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THE HISTORY OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF COLORED PEOPLE IN TEXAS

1912-2009

Prepared for the Texas NAACP

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THE HISTORY OF THE NAACP IN TEXAS

PREFACE

America’s history is an inspirational story of pioneers who gambled their lives and those of their families in search of liberty and freedom. But that remarkable history bears the taint of a history that challenged these lofty goals with years of denying freedom and liberties to many of its people. Spanning centuries, America has persecuted racial and ethnic groups, women, children and those of non-traditional religion and sexual orientation. Amidst these abuses, those heaped upon the African immigrant have been the most long lasting and cruellest. From its inception, slavery in America established and institutionalized the denial of civil and human rights to people brought forcibly onto American soil.

In 1909, a group of white liberals led by Mary White Ovington and Oswald Garrison Villard issued a call for a meeting to do racial justice. Out of the sixty that were present seven of those individuals were African-American including W.E.B Dubois, Ida B. Wells, and Mary Church Terrell.¹ These sixty individuals banned together to establish an organization that remains the single organization linked to civil rights advocacy throughout the world; the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Known internationally as the NAACP, this organization quickly established branches throughout the United States of America.

The first branch of the NAACP in Texas was established in El Paso in 1915 and by 1918 four branches called Texas home. But Texas did not provide a welcome to the new Texas branches that were met with bitter racial animus often fostered by white supremacy organizations like the Ku Klux Klan. These organizations were known for their campaigns of intimidation that often kept African Americans from participating in constitutionally guaranteed rights like voting. While other branches of the NAACP emerged in Texas, many disbanded under threat by the government bolstered by the lawlessness of the Ku Klux Klan. By 1923, only five branches existed in Texas and a resurgence of the organization did not begin until World War II and immediately thereafter. By 1945, the Texas state conference of the NAACP was the second largest in the country boasting more than one hundred branches and almost 30,000 members.

From that time to this, the NAACP branches in Texas have grown and continue to flourish. The African American Experience in Texas chronicles the creation, development and history of the Texas branches.² From Jim Crow to Barack Obama, the NAACP Texas stands as a symbol of freedom, equality and justice in Texas for all.

¹ National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, http://www.naacp.org/about/history
African Americans in Texas 1910-1925

The largest African American populations in Texas during this period were in Dallas and Houston. In 1920 Dallas’s African American population was numbered at 24,023 or 15% of the city’s total population. In Houston during the same period, almost 25% of the city’s population was African American. During this period African Americans were predominantly rural residents in Texas, despite the urbanization of other western states.

The movie industry had begun portraying African American in films that relegated the actors to service jobs and roles of subservience. Menial roles in Hollywood reached 80% of all roles for African Americans. A few actors escaped these stereotypical portrayals, like Paul Robeson who pursued his career abroad. One of the most successful African American actors that personified the negative stereotypes of African Americans was Stepin Fetchit. In the 1920s he was the lone African American actor who got featured billing and regular work. But while he was popular among white audiences, he was not nearly regarded by black audiences. Ultimately, it would be the NAACP who would be credited with ending Fetchit’s career.

Wartime presented additional challenges to African American Texans. Some whites were so fearful of arming blacks that they opposed black military service altogether. Yet during World War I, twenty-five percent of the Texans who served their country were African Americans. One of those who served was an African American doctor from Austin, Dr. Cornelius Dickerson who became a brigadier general. In Huntsville, a white mob lynched a black man because he refused to serve in the armed services. Generally white Texans opposed the presence of black troops which resulted in violent clashes at Del Rio, San Antonio, Waco and Houston.

On May 15, 1916, Jesse Washington became the first African American whose lynching is recorded in Waco. One day after his lynching, Royal Freeman Nash, the white social worker who was then secretary of the NAACP, wired Elisabeth Freeman in Fort Worth, and started the NAACP’s organized response to the murder.

Texas ranked third in the nation in lynching with over one hundred documented cases between 1900 and 1930.

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4 Id.
5 Id.
1910. Seventy three counties, primarily in East Texas had lynchings. Harrison County led with fifteen over a period of thirty-five years. When a newspaper reported that a black man in Longview had been lynched for having an affair with a white woman, the story’s suspected author was attacked, his home burned, black businesses destroyed and the man ordered never to return to Longview. The last reported lynching in Texas occurred in 1935.  

NAACP activities 1920-1925

1. In December 1918 Mary B. Talbert organized nine NAACP branches in Texas.

2. There were thirty-one NAACP chapters throughout Texas by 1919, with over 7,000 members; 1000 in Dallas and San Antonio.

3. The branches openly protested segregation, violence and inequality between the races.

4. John R. Shillady, the white Executive secretary of NAACP national visited Austin, Texas in 1919 where he was beaten almost to death and left suffering from permanent injuries. No one was arrested for the attack but Texas Governor W. P. Hobby publicly condoned the attack against Shillady.

5. In 1923 the Texas Legislature enacted a measure excluding blacks from the right to vote in the Democratic primary.

6. The NAACP supported black attorneys like J Vance Lewis of Houston who would suffer threats of mob violence for their vigorous defense of black clients.

7. Despite intimidation and threats by white Texans, Wiley College President Matthew Dogan encourages his faculty to join the NAACP.

