

# The Limits of Egalitarianism: Radical Pacifism, Civil Rights, and the Journey of Reconciliation

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In April 1947, a group of young men posed for a photograph outside of civil rights attorney Spottswood Robinson's office in Richmond, Virginia. Dressed in suits and ties, their arms held overcoats and overnight bags while their faces carried an air of eager anticipation. They seemed, from the camera's perspective, ready to embark on an exciting adventure. Certainly, in a nation still divided by race, this visibly interracial group of black and white men would have caused people to stop and take notice. But it was the less visible motivations behind this trip that most notably set these men apart. All of the group's key organizers and most of its members came from the emerging radical pacifist movement. Opposed to violence in all forms, many had spent much of World War II behind prison walls as conscientious objectors and resisters to war. Committed to social justice, they saw the struggle for peace and the fight for racial equality as inextricably linked. Ardent egalitarians, they tried to live according to what they called the brotherhood principle of equality and mutual respect. As pacifists and as militant activists, they believed that nonviolent action offered the best hope for achieving fundamental social change. Now, in the wake of the Second World War, these men were prepared to embark on a new political journey and to become, as they inscribed in the scrapbook that chronicled their traveling adventures, "courageous" makers of history.<sup>1</sup>

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Over the next two weeks, these men would take extraordinary risks to put their ideals to the test. They called their trip the Journey of Reconciliation, a project jointly organized by the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and the pacifist Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR). Traveling in small interracial teams, the men of the Journey intentionally defied Jim Crow seating arrangements on public buses and trains. Black next to white, they sat wherever they chose, provoking threats, verbal harassment, physical brutality, and arrests. But in the spirit of Gandhian nonviolence, they refused to respond in kind and instead embraced their hardships with relish. The Journey's leaders celebrated the project as a crucial step in the struggle for black civil rights. Just as importantly, they hoped that the power of their witness would spark a nonviolent movement for social and political change.<sup>2</sup>

The 1947 Journey of Reconciliation is best known today as the precursor to the more famous Freedom Rides of 1961 that dramatically challenged the institutions of racism in the American South. But while the project's organizers and team members certainly hoped that their efforts would serve as a catalyst and inspiration for future actions, they could not have predicted at the time what the legacy of their actions would be. To the radical pacifists who spearheaded the trip, the Journey signified something else: the first national project of a nascent nonviolent movement, the logical outcome of over a decade of militant resistance to Jim Crow, and a visible reflection of the pacifist commitment to interracial justice and egalitarian social relations.

The presence of so many pacifists outside civil rights attorney Spottswood Robinson's office illustrates a key piece of this project and a primary focus of this article: the very concrete ways in which the Journey linked the causes of peace and racial justice in the years that immediately followed World War II. Historians readily recognize the important connections between the pacifist and civil rights movements of this time. Many scholars highlight the radical pacifist involvement with CORE, where activists readily deployed the innovative tactics of nonviolent resistance, as a major contribution to the black freedom struggle. Beyond tactical inspiration, pacifists' work, in what sociologist Aldon Morris dubs "movement halfway houses," provided important organizational and financial resources to the escalating civil rights protests of the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s. Yet the relations between these two different movements did not prove as harmonious as this may sound. A much more complex reality instead lay behind the visage of interracial and intermovement cooperation.<sup>3</sup>

The all-male composition of the Journey team similarly obscured another critical dynamic in the radical politics of the postwar years. This photo presents a familiar vision of masculine militancy, one that dominates much of the literature on contemporary social movements and modern struggles for social and political change.<sup>4</sup> Yet women had long participated in a range of protest movements, not only as feminists or within women's organizations but as female activists who readily

worked beside men to advance the causes of their concern.<sup>5</sup> Despite this shared history, no women traveled on the Journey of Reconciliation. Their absence from this project, and from the photograph, not only begs the question of why they were missing, but suggests that the radical pacifist quest for “brotherhood” was not nearly as egalitarian as activists intended.

The Journey of Reconciliation was an ambitious project that epitomized both the creativity and the limitations of the 1940s radical peace movement and its effort to take the lead in the politics of postwar dissent. The Journey highlighted the critical relationship between pacifism and civil rights, even as it underscored the difficulties inherent in bringing these two movements together. It also revealed the opportunities and obstacles that radical women encountered as they joined forces with radical men in an idealistic effort to change the world. As a training ground for future actions, the Journey of Reconciliation illuminated the power of militant non-violence to expand the boundaries of political debate, even as it highlighted the limits of postwar struggles for social and political change.

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The story of the Journey of Reconciliation really begins in the 1930s, when American pacifism, racial militancy, and radical activism emerged as potent forces for change within a climate of economic desperation and political turmoil. In the midst of the Great Depression, women, students, and clergy led an American peace movement that reached heights of mass influence and support never before seen. At the same time, the American left, and particularly the Communist Party (CP), increased its appeal by positioning itself as the voice of the black and white working classes and by utilizing organizing strategies that gave it a reputation for militant and effective leadership. The work of the CP, of course, dovetailed with that of the newly formed Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), whose successful union-organizing campaigns in the steel and auto industries epitomized the power of grassroots protest to generate concrete political gains. Similarly, the combined efforts of communists, socialists, and black nationalists contributed to a rise in northern and southern civil rights activity that made the issue of race impossible to ignore. Like other activists of their milieu, American pacifists did not limit themselves to working on behalf of a single cause, but instead worked with and were influenced by political developments in all of these movements. This meant that for many, peace and justice became deeply intertwined.<sup>6</sup>

World War II, however, brought profound changes to the scope and character of the American peace movement. With the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941, public support for antiwar sentiments evaporated overnight—although it should be noted that more radical pacifists lost key allies in the CP six months earlier with the collapse of the Nazi-Soviet Pact. Pacifists of all persuasions suddenly found themselves politically isolated and publicly derided. By early 1942,

most Americans viewed pacifism as irrelevant at best and treasonous at worst. Committed pacifists mostly turned inward, seeking solace in small communities of support and organizations like the FOR, which promoted conscientious objection as a form of moral and personal witness. Nevertheless, a determined cohort of militant pacifists struggled to sustain the activism and relevancy of their prewar protests. They resisted the draft and went to jail. They demonstrated in the streets. And as they did so, they forged a new radical pacifist identity.<sup>7</sup>

These radical pacifists rooted themselves in the leftist traditions of the 1930s, but also in the activist Christianity of the Social Gospel and the absolute pacifism espoused by the historic peace churches. They thus defined themselves by a commitment to nonviolence and to an egalitarian ethos of “brotherhood” that reflected their Left and Christian roots. From the radical pacifist perspective, “the principles of brotherhood” united people across differences of race, class, nationality, and gender. One did not kill one’s brother or inflict violence on fellow members of what black FOR Race Relations Secretary James Farmer typically called “the human family.” Radical pacifists believed that this human family was comprised of equal partners who related to each other as brothers and sisters rather than as parent and child. This rhetorical commitment to an egalitarian brotherhood, to the belief, as FOR leader A. J. Muste once stated, that there existed “a fundamental kinship among all men,” pervaded all aspects of their organizing efforts.<sup>8</sup>

In the early 1940s, radical pacifists quickly turned their attention to the civil rights struggle. In part, this decision stemmed from the peace movement’s combined commitment to justice and peace. But it also reflected the more immediate saliency of race as a topic of national concern. With the “labor question” resolved by New Deal labor provisions and wartime prosperity, class tensions decreased in the 1940s just as racial tensions rose. The migration of blacks to industrial centers sparked a violent white backlash that had national, and not just southern, dimensions, while a wartime surge in racial militancy gave notice that African Americans did not intend to back down. Membership in the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)—the nation’s most well-established civil rights organization—increased ninefold over the course of the war, from 50,000 to 450,000 members. And when black labor leader A. Philip Randolph, head of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, threatened to organize a massive march on Washington to protest the unequal treatment that blacks received in the federally funded defense industry, President Roosevelt buckled under the pressure and established the Fair Employment Practices Commission. Radical pacifists could not help but be impressed by these courageous examples. Even more, they recognized that focusing on racial equality could bring political benefits by providing a way to make new allies and to expand their now-decimated base of support.<sup>9</sup>

They also believed that they could make a unique contribution to black civil rights by deploying powerful new methods of protest and action. Since the early 1930s, pacifists kept a close watch on Mohandas Gandhi's nonviolent struggle against British colonial rule. The Indian independence movement presented a striking example of how nonviolence could be used to combat oppression, one which pacifists drew on to justify their antiwar stance in the face of Nazi horrors and Japanese aggression. According to David Dellinger, who began his radical pacifist career as a World War II draft resister, the Gandhian movement "made respectable the idea that there was a 'moral alternative' to war as a method of solving political problems." It also provided a blueprint for innovative action. By the early 1940s, radical pacifists included civil disobedience in their repertoire of protest as they organized around issues as varied as the British imprisonment of Gandhi, Jim Crow prison policies, and racial segregation in restaurants and theaters.<sup>10</sup>

