18, pg. 4

²⁹ Trezzvant W. Anderson, “Along the Labor Front,” *The Charlottean*, 1946 May 11, pg. 6, Box 1, Folder 2, Trezzvant W. Anderson Papers

faced during the immediate postwar period.” The union was organized by former soldiers and the Communist Party, and “employed a wide array of tactics including mass mobilization, protest politics and legal strategy to assist black veterans in their demands for equal housing, employment, medical care, and educational opportunities under the G.I. Bill of Rights.” It [antecedent?] was founded under interracial leadership that included white journalists Bertram Alves, Walter Bemstein, and Alan Morrison, all of whom were former World War II correspondents. The group also included such black luminaries as Gorge B. Murphy, former secretary of the National Negro Congress; Mercer Ellington, son of famous composer Duke Ellington; and Jacob Lawrence, a noted visual artist. At its height, the UNAVA claimed more than 10,000 members organized in forty-one chapters across twenty-one states, including South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Louisiana, and Texas in the South. It was in the South that the UNAVA believed that smaller chapters could have the most profound effect. They believed that black veteran groups should form “a link in an unbreakable chain that binds [them] to progressive labor and all other democratic forces.”³⁰ By the end of 1946, the organization had attracted national attention for its efforts to assist veterans in their fight against housing and employment discrimination.³¹

Trezzvant Anderson’s work organizing black veterans was a part of this larger pattern that took place across the country following World War II. He also took steps to organize upwards of 150 to 300 black veterans into a Veteran’s Welfare Association (VWA) within the same month as the UNAVA began organizing black veterans in the

³⁰ “The New Veterans’ Organization,” *Chicago Defender*, 1946 April 20, pg. 14

³¹ Nina Mjagkij, ed., *Organizing Black America: An Encyclopedia of African American Associations*, (New York, NY: Garland Publishing, 2001), pg. 579-580

urban North. Similar groups of black veteran's welfare associations also sprang up in Jackson, Tennessee and Norfolk, Virginia, but it is unclear whether Anderson's or the former groups in Jackson and Norfolk had any affiliation with the UNAVA.³² All their efforts and goals seemed to be somewhat aligned; they professed to primarily be concerned with housing, jobs, social security, poll taxes, peonage and sharecropping, and health and sanitation.³³

In places like Charlotte, there was an acute abrogation of civil rights and denial of veterans' benefits. As a veteran himself, Trezzvant Anderson had built a rapport with black soldiers. He used the VWA to seek the appointment of six veterans to the city's police force, in addition to the first two black police officers he helped gain employment before the war. The VWA demanded that all police officers be granted full-civil service status, which provided job security, official uniforms, weapons, badges and the ability to make arrests.³⁴ The VWA additionally demanded that a black veteran be appointed to the local Veterans Advisory Committee, which was formed at the end of the war to explore ways to honor, recognize and provide services that area veterans needed. Black veterans also demanded that any of their members seeking licenses to operate taxicabs be given the same consideration as other applicants.³⁵ That black veterans were being discriminated against was to be expected, but that city officials were allowed to deny

³² "Tennessee Vets Get State Charter," *Chicago Defender*, 1946 April 20, pg. 3; "Vets Association Will Work For Improvements," *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, 1946 November 9, pg. B4

³³ Nina Mjagkij, ed., *Organizing Black America: An Encyclopedia of African American Associations*, (New York, NY: Garland Publishing, 2001), pg. 579-580

³⁴ Willie J. Griffin, Master's Thesis, "An Indigenous Civil Rights Movement: Charlotte, North Carolina, 1940-1963," (Baltimore, MD: Morgan State University, 2006)

³⁵ Trezzvant W. Anderson editorial, "Five-Point Program," *The Charlottean*, 1946 July 4, pg. 7, (newspaper clipping), Box 1, Folder 2, Trezzvant W. Anderson Papers

blacks the ability to make a living, driving their own cars, infuriated Anderson. He decided to organize a mass demonstration to protest what they perceived as a blatant denial of economic rights as citizens.

On June 28, 1946, Anderson frightened city officials when he paraded over 200 black uniformed veterans through the streets of Charlotte. He sent out press releases announcing their plans to local newspapers the day before. The *Charlotte Observer* buried news of the event in the second section of its newspaper and asserted that the group was “about 150.”³⁶ Anderson knew that black veterans would no longer be willing to accept menial labor positions and that they were ready to develop a more assertive black political voice—one that demanded compensation for their sacrifices.³⁷ “There were no bugles or drums, in the silent parade,” he wrote, “they carried posters telling their desires.” They demanded jobs for blacks on the police force and fire departments and representation on the Veterans Advisory Committee. When the marchers arrived at City Hall, Anderson presented a signed letter outlining their demands in a “five-point program” addressed to the mayor, city council and the local civil service commission.³⁸

Trezzvant Anderson used *The Charlottean* and *Charlotte Eagle*, another local newspaper that he edited, as a platform for the VWA to help wage a campaign for access to city jobs. He recalled that during the march “between 200 and 300 veterans of World

³⁶ Press Release, ‘Negro Vets Ask For Jobs On Police Force,’ undated, Box 16, Folder 57, Trezzvant W. Anderson Papers; “150 Negro Vets Parade In City,” *Charlotte Observer*, 1946 June 30, pg. 6-B

³⁷ Brooks, *Defining The Peace*, pg. 13

³⁸ Trezzvant W. Anderson editorial of reprinted letter, “Five-Point Program,” *The Charlottean*, 1946 July 4, pg. 7, (newspaper clipping), Box 1, Folder 2, Trezzvant W. Anderson Papers

War II paraded from the Southern (railway) station to the City Hall on Saturday, and gave city officials a letter.”³⁹ The letter, addressed to Charlotte’s city officials, began:

Not in a spirit of antagonism or rebelliousness, but motivated by the finer principles of American citizenship which we have been taught by study and have learned by practice to revere and honor, we, the Negro veterans of World War II, all residents of Charlotte, county of Mecklenburg, State of North Carolina do call upon you to exercise the high principles of statesmanship, justice, honor and fair play which devolve upon your high office.⁴⁰

In response to the march, Mayor Herbert H. Baxter also used the rhetoric of patriotism, progress and inclusion in an open letter to *The Charlottean* readers. “Although Charlotte will never be able to repay the debt to thousands of veterans who left their homes, schools, and businesses to fight for us,” he wrote, “we have tried to properly welcome them home.” Baxter pointed to the Veterans Center that he established to provide veterans advice on how to find employment and housing. He promised that “in the reconversion of Morris Field [a former military airfield], there [would] be seventy apartments finished for colored veterans of World War II to help solve the housing shortage.” At the end of his letter he urged readers: “Let’s all pull together for a greater Charlotte and not take advantage of our government’s generosity, but realize that our own personal success is due to hard work and proper living.”⁴¹ Baxter, a veteran himself, may have identified with the marchers. He first came to the city during World War I and was stationed at Camp Greene. After the war he returned to start Central Lumber Company.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Mayor H. H. Baxter, “An Open Letter,” *The Charlottean*, 1946 July 4, pg. 7, Box 1, Folder 2, Trezzvant W. Anderson Papers

Eventually he became an instrumental part of the civic community and won the election as mayor in 1943.⁴²

After World War II, Mayor Baxter established a planning board to help launch the sale of bonds to finance a \$12,000,000 “Program for Progress.” In addition to converting the vacated structures at Morris Field into housing for former soldiers, the mayor sought to use the funding to establish a veteran’s rehabilitation center that focused on their mental health. Outside of the program’s initiatives to improve the welfare of returning veterans, it also sought to expand the city’s boundaries, authorize construction of a cross town highway, create new city departments, consolidate city and county governments and promote funding for the building of a new auditorium and coliseum.⁴³

Trezzvant Anderson noted that Baxter had shown interest in veteran’s affairs and consistently employed “more than 150 Negro workers” at his Central Lumber Company. But he was not fooled by the mayor’s “program for progress,” because the plan for post-war Charlotte did not include black veterans. When Baxter later tried to offer Anderson an appointment on the Veteran’s Advisory Committee to help oversee housing plans, he declined. Anderson replied that he read daily newspaper reports in *The Charlotte News* and *Charlotte Observer*, “that all the planning has been proceeding quite well, with no attention having been placed, as far as we can ascertain, on the matter of housing for Negro veterans in this city.” He remarked that the conditions along the housing line were “deplorable” for black veterans. “I, myself, am seeking housing, like many other Negro vets. It was for the purpose of alleviating our own strained conditions that a certain of us

⁴² See info about UNCC’s Mayoral Collection on its website for a brief biography on Herbert H. Baxter at <http://charlottemayoralcollections.wordpress.com/category/mayors/h-h-baxter/>

⁴³ Ibid; the highway initiative eventually destroyed Brooklyn, the city’s largest black neighborhood and uprooted numerous black families.

have gone into the matter of constructing an apartment house for Negro vets.”⁴⁴ This was an apparent dig at the Mayor’s insinuation that black vets were looking for a hand-out and trying to take advantage of ‘our’ government’s generosity, and that black vets, somehow more than others, needed to rely on “hard work and proper living.”⁴⁵ Anderson’s combativeness extended well beyond local government and white business leaders. His activism also upset the delicate balance of leadership within the black community.

Trezzvant Anderson managed to use *The Charlottean*, and to some extent the *Charlotte Eagle*, for local organizing and networking, but he was critical of *everyone*, including white city officials, business and labor leaders alike, as well as the black leadership responsible for most of the newspapers’ financial backing. Kelly Alexander was head of the local National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and had worked closely with Anderson before the newsman was drafted into the military. Alexander’s family owned and operated a prominent mortuary service, and helped bankroll *The Charlotte Eagle*, which Anderson began managing in April 1946. The *Eagle*, unlike *The Charlottean*, did not place much emphasis on working-class issues. Instead, it centered its focus on local social matters. Anderson did, however, use the newspaper to criticize conservative black leader Dr. James S. N. Tross for going before the city council to disparage the activities of the Veterans Welfare Association.

⁴⁴ Letter, Trezzvant W. Anderson to Hon. H. H. Baxter, 1946 August 23, Box 2, Folder 14, Trezzvant W. Anderson Papers; If Anderson and other black veterans constructed their own housing, I have been unable to find any historical records of this housing in Charlotte beyond this letter. But given the veterans labor skills it would not have been unfathomable.