8. James Farmer was born in Marshall Texas while his father taught at Wiley College. Farmer would graduate from Wiley in 1938, organize the Congress of Racial Equality in 1942 and become the national program director for the NAACP in the 1950s.

African Americans in Texas 1926-1935

The 1930 census reported that Dallas boasted an African American population of 38,742, an increase of over 10,000 persons since the decade prior, but represented a decrease in percentage of overall population from 15 to 14.8%. While in Houston, African Americans substantially increased in numbers from 33,960 in the 1920 census to 63,337 by the census of 1930. However, even with the growth in numbers the comparable growth to the overall Houston population

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8 Barr, supra n. 6
fell from 25% in 1920 to about 22% by 1930.⁹

African American women in Texas were overwhelmingly domestic workers in the 1930s, with more than 93% being employed in domestic service in Dallas, Texas. Most African American men in the southwest also worked in domestic service, but in Houston that was not the case. Male workers were predominantly employed in manufacturing which outnumbered those employed as servants. 32.3% of African American men in Dallas and 2.2% of African American women in Dallas held manufacturing jobs by the early 1930s. 11% of men and .7% of women were employed in a trade; 3.7% of men and 2.8% of women were in professional services industries and 33.6% of men and 93.3% of women were in domestic service. Houston painted a slightly different picture with 40.7% of men and 4.8% of women in manufacturing; 11.2% of men and 1.1% of women in trades, 2.8% of men and 3.9% of women in the professions and 19.0% of men and 89% of women in domestic service.¹⁰

During the period from 1930 to 1940, 31.4% of Houston blacks and 24.9% of Dallas blacks owned and occupied their own homes.

Racial segregation and discrimination in Texas cities were generally supported by city ordinance and state law. Texas schools were segregated by law. Moreover, African American Texans suffered voting restrictions and segregated public accommodations. In 1928, white Texas Democrats hosted their party’s national convention in Houston and separated black delegates and spectators from whites by a chicken wire fence. Dallas restricted access to the city’s parks from blacks.

Texas blacks suffered greatly throughout the 1930s when the black unemployment rate in Houston approached 40% compared with 17% of whites. During this time, it was reported that many African American families relied on the assistance offered from self-help programs offered by the many churches and churchwomen in Houston organized soup lines and dispensed food. But the institutional relief efforts were described as “a God awful mess” by FDR investigator Lorena Hickok which reported that the federal programs were wrought with discrimination against local African Americans. Many African American Texans agreed with the African American owned and operated Houston Informer newspaper that the federal administration had so abandoned the black citizen in Texas that it made no difference whether FDR or his Republican opponent had been elected.

⁹ Quintard Taylor, supra n. 3
¹⁰ Id.
Racial segregation and discrimination in Texas cities were generally African American Texans increasingly participated in the political landscape during this decade.

While few African Americans voted, political strategies were developing in San Antonio, Texas, and Dallas Texas with the emerging political forces of black San Antonio political boss Charles Bellinger, and Dallas powerhouses Antonio Maceo Smith and Reverend Maynard H. Jackson, Sr. supported by city ordinance and state law. Texas schools were segregated by law. Moreover, African American Texans suffered voting restrictions and segregated public accommodations. In 1928, white Texas Democrats hosted their party’s national convention in Houston and separated black delegates and spectators from whites by a chicken wire fence. Dallas restricted access to the city’s parks from blacks.

It was amidst these vestiges of slavery that the NAACP began establishing branches throughout Texas. The Houston branch is said to have been organized in 1912 and by 1919, eleven branches existed in Texas.\textsuperscript{11} The largest branch was the 1200 member San Antonio branch.

During the period from 1930 to 1940, 31.4% of Houston blacks and 24.9% of Dallas blacks owned and occupied their own homes.

\textsuperscript{11} Id.
The largest branch was the 1200 member San Antonio branch.

NAACP activities in Texas 1926-1935

1. The Texas branches joined together to launch a legal campaign over black participation in the state democratic primary. This movement became one of the longest efforts of any NAACP chapter during this period.

2. In January 1921, the Houston City Democratic Executive Committee passed a resolution expressly prohibiting blacks from voting in the coming primary election. Charles Norvell Love, editor of the Texas Freedman, filed suit against the Harris County Democratic party which was the act that led to four United States Supreme Court decisions between 1927 and 1944. Love lost his lawsuit and in 1923 the Texas legislature passed the Terrell Law which stated that “In no event shall a Negro be eligible to participate in a Democratic primary election…in…Texas.”

3. El Paso dentist Lawrence A. Nixon, helped found the El Paso branch of the NAACP in 1915 and in 1924, the NAACP announced that it intended to test the constitutionality of the Terrell law.

4. NAACP attorneys from the local branch and the national office won Nixon v. Herndon before the United States Supreme Court in 1927.

5. On June 19, 1926, Mr. Joseph Cullinan, a man who dedicated $80,000 to help build a new and larger hospital for African Americans, dedicated a cornerstone of the hospital to his late son Jon.13

6. Texas modified the law but still discriminated against African Americans so in 1928, Nixon and the NAACP brought a second lawsuit, Nixon v. Condon. The United States Supreme Court ruled that the state legislature lacked the power to bar blacks from voting in the primary election(s).

7. Texas leaders included James M. Nabrit and Carter W. Wesley of Houston, C. A. Booker of