All of these forces—the example of Gandhian nonviolence, the rise of race as a potent organizing issue, and search for a way out of wartime political isolation—inspired leading pacifist organizations like FOR to prioritize the fight against Jim Crow as an integral part of their larger activist agenda. A. Philip Randolph, head of the March on Washington Movement (MOWM), encouraged these sentiments by publicly adopting the tenets of nonviolent resistance in his black working-class struggle for economic justice. When Randolph asserted that the "evil of racism" could be overcome by "non-violent, good-will direct action," the FOR decided to give him "all the support and help we can." Radical pacifists interpreted this as a signal, one that also indicated that the time was right to make a constructive contribution of their own.<sup>11</sup>

By 1942, radical pacifist protests against Jim Crow had begun in earnest. That year, FOR members and staffers founded CORE, where they worked to bring a pacifist ethos and the Gandhian method to the civil rights struggle. Chapters of CORE soon sprouted up in cities across the country, primarily in the northern and border states, where activists could openly work as part of an interracial struggle for equality and justice. In accord with what activists called "the CORE approach," CORE members attacked Jim Crow in restaurants, skating rinks, movie theaters, and barbershops by organizing sit-ins, stand-ins, and walk-ins. Often they risked assault and arrest, and sometimes they won small victories, which in turn inspired other activists. In 1943, for example, FOR member and Howard University law student Pauli Murray guided young coeds at the historically black college as they waged a nonviolent campaign of sit-ins and pickets at nearby white-only restaurants. Imprisoned draft resisters and conscientious objectors similarly began to protest against Jim Crow, in their case focusing on the segregation that occurred behind federal prison walls. By the time World War II ended in 1945, the pacifist movement,

and especially its more radical wing, had built up a cadre of seasoned activists, white and black, experienced in nonviolent protest and committed to black freedom.<sup>12</sup>

Radical pacifists took these historical conditions and in the postwar years worked to forge them into a concrete program for social and political change. They believed they had, in the words of A. J. Muste, “a positive responsibility to develop techniques of non-violence that can be used by mass organizations.” Similarly, CORE activists “dreamed of a mass, nationwide, interracial movement.” As early as 1944, George Houser—jailed war resister, FOR staff member, and cofounder of CORE—took the first step toward turning this dream into reality by proposing a militant and coordinated campaign against Jim Crow. He hoped to bring together “a disciplined movement of persons” who would devote themselves to a full-time non-violent direct action project. “If this experiment were a success after being tried by migrating nonviolenteers in various localities,” he posited, “the pattern of the mass non-violent approach would take hold in localities on a more permanent basis.” The CORE executive committee greeted Houser’s plan with enthusiasm, as did individual members of CORE’s leadership and allies such as A. Philip Randolph. Houser also received encouragement from Muste. “I think,” wrote Muste, “the idea of trying to put on a larger and more systematic n.v.d.a. campaign is . . . the logical next step.”<sup>13</sup>

A window of opportunity for such a campaign opened in June 1946, when the Supreme Court took a first step in overturning Jim Crow. The court’s ruling, in the case of *Irene Morgan v. the Commonwealth of Virginia*, declared that racial segregation in interstate travel was unconstitutional. African Americans initially believed that Jim Crow “had been crushed,” but the intransigence of southern bus and railroad company executives, who indicated their intent “to ignore and frustrate the court’s decision,” soon tempered the initial optimism of black activists and allies. Nevertheless, the Supreme Court’s ruling, and the possibilities for action it presented, fired the imagination of CORE and its radical pacifist leadership. As George Houser later reflected, “you might say it was natural for us to think of ways in which we could try to implement that decision.” Public buses and trains were a daily part of African American life—and a daily source of humiliation. Attacking segregation on board these ubiquitous sites of racial conflict promised to give CORE and its pacifist allies the relevance and visibility they yearned to achieve. “We felt,” Houser reflected, “it was a winnable issue.”<sup>14</sup>

That following September, CORE’s executive committee and the Racial-Industrial Committee of the FOR began to formulate a joint plan of action that moved beyond the court-oriented strategy of organizations like the NAACP. “There is a need,” CORE committee members asserted, “to . . . look for a better approach, a CORE approach,” one that involved not only outreach and education, but direct action as well. As Bayard Rustin, a young black pacifist resister and FOR staffer explained, “the responsibility for change will fall upon disciplined Negroes and

whites who can enter busses and, without resort to violence, resist by sitting where they choose and refusing to move, no matter the cost.” It is clear from such statements that CORE’s leaders did not yet expect “to get the masses of people to resist Jim Crow practices wholesale on buses and trains.” But they believed that if they could gather a small group of dedicated activists, willing to test and publicize the *Irene Morgan* decision, they would “strick[e] a raw nerve . . . [and] get public attention,” not only for the problem of racial segregation but for the style of Gandhian resistance that the radical pacifist members of CORE hoped to promote.<sup>15</sup>

Now that CORE and FOR had agreed to organize the project that would become known as the Journey of Reconciliation, staffers Houser and Rustin went to work—and almost immediately faced obstacles to the project’s success. Finding capable recruits was perhaps their hardest task. As Journey participant Wally Nelson recalled, volunteers for the trip were “not exactly banging down the door.” And those who did volunteer had to satisfy a number of requirements before receiving permission to join. Organizers wanted to include southerners in the Journey team, particularly since the project’s route would take them through the South. Racial balance was also critical since leaders intended the Journey to act as a model of interracial action. Finally, the project’s dual focus on education and direct action required that those who joined “be qualified to speak before groups as well as to be a disciplined part of a non-violent project.” Houser and Rustin struggled for several months to find enough people ready and willing to take the risks involved.<sup>16</sup>

Not surprisingly, a large number of recruits came from the ranks of the radical pacifist movement, and particularly war resisters and conscientious objectors who had actively challenged racial segregation while imprisoned during the war. The Journey’s two chief organizers, Rustin and Houser, came from this background, as did most of the other participants. Some arrived fresh from these wartime struggles. Nelson, a black conscientious objector, joined the trip almost immediately after his release from prison. Jim Peck, a white pacifist veteran of prison protests against Jim Crow, had “discovered and joined CORE just a few months before” the Journey began. All in all, twelve out of the sixteen members of the group came from the radical pacifist movement. Their predominance among the recruits not only suggests how attractive this project was to those committed to serious nonviolent action but also how difficult it was to find recruits outside of pacifist circles.<sup>17</sup>

It is quite possible that the small size of the group and its self-selected composition of largely prison-hardened pacifists reflected the very real fears that people had about joining this project. No one doubted that violating racial norms and state laws, even while upholding a Supreme Court ruling, could have frightening results. The limited experience CORE had gained in the North indicated that despite the calm and courteous behavior of nonviolent protesters, stalwart segregationists would not only hold their ground but resort to physical intimidation and violence. Marjorie

Swann, a charter CORE member in Chicago and then Washington, D.C., remembered “getting bounced around by police” and spat at in the face after trying to integrate restaurants in both cities. It could be, she recalled, “a pretty scary situation.” Many feared that challenging segregation in the solid South—with its lynch-mob reputation—would prove even more dangerous. White southerners faced additional threats since joining the Journey could bring ostracism and retribution from neighbors and friends. Indeed, only a few men from the South joined the project. Danger and anxiety kept all but the most stalwart at bay.<sup>18</sup>

Houser and Rustin sought to mitigate these risks by limiting the scope of the Journey’s actual challenge to Jim Crow. Organizers originally planned to travel from Baltimore to New Orleans. But “believing that to extend the protests into Mississippi, Alabama, or other Deep South states would invite certain violence,” they scaled down their itinerary and confined the project to the Upper South: Washington, D.C., Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee, Kentucky, and Ohio. “To penetrate the Deep South at that time,” wrote Jim Peck, “would simply have meant immediate arrests of all participants, an end to the trip—and possibly us. As a Negro told us on the first lap, ‘Some bus drivers are crazy; and the farther south you go, the crazier they get.’” Without a solid base of support in the deepest regions of the South, it would have proven suicidal to take such risks.<sup>19</sup>

As the journey’s team members soon found out, the dangers they faced were acute enough, even on the more northerly route. The trip began in Washington, D.C., with an intensive training session in nonviolence. From there, the volunteers headed south in interracial pairs, sometimes testing parallel Greyhound and Trailways bus routes, sometimes testing train lines, and usually spread out within the buses and cars. Journey members arranged their seats so that both white and black activists could effectively challenge Jim Crow. On most of the trips, at least one black rider sat near the front, while at least one white rider moved to the back. “We were not obviously traveling as a group,” recounted Houser. “It was only when an incident took place, when the issue arose, that it became obvious that there was a group involved.” Most of the trips remained uneventful. Project members often rode undisturbed or encountered only perfunctory challenges to their presence. Nevertheless, on several occasions, the riders faced the possibility of physical assault by bus drivers, fellow passengers, and even passersby. The most notable incident occurred in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, when angry white taxi drivers attacked Jim Peck and literally chased the entire group and a supportive local white minister out of town. More frequent were the whispered warnings and outspoken jeers. And, of course, there were periodic arrests. By the end of their two-week trip, twelve Journey members had been arrested on six occasions, all for violating Jim Crow seating arrangements on southern buses and trains.<sup>20</sup>