⁴⁵ Mayor H. H. Baxter, “An Open Letter,” *The Charlottean*, 1946 July 4, pg. 7, Box 1, Folder 2, Trezzvant W. Anderson Papers;

Since Tross had become NAACP's biggest critic, Alexander, leader of the Charlotte chapter, most certainly had no qualms with Anderson using the *Eagle* to go after Tross.

Yet Anderson, much to the surprise of Alexander, also used the paper to criticize his leadership. In the pages of *The Charlottean* the journalist raised strong objections to the unwillingness of the local NAACP to take an active role in organizing working-class blacks around important labor issues. Black veterans had fought and helped claim the victory, he wrote, and yet "there is no report on what the local chapter has actually done for the people." Anderson emphasized that the city's NAACP chapter was reorganized in 1940 and since then had "had a golden opportunity to do something for the blighted Negroes of Charlotte." He contended that during its six-years of existence, local citizens continued only to receive reports that they "have increased the membership."

No doubt Alexander, who relinquished the financial support he and his family had made in the *Charlotte Eagle*, found such criticism patently unfair.⁴⁶ Since the 1940s Alexander had closely aligned the local NAACP branch's agenda with that of the national office. As a result, he had focused on "increasing membership" and carefully identifying test cases that might aid in their litigation plans to dismantle educational inequality. The NAACP leader hoped that that test case would be in Charlotte. In 1946, he had protested the Charlotte City School Board's effort to create Charlotte Center of the University of North Carolina, which later became Charlotte College and then University of North Carolina at Charlotte. Alexander had accused the school of relocating from the center to the outskirts of the city to purposely inconvenience blacks that wanted to attend.

⁴⁶ Letter, Zechariah Alexander, Jr. to Associated Negro Press (Claude Barnett), 1946 August 12, Box 0, Folder 0, Claude Barnett Papers, Chicago History Museum, Research Center

This maneuver by city officials ultimately provided him with the needed leverage to launch the local battle for adequate education.⁴⁷

In his criticism of Alexander and the NAACP Anderson made clear where he and *The Charlottean* stood on the issue of class and its role in the struggle for equal access. “We don’t say ‘To heck with the upper classes,’ for we don’t feel that way. But we do feel that those upper classes know how to take care of themselves better, and it is not essential to develop a program for them,” he asserted. “It would be wise for the upper classes to cooperate in a program for the masses, for a house divided against itself cannot stand,” warned Anderson.⁴⁸ He had always shunned middle and upper class ideas of respectability politics, which were often imposed upon the masses.⁴⁹ For him there was certain fallacy in the belief that in order for marginalized groups to receive better treatment, all they had to do was behave better. His uncompromising points of view like this for many in the newspaper business, who happened to be largely middle and upper class, compelled them to believe he acted too hastily, and at times was unreasonable in his approach to advocating for African Americans’ citizenship rights.

It was highly likely that many people thought Trezzvant Anderson was too dogmatic, since most journalists and editors were not in the business of criticizing their employers. In December 1946, his longtime professional associate, Claude Barnett, head of the Associated Negro Press (ANP), had had firsthand experience with Anderson’s

⁴⁷ Willie J. Griffin, “An Indigenous Civil Rights Movement: Charlotte, North Carolina, 1940-1963,” Master’s Thesis, Morgan State University, 2006

⁴⁸ Trezzvant W. Anderson editorial, “The Charlottean’s Program,” *The Charlottean*, 1946 May 11, pg. 6, (newspaper clipping), Box 1, Folder 2, Trezzvant W. Anderson Papers

⁴⁹ Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, in *Righteous Discontent: The Women’s Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), is generally acknowledged as the first scholar to identify and articulate the concept of respectability politics.

uncompromising nature and secretly confided to one of the city's local black leaders: "It looks as though our friend was incorrigible." He asserted, "A newspaper can be a dangerous weapon in Trezzvant's hands. He has delusions of grandeur."⁵⁰ The truth is that Anderson was always singularly focused and driven to accomplish his most immediate goal at hand, and it often did not matter who got in the way.

In Charlotte, his ultimate goal was to establish an effective and forceful black news network that would fight for equal economic opportunities for African Americans. The city was home to the state's third largest black newspaper, the *Charlotte Post*, behind Durham's *Carolina Times* and Raleigh's *Carolina Tribune* respectively. Their combined circulations totaled only 7,500. Although *The Charlotte Post* had given him his very first press card in 1928, he felt the newspaper had grown too conservative and was "not demanding the respect of the people at large." This shift in the newspaper's policy probably had something to do with James S. N. Tross assuming more of a leadership role in the newspaper before the war. With Tross at the helm, the paper became a leading proponent of respectability politics, advocating that one way to decrease crime in the black community was to encourage more black youth to attend Sunday school. This change in leadership led Anderson to help the *Times* and Baltimore's *Afro-American* establish offices in Charlotte. After Anderson was drafted the *Times'* presence in Charlotte ceased; however, the *Afro* and the *Journal and Guide* maintained significant circulations in the city.

When Anderson returned from Europe, he was determined to take an active role in the process of collecting, reporting, analyzing and disseminating news to the city's

⁵⁰ Letter, Claude A. Barnett to Dean T. E. McKinney, 1946 December 18, Box 0, Folder 0, Claude Barnett Papers

black citizens. His goal was to place black Charlotteans, especially veterans, at the center of local and regional politics. Anderson, who sought to build alternatives to Operation Dixie, he wanted black veterans to have jobs. As well he joined and encouraged others to join labor unions, and led direct action protest marches. His dissatisfaction with the direction of the southern labor movement largely stemmed from the limited vision of labor leaders. Intent on organizing textile workers, union leaders tacitly accepted the racial hierarchy that prevailed in textile mills. Given this pattern, Anderson realized that neither city officials, nor leaders in the AFL and CIO had serious intentions of elevating black workers and creating greater economic parity.

Because of his outspokenness, most of these people wanted Anderson to disappear. In December, the *Charlotte Observer* announced that Anderson had resigned as chairman of the VWA and authorized representative of Local 1094.⁵¹ The most likely reason that he gave up this leadership was because he was unable to financially sustain himself and the *Charlottean*. He made attempts to regain his position in the Railway Mail Service, going as far as promising the Chief Clerk of his former district that, “I shall immediately and forthwith discontinue any and all connection with this newspaper, and devote my full time and interest to the Railway Mail Service.”⁵²

That Anderson had spent nine months publicly critiquing the southern labor movement, a lack of city job opportunities, and conservative black leadership did not sit well with many. Given his past accomplishments, Anderson could have easily joined any of the larger newspapers after the war. He had spent the better part of the 1930s as a staff

⁵¹ Newspaper Clipping, “T.W. Anderson Quits VWA Job,” *Charlotte Observer*, 1946 December 6, Box 1, Folder 1, Trezzvant W. Anderson Papers

⁵² Letter, Trezzvant W. Anderson to Chief Clerk, RMS, District Two, 1946 June 28, Civilian Personnel Records, St. Louis MO, Trezzvant W. Anderson Files

member of the *Afro* and *Journal and Guide*, and was an executive staff member of the ANP. Years later he confessed that he “published and edited his own newspapers in Charlotte, N.C.,” *The Charlottean* and *Charlotte Eagle*, “to ‘even the score’ with whites who he had scores to settle with.”⁵³ He was no doubt alluding to his belief that local white leaders had something to do with his dismissal from his railway mail position in 1941, after he led an uncompromising fight against discrimination in the local post office. While this may have been a driving force, it is safe to assume that Anderson also understood the limited space larger nationally circulated black newspapers devoted to regional issues provided readers in the South with too little leverage to place pressure on local leaders. Black newspapers remained a public nuisance to white southern business and government leaders for this very reason.

In terms of black newspaper circulation in the South, the region had thirteen of the sixteen cities that were considered urban news markets in the United States. The urban market consisted of cities that had a black population above 25,000. These cities constituted 8.7 percent of the country’s total urban black population. There were eleven larger cities with black populations above 50,000, which constituted 11.1 percent of the total urban black population, and thirteen cities with black populations above 100,000, which accounted for 37.4 percent of the urban black population. The remaining populations of blacks were scattered across small towns less than 25,000 and many more rural areas. Charlotte was among the smaller of the urban markets with a black population total of 31,403. The *Afro* and the *Journal and Guide* provided news coverage to fifty-four percent of black families who purchased newspapers in the city. Anderson sought to provide newspapers that gave more attention to local issues that black

⁵³ Ibid.

Charlotteans faced, and to provide an alternative to the increasingly conservative voice of *The Charlotte Post*.⁵⁴ But in the end, he only made himself a marked man in the South, susceptible to all types of reprisals that went beyond those economic in nature and into the realm of possible violence. Anderson decided to leave Charlotte and head to Detroit, where thousands of blacks were migrating in hopes of landing employment in the auto industry.

Organizing from the *Courier* Rewrite Desk

Beginning in January 1947, Anderson did briefly find employment on “the Ford Motor staff as a worker on the assembly line.” He recalled that at this point in his life he was simply “tired of battling and fighting.”⁵⁵ Detroit, Michigan was “a center of black working-class activism in the North,” according to labor scholars.⁵⁶ Detroit offered Anderson the opportunity to work in a place where blacks had access to strong labor unions that fought for living wages. In the 1940s, the United Auto Workers Union had the largest concentration of unionized blacks, with an estimated 65,000. Though he went there out of well-earned disillusionment from his struggles in Charlotte, his stay in Detroit was brief and he was soon back in the word business, working out of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania for the largest black publication in the country—the *Pittsburgh Courier*.

Anderson eventually moved to Pittsburgh to work for the *Courier* where he had a greater opportunity to probe American domestic and foreign policies. He agreed to join

⁵⁴ ‘1940 U.S. Census Records,’ Negro Press Pamphlet, Claude Barnett Papers

⁵⁵ Complete Biography of Trezzvant W. Anderson (Courier Roving Reporter), (4-pages) Box 12, Folder 10, Trezzvant W. Anderson Papers

⁵⁶ Robert Korstad and Nelson Lichtenstein, ‘Opportunities Found and Lost: Labor, Radicals and the Early Civil Rights Movement,’ *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 73, No. 3 (December 1988), pp. 786-811.

the *Courier* staff under the condition “that he never be sent [South].”⁵⁷ Ironically the region had grown more determined to resist the changes he and other African Americans hoped would come following World War II. The period saw many black activists of his ilk come under heavy public scrutiny for the goals and tactics they used to bring about change. Even though he left the region, Anderson was unwilling to compromise.⁵⁸ His work with the *Courier* gave him a larger outlet to espouse his own political agenda, openly critique American domestic and foreign policy, and reach a wider national audience. As a man who had traveled the world during the war, the South seemed too confining for him, and he quickly carved a place for himself among black columnists and journalists who were well informed about global socio-political matters, especially as they pertained to black Americans. Still, he could not erase his fascination with the region where he was born.