The men on the Journey used these incidents to showcase the strengths of their emerging direct action movement. Their conduct demonstrated a combination

of tenacity, flexibility, and an absolute commitment to nonviolence. While the men could only guess at what they might face, they were well aware of the risks involved. Indeed, the worst aspects of southern racism, particularly the threats of lynching and murder, pervaded their thoughts, especially when traveling late at night. But they also found strength in their collective solidarity. Challenging Jim Crow required a deep and shared trust in each member's conduct. The riders relied on each other's "individual discretion" and developed an uncanny ability to act and think in sync with each other, to communicate, as one member described it, "almost psychically." When authorities would arrest one pair of riders for violating segregated seating regulations, another pair would appear almost magically to take their place. Still other team members casually struck up conversations about the arrests with anxious and irritated bus passengers, hoping to raise the consciousness and understanding of the people on board. Such behavior required a "taut morale," discipline, and a strong sense of group solidarity.<sup>21</sup>

No one on the Journey expected their defiance of Jim Crow to go unchallenged, and they anxiously anticipated the prospects of conflict and arrest. A black team member's refusal to move to the back of the bus could precipitate a long delay that generated irate responses not only from bus passengers but also from bus drivers and arresting officers. Even on segments of the trip where no arrests occurred, "there was no escaping the tension." The vision of a black man in the front of the bus audibly jangled the nerves of many passengers, white and black, not to mention those of the accompanying Journey members. While traveling in North Carolina, a white South Carolinian, sitting next to white pacifist Ernest Bromley, loudly remarked that, "in my state, [the black Journey member seated near the front] would either move or be killed." On several occasions, fearful black passengers seated in the rear openly condemned the Journey's challenge to Jim Crow and, "urged the resisters in very emotional terms to comply with the [local segregation] law." Without training and commitment, the men on the Journey would have found it difficult to follow their trip through to the end.<sup>22</sup>

But they also needed more if their project was going to succeed. National publicity was critical, and they got this by bringing two black journalists on the trip who regularly filed reports in the black press. Local publicity came through speaking engagements that Houser and Rustin lined up along the Journey's route. By meeting with church, NAACP, and college groups, Journey members spread the word about their project and generated valuable grassroots support. Spontaneous words of encouragement and offers of assistance from fellow passengers also heartened this small band of travelers. In Oxford, North Carolina, for example, one black man threatened to sue the bus company for the delay caused when Rustin refused to move to the rear. On several other occasions, female passengers gave their names and addresses to the group. Journey members rarely felt entirely alone in their endeavors.<sup>23</sup>

These responses helped convince the group that their project was a success. In the evaluation they conducted after the Journey ended, organizers admitted that their efforts had not eliminated segregation, but took solace in what they saw as a softening of racist attitudes and attacks. Although their efforts had often provoked negative responses, they saw progress in the fact that, as Houser wrote in explanation, “never did a white passenger threaten a Negro for sitting ‘out of his place.’” Houser and others attributed this response to their tactics, and believed they had demonstrated how nonviolent action could be used as an effective political tool. They even viewed their arrests in a positive light, and treated the men sentenced to time on a chain gang as heroes to emulate. Reflecting their Gandhian ethos, Journey leaders believed that putting their bodies on the line was the most promising strategy in the struggle for social change. “It is our belief,” they concluded in their evaluation of the project, “that without direct action on the part of groups and individuals, the Jim Crow pattern in the South can not be broken down.”<sup>24</sup>

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Despite this positive assessment, Journey organizers quickly discovered that overcoming the obstacles separating social movements could prove as difficult as breaking down the barriers dividing Americans by race. Although an interracial project, the Journey of Reconciliation could not hide the fact that it emerged in large part from the predominately white pacifist movement—a movement committed to a race-blind “brotherhood of man,” but not yet sure of how to make concrete contributions to the black freedom struggle. It soon became obvious that even the best of intentions could not guarantee a harmonious relationship between pacifist direct actionists and a varied and diverse black activist community. Nor could a commitment to nonviolence ensure extensive pacifist cooperation. Without a broad base of black *and* white support, Journey members would find it difficult to spark the organized and widespread challenge to Jim Crow that they desired.

Ironically, the Journey’s greatest source of strength—its radical pacifist roots—also became its greatest liability. Radical pacifist participation in the project certainly proved integral to its success. Nevertheless, not everyone embraced the pacifist presence, in CORE or on the Journey, with open arms. Longtime CORE member Bernice Fisher, for example, vociferously opposed “combining the efforts of CORE, FOR and MOW[M]. . . . There are numerous others,” she asserted, “who would rebel at the pacifist tag. To combine efforts with pacifist groups might well spell the end of dnva [direct nonviolent action] in the race struggle.” CORE’s organizers realistically feared alienating potential support, particularly during the wartime and immediate postwar period, when the public overwhelmingly viewed conscientious objectors and pacifists as traitors to the national cause. Even ex-war resister Houser feared that the pacifist label would limit CORE’s appeal. “I feel,” he

wrote to Muste, “that we need to get some more national people other than ministers and pacifists if this is to be a success.” And although Houser held a dual role as CORE’s executive secretary and cosecretary of FOR’s Racial and Industrial Department, he diligently worked to keep the organizations separate. “As far as the connection between CORE and the FOR is concerned,” he asserted, “it exists only as some members of CORE are also FOR members.”<sup>25</sup>

This was not quite the truth. The FOR directly and indirectly subsidized CORE. It provided free office space for the fledgling organization and, more important, it “lent” James Farmer, George Houser, and Bayard Rustin, all of them FOR staffers, to CORE projects and campaigns. This close relationship created tensions that ran in both directions. Not only did some CORE activists like Fisher want to keep their distance from the pacifist cause, but some pacifists in FOR lobbied to keep CORE at arms length as well. A number of FOR members vocally resented the amount of time and resources that Houser and Rustin put into CORE rather than into purely pacifist projects. To appease these critics, in the months just before the proposal of Journey of Reconciliation Muste insisted that “FOR is not going to put any more money and time into an effort to build a national CORE.” Others forcefully reminded the two FOR organizers that racial issues were not the organization’s only priority and directed “that more attention be given to the industrial as well as racial work.” In addition, FOR members often found CORE’s militant tactics as difficult to swallow as its racial focus. “There were lots of people on that board who were not in favor of direct action,” recalled white Journey member and former FOR staffer Bromley. “That was thought to be unbecoming to pacifists.”<sup>26</sup>

Typical CORE activities, specifically its strategy of militant nonviolent action, also did little to endear the group to the national office of the NAACP, the premier national organization for black civil rights. On the one hand, historians August Meier and Elliot Rudwick note that “CORE leaders like Bayard Rustin . . . sought in nonviolent direct action a program that would provide an alternative to what they deemed the ineffectual NAACP.” Indeed, Rustin railed against the cautious legalistic approach of the NAACP and “those who question the use of nonviolent direct action by Negroes in protesting discrimination, on the grounds that this method will kindle hitherto dormant racial feeling.” The NAACP was equally hesitant about supporting CORE. The influential Thurgood Marshall, Rustin noted, publicly “‘cautioned’ Negroes in the South to avoid nonviolent resistance tactics . . . , [and] added that a ‘disobedience movement on the part of Negroes and their white allies . . . would result in wholesale slaughter with no good achieved.’” Considering their divergent viewpoints and strategies for action, it came as no surprise that these two organizations shared an ambivalent relationship.<sup>27</sup>

CORE organizers, however, rightly recognized the importance of cooperat-

ing with the NAACP, and in the months before the Journey worked to smooth over relations between the two groups and reach out to the larger black community. Members of both CORE and FOR arranged for reporters from two black newspapers, the *Pittsburgh Courier* and the *Baltimore Afro-American*, to observe and accompany the Journey. Rustin and Houser also managed to drum up assistance from civil rights attorneys Spottswood Robinson and Charles Houston, prominent black leaders like Mary McLeod Bethune and, ultimately, even the qualified support of Marshall. It was clear to all concerned, however, that the “Journey was not backed by the national NAACP office, whose policy was to stick to legal cases and education and to shun nonviolent action.”<sup>28</sup>

Despite this less than enthusiastic backing, the NAACP did provide Journey organizers with invaluable assistance, most notably a list of key NAACP contacts and lawyers in cities along the project’s route. Houser and Rustin used this list to line up speaking engagements, meetings, and hospitality for the riders as they journeyed south. On this local level, they found support to be more forthcoming, reflecting perhaps a broader grassroots interest in Gandhian direct action methods than the national organization articulated. “[Local] NAACP attorneys . . . were prepared to defend us in the event of arrest,” recalled Jim Peck, and “NAACP members were ready to take us into their homes during our stopovers.” This cooperation proved crucial to the Journey’s success: it helped increase awareness of the *Irene Morgan* Supreme Court decision, it provided critical legal aid after the numerous arrests, and it largely outweighed the reticence of the national office.<sup>29</sup>

Nevertheless, such support had its limits. This became apparent as the Journey’s legal challenges slowly wound their way through the courts. Lawyers quickly resolved almost all of the cases in favor of the defendants, but one case, stemming from arrests in Chapel Hill, dragged on for several years. Not surprisingly, the weight of time wore down early offers of assistance. And as the Chapel Hill cases came up for trial and then multiple appeals, local supporters grew reluctant to provide ongoing aid. Leaders from CORE and FOR began to feel desperate. “Our problem,” Houser wrote to the North Carolina NAACP in an urgent request for help, “is that we are not a legal defense organization. . . . Groups like the NAACP have that as their first task.” But defending Journey of Reconciliation members was not the NAACP’s top priority. Despite the constitutional issues involved in the Journey arrests, the NAACP showed little interest in pursuing the case. Nor were local chapters happy about covering the legal expenses that stemmed from appeals to county and state superior courts. Although some members of the Journey wanted to appeal their cases all the way to the federal Supreme Court, they could not do so without financial and legal backing. After numerous legal appeals, the North Carolina Supreme Court upheld the verdicts from the Chapel Hill case, as well as the chain gang sentences imposed on the four men proclaimed guilty. Although CORE’s

organizers still considered the Journey of Reconciliation a success, other black activists clearly did not yet give the project their unqualified support.<sup>30</sup>

. . . . .

There was one last problem that the Journey of Reconciliation failed to face: all of the Journey's members were men, even though, as Houser recalled, "there were a good many women who were active in CORE and on our National Committee who wanted to go." Wally Nelson, one of the black members of the project, strongly believed that, in the CORE tradition, the Journey should act out CORE's vision of an egalitarian and integrated society, one which actively disregarded differences of all kinds. "I was one of the people," Nelson remembered, "who said . . . , 'You've got to have women on this. . . . This is what we believe!'" His wife, veteran organizer Juanita Nelson, concurred. "I knew what was going on because I was active in CORE at the time," she remembered. "As a matter of fact, I was very upset because I thought it should be an integrated Journey, . . . that women should be on it." But the Nelsons were in the minority. Although minutes indicate that "the original idea assumed women as well as men would participate in the Journey," organizers ultimately limited the project to men.<sup>31</sup>

That organizers excluded women from this project at first seems puzzling, especially since women had long participated in radical pacifist and interracial organizations and protests. Marjorie Swann, for example, had been one of CORE's charter members. A young college coed from a white working-class Chicago family, Swann was already a committed pacifist and interracialist by the time she joined CORE in 1942. More important, she stayed with the organization as she moved over the next few years from Chicago to Washington, D.C., to Philadelphia to Ohio. As with other early CORE members, Swann was a devoted follower of Gandhi, and she periodically tested his precepts in bus and restaurant sit-ins, occasionally risking arrest or physical harm and once serving time in jail after demonstrating for Gandhi's freedom. But Swann was as much an organizer as an activist. During the Second World War, she worked as the Washington secretary for the National Committee on Conscientious Objectors (NCCO) and then afterward volunteered her services to CORE in a leadership capacity. She headed Philadelphia CORE in 1945 and 1946, joined the national CORE's executive committee during that same period, and then in 1947, served on the executive committee of a CORE local in Yellow Springs, Ohio (along with James Lawson, who almost fifteen years later played an instrumental role in the civil rights movement in Nashville, Tennessee).<sup>32</sup>

Swann's experiences were not unique. Of CORE's fifty charter members, twenty-two were women. Women also spearheaded local chapters and worked on national committees, where leadership was divided quite evenly between women and men.<sup>33</sup> Indeed, the wartime years proved notable for providing both white and

black women with opportunities for activism and leadership that many used to their full potential and then tried to carry with them into the immediate postwar years. This dynamic matched that experienced by women in other political venues as well, including the Democratic Party, the labor movement, and radical organizations like the Communist Party. And although the black civil rights movement of the time was most visibly dominated by men like A. Philip Randolph and leagues of militant male protesters, within the pacifist-influenced nonviolent direct action movement, women could take the lead.<sup>34</sup>

Pauli Murray, a black member of FOR and mentor to student activists at Howard University in the early 1940s, was one such woman. As Murray recalled, “the fact that an accident of gender exempted me from military service made me feel an extra responsibility to carry on the integration battle.” In 1943, along with three other Howard women, including a young Juanita Nelson, she led her fellow students in a wave of protests and sit-ins at the segregated restaurants that surrounded the famed black university. What Murray described as “the wartime thinning of the ranks of male students” may have aided women’s prominence in these protests. But it is likely that the absence of men did not so much compel women to action as it increased the availability of leadership positions. It also strengthened their resolve. According to Murray, “the fact that we were doing something creative about our racial plight was exhilarating and increased our self-esteem.” Murray’s young protégée, Juanita Nelson, clearly agreed. Nelson returned home from Howard to become a leading member of Cleveland CORE. By 1947, she, too, had become a member of CORE’s national executive committee.<sup>35</sup>

So how to explain the lack of support for female participation in the Journey of Reconciliation? The sexual politics of race certainly played a role in the decisions that organizers made. The racial stereotype of the dangerous and hypersexualized black man threatening the purity of white womanhood had long provided whites with an excuse to attack and lynch African Americans who stepped out of line. By the 1940s, these attitudes made for an established feature of the national racial landscape, with particularly strong roots in the Jim Crow South. It was thus no secret to the organizers of the Journey that putting black men and white women together could provoke a catastrophic response. Indeed, organizers believed that “mixing the races and sexes would possibly exacerbate an already volatile situation” and lead to violence and probably death. Disrupting racially segregated seating, they argued, was a big enough battle to wage without adding the explosive ingredient of sex. Journey organizers were willing to cross some lines, but not all.<sup>36</sup>

They did seem, at first, to be willing to explore other options. Journey leaders promised to set up a project for the women who wanted to go, although Houser later recalled that “we were a little vague on that.” Nevertheless, both CORE and FOR “considered carefully” the proposal for a so-called Women’s Journey in the months that followed the original project. Members of both groups “held several

enthusiastic discussions on the possibility of another interracial Southern bus trip,” and many supporters “felt it was a good project.” As activist Alice Merritt argued in a letter to the CORE office, “I have a strong feeling that the time to take the lines a little further south is now while the men’s trip hasn’t been forgotten.” Nevertheless, CORE’s key staff and organizers seemed either unwilling or unable to devote the time and resources necessary to get this second project off the ground. “We discussed a possible Female Journey,” Catharine Raymond, George Houser’s secretary, apologetically explained to Merritt, “but decided against sponsoring one this year, because all the cases from last spring’s trip are still unsettled, and so we still have the expenses of all those trials to face.” Follow-up on the men’s project was simply given a higher priority than organizing a women’s challenge to Jim Crow. Organizers at CORE passed the project over to FOR’s Racial-Industrial Department, but it reached a dead end there as well.<sup>37</sup>

While it is relatively easy to explain women’s exclusion from the original Journey, the reasons why plans for an all-female project failed prove more difficult to resolve. One can, to some degree, attribute CORE’s and FOR’s minimal support for the women’s Journey to the prevailing cultural attitudes regarding women’s public work during the immediate postwar years. Across the nation, women had made gains during World War II that they were forced to relinquish as soon as the war ended. Displaced from jobs and political posts by soldiers returning from the front, women found themselves pushed back into the domestic realm and out of the public sphere. As historian Karen Anderson notes, the war marked only “a temporary retreat from the prevailing notions of women’s capabilities and proper roles.” That radical pacifists should follow such trends was to be expected: these developments played out across the broad spectrum of American politics and life.<sup>38</sup>

And yet the responses of female activists in CORE, FOR, and the nonviolent direct action movement indicate that many women did not subscribe to these shifting expectations regarding gender roles and women’s place. A number of women, including the well-respected black NAACP organizer Ella Baker, who had years of experience traveling alone throughout the South, attended the planning and decision-making meetings for the Journey of Reconciliation and voiced their concerns and desires about participating in the project. Others recruited female riders and raised money to cover the expenses of an all-female Journey. They were, in their own words, “counting on being able to go.” And when they couldn’t, they responded with public displeasure. Juanita Nelson, by then a veteran CORE organizer, recalled being “hopping mad” at her exclusion from the project. Her outspoken nature makes it likely that at least several male staffers and volunteers received a piece of her mind. Women in the movement did not retreat without a fight.<sup>39</sup>