Soon William G. Nunn, Sr., managing editor of the *Courier*, placed Anderson on the rewrite desk overseeing news in the mid-West and the South. Over the next five years, he manned *Pittsburgh Courier* phones as one of its key wordsmiths, transforming the notes from reporter’s pads into readable news for hundreds of thousands of newspaper customers.⁵⁹ The *Pittsburgh Courier* had a national circulation of 276,892.

⁵⁷ “Trezz: My Beat [Obituary]” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1963 March 30.

⁵⁸For literature that has provided useful discussions of the Cold War and its impact on black activism see: Robbie Lieberman and Clarence Lang, Eds. *Anticommunism And The African American Freedom Movement: “Another Side of the Story,”* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); Glenda Gilmore, *Defying Dixie: The Radical Roots of Civil Rights, 1919-1950*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2008); Penny Von Eschen, *Race Against Empire: Black Americans and Anti-colonialism*, (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 1997); for literature relating specifically to the impact of the Cold War in North Carolina see; Robert Korstad, *Civil Rights Unionism: Tobacco Workers and the Struggle for Democracy in the Mid-Twentieth Century*, (Chapel Hill, The University of North Carolina Press, 2003); Timothy Tyson, *Radio Free Dixie: Robert F. Williams and the Roots of Black Power*, (Chapel Hill, The University of North Carolina Press, 1999).

⁵⁹ Complete Biography of Trezzvant W. Anderson

More people read it than any other black newspapers in the country. It was distributed through all nine of the major Northern markets, with more than 50,000 black Americans each, and at least five of the thirteen major Southern markets. These were the urban markets that accounted for thirty-six percent of purchased newspapers. There were only three other major newspapers whose circulations rose above 100,000; Baltimore's *Afro-American* (230,343), the *Chicago Defender* (193,059), and the *New York Amsterdam News* (105,778). The *Norfolk Journal and Guide*'s (67,800) circulation made it the only other member of the black press above 50,000. These newspapers' combined total circulation was 873,872. The total combined circulation of their next twenty closest competitors was 303,123. Most black newspapers retailed for ten cents a copy and benefitted from a pass-on circulation distribution pattern, meaning they were shared between neighbors, read aloud in barbershops, churches and fraternal lodges, which in many ways increased circulation through its guaranteed longer life and intense reader interest.

Trezzvant Anderson immediately began organizing the *Courier*'s southern bureaus and independent correspondents to bring together better coordinated regional news coverage of the South. This way he did not have to return to report on the region but was able to broaden his activism. The synchronized news coverage served as a more efficient means of organizing larger swaths of people. For instance, in one series of articles, he exposed pay inequality that black teachers faced in the South by featuring articles from all over the region about their plight. As in the past, he hoped to incite readers to act. By focusing on black teachers he was able to bring together and help galvanize a large group of women workers. African American teachers exerted

considerable influence in local communities. As a result of their daily interactions with children, teachers had the potential to reach whole communities. Anderson was certainly not the first to recognize the central importance of black teachers in the South. One historian noted that the NAACP's national office first began exploring the possibilities for testing a legal campaign to pursue pay equality in the South in North Carolina during the 1920s. The organization chose the state because its teachers had been invaluable to its membership's growth.⁶⁰

Anderson called attention to the gross inequality in pay between white and black teachers. "Since the early eighties [1880s]," in the South, he wrote, "Negro teachers have been economically electrocuted. Overworked and underpaid."⁶¹ To convey the plight of black teachers in the South Anderson highlighted the poor working conditions of teachers across the nation. Anderson carefully pointed out that there had been twelve major walkouts since last September 1947. "Scores of key cities and hundreds of rural communities face a revolt of teachers. Hundreds of teachers are quitting their jobs," he wrote. Anderson used these efforts to call attention to the difficulties black teachers faced. He pointed out that "in the midst of all this upheaval the poor, underpaid and overworked Negro teacher in the South is undergoing the greatest hardship of all." He added that even with "token pay raises," southern black teachers' living conditions are still the "worst on the scale: lower than that of a Northern janitor." By embarking on the series Anderson aimed to keep *Courier* readers informed about "the fight to free [black

⁶⁰ Sarah Thuesen, *Greater Than Equal: African American Struggles for Schools and Citizenship in North Carolina, 1919-1965* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013)

⁶¹ Trezzvant W. Anderson, "Negro Teachers in Dixie Underpaid, Overworked Since Early Eighties; Low Wages Strictly a Racial Matter," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1947 March 1, pg. 13; This may have been the case in some Southern states, but in his home state, according to Thuesen, in the 1890s the state's black teachers had received an average of 98 percent of white salaries.

teachers] from the shackles of economic bondage and imprisonment which has burned their souls for lo' these many years.”⁶²

Anderson believed that the earliest battles for equal salaries were initiated in the 1930s and finally won in 1937 in Rockville, Maryland.⁶³ This victory gave rise to other fights waged by local teachers' unions and associations and NAACP branches all over the South, as well as in the border-states Illinois and Missouri. The worst place for black teachers was Mississippi, where during the 1943-44 school year they were paid an average of \$342 annually, compared to their white counterparts' \$1,107 annual salary.⁶⁴ Anderson stressed that the *Courier* was proud to have “presented the series as a public service to those who are responsible for the training of our children, and for the enlightenment of millions of parents who have had so little insight into the plight of Negro school teachers.”⁶⁵ These stories assisted the NAACP in a wider public education effort and helped contribute to its continued movement towards challenging segregation, which culminated in the landmark Supreme Court case—*Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* (1954). Anderson emphasized throughout the series that, “the battle for equal salaries assumes an even greater significance when the statistical details of the separate school systems are examined.”⁶⁶ He argued that the “advantages of the equalization are to be reflected in the quality of instructions received by the pupils, the

⁶² Trezzvant W. Anderson, “Negro Teachers in Dixie Underpaid, Overworked Since Early Eighties; Low Wages Strictly a Racial Matter,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1947 March 1, pg. 13

⁶³ Thuesen, *Greater Than Equal*, pg. 133; Thuesen reveals that the national office of the NAACP had actually hoped to focus its earliest efforts in North Carolina in the mid to late 1920s, but African Americans in state were resistant to the idea of pursuing legal channels to equality in teacher salaries.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Trezzvant W. Anderson, “See Brighter Future Ahead For Dixie School Teachers,” *The Pittsburgh Courier*, 1947 May 31, pg. 13

⁶⁶ Ibid

basic purpose of education being to produce well-trained graduates who can measure up in life and affairs of the community and Nation.”⁶⁷

For three months, beginning in March 1947, Anderson ran articles from a team of “crack *Courier* writers who lived among the teachers about whom they wrote. They knew what they were writing about,” Anderson wrote. He asserted that their stories were augmented by corroborative data and material from various State Departments of Education. Their goal was to present the true picture of conditions in the various places as they actually existed. Staff correspondent, Alexander M. Rivera Jr. reported from Virginia, North and South Carolina. O. J. Cansler and J. Don Davis reported from the *Courier* Texas Bureau. John A. Diaz wrote from the Miami Bureau, while Emory O. Jackson was Anderson’s contact in Alabama. “Special Correspondents” reported from Mississippi, Georgia, Louisiana and Florida. Over twenty-articles appeared in the series and they all highlighted key battles, how long communities had been fighting, and the opposition that they faced from white teachers and local and state governments.

Rivera echoed Anderson on school inequality. “Unfortunately,” he wrote, “because of the great compromise in our democratic system, any problem which affects the Nation must take into consideration the bi-racial system of the South. Perhaps the most costly result of this great compromise is the system of jim crow education.” Rivera, like Anderson, was a native North Carolinian and joined the *Courier* in 1946. He revealed that Virginia in 1937, on the heels of victory in Rockville, Maryland, was first sued for inequality in the distribution of teacher’s salaries and in 1947 the state had “nine suits for equal facilities pending.” By 1947, the state established a minimum starting

⁶⁷ Trezzvant W. Anderson, “Seven Dollars is Average Weekly Salary of Some Colored Teachers in Southern States,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1947 March 8, pg. 13

salary of \$120 a month, or \$1,200 dollars (for 185 days) for teachers with degrees and \$100 a month for those without degrees. The developments in Virginia “influenced North Carolina to assume the magnanimous role of granting equalization without court action.” Rivera rightfully characterized the state “as wanting peace and progress often to the sacrifice of the latter. The unwillingness of the [black] leaders in education to press suits brands them as more anxious to get along than to get ahead.”⁶⁸ The base salary for teachers in North Carolina with a bachelor’s degree and no experience was \$1,125, while the annual salary for a teacher with a master’s degree and eleven years of experience was \$1,683.⁶⁹

Throughout the 1940s, both Cansler and Davis were regular *Pittsburgh Courier* columnists for the Texas edition, writing “Kolumn Komments” and “Lone Star Week,” respectively. Cansler and her husband (Fritz), a Dallas YMCA executive, were also active in black voter registration drives across the state. The columnists informed *Courier* readers that Texas, from 1945-1947, “appropriated more than twenty-seven times as much money for State supported white schools as for Negro schools!” They asserted that if white institutions received \$24,711,645 in support, while black institutions received only \$851,804 was “there any wonder then that the economic status of many Texas Negroes is kept so far down? They do not have the educational facilities to provide them with the basic training required for higher education where they can earn real

⁶⁸ For a more in depth analysis of this see chapter four of *Greater Than Equal*, Thuesen thoroughly examines the delicate relationship between black and white educators. This relationship, which encouraged racial cooperation, continued to discourage black educators in North Carolina from joining the NAACP’s larger litigation campaign.