Their angry responses, however, carried little weight. Marjorie Swann’s memories highlight the limits of female agency and authority at the time. “There just wasn’t enough approval for us to participate,” she recalled, “the men just put their

collective feet down.” In a movement founded on the egalitarian principles of “brotherhood” that saw all human beings, in the world of FOR leader Muste, as “children of God, . . . essentially brothers and sisters,” the unequal balance of power between women and men proves particularly striking. As the politics of the Journey of Reconciliation suggest, below the surface, radical pacifism’s commitment to “brotherhood” was as literal as it was a then unquestioned figure of speech.<sup>40</sup>

The postwar construction of American radical pacifism was, in fact, a large part of the problem. Given the longstanding relationship in the United States between military duty, national identity, and notions of manly honor, it should come as no surprise that pacifist men often found themselves publicly ridiculed as effeminate weaklings whose questionable masculinity was a source of national dishonor and shame. In defense of their manhood, radical pacifist men quickly turned to an interpretation of Gandhian nonviolence that emphasized the heroism stemming from risk taking and sacrifice. Within this frame of reference, going to prison as a conscientious objector became proof of one’s manliness and courage, rather than an indication of weak-kneed cowardice. Activists thus believed that they could use non-violent action to bolster a sense of masculine identity that pacifism *without* action threatened to undermine. Thus James Farmer, FOR field organizer and charter member of CORE, typically encouraged nonviolent activists to create a “virile and comprehensive program” to tackle the problem of black civil rights through nonviolent action. Draft resister David Dellinger similarly characterized pacifist resistance to World War II as “the war for total brotherhood.” Then there was Jim Peck, known for his persistence and proclivity for trouble, who practically swaggered when he recounted his acts of nonviolent protest. By the late 1940s, pacifist men had ironically replicated the concept of heroic martial duty as a constitutive element of masculinity within their own movement.<sup>41</sup>

The radical pacifists’ “war” was a nonviolent one, but it held the same implications as far as gender roles were concerned, not only for men but for women as well. The old trope of the self-suffering and comforting woman who stayed behind as men left to fight the battles of war prevailed, even when women acted on the front lines of militant protest, as they repeatedly did.<sup>42</sup> Rather than celebrating women’s heroic risk-taking efforts, written reports instead described women as “natural” pacifiers and passive resisters, whose presence alone could calm potentially explosive situations. As FOR’s Racial-Industrial Department characteristically asserted, “there is less likelihood of violence if women happen to be present.” And if the threat of violence did appear, men often took it on themselves to protectively stand by as women engaged in their protests and pickets. True to type, men championed women not only as pacifiers but also as stalwart supporters. Organizers of the Journey of Reconciliation, for example, proudly recounted how female passengers were more willing than men to take a stand in support of the Journey’s direct action efforts. It was women, they argued, who most readily wrote their names and phone numbers

down on cards if they needed to be called as courtroom witnesses and who vocally expressed support for the activists' open defiance of the Jim Crow laws. Women's achievements brought acclaim, but only in these secondary roles.<sup>43</sup>

Women who did not fit into this role, who insisted on primary participation in the movement, were thus an anomaly and a threat. Not only did men in the movement use gender to code their militancy male but they also explicitly defined this militancy in contrast to a devalued feminine identity. Femininity, from their perspective, represented weakness and dishonor and an inability to perform as leading actors within the public political sphere. Men therefore acted to prove themselves as *men*, as activists stronger and more powerful than women and thus worthy of political respect. Women could act as well, but they needed to make sure that their accomplishments did not overshadow those of their fellow men. Consequently, the idea of a female Journey, especially one that might push the envelope of resistance beyond that of the original all-male project, must have been anathema to the men of FOR and CORE. While these men revealed little through the words they left behind, their actions indicate just how minimally they supported the idea of independent female organizing efforts. Egalitarianism notwithstanding, the radical pacifist movement was not yet ready to accept the full implications of gender equality in its struggle for social change.

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Activists involved in CORE and FOR had hoped that the Journey of Reconciliation would have wide appeal and would unite a mass movement against Jim Crow. In the words of white Journey volunteer Jim Peck, organizers and participants truly thought that "if an organized, interracial group set an example, wouldn't other people be encouraged to follow?" Perhaps the time was not right. As Bayard Rustin retrospectively reflected, "the masses were not yet ready to enter into active struggle, but their sympathies were with us." Although the movement CORE hoped to spark did not materialize in the 1940s, historians Meier and Rudwick note that the Journey of Reconciliation "functioned as a dramatic high point and source of inspiration to CORE for years to come."<sup>44</sup>

The Journey of Reconciliation certainly highlighted the power of the 1940s alliance between radical pacifism and the struggle for black civil rights. It illustrated the innovation, strength, and flexibility of the radical pacifist movement and the power of its commitment to creative and nonviolent direct action. Radical pacifism's zealous dedication to this militant vision of social change gave CORE and its related projects the creative edge that pushed campaigns like the Journey of Reconciliation to the vanguard of postwar radical protest. At the same time, the Journey's connection to the organized civil rights movement helped preserve radical pacifism's vision during a lonely and difficult time.

Nevertheless, the Journey revealed crucial weaknesses and limitations at the

points where these two movements converged. It was, without a doubt, an experimental project. As the chair of Chapel Hill's Journey of Reconciliation support committee reflected, "there are no charts in this pioneering work, so mistakes are inevitable."<sup>45</sup> Despite good intentions and close ties, the radical pacifist and black freedom struggles were not ideologically reciprocal. In other words, while radical pacifists saw the struggle for racial equality as an integral part of their work for a peaceful and nonviolent future, not all civil rights workers were committed to the pacifist vision. In addition, CORE's militant tactics could also estrange them from the very people and groups whose support they needed—both on the civil rights and pacifist fronts. It thus seems inevitable that this ideological imbalance, and the absence of shared goals beyond the common denominator of opposition to racial segregation, would lead to organizational tensions. That these two movements were able to actively cooperate at all is actually quite impressive. That they found it difficult to sustain such connections, however, should come as no surprise. The two movements could work together, but theirs was an imperfect fit at best.

The absence of women on the Journey of Reconciliation also indicated the limits to radical pacifism's egalitarian vision. The Journey epitomized a style of activism that privileged male risk taking and sacrifice over female participation. As the struggle over the female Journey reveals, there were limits to women's leadership and authority among pacifist direct actionists, even if women were willing to take the same risks as men. Indeed, to accept women's strength and power as nonviolent activists would have undermined men's efforts to bolster their masculinity through pacifist protest. Female pacifists were not the only women afforded opportunities during World War II that they ultimately had to give up in the years after 1945. Yet while they may have remained invisible, they did not disappear. Their consignment to the background in this first national project of the postwar radical pacifist movement raised issues that radicals of all sorts would grapple with in the years to come.<sup>46</sup>

## Notes

1. Photograph of Worth Randle, Wally Nelson, Ernest Bromley, James Peck, Igal Roodenko, Bayard Rustin, Joseph Felmet, George Houser, and Andrew Johnson, April 1947, the Papers of the Fellowship of Reconciliation (hereafter cited as FOR), photograph box 3, Swarthmore College Peace Collection, Swarthmore, PA; George Houser?, handwritten note, n.d. [1942], the Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, microfilm (Sanford, NC: Microfilming Corporation of America, 1987) (hereafter cited as CORE), reel 11; Journey of Reconciliation scrapbook, the Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, Swarthmore College Peace Collection (hereafter cited as CORE Papers), box 3, "George Houser's Scrapbooks." The handwritten inscription in the Journey of Reconciliation's scrapbook reads, "*Spring 1947: A group of courageous young people planned to travel in an Interracial Group through 4 Southern States. This Journey of Reconciliation made the history recorded in this scrapbook.*"
2. George Houser and Bayard Rustin, *We Challenged Jim Crow! A Report on the Journey of Reconciliation* (New York: FOR/CORE, 1947). See also August Meier and Elliot Rudwick,