⁶⁹ A. M. Rivera Jr., (Staff Correspondent) (Tenth in Series), “Showing the Way: Virginia Teachers Find Cure for Ills In State’s Courts,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1947 May 3, pg. 13; also see A.M. Rivera Jr., (Staff Correspondent)(Eleventh in a Series), “Hard Fight Ahead For Teachers in South Carolina,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1947 May 10, pg. 13

money.”⁷⁰ Rivera reported similar conditions in South Carolina. The state, he asserted, represented “the deep South where no pretense is made to equalize any area of Negro life. Here education is ‘catch-as-catch-can.’” The state spent \$150,000 annually to support black colleges and universities, but directed a robust budget of \$2,404,378 for their five white counterparts.⁷¹

Cansler and Davis wrote that “even though the average yearly salary for Negro teachers in the State stood at \$919, Negro teachers in Rockwell County, Texas were drawing the pitiful average of \$358 a year! That amounts to \$29.83 a month, or the princely sum of \$6.86 a week!” They found it “appalling to the entire country” that in a Nation where thousands of white teachers were striking because they could not live on average weekly salary of \$37, black teachers were asked to live on \$6.86 a week, “and still tender good service.” South Carolina’s teachers, according to Rivera, were bracketed for salary classifications based on schooling and merit examination scores. Class One required a master’s degree, Class Two a bachelor’s degree and graduate level work, Class Three a bachelor’s degree, and Class Four and Five required two years or less schooling respectively. Of the 5,000 black teachers in the state, many were Class Three, but the majority were Class Four. The Class Four starting minimum salary was \$65 monthly (\$780 annually) as compared to \$165 for Class One (\$1,980 annually).

⁷⁰ O.J. Cansler and J. Don Davis, (Courier Texas Bureau)(Third in a Series), “Race Teachers in Texas Paid 33 Per Cent Less Than Less Than Whites,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1947 March 15, pg. 13; O.J. Cansler and J. Don Davis, (Courier Texas Bureau)(Fourth in a Series), “Teachers in Four Texas Cities Get Raises; Others Are Still Suffering,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1947 March 21, pg. 13

⁷¹ A. M. Rivera Jr., (Staff Correspondent) (Tenth in Series), “Showing the Way: Virginia Teachers Find Cure for Ills In State’s Courts,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1947 May 3, pg. 13; also see A.M. Rivera Jr., (Staff Correspondent)(Eleventh in a Series), “Hard Fight Ahead For Teachers in South Carolina,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1947 May 10, pg. 13; Rivera offers important statistics on annual salaries in each of the three states: VA-\$1,200 (Bachelors), NC-\$1,125 (Bachelors), and in SC-the majority of black teachers earned \$780 (2 years of College Education).

Rivera wrote that the viciousness of South Carolina's system "lies in the fact that Negro teachers don't make enough to take advanced work and the state doesn't provide out-of-state aid. Graduate courses at the State School for Negroes are less than makeshift, even by South Carolina's standard for whites."⁷² Anderson found a similar system in Alabama.

Anderson found a similar pattern in Alabama where Emory O. Jackson supplied details about teacher salaries. Jackson joined the *Birmingham World* in 1934 as a book reviewer and sports writer; by 1941 he was editor of the newspaper. Jackson was known throughout the region for his column, "The Tip Off," which advocated for civil rights and social justice. Trezzvant Anderson knew that Jackson could be counted on for having a finger on the pulse of black Alabama. He revealed to Anderson that it was in 1942 that William J. Bolden became the first black teacher to find the courage to sue for pay inequality in Alabama. In 1945, "the [Federal] judge ruled that the board and its superintendent are hereby perpetually enjoined and restrained from discriminating in the payment of salaries against the plaintiff (Bolden) and any other Negro teachers and principals in the public school system of Jefferson County, Alabama, on account of race or color," wrote Anderson. At that time, white teachers averaged \$1,158 a year, while black teachers earned an annual salary of \$661.⁷³ However, in 1947, black teachers still had not realized victory. Anderson learned that Ruby Jackson Gainer had filed another suit demanding back pay for black teachers. She was president of the Jefferson County

⁷² A.M. Rivera Jr., (Staff Correspondent)(Eleventh in a Series), "Hard Fight Ahead For Teachers in South Carolina," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1947 May 10, pg. 13

⁷³ Special Correspondent, "Teachers in State Victims of Scheme Devised by Bosses," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1947 April 12, pg. 13

Negro Teachers Association in Birmingham and Local 683 United Public Workers (UPW-CIO), and vowed to “fight until complete victory [was] won.”⁷⁴ Anderson found similar stories in Louisiana, Florida and Georgia.

Throughout his first year as a staff writer with the *Pittsburgh Courier*, Anderson assisted the newspaper’s efforts to increase circulation by offering improved news coverage. William G. Nunn Sr. likely recruited him because of his brash, uncompromising style of journalism. He hoped that his aggressive newsgathering would resonate with readers and ultimately contribute to the newspaper’s continued growth. Anderson covered everything from the labor movement to the rise of black political power in various municipalities, the political influences and the intra-politics of the Elks—the country’s largest black fraternal order, and the continued effort to push forward the anti-lynching bill.⁷⁵

Anti-Colonialism during the Cold War

The ongoing general discrimination against African Americans, particularly around labor issues, lynching and lack of political power led Anderson and other activist intellectuals to begin examining similarities between black Americans and people of color globally, especially relating to the evolving ideological warfare between democracy and communism. Increasingly, black Americans began connecting their struggles in the United States with anti-colonial struggles unfolding in Africa, Asia and the Caribbean, “not because there were biological blood ties but because their differing experiences of

⁷⁴ “Set-Back Won’t Stop Ala. Teachers’ Fight,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1947 April 26, pg. 5; The UPW was a labor union that represented federal, state, county and local government employees, it lasted from 1946 to 1952. It was organized primarily to challenge the constitutionality of the Hatch Act that forbid government employees from engaging in political activity

⁷⁵ Trezzvant Anderson, “Dixie Politics Heated as 13 Negroes Seek City Positions,” *The Pittsburgh Courier*, 1947 May 3, pg. 1

slavery and colonialism were all seen as part of the history of the expansion of Europe and development of capitalism,” asserted one scholar.⁷⁶ These connections resonated more deeply after World War II. The rebuilding of Europe; the contest between the United States and the Soviet Union; and the implementation of the Marshall Plan converged to set the Cold War in motion. Anderson believed that the convergence of these developments unleashed a renewed drive for the subjugation of darker races around the world.

This period saw Anderson initiate his second highly successful news column, “World News in a Nutshell.” The column ran for over two years and became a one-stop shop for news related to African Americans and the emerging Cold War, and contributed to the rise of anti-colonialism sentiment among *Pittsburgh Courier* readers. It provided a general awareness and understanding of the link between local social conditions and regional, national and even international politics. The Marshall Plan was America’s effort to promote its political and economic influence, and contain the spread of the Soviet communism throughout Europe. In one of Anderson’s first entries to his column, he suggested that the plan should have been called “help for everyone but us,” and connected it to European colonial expansion. He noted: “500 new openings for new farmers in Kenya, British Crown Colony in Africa, have been announced for white Europeans...another step in complete domination of the native economy.”⁷⁷ Indeed, one scholar confirms that, “it took the unprecedented economic stimulus of the Second World War to give the European settler the confidence to finally take on the [Kikuyu] squatter,”

⁷⁶ Von Eschen, *Race Against Empire*, pg. 5

⁷⁷ Trezzvant Anderson, “World News In a Nutshell,” *The Pittsburgh Courier*, 1948 June 26, pg. 3

who had resisted colonization efforts since the turn of the twentieth century.⁷⁸ While England was being rebuilt with American funds, Anderson understood that some monies were diverted to encourage whites to relocate to Kenya and help renew Britain's four decade long encroachment on some of the world's richest agricultural soils. Such activity, which led to the continued exploitation of native Kikuyu, prompted Anderson to view the Marshall Plan with skepticism. He quickly identified the policy as a way the United States supported some European countries' efforts to reassert their colonial power over darker people around the world.

Russia, on the other hand, viewed the Marshall Plan as America's way of strengthening European countries that would help spread the influence of capitalism around the world. American and Soviet governments both sought to export their own socio-political philosophies to other countries and regions. The United States championed its free-market economy as the ideal way for people to enjoy the fruits of their labors because the system encouraged hard work and ingenuity. Russian communism advocated for equal wealth distribution that theoretically insured that everyone in society shared in the benefits derived from labor. Each side argued that its strategies provided the only true path to freedom and equality. Anderson viewed capitalism and communism as two sides of the same coin, because they historically used black labor as pawns to gain influence. He worked to expose the underside of each system in relation to people of color throughout the world. From the outset Anderson suggested that Russia's effort to gain a footing in Germany and throughout the Balkan states was only a maneuver to create a diversionary attack. He wrote, "They were really concentrating the main strength of their propaganda attack in the Far East." While

⁷⁸ Frank Furedi, *The Mau Mau War in Perspective*, (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1989), pg. 27

America focused on averting Russia's influence in Berlin, Yugoslavia, France and Italy, "like busy beavers the Russians are operating at top speed in India, Burma, Pakistan, Malaya, China, Korea and other Asiatic countries." "What they're really aiming at," Anderson contended, was "their centuries-old goal: the Dardanelles."⁷⁹ This narrow strait was an international waterway separating Europe from the mainland of Asia, connecting the Aegean Sea to the Sea of Marmara, and was viewed by Russia as key to controlling important trade between the regions. Anderson proclaimed that the West purposely distracted "attention from that part of the Red plan," while denying its own efforts to buy interest in the Suez Canal.⁸⁰

Anderson insisted that people needed to realize, especially in light of the "refusal of Arabians in Palestine to accept the United Nations mediation plan" of partition and economic union, that more than half of the world's population was composed of "darker races" who were simply tired of "the white man's domination." "That's what it really amounts to," he wrote, "no matter what fancy words dress it up...Keep your eyes on Africa, but don't overlook India and East Asia...What happens there will some day affect you here in America."⁸¹ As the Cold War began to take shape Anderson used his column to exhort fellow African Americans to make connections between their own treatment at home and their federal government's foreign policy.

Unlike other black journalists who followed anti-colonial movements in Africa, Anderson set his sights on the independence struggles of "60,000,000 brown citizens" of Indonesia "fighting for the right to run their own country." "Horrible in its implications

⁷⁹ Trezzvant W. Anderson, "World News In a Nutshell," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1948 June 26, pg. 3

⁸⁰ Trezzvant W. Anderson, "World News In a Nutshell," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1948 July 17, pg. 21

⁸¹ Ibid

to Negroes in the United States,” Anderson asserted, “is the fact that Dutch troops are being supplied by their government with arms and equipment being purchased with dollars from our own country under the Marshall Plan.”⁸²

Developments in post-war Indonesia offered Anderson an instructive story to showcase for African American readers how subjugation operated elsewhere. Officials in the Netherlands, assisted by funds from US Marshall Plan, set out to re-colonize Indonesia. Yet these efforts met resistance from Indonesians. Anderson hoped to use this resistance to inspire black Americans to continue their own struggle at home. “Negroes in the United States—unfortunately—know very little about this mysterious land far to the South between the Pacific and Indian Oceans.” Anderson urged his readers to understand that Indonesians were of the “same hue as ours,” and that the presence of the Dutch in the islands grew out of centuries of exploitation. The Dutch, he explained, were among the first Europeans to purchase captured Africans “for the purpose of selling them into slavery here in America and elsewhere.” Anderson argued that the Dutch and Belgians had “made a practice of enslaving natives of the darker races and tearing their riches and resources away from their hands.” The Dutch had one thought in mind, according to Anderson—“the rape of Indonesia”—harvesting the country’s natural resources in oil, copper, rubber, coffee and tea. They refused to comply with United Nations demands that Indonesia’s independence be honored. He asserted, “America and other white nations are showing nothing more than a token interest.” This duplicitous stance could be attributed to the fact that many capitalist European countries were growing more fearful that Dutch aggression in Indonesia would fuel the growth of

⁸² Trezzvant W. Anderson, “Rape of Indonesia Stirs Colored Races,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1949 January 1, pg. 1

“Communists of darker complexions in the Far East, Africa, Asia and other lands,” and provide them with “ammunition for their attack on so-called Western ‘democracy.’”⁸³

Trezzvant Anderson used his politically explosive news column to connect US foreign policies to domestic affairs in order to further expose and document the hypocrisy of the federal government. In 1949 he created one of the black press’ most sensationalized stories of the year that sent federal officials scrambling to do damage control. Two years had passed since he traveled into the South in search of stories that challenged the United States’ position as a defender of democracy. He found one such story in eastern Tennessee.

America’s Manhattan Project created the town of Oak Ridge, Tennessee, spawned the atom bomb and initiated the development of nuclear energy. Federal authorities insisted that the project would protect Americans and enhance their living conditions. However, Oak Ridge had been in the national media for a few months because of labor strikes and news that the federally owned territory was being incorporated into a public town of Tennessee. Anderson wrote: “The lifting of the iron curtain which hitherto had shielded the little city from the eyes of a curious world has bared a story of neglect, discrimination and callous disregard for the welfare of its Negro population and disclosed a ghetto worse than those in many of America’s bigger cities.” He highlighted what he referred to as a few “brighter points” in regards to the local conditions of blacks, such as the presence of Robert H. Wadkins on the City Council, a modern elementary school for

⁸³ Trezzvant W. Anderson, “War Between Races Can Spring From Indonesia,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1949 January 8, pg. 2; also see Penny M. Von Eschen, *Race Against Empire: Black Americans and Anti-colonialism, 1937-1957*, (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1997), pgs. 118-121; Von Eschen addresses the charges leveled at the Dutch and United States over Indonesia. She quotes a few journalists, including Anderson, suggesting that they were among the most militant of African American criticism. She asserts that most black newspapers ceased their criticism of the Marshall plan after April 1947, with the exception of Dutch in Indonesia. This may have been the case for other journalist, but an examination of Anderson’s articles/column reveals otherwise as he continued critique American foreign policy.

blacks and the work of four black nurses on a non-segregated hospital staff. But he railed against the lack of employment for blacks within the city's main industry, beyond menial labor, and the pattern of racial segregation that followed the rules of the Jim Crow South. Anderson was seeking to challenge the federal government's position during the Cold War that racial discrimination was a product of southern local and state governments' prerogatives, and that they were working to improve African Americans' treatment in the South.

For nine months Anderson used his column and other articles to provoke public outcry, shame the federal government and force a response to the mistreatment and discrimination of black citizens. He provided detailed background information on African Americans who were brought into Oak Ridge in 1942 to help build the infrastructure for the atomic project. The government erected rudimentary, temporary housing structures for black workers. They were supposed to inhabit the dwellings for two years while more permanent housing was constructed in what would become East Village. This residential area was supposed to provide all modern amenities, including shade trees, paved sidewalks and streets. "Yes, they built it for Negroes—and never let them live in it," Anderson wrote. "They gave it to the whites, although Negro monies helped pay the taxes which kept the Government-owned project going... It was a dirty double cross."⁸⁴ Seven years had passed and African Americans still inhabited the "temporary" and now dilapidated huts. He sought to shame Atomic Energy Commissioner David E. Lilienthal, by writing that "the sound of fury is beginning to echo around the United States...Condemnation of the Atomic Energy Commission

⁸⁴ Trezzvant W. Anderson, "Hideous Housing Treatment Sickens Stoutest Stomachs," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1949 April 16, pg. 6

(AEC) for its treatment of Negro citizens.” Anderson asserted it “is making the front pages of the Nation’s dailies.”⁸⁵

One of his most critical exposes detailed the exclusion of blacks from high-ranking posts and the Oak Ridge Institute of Nuclear Studies. Anderson pointed out that by perpetuating discrimination Lilienthal was “guilty of a definite breach of democracy.” Nineteen southern universities sponsored the institute, but only one of these institutions admitted African Americans. “This is shutting the door in the face of Negro students who wish to learn something about this wonderful field of the near future which is going to change the lives of all human beings everywhere,” Anderson wrote. The long-range implications of such exclusion struck him as far more serious than the failure to move blacks into housing that was already available. As Anderson pointed out, such action “affects and concerns all of us and the basic so-called American principle—democracy.” He assured readers that this was not a personal attack upon Lilienthal and reminded them that the *Pittsburgh Courier* came to the commissioner’s defense when he was under fire during his U. S. Senate confirmation hearings. But he felt that it was the responsibility of the AEC leader to know what was going on at Oak Ridge. “Chairman Lilienthal is responsible for what happened at Oak Ridge and if he has not in the past chosen to find out what has happened, he cannot truthfully say now that he does not know.”⁸⁶

Perhaps the most devastating criticism against Lilienthal and the federal government came when Anderson publicized that the AEC granted scholarships to Cold War enemies. “Russia is laughing up her sleeve at the comedy of the U.S. Atomic

⁸⁵ Trezzvant W. Anderson, “Courier Expose of Atomic City Shames Nation: Lilienthal Holds Key to Oak Ridge, Can Erase Evils,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1949 April 23, pg. 1

⁸⁶ Ibid

Energy Commission which has allowed Communists—white people, of course—to receive fat scholarships to attend universities teaching the study of nuclear energy.” This occurred while, he asserted, the country was denying the same opportunities to the “sons and daughters of absolutely loyal Americans.”⁸⁷ Anderson and the editor of the *Courier* made repeated attempts to get a response from Lilienthal and his Washington headquarters, but none came until two months later when Congress, shaken by the revelations, conducted an investigation of the conditions at Oak Ridge.

In anticipation of the congressional investigation, the AEC, Anderson reported, only tried to “cover up” its Jim Crow policies. In April 1949, three weeks after the first exposé article appeared, a subcommittee of the Joint House and Senate Committee on Atomic Energy ventured to Oak Ridge investigate the conditions. They found that all of the black families who had been relegated to the shanty huts “had been moved into ‘Victory’ cottages,” pending the accelerated completion of new housing. Only the most minimal remedies were taken to address racial barriers at the Institute of Nuclear Studies. An AEC spokesperson informed the *Courier* that four physicians from nearby Knoxville had attended a course on radioisotope handling in May. Anderson also reported that two college professors, one from North Carolina Agricultural and Technical College and another from Tennessee Agricultural and Industrial State College, were admitted to the institute and that efforts were underway to bring Fisk University and Meharry Medical College into the fold of its membership.⁸⁸

⁸⁷ Trezzvant W. Anderson, “World News In a Nutshell,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1949 June 4, pg. 16

⁸⁸ Trezzvant W. Anderson, “Courier’s Atomic Expose Pays Off: Housing Horrors at Oak Ridge, Tenn., Congress Probes Charges,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1949 July 16, pg. 6; Also see: “Selected For Atom Study,” *Chicago Defender*, 1949 July 2, pg. 1; “A & T Professor Study At Oak Ridge,” *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, 1949 July 2, pg. A15; “Photo Standalone 4,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1949 August 27, pg. 2; “College Professor Studies At Oak Ridge,” *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, 1949 August 27, pg. 16

If high-ranking officials like David Lilienthal and members of Congress thought that they quelled the meddling of Trezzvant Anderson, they were mistaken. After only three months, he traveled back to Oak Ridge to investigate the government's efforts to address racial discrimination against its black citizens. "Uncle Sam is still handing Negro residents a new dirty deal in this growing city," Anderson wrote. "The United States government—is not only aiding and abetting racial discrimination, but is actually executing and operating that discrimination himself." He pointed to the practice of black businessmen being shut out of trade in the local black community, Jim Crow buses transporting black high school students twenty-miles away to Knoxville, blacks not being permitted to attend local theatres, and the introduction of new voting policies designed to bar blacks from ever serving on the local city council.⁸⁹ Anderson demanded that Congress make a second probe into these new charges. As the Joint Congressional Committee on Atomic Energy debated another investigation into AEC, some legislators accused the committee of playing 'politics.' One suggested that the investigation "signed by all the Democratic members of the committee...was colored by political implications."⁹⁰ Lilienthal endured months of charges that he was providing "incredible mismanagement of the AEC before he was forced or finally decided to resign in

⁸⁹ Trezzvant W. Anderson, "New Dirty Deal In A-Bomb Birthplace: Uncle Sam's Own Jim Crow Dazes A Shocked Nation," (first in a series of three articles), *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1949 October 1, pg. 1; See also: Trezzvant W. Anderson, "World News In a Nutshell," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1949 October 1, pg. 2; Trezzvant W. Anderson, "New Scandals Rock Oak Ridge: Trickery In A-Bomb Birthplace Puts Dems On Spot," (second in a series of three articles), *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1949 October 8, Pg.1; Trezzvant W. Anderson, "Voters Got Gypped In Oak Ridge Trick," (final article in a series), *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1949 October 15, pg.2

⁹⁰ "Sen. Johnson, Rep. Hinshaw Hit AEC Probe," *Washington Post*, 1949 October 27, pg.3

November 1949.⁹¹ Anderson felt that “it was his pressure that helped bring the resignation” of Lilienthal.⁹²

Conclusion

Throughout early 1950 Trezzvant Anderson continued to use “World News in Nutshell” to develop a black citizenship service that attempted to raise concern in the black community about both domestic and foreign affairs. But shortly following the United States’ military involvement in the Korean War in late June 1950, he discontinued the column. In all likelihood the decision had a lot to do with the *Courier*’s interest in minimizing the risk of being charged with disloyalty. In the very last column, Anderson provided a parting thought on the rising influence of the Cold War and the Red Scare by quoting Jackie Robinson, who spoke before the House Committee on Un-American Activities: “Just because Communists kick up a big fuss over racial discrimination when it suits their purposes, a lot of people try to pretend that the whole issue is a creation of Communist imagination.” Anderson likely shared Robinson’s sentiment that government officials were “not fooling anyone with this kind of pretense and talk about Communists stirring up Negroes to protest only makes misunderstanding worse than ever. Negroes were stirred up long before there was a Communist party, and they’ll stay stirred up long after the party has disappeared—unless Jim Crow has disappeared then as well.”⁹³

Anderson added a simple: “Amen!”