- CORE: A Study in the Civil Rights Movement, 1942–1968* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 3–39; James Tracy, *Direct Action: Radical Pacifism from the Union Eight to the Chicago Seven* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 47–56; Lawrence Wittner, *Rebels against War: The American Peace Movement, 1933–1983* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1984), 160–62; James Peck, *Freedom Ride* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1962), 14–27.
3. For an analysis of the connections between these two movements from the perspective of the black freedom struggle, see Aldon Morris, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement: Black Communities Organizing for Change* (New York: Free Press, 1994), 139–73. For explorations of how these linked efforts affected the trajectory of the peace movement, see Tracy, *Direct Action*, as well as Susan Lynn, *Progressive Women in Conservative Times: Racial Justice, Peace, and Feminism, 1945 to the 1960s* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1992). Biographical studies of pacifist organizer Bayard Rustin, who straddled these two movements for most of his political career, similarly highlight the ways in which the struggles for peace and work for racial equality overlapped. See John D’Emilio, “Homophobia and the Trajectory of Postwar American Radicalism: The Career of Bayard Rustin,” *Radical History Review* 62 (1995): 80–103; Jervis Anderson, *Bayard Rustin: Troubles I’ve Seen* (New York: HarperCollins, 1997); and Daniel Levine, *Bayard Rustin and the Civil Rights Movement* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2000). Despite the influence of the pacifist movement, pacifists were not the only link between African Americans and the techniques of nonviolent direct action, and numerous black leaders had fostered their own, independent engagement with Gandhi and his liberation struggle in colonial India. See Sudarshan Kapur, *Raising Up a Prophet: The African-American Encounter with Gandhi* (Boston: Beacon, 1992).
  4. On the dominant interpretation of masculine militancy as normative in the history of American radicalism, see Tracy, *Direct Action*; Van Gosse, *Where the Boys Are: Cuba, Cold War America, and the Making of a New Left* (New York: Verso, 1993); Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage* (New York: Bantam, 1987); James Miller, *Democracy Is in the Streets: From Port Huron to the Siege of Chicago* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987); Harvard Sitkoff, “Racial Militancy and Interracial Violence in the Second World War,” *Journal of American History* 58.3 (1971): 661–81; Maurice Isserman, *If I Had a Hammer: The Death of the Old Left and the Birth of the New Left* (1987; Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993); John Dittmer, *Local People: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994); Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981); and Paul Buhle, *Marxism in the United States: Remapping the History of the United States* (New York: Verso, 1987).
  5. Most studies of women’s activism emphasize their work in single-sex groups. For a generalized discussion of women’s activism in all-female organizations, see Estelle Freedman, “Separatism As Strategy: Female Institution Building and American Feminism, 1870–1930,” *Feminist Studies* 5.3 (1979): 512–29. For analyses of women’s activism in the women’s peace movement, see, most notably, Harriet Alonso, *Peace As a Women’s Issue: A History of the U.S. Movement for World Peace and Women’s Rights* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1993); and Amy Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace: Traditional Motherhood and Radical Politics in the 1960s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993).

Of those studies that do examine women’s experiences in mixed-sex groups, most emphasize the way these experiences paved the way for the feminist movement of the 1960s and 1970s. See, for example, Lynn, *Progressive Women in Conservative Times*; Sara Evans,

*Personal Politics: The Roots of Women's Liberation in the Civil Rights Movement and the New Left* (New York: Random House, 1979); Kate Weigand, *Red Feminism: American Communism and the Making of Women's Liberation* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001); and Alice Echols, "Nothing Distant about It: Women's Liberation and Sixties Radicalism," in *The Sixties: From Memory to History*, ed. David Farber (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994).

Several recent works do focus on the dynamics of gender in shaping the activism of modern social movements. The most direct is Dee Garrison's "'Our Skirts Gave Them Courage': The Civil Defense Protest Movement in New York City, 1955–1961," in *Not June Cleaver: Women and Gender in Postwar America, 1945–1960*, Joanne Meyerowitz (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991). Doug Rossinow, *The Politics of Authenticity: Liberalism, Christianity, and the New Left in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998) and Lawrence Wittner, *The Struggle against the Bomb*, vol. 2 of *Resisting the Bomb: A History of the World Nuclear Disarmament Movement, 1954–1970* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997), also examine this issue in some detail. The best studies of the impact of gender on women's activism, however, can be found in the extensive scholarship of the modern civil rights struggle. See Cynthia Griggs Fleming, *Soon We Will Not Cry: The Liberation of Ruby Doris Smith Robinson* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1998); Constance Curry et al., *Deep in Our Hearts: Nine White Women in the Freedom Movement* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2000); and Charles Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

6. On the widespread influence of the interwar peace movement and its social justice agenda, see Charles Chatfield, *For Peace and Justice: Pacifism in America, 1914–1941* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1971); Wittner, *Rebels against War*, 1–33; Robert Cohen, *When the Old Left Was Young: Student Radicals and America's First Mass Student Movement, 1929–1941* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); Harriet Alonso, *The Women's Peace Union and the Outlawry of War, 1921–1942* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1989); Charles Howlett, *Brookwood Labor College and the Struggle for Peace and Social Justice in America* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1993); Jo Ann Ooiman Robinson, *Abraham Went Out: A Biography of A. J. Muste* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1981), 32–70; Betty Lynn Barton, "The Fellowship of Reconciliation: Pacifism, Labor, and Social Welfare, 1915–1960" (Ph.D. diss., Florida State University, 1974).

On the militancy of the Depression-era labor movement and the impact of the Communist Party on progressive organizing and black civil rights, see Staughton Lynd, "We Are All Leaders": *The Alternative Unionism of the Early 1930s* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996); Maurice Isserman, *Which Side Were You On? The American Communist Party during the Second World War* (1982; Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 1–31; Michael Denning, *The Cultural Front: The Laboring of American Culture in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Verso, 1998); Adam Fairclough, *Better Day Coming: Blacks and Equality, 1890–2000* (New York: Viking, 2001), 133–80; Robin D. G. Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe: Alabama Communists during the Great Depression* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990); Nell Irvin Painter, *The Narrative of Hosea Hudson: His Life As a Negro Communist in the South* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979); James Goodman, *Stories of Scottsboro* (New York: Pantheon, 1994); Cheryl Greenberg, "Or Does It Explode?" *Black Harlem in the Great Depression* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

7. On the immediate impact of World War II on American antimilitarists, see Alonso, *Peace As a Women's Issue*, 125–56; Wittner, *Rebels against War*, 62–124; Tracy, *Direct Action*, 1–46. Twelve thousand conscientious objectors spent the wartime years in 151 Civilian Public Service Camps. A smaller but significant number decided that resistance to war required more than accepting official conscientious objector status and cooperating with military demands. Nearly 6,000 draft resisters spent time in federal prison for violating the federal draft law. While about one-third of these men were Jehovah's Witnesses and acted on faith alone, two-thirds of the imprisoned resisters suffered prison sentences because of their political beliefs. During World War II, conscientious objectors comprised one-sixth of the federal prison population. See Wittner, *Rebels against War*, 72, 84; Larry Gara and Lenna Mae Gara, eds., *A Few Small Candles: War Resisters of World War II Tell Their Stories* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1999); Rachel Waltner Goossen, *Women against the Good War: Conscientious Objection and Gender on the American Home Front, 1941–1947* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997); Deena Hurwitz and Craig Simpson, eds., *Against the Tide: Pacifist Resistance in the Second World War: An Oral History* (New York: War Resisters League, 1983).
8. Bayard Rustin, *Interracial Primer* (New York: FOR Publications, 1943), 5; James Farmer, “The Race Logic of Pacifism,” *Fellowship* reprint, Feb. 1942, series A, box 26, FOR; A. J. Muste, “The Foundations of Democracy,” typescript, 1938, 18, Swarthmore College Peace Collection, the Papers of A. J. Muste (hereafter cited as Muste), reel 4, microfilm (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1990); A.J. Muste, “What the Bible Teaches about Freedom,” FOR booklet, 1943, 7, Muste, reel 6. Members of the FOR, the preeminent pacifist organization of the 1940s, used the term *brotherhood* everywhere, from the title of proposed projects (i.e., the Brotherhood Mobilization) to pamphlets, speeches, and private correspondence. On the egalitarianism of the secular left of the 1930s, see Cohen, *When the Old Left Was Young*, 188–277; Daniel Horowitz, *Betty Friedan and the Making of the Feminist Mystique: The American Left, the Cold War, and Modern Feminism* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1998); Weigand, *Red Feminism*, 15–45; Lynd, “*We Are All Leaders.*”
9. On the dynamics of labor and race during the World War II era, see Steve Fraser, “The ‘Labor Question,’” in *The Rise and Fall of the New Deal Order, 1930–1980*, ed. Fraser and Gary Gerstle (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), 55–84; Robert Korstad and Nelson Lichtenstein, “Opportunities Found and Lost: Labor, Radicals, and the Early Civil Rights Movement,” *Journal of American History* 70 (1988): 786–811; George Lipsitz, *Rainbow at Midnight: Labor and Culture in the 1940s* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994). On black militancy during this time, see also Adam Fairclough's discussion of the wartime NAACP in *Better Day Coming*, 181–202; Herbert Garfinkel, *When Negroes March: The March on Washington Movement in the Organizational Politics for FEPC* (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1959); Paula Pfeffer, *A. Philip Randolph: Pioneer of the Civil Rights Movement* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990); Sitkoff, “Racial Militancy and Interracial Violence in the Second World War,” 661–81; John Egerton, *Speak Now against the Day: The Generation before the Civil Rights Movement in the South* (New York: Knopf, 1994); Michael Honey, *Southern Labor and Black Civil Rights: Organizing Memphis Workers* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993); and Kapur, *Raising Up a Prophet*, 101–23.