⁹¹ Alfred Friendly, “Wants to Engage in Public Affairs Without Restraint of Office, He Says” *Washington Post*, 1949 November 24, pg.1

⁹² Complete Biography of Trezzvant W. Anderson (Courier Roving Reporter), (4-pages) Box 12, Folder 10, Trezzvant W. Anderson Papers, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Atlanta University Center

By 1951 Anderson was eager to have a larger role within the newspaper industry and hoped to move to Los Angeles, California to serve as Managing Editor of the *California Eagle*. The position would afford him an opportunity to collect and disseminate stories of his choosing.⁹⁴ He was a restless soul and always knew that he thrived on being able to “hunt and peck” as he pleased. When the position did not come to fruition, he relocated to Washington D.C. to assume the role of City Editor of the *Pittsburgh Courier*’s Washington edition. Over the next four years he ran the *Courier*’s office, continued to critique domestic policy and offered his publicity services to both the Elks and the National Alliance of Postal Employees.⁹⁵ Anderson also sought out alternative ways of reaching wider audiences and began to appear regularly as a news commentator on the *Capitol Caravan*, a television variety show that began broadcasting on WTTG-TV (Chanel 5) in Washington, D.C. in July 1953.⁹⁶ From time to time he ventured into the South to cover vital stories that he felt black Americans needed to be informed about.

A consistent ombudsman for equal rights, Trezzvant, spent the last years of his life as he filled most of his years previously. After assuming the title of Courier Roving Reporter, he continued to utilize words—his most effective commodity to report

⁹³ Trezzvant W. Anderson, “World News In a Nutshell,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1950 August 12, pg. 4; During the remainder of 1950, and through 1952, Anderson periodically continued to focus attention on other important domestic developments that had international implications such as the Lieutenant Leon Gilbert case, other Atomic Energy Commission sites where federally sanctioned discrimination occurred in the South (South Carolina and Kentucky), and the purchase of homes by Senators in neighborhoods with racially restrictive covenants. Lieutenant Gilbert was sentenced to death in Korea after he refused a direct order to lead his troops into a battle that viewed as a guaranteed death sentence for his entire unit.

⁹⁴ Letter, Trezzvant W. Anderson to Charlotta Bass, 1951 March 7; Letter, Claude Barnett to Trezzvant W. Anderson, 1951 March 13, Box 0, Folder 0, Claude Barnett Papers, Chicago History Museum, Research Center. Bass was known for her uncompromising positions.

⁹⁵ “Trezzvant Anderson Heads NAPE Publicity,” *Chicago Defender*, 1951 December 15, pg.3

⁹⁶ Complete Biography of Trezzvant W. Anderson

inequality at home and abroad, and remained a lifelong catalyst for bringing about racial justice and equality.

EPILOGUE
**“Report From Dixie” and the Forgotten Legacy of Trezzvant William Anderson,
1956-1963**

What I did, I did, and the record will show it. You won't get the story in the white media . . . They don't know it. Never did. I am not a publicity hound. I am a 'results' hound.

—Trezzvant W. Anderson (1963)

In 1956 the Charlotte City Coach Company was granted permission to increase its fares. Trezzvant W. Anderson wrote, in a telegraphed letter to North Carolina's State Utilities Commission, "The Negroes who must bear the brunt of such an increase, bitterly protest and demand a hearing, otherwise we will organize a [bus] boycott, I promise you," he warned. But, he assured the commission all opposition would be withdrawn, "if the firm hired some Negro drivers, particularly on predominantly Negro routes." The letter was signed: "T.W. Anderson, director of Report from Dixie."¹ Even though, then "Report from Dixie" was at the time just an idea in his imagination, it eventually became his most successful news endeavor. Consisting not only of a news column that appeared weekly in the *Pittsburgh Courier* from January 1958 until his death in March 1963, it became not only a syndication of news reports that were released anonymously and under the bylines "Courier Press Service," "Courier Roving Reporter," "Dateline: Georgia," but also a radio program broadcasted across the South. During those last six years of his life, Anderson used Macon and Atlanta, Georgia as his outpost from which he reported and

¹ "Charlotte's Leaders Cool To 'Bus Boycott,'" *The Carolinian*, 1956 November 3

fought to keep black communities informed all over the South. Wherever news broke he was there pounding the ground for the real story that mainstream did not tell.

Phyl Garland, who was born right outside of Pittsburgh in 1935 and joined the *Courier* in 1958, recalled: “The *Courier* had one man in the South who was their key person, Trezzvant Anderson, who traveled about—must have been foot-sore and fatigued, but a marvelous reporter who covered major stories.”² When she was born, Anderson was a tad under thirty. He had officially begun his career five years earlier. Although he had been writing for black newspapers since early 1928, in 1930, he had his own Rosa Parks like experience that compelled him to protest. After a schoolteacher named Lillian Redding was verbally and physically abused by a trolley driver and arrested by a local Charlotte police officer, he decided to finally use his own name as his byline.³ It was not a decision to be taken lightly. A black journalist who chose to openly report on mistreatment of African Americans in the 1930s South had to be more than simply a “marvelous reporter,” they had to be radically committed to a life of seeking justice. By the time Garland joined the *Courier*, Anderson was doing more than “covering major stories” of the Civil Rights Movement. He was continuing a close to three decades long career as an activist whom many today would doubt ever existed, but as the *Courier* admitted upon his death: “His kind appear rarely on the shifting sands of life.”⁴

² Phyl Garland interview, *Newspaper of Record: The Pittsburgh Courier, 1907-1965*, (2009) (documentary)

³ Trezzvant W. Anderson (ANP), “Delaware Girl Arrested For Violating Jim Crow Law,” *Afro-American*, 1930 September 27, pg. A3; Trezzvant W. Anderson (ANP), “Teacher Arrested for Riding Front Seat of Jim Crow Street Car,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1930 September 27, pg. 1; ANP, “Northern Girl Abused By Ruffian Conductor and Cop,” *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, 1930 October 4, pg. 2;

⁴ “Going Home,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1963 April 6

For those who knew Anderson, it was no coincidence that his letter to the North Carolina State Utilities Commission arrived exactly two weeks before the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the landmark *Browder vs. Gayle* (1956) decision. Anderson made it his business to stay informed and he hoped the decision would not only officially strike down segregated seating on Montgomery's buses, but he trusted that it would help the Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA) achieve an important goal that has often been overlooked by those that remember the bus boycott—securing black drivers on black routes. He aimed to leverage this momentum along with the full weight of his reputation as a “respected” and “feared” journalist who had spent years manufacturing similar publicity to bring economic citizenship to African Americans in his hometown and larger South.

Upon learning about Anderson's threat of initiating a bus boycott in Charlotte, officials of the City Coach Company openly announced it was not against hiring black drivers, but asserted its current roster was full, it had a backlog of applications, and that it was unlikely to hire any black drivers in the near future.⁵ White civic leaders sent the message that they accepted that times had changed, it was no longer acceptable to be openly racist, but this change would occur on their' own terms, and most of all they would not be forced to do anything. This last point was something that Anderson also understood, but certainly did not fully accept, he acknowledged: “There is a certain amount of humiliation in such a move and white Southerners fiercely resent being

⁵ “Charlotte Bus Jobs Held Not Likely Now,” *The Carolinian*, 1956 December 15; ANP, “No Negroes To Be Hired Says Bus Company,” *The Atlanta Daily World*, 1956 December 19; The Pioneers Organization, founded by Rev. James B. Humphrey, Jr. in 1961, focused its efforts on getting blacks hired in various industries. Its most notable success was the hiring of eight African American bus drivers for Charlotte City Coach Lines. Humphrey was a prominent member of the city's black leadership; he was pastor of First Baptist Church, one of the oldest African American churches in the community, president of the local NAACP chapter and an executive member of Mecklenburg Organization for Political Action, founded by Reginald Hawkins.

humiliated, and—above all—by Negroes.” He knew that “it [had] not been easy for the white South to forget its role of ‘master and slave’ in the 95 years since [1861].”⁶ It was for this reason that he never truly intended to organize a boycott; instead he was sending his own message. Anderson aimed to place Charlotte’s white civic leaders on notice that if they desired to build bridges of communication across the chasm of race, then they needed to do it with local black leaders, like Kelly and Fred Alexander, who were not looking to humiliate them.

Following the *Brown* decision, the white South lived under the constant overhanging threat of what the NAACP might do as a lever in negotiating. Anderson professed, the “chief resentment against the NAACP in Dixie is the implication that it means to force the South to do something.”⁷ When he published “Charlotte’s Leaders Cool To Bus Boycott,” in the Raleigh based *Carolinian*, he did so cunningly and was actually pulling the negotiation lever for the local NAACP. After anonymously reporting on the emergence of a possible threat of a bus boycott by “local Negroes,” led by him, the article provided testimony that Kelly Alexander, president of the NAACP branches in North Carolina, stressed that the boycott did not have NAACP sanction. “‘It is in no way connected with the NAACP,’ he declared,” wrote Anderson. For good measure, he cited another “anonymous” black leader: “Anderson is apparently acting on his own, without organized backing.”⁸ Although their relationship had at times been tenuous, Alexander understood that Anderson’s tactics were necessary for the economic progress that they

⁶ “A Southern Editor Looks at the Race Question,” Unpublished Essay, 12 pages, Trezzvant W. Anderson Papers, Atlanta University Robert W. Woodruff Library, Box 17, Folder 9

⁷ This is why in many instances, it was outlawed and/or became the target of hostility in certain places throughout the South.

⁸ “Charlotte’s Leaders Cool To ‘Bus Boycott,’” *The Carolinian*, 1956 November 3

both envisioned. Alexander had proven beyond reasonable doubt that he fully backed Anderson when he and other members of the NAACP stood armed with “rifles and pistols” in Anderson’s home throughout the summer months of 1940 when members of the Ku Klux Klan threatened to kill him after they learned he had instigated a federal investigation into the corrupt political and employment practices of the local postmaster.

But in 1956, Charlotte was no Montgomery. Its city leaders had evolved and were more sophisticated. As most scholarship suggests, white civic leaders there understood that the kind of defiant bigotry exhibited in Montgomery could harm Charlotte’s reputation, forestall economic development, and invite judicial intervention.⁹ It was a lesson they no doubt learned in part through their past dealings with Trezzvant Anderson. Charlotte had evolved and strategically looked to get out front of the new televised Civil Right Movement. Shortly following *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), the city became one of the first in the South to desegregate its buses. By 1956 Charlotte’s city leaders actively sought to suppress bigoted newsworthy moments, because they knew mainstream news media was now clamoring to bring, as one black press scholar put it, “the real-life drama of Southern bigots threatening, beating, and killing black citizens into the homes of citizens across America.”¹⁰ This calculated move allowed city leaders to reshape its image into a bastion of liberalness in the wilderness of a larger recalcitrant South. It not only allowed the city to continue to lead the region’s economic rise from the ashes of the Civil War, it helped reshape the narrative of the national Civil Rights

⁹ See Davison M. Douglas, *Reading, Writing & Race: The Desegregation of the Charlotte Schools*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995); Stephen S. Smith, *Boom for Whom? : Education, Desegregation, and Development in Charlotte*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004)

¹⁰ Clint C. Wilson, *Whither the Black Press? : Glorious Past, Uncertain Future*, (United States: Xlibris Press, 2014), pg. 111

Movement into a much shorter struggle that according to popular belief sought to end violence, segregation, and restore voting rights.¹¹

However, the black freedom struggle in America, and particularly the South, had always centrally been about economics and place. The struggle for black economic liberty emerged with slavery, long before the founding of the country, and continued beyond the start and end of the Civil War. As African Americans began leaving the South at the close of the war, laws were enacted to control their movement and exploit their labor. In the years following turn of the century white supremacy campaigns, when it became clear that the white South intended to keep black Americans in their place—a status eerily similar to their formerly enslaved status, black migration out the South quickened to a mass exodus flow by the 1920s. Few others’ lives articulate the continued struggle more clearly than Trezzvant Anderson’s. During the period in which he was growing and coming of age, white Southerners were always quick to tell “all and sundry” how much better blacks fared in the South. “Of course,” he wrote, “this [was] often qualified by the understanding that the Negro must ‘stay in his place.’ And the white South is the arbiter who must say where that ‘place’ is.” For Anderson, this had remained “the crux of the whole ‘race question’ in Dixie” up until 1956. It was what he had used black newspapers to fight for all of his adult life—the rights of African Americans to decide their own ‘place,’ physically, economically and psychologically.

For the white South, black newspapers had always been dangerous. They were especially so “in the hands of Trezzvant Anderson,” as Claude Barnett once confided. Until the 1960s, Anderson had been among the most important of those “black publishers, editors, and journalist” that black press scholarship has argued, “fueled and

¹¹ Jacquelyn Hall, “The Long Civil Rights Movement,” *Journal of American History*

facilitated the movement.” The unintended but natural outcome of their decades long advocacy, meant that they and black newspapers were no longer the primary leaders of the African American community. Standing on their shoulders was a new corps of young black leaders. Americans began seeing “stories chronicling [black] struggles against racism and bigotry spearheaded by a cadre of new Black leaders including Martin Luther King, Jr.,” wrote one scholar.¹² Formerly the boon of the Civil Rights Movement, the black press was forced to find ways to evolve and recreate itself. And this was no less true for Anderson, and it was what he was grappling with when he signed his letter “director of Report from Dixie.”¹³



Figure 7.1 A *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1961 Advertisement (Courtesy of Robert W. Woodruff Library at Atlanta University Center)

¹² Wilson, *Whither the Black Press*, pg. 111

¹³ Robert M. Ratcliff, “Behind the Headlines,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1955 December 5; Ratcliff wrote that Anderson returned to Charlotte and began editing a city’s edition of *The Carolinian*. This was around the same time that Rosa Parks was first arrested, coverage of the boycott, as well as other southern community efforts to comply with *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), could be found in the “What’s Happening on the Desegregation Front” section of the newspaper.

Anderson left his editorial position with *The Carolinian* and rejoined *The Pittsburgh Courier* in the summer of 1957 because it offered him the best platform from which to launch “Report for Dixie.”¹⁴ While mainstream media transfixed on the drama of non-violent resistance and Martin Luther King, Jr., Anderson became the “Roving Reporter,” the *Courier*’s “man” on the ground in the South charged with capturing the “spirit” of the movement for its readers. He used the position to quickly rebuild a following that would support his vision for “Report from Dixie.” To accomplish this he first revisited news stories that garnered national and international attention in the years leading up to and following the rendering of *Brown v. Board of Education*. Anderson wrote several articles about the lives of Rosa Lee Ingram and Ruby McCollum, and the events surrounding their lives, which paralyzed the South in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Both women were convicted and initially sentenced to death for killing white men who sexually assaulted them. He interviewed Ingram in the Georgia State Prison nine years after she, and two of her sons, were convicted of murdering John E. Stratford, a white tenant farmer who attempted to rape her. Ingram’s case attracted fund raising efforts and international protest unseen in the South since the infamous Scottsboro case (1931). Similarly, McCollum was sentenced to death in 1952 after she murdered Dr. Clifford L. Adams, a white doctor who she accused of drugging, repeatedly raping and forcing her to bear his child.¹⁵

¹⁴ In 1953, the *Courier* circulation was roughly 250,000 with sixteen different regional editions, more editions than it had ever produced. But the circulation had dropped from 357,000 in 1947 when Anderson first joined the newspaper; this drop in circulation in just six years illustrates not only the *Courier*’s but also the larger black press’ decline.

¹⁵ See: Trezzvant W. Anderson, “Don’t Spoil Freedom For Rosa Lee Ingram,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1957 June 15; “Rosa Ingram Tells Courier: ‘I Cry to See My Children; I’ll Be Glad to Go Home,’” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1957 June 22; “What is Her Fate: Ruby McCollum!” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1957 July 6



Figure 7.1 *Pittsburgh Courier* Newspaper Clipping, 1962 (Courtesy of Robert W. Woodruff Library of Atlanta University Center)

Anderson traveled to places like Clinton, Tennessee, where ten months earlier “the eyes of the entire civilized world” had witnessed images of “Sherman tanks and helmeted infantry men armed to the teeth” marching into the small town “to keep Americans from tearing each other’s throats” over the integration of a local high school. In a series of three articles, he uncovered what he referred to as the “spirit of Negro Clinton” by exploring the history of the small town’s black community, its local leaders who persevered in spite of threats from the Ku Klux Klan, and how violent white resistance impacted the children and the families involved in the integration process. Throughout the summer and fall of 1957, Anderson followed the “spirit” of the

movement to other places like Tuskegee, where black Americans took the stand that if they could not vote; then they could not spend their money.¹⁶

Anderson not only traveled to places where local movements had already emerged. He sought to help the movement spread by bringing attention to places where things needed to happen. Anderson often referred to these places as the ‘hell holes’ of the South. One such place that he visited in the late summer of 1957 was Wilcox County, Alabama. This county was commonly referred to by black Alabamians as the “Land of Terror,” where 18,566 African Americans lived in fear of the 4,910 white residents. Anderson’s series on Wilcox County revealed that several hundred black residents worked as perpetual slaves on a plantation of 25,000 acres owned by Bruce and Fred Henderson. The Henderson plantation was replete with a store, gin-house, saw mill, filing station, and had just recently stopped printing its own money. “The workers were paid off with this and could spend it at the plantation store,” but if they preferred real money, they could cash it in at the rate of 90 cents for every dollar. The law of terror ruled the county to ensure that local blacks would remain in their place and not challenge the system. It was a place where black men were regularly lynched without repercussion and black women were frequently forced into sexual relationships or worst, brutally raped.¹⁷ These and other kinds of civil rights stories failed to attract attention from

¹⁶ Trezzvant W. Anderson, “The Courier Spends Memorial Day ’57 in Clinton, Tenn.,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1957 June 8; “Clinton, Tenn.: Integration Battleground,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1957 June 22; “Clinton, Tenn.: Last Article in a Series,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1957 June 29; “Spirit of Tuskegee ‘Crusade’ Is like Montgomery and Clinton,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1957 July 13

¹⁷ Trezzvant W. Anderson, “Wilcox County, Ala. Land of Terror!” (First in a Series), *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1957 August 3; “Land of Terror!” (Second in a Series), *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1957 August 10; “Land of Terror!” (Last in a Series), *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1957 August 17; Anderson uncovered the ugliness of Wilcox County while investigating the lynching of Willis Martin, Sr., see “Worse Than Till Case!” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1957 July 27

mainstream newspapers and television cameras and are the kinds of stories for which Anderson became known and respected.

As he had in previous decades, he continued to find clandestine ways to manufacture publicity to help advance civil rights causes. In early September 1957, his hometown presented one the earliest opportunities for Anderson to exhibit his new understanding of the evolving nature of the press. Up until then, his Charlotte had maintained its efforts to avoid instances of violent resistance to desegregation. City leaders complied with school desegregation through the process of transfer applications from black families seeking to do so, thereby allowing only a handful of black students to actually integrate.¹⁸ This, they hoped, would decrease the spectacle of having large crowds protest against groups of black students integrating a particular school, like Clinton a year earlier, and what was anticipated to happen in Little Rock, Arkansas. Yet, Charlotte's white civic leaders did not foresee how John Kasper would impact the community's response to fifteen year-old Dorothy Counts.