10. Dave Dellinger, introduction to Hurwitz and Simpson, *Against the Tide*, n.p. Activists were particularly influenced by Richard Gregg's survey of Gandhian action, *The Power of Nonviolence* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1934), as well as the book that CORE activists adopted as their "bible," Krishnalal Shridharani's *War without Violence* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1939). See also Dave Dellinger, *From Yale to Jail: The Life Story of a Moral Dissenter* (New York: Pantheon, 1993), 25–26; and Barton, "The Fellowship of Reconciliation."
11. A. Philip Randolph, quoted in Kapur, *Raising Up a Prophet*, 112; James Farmer, National FOR, to George Houser, Chicago FOR, Feb. 5, 1943, CORE, reel 11. See also A. J. Muste, "Two Tactical Problems," in "Civil Disobedience: Is It the Answer to Jim Crow?" *FOR Non-Violent Action Newsbulletin* 2/3 (1943): 24, Muste, reel 4; and "Draft Report," FOR Commission on Inter-Racial and Minorities, n.d. [1943?], the Bayard Rustin Papers, ed. John Bracey Jr. and August Meier (hereafter cited as Rustin), reel 1, microfilm (Frederick, MD: University Publications of America, 1988); Farmer, "The Race Logic of Pacifism."
12. George M. Houser, *Erasing the Color Line* (New York: Fellowship Publications, 1945); Pauli Murray, *Pauli Murray: The Autobiography of a Black Activist, Feminist, Lawyer, Priest, and Poet* (1987; Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1989), 202–8; "Pledge," Civil Rights Committee, Howard Chapter NAACP, May 1, 1944, Pauli Murray Papers, box 18, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe College, Cambridge, MA; Wally and Juanita Nelson, interview by author, Deerfield, MA, March 13, 1995. On the founding of CORE, see also Meier and Rudwick, *CORE*, chap. 1. For more details on the pacifist wartime prison protests against Jim Crow, see "Conscience in Prison: An Appeal from COs," FOR and WRL, Nov. 26, 1943, Rustin, reel 20; Wittner, *Rebels against War*, 84–94; James Peck, *Who Would Not Kill* (New York: Lyle Stuart, 1958); Dellinger, *From Yale to Jail*, 68–98, 115–37; Tracy, *Direct Action*, 18–20, 35–39; and Gara and Gara, *A Few Small Candles*. Those prisons that witnessed the most significant protests were in Ashland, Kentucky; Lewisburg, Pennsylvania; and Danbury, Connecticut.
13. A. J. Muste, "The Role of the Pacifist Movement Today," typescript, n.d. [1943?], Muste, reel 4; Marion Bromley, "Feminism and Nonviolent Revolution," in *Reweaving the Web of Life: Feminism and Nonviolence*, ed. Pam McAllister (Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, 1982), 146; George Houser, "Plan for a Non-Violent Campaign against Jim Crow," June 16, 1944, CORE, reel 14; George Houser, "Plan for Non-Violent Campaign against Jim Crow," June 19, 1944, Rustin, reel 5; Minutes of National EC of CORE, Oct. 14, 1944, CORE, reel 16; A. J. Muste to George Houser, June 28, 1944, CORE, reel 11. Minutes from a CORE executive committee meeting in December 1945 note A. Philip Randolph's enthusiastic response "to the idea of a mass movement" and imply that the organizers believed the time was ripe for such an action. See Minutes of National EC of CORE, Dec. 8–9, 1945, CORE, reel 16.
14. Robin Washington, prod., *You Don't Have to Ride Jim Crow!* New Hampshire Public Television, 1995; Meier and Rudwick, *CORE*, 33–34; Bayard Rustin, "Beyond the Courts," typescript, Dec. 28, 1946, Rustin, reel 17; George Houser, interview, in *You Don't Have to Ride Jim Crow!*; George Houser, "A Personal Retrospective on the 1947 Journey of Reconciliation," typescript, n.d. [1992], 3, CORE Papers, box 1. See also Catherine Barnes, *Journey from Jim Crow: The Desegregation of Southern Transit* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 1–65; Robin D. G. Kelley, "Congested Terrain: Resistance on Public Transportation," in *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class* (New York: Free Press, 1994), 55–75; Jo Ann Gibson Robinson, *The Montgomery Bus Boycott and the Women Who Started It* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1987).

15. Minutes of CORE EC meeting, Sept. 14, 1946, CORE, reel 16; Rustin, "Beyond the Courts"; "Memorandum Number 2: Bus and Train Travel in the South," FOR Racial-Industrial Department, n.d. [Sept.–Oct. 1946], FOR, series E, box 1; Minutes of CORE EC meeting, 14 Sep 1946; Houser, "A Personal Retrospective."
16. Wally and Juanita Nelson, interview; Minutes of FOR Racial and Industrial Department meeting, Sept. 17, 1946, FOR, series A, box 5a; George Houser to "Dear Friend," Feb. 26, 1947, CORE, reel 13; George Houser to Wilson Head, Oct. 15, 1946, CORE, reel 11. By late February 1947, only four people had committed to go on the trip. See George Houser to "Dear Friend," Feb. 26, 1947, CORE, reel 13.
17. Wally Nelson, interview; Wally Nelson, quoted in *You Don't Have to Ride Jim Crow!*; Peck, *Freedom Ride*, 15; Houser and Rustin, *We Challenged Jim Crow!*, 2. It should be noted that of the sixteen participants on the Journey, eight were white and eight black, thus achieving the true interracial character that marked CORE's philosophy.
18. Marjorie Swann, interview with author, Voluntown, CT, March 4, 1995; Houser and Rustin, *We Challenged Jim Crow!*, 2; Meier and Rudwick, *CORE*, 34. For details of other CORE direct action efforts and the responses they provoked, see George Houser, *Erasing the Color Line*. On the threats posed by white supremacists and the "epidemic of violence" in the wartime South, see Egerton, *Speak Now against the Day*, 359–75. On the particular hardships faced by southern white interracialists, see Egerton, *Speak Now against the Day*; Virginia Durr with Hollinger Barnard, *Outside the Magic Circle: The Autobiography of Virginia Foster Durr* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1985); and Catherine Fosl, *Subversive Southerner: Anne Braden and the Struggle for Racial Justice in the Cold War South* (New York: Palgrave, 2002).
19. Bayard Rustin, *Strategies for Freedom: The Changing Patterns of Black Protest* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), 25; Minutes of FOR National Committee meeting, Oct. 24, 1946, FOR, series A, box 3; Peck, *Freedom Ride*, 16.
20. Peck, *Freedom Ride*, 15; Houser and Rustin, *We Challenged Jim Crow!*; George Houser, interview, in *You Don't Have to Ride Jim Crow!*
21. Homer Jack, "Journey of Reconciliation," *Common Ground* (1947): 23; Igal Roodenko, handwritten note, April 14, 1947, CORE, reel 10; Jack, "Journey of Reconciliation," 23.
22. Houser, "A Personal Retrospective," 15; Houser and Rustin, *We Challenged Jim Crow!*, 6, 10–11.
23. Houser, "A Personal Retrospective"; Houser, *Erasing the Color Line*, 11; "Very Confidential," Journey of Reconciliation contact list, April 1947, Swarthmore College Peace Collection, the Papers of Igal Roodenko (hereafter cited as Roodenko), box 4.
24. George Houser to "the Participants in the Journey of Reconciliation," March 28, 1947, Roodenko, box 4; Houser and Rustin, *We Challenged Jim Crow!*, 2, 3–7; Meier and Rudwick, *CORE*, 34; Houser and Rustin, *We Challenged Jim Crow!*, 12.
25. Bernice Fisher to George Houser, July 12, 1944, CORE, reel 11; George Houser to A. J. Muste, Feb. 21, 1945, CORE, reel 14; see also George Houser to Bond Collier, July 5, 1945, CORE, reel 11; Meier and Rudwick, *CORE*, 19–20; George Houser to C. H. Wellman, June 4, 1945, CORE, reel 11.
26. Ernest Bromley, interview with author, Cincinnati, OH, September 4–7, 1996; A. J. Muste to John Nevin Sayre, Aug. 13, 1946, FOR, series D, box 1; Minutes of FOR National Committee meeting, Oct. 24; Ernest Bromley, interview.
27. Meier and Rudwick, *CORE*, 10; Bayard Rustin, "The Negro and Nonviolence," *Fellowship*, October 1942, reprinted in Bayard Rustin, *Down the Line* (Chicago: Quadrangle, 1971), 11; Thurgood Marshall, quoted in Rustin, "Beyond the Courts."

28. Minutes of FOR Racial-Industrial Committee meeting, Jan. 7, 1947, FOR, series A, box 5a; Houser, "A Personal Retrospective," 8; Minutes of FOR Racial-Industrial Committee meeting, Jan. 7; Peck, *Freedom Ride*, 17.
29. Houser, "A Personal Retrospective"; Minutes of FOR Racial-Industrial Committee meeting, Jan. 7, 1947; George Houser to "the participants in the Journey of Reconciliation," March 28, 1947, Roodenko, box 4; Peck, *Freedom Ride*, 17. At least 50 percent of the Journey's public meetings in the South were officially sponsored by local chapters of the NAACP. See "Very Confidential," Journey of Reconciliation contact list. Unlike the national NAACP, the wider black community had long shown an interest in Gandhi's anticolonial struggle and the possibility of transplanting his techniques to American soil. See Kapur, *Raising Up a Prophet*. The disjunction between the will of the national organization and the desires of local branches became eminently clear to NAACP organizers like Ella Baker, who worked as the NAACP's traveling field secretary and director of branches in the early 1940s and who chafed under the conservative directives of the national executive board. See Joanne Grant, *Ella Baker: Freedom Bound* (New York: John Wiley, 1998), 45–90.
30. FOR and CORE, Background Statement on the North Carolina Case, typescript, 1949, Rustin, reel 3; Houser and Rustin, *We Challenged Jim Crow!*; George Houser to T. V. Mangum, North Carolina NAACP, June 7, 1947, CORE, reel 44. The depth of legal wrangling, particularly over obtaining and paying for lawyers, overshadowed most discussions about the legal and moral issues involved in the cases. See miscellaneous correspondence, June 1947–March 1949, CORE, reel 44; Bayard Rustin, "A Report on Twenty-Two Days on the Chain Gang at Roxboro, North Carolina," April 1949, Rustin, reel 17.
31. George Houser, interview, in *You Don't Have to Ride Jim Crow!*; Wally Nelson, interview, in *You Don't Have to Ride Jim Crow!*; Juanita Nelson, interview, in *You Don't Have to Ride Jim Crow!*; Minutes of FOR National Committee meeting, Oct. 24, 1946.
32. Marjorie Swann, interview with author; "Suggested letter to managers of Philadelphia department stores," Nov. 1945, CORE Papers, box 1; Minutes, CORE EC meeting, Dec. 8–9; Marj Swann to George Houser, Feb. 20, 1946, CORE, reel 10; Marj Swann to George Houser, June 4, 1946, CORE, reel 9; Marj Swann to George Houser, July 7, 1946, CORE, reel 11; Yellow Springs CORE letterhead, Sept. 3, 1947, CORE, reel 10.
33. The ratio of men to women among CORE's officers and its executive committee was consistently about 50:50 throughout the 1940s. See lists of officers and executive committee members on CORE letterhead, 1943–1949, CORE, reels 8 and 9. The FOR's national staff and executive committees, on the other hand, were dominated by men, who held 75–80 percent of all leadership posts and who tended to relegate women to office and editorial positions. See lists of national secretarial staff and executive committee members on FOR letterhead, 1945–1947, CORE, reel 8.
34. Mary Lou Munts and Arvonne Fraser, interviews, in *Step By Step: Building a Feminist Movement, 1941–1977*, prod. Joyce Follett, Step by Step, 1998; Nancy Gabin, *Feminism in the Labor Movement: Women and the United Auto Workers, 1935–1975* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), 47–110; Horowitz, *Betty Friedan and the Making of the Feminine Mystique*, 69–120; Wiegand, *Red Feminism*, 28–45; Pfeffer, A. *Philip Randolph*; Sitkoff, "Racial Militancy and Interracial Violence in the Second World War."

35. Murray, *Pauli Murray*, 205, 202, 206–8; Wally and Juanita Nelson, interview; miscellaneous correspondence between Juanita Morrow (Nelson) and George Houser, 1944–1946, CORE, reel 9. Two out of five of CORE’s national officers were female, and four women, including Juanita Nelson and Marj (Kendrick) Swann, served on the ten-member executive committee. See CORE letterhead, March 24, 1947, CORE, reel 9.
36. Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, “‘The Mind That Burns in Each Body’: Women, Rape, and Racial Violence,” in *Powers of Desire: The Politics of Sexuality*, ed. Ann Snitow, Christine Stansell, and Sharon Thompson (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1983), 328–49; Houser, “A Personal Retrospective”; Conrad Lynn, *There Is a Fountain: The Autobiography of a Civil Rights Lawyer* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1979), 109.
37. George Houser, interview, in *You Don’t Have to Ride Jim Crow!*; Report to the FOR National Council about the Racial-Industrial Work, May 30, 1947, FOR, series E, box 1; Minutes of FOR National Committee meeting, May 29–31, 1947, FOR, series A, box 3; Report on Fifth CORE Convention, June 19, 1947, CORE, reel 9; Peck, *Freedom Ride*, 27; Minutes of FOR National Committee meeting, May 29–31, 1947; Alice Merrit to Catherine Raymond, Jan. 21, 1948, CORE, reel 10; Minutes of CORE Executive Committee meeting, Sept. 14, 1947, CORE, reel 16; Catherine Raymond to Alice Merritt, Jan. 23, 1948, CORE, reel 10.
38. Karen Anderson, *Wartime Women: Sex Roles, Family Relations, and the Status of Women during World War II* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1981), 4. For other examples of how wartime demobilization affected American women, see Ruth Milkman, *Gender at Work: The Dynamics of Job Segregation by Sex during World War II* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987); Gabin, *Feminism in the Labor Movement*, 111–42; Munts and Fraser, interviews; Horowitz, *Betty Friedan and the Making of the Feminine Mystique*, 117–52; Goossen, *Women against the Good War*, 112–28.
39. Ella Baker, interview with Joanne Grant, 1966–1969, courtesy of Joanne Grant; Minutes of FOR Racial and Industrial Department meeting, Sept. 17; Alice Merrit to Catherine Raymond, Jan. 21, 1948 (according to this letter, at least four and possibly six women were committed to a second journey); Juanita Nelson, interview, in *You Don’t Have to Ride Jim Crow!*
40. Marjorie Swann, interview; Muste, “The Foundations of Democracy,” 16.
41. James Farmer, “Memorandum to A. J. Muste on Provisional Plans for *Brotherhood Mobilization*,” Jan. 8, 1942, FOR, series A, box 7; Dave Dellinger, “Declaration of War (1945),” in *Revolutionary Nonviolence* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1970), 19. Tracy, *Direct Action*, highlights the masculine nature of radical pacifism in the wartime and postwar years. As primary documents, Jim Peck’s various memoirs most tellingly assert this equation between nonviolent resistance and virile masculinity. See James Peck, *We Who Would Not Kill* and *Upperdogs vs. Underdogs* (Canterbury, NH: Greenleaf, 1969). On the ways in which this dynamic was mirrored in other social movements of the time, see Gosse, *Where the Boys Are*, and Weigand, *Red Feminism*.

On the relationship between martial valor and definitions of masculine citizenry, see Ilene Rose Feinman, *Citizenship Rites: Feminist Soldiers and Feminist Antimilitarists* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 88–94; and Linda Kerber, *No Constitutional Right to Be Ladies: Women and the Obligations of Citizenship* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1998), 221–302. On Gandhian nonviolence and how U.S. activists interpreted it in the 1940s, see Shridharani, *War without Violence*; Gregg, *The Power of Nonviolence*; A. J. Muste, “Gandhi, Maritain, and Niebuhr,” typescript, 1943, Muste, reel 4.

42. On the stereotypical images of noncombatant women in war, see Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Women and War* (New York: Basic Books, 1987). In contrast to the characteristics of what Elshtain calls the “Beautiful Soul,” numerous women throughout the 1940s marched on the front lines, risking arrest and imprisonment, not to mention hecklers and street fights, as they protested against racial inequality, militarism, and the draft. Their presence and numbers were, in fact, vital to the success of an unpopular movement that had few recruits and diminishing support during the wartime and postwar years. For examples, see Marjorie Swann, interview; “A Call to Action for the Cause of Freedom,” Non-Violent Action Committee, Fellowship of Reconciliation, n.d. [June 1943], FOR, series A, box 5; photograph of Marjorie Swann and others in front of the British embassy, July 1943, War Resisters League photo collection, Swarthmore College Peace Collection; Marion Coddington to Ernest Bromley, June 28, 1947, Carol Rainey private collection; Marion Coddington to Ernest Bromley, July 17, 1947, Carol Rainey private collection.
43. “Memorandum Number 2: Bus and Train Travel in the South,” FOR Racial-Industrial Department, n.d. [Sept.–Oct. 1946], FOR, series E, box 1; Joffre Stewart, “Tactics vs. Principles,” *Chi-CORE News*, October 18, 1947, 7, CORE, reel 8; Houser and Rustin, *We Challenged Jim Crow!*, 13.
44. *You Don't Have to Ride Jim Crow!*; Peck, *Freedom Ride*, 15; Rustin, *Strategies for Freedom*, 26; Meier and Rudwick, *CORE*, 39. Marjorie Swann and Wally and Juanita Nelson echoed this evaluation of the journey's importance in interviews with the author.
45. C. E. Boulware to George Houser, Jan. 17, 1949, CORE, reel 44.
46. The most well-known victims of shrinking opportunities for women after the war were those who went to work in the war industries, only to find themselves pressured to return to the domestic realm after men came back from overseas. See Susan Hartmann, *The Home Front and Beyond: American Women in the 1940s* (Boston: Twayne, 1982), 20–24; Milkman, *Gender and Work*; and Gabin, *Feminism in the Labor Movement*.

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