On September 4, the same day that nine black students made their first attempt to register at Central High School in Little Rock, Dorothy Counts enrolled at Harding High School. Kasper, a New Jersey native and Columbia University graduate, had traveled all across the South organizing White Citizens Councils to resist desegregation efforts. He arrived in Charlotte a few days before Counts' first day of school. Kasper did not draw the crowds that he had in Clinton because local white

¹⁸ To comply with the federal directives of *Brown* to desegregate schools, the city and the larger state of North Carolina adopted the Pearsall Plan, which provided constitutional amendments allowing private school tuition grants for parents with children attending desegregated schools or local referenda whereby communities could decide their own courses of action, usually "token integration" or the closure of certain schools. Most communities chose to implement elements of all three options and solicited advice and cooperation from media, which agreed not to report on ensuing negotiations; See Douglas, *Reading, Writing & Race*, pg. 32-33 and 68-70

leaders sought to keep local white citizens away, but he did manage to organize a small White Citizen's Council before being run out of the city. After he left, John Warlick, a local truck driver, and his wife appeared at Harding that morning before Counts arrived and encouraged hundreds of students to prevent her from enrolling. According to most sources, the students spat and threw objects at Counts and called her "nigger" and told her to "go back to Africa." Trezzvant Anderson was there to witness and record what he saw with a camera. "I was the only Negro present as a white mob of some 600 kids and adults waited," he wrote. "They jeered me, and hissed and spat. They called me 'nigger' too," Anderson recalled. When Counts arrived he took pictures of the taunting crowd of young white teenagers mocking and verbally assaulting her, and anonymously released them along with a general account of the scene to Associated Press newswires. Anderson later admitted that no one knew about his involvement that day.¹⁹ According to one scholar, "Counts' experience received nationwide and even worldwide attention as photographs of her walking through the hostile crowd were transmitted throughout the world."²⁰

Moving forward, the Dorothy Counts' experience became indicative of one of the many ways Trezzvant Anderson saw he could contribute to the larger modern televised Civil Rights Movement. He would sometimes act as a simple newswire reporter that shared news just to get particular stories out. Anderson was granted the first exclusive interview with Governor Orval E. Faubus after he decided to use Arkansas state troops to prevent black students from entering Little Rock. The conclusion that he came to was that Faubus was the "Guinea Pig" of Roy V. Harris, whom Anderson also interviewed.

¹⁹ Trezzvant W. Anderson, "Report From Dixie," 1963 January 26

²⁰ Douglas, pg. 72

He was the executive director of the States Rights Councils of Georgia and the “shrewdest segregation leader in the entire South.” Harris was from Augusta, and was a “publisher, politician, banker, businessman, utilities owner and sworn enemy of the NAACP.” For businessman and politicians, like Harris, Anderson argued that segregation was good for business.

These leaders were grooming younger leaders like T. V. Williams Jr., who was 28 years old when Anderson interviewed him. He was the executive secretary of the Georgia Education Commission (GEC), which Anderson visited, and was called “a trouble-maker.” He wrote it was a usual term for “Dixie white supremacist” that was “at a loss to otherwise describing an opponent.” The GEC printed and distributed education material to “keeping the hate pot boiling” by smearing black leaders all over the South, especially those connected with the NAACP and the Highlander Folk School, or what they referred to it as the “Labor Day Weekend Communist Training School.” Williams used black and white taxpayer money to print information, which to intelligent and uninformed blacks alike was “ridiculous,” but it was “highly inflammatory to illiterate whites” that he referred to as “Georgia crackers.”²¹

Following his series on the GEC, Anderson began directing “Report From Dixie and over the next five years he covered the most important developments in the South like no other person in the media, white or black. He continued to focus on the growth and integration of labor unions, and their need to place African Americans in greater leadership roles. Trezzvant Anderson would go on to document developments in Birmingham, the 1959 trial of four white men who raped a Florida A&M University

²¹ Trezzvant W. Anderson, “Georgia Education Commission Called Most Vicious Dixie Group,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1957 December 28; “Ga. Agency Keeps Hate

student, and the Sit-In Movement. He was most proud of the work in Fayette and Heywood County, Tennessee, where he documented African Americans eviction from farmland for registering to vote, as well as his role in covering the Albany Movement. To read his articles throughout this period is like reading an important oral history of the classical phase of the Civil Rights Movement, on and off the beaten path.

When confronted by the question of how someone like Trezzvant Anderson could go unmentioned in the popular narrative of the Civil Rights Movement, John H. Britton Jr., asserted: “One of the things, that has been very missing, particularly in the scholarly realm, is a close look at the black press...In my opinion, and I may be wrong about this [but] the black press was the Civil Rights Movement for many years. And Trezzvant was a part of that and, he was not the only one but he was a powerful one because people trusted him.” Unlike Phyl Garland, Britton was from the South. He recalled that he had “become familiar with [Anderson’s] byline when [he] was a youngster” in Nashville. Born in 1937, Britton was proud to say that Anderson was his hero. He joined the staff of the *Atlanta Daily World* in 1958 and remembered being in awe when he came into their editorial offices. Once when the *Daily World* sent him to Columbus, Georgia, he remembered, “Trezzvant happened to be there covering some sort of story. And he was just almost lionized by the black people in the community because of his coverage—not only did they praise him as a person, but they praised him for the accuracy of his reports.” Ultimately, Britton believed that “people just don’t look at the black press as having made much of a contribution to the progress that black folks made... Why that is,

I don't know? I don't know why it is that black people don't seem to understand what the black press did in their behalf.”²²

In today's world Trezzvant Anderson's name is not a household one or even one readily recalled in circles of academia. Yet, the results of his personal and professional fight to end racism at home and abroad are visibly felt in numerous areas of life. Ostensibly alone, in a Macon, Georgia hotel room, under circumstances unavailable for public scrutiny, Anderson's relentless voice was stilled. In this very present, however, for black soldiers who are engaged in war, at the roll of every United States postal truck, in the step of every mail carrier, in the heart of every clerk or postmaster, cognizant or not, a determined beat is measured and carried out. At every meeting of a labor union, in every by-line of a journalist of color; in every major newspaper brave and honorable enough to report without bias; in every black weekly found on local news stands and passed out to parishioners on Sunday mornings, for every press pass earned by a correspondent of color—a remembrance of his constancy to purpose prevails.

Trezzvant William Anderson indefatigable, forceful, courageous, was stalwart in a time when every attempt was made to lynch and bludgeon out these characteristics in a black man. Prone to organizing marches and demonstrations, firing off scathing letters and admonishing the country through radio broadcasts, Anderson's undeniable instrument of choice—or rather, his commodity—was words, spoken loudly and written bluntly, unapologetically and uncompromisingly. He wielded words that ignited action. His entire life was spent using pen, paper, and voice, to bring about major change in the lives of so many—the oppressed and the oppressors. Indeed, his voice was stilled in that Georgia hotel room. Now, it is un-silenced.

²² John H. Britton telephone interview by author, 2010 January 11

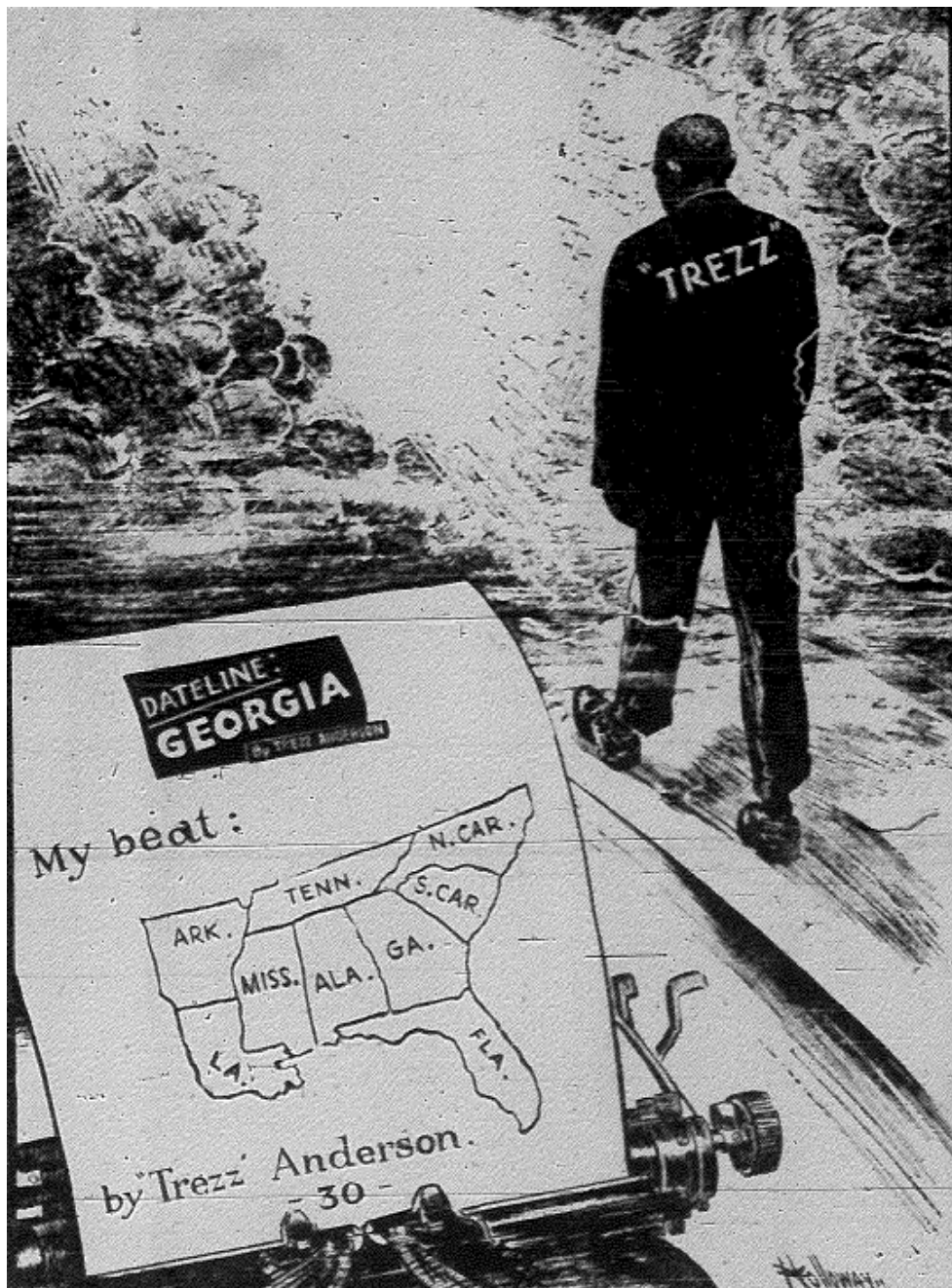


Figure 7.3 Political Cartoon Obituary *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1963 (Courtesy of *Pittsburgh Courier*)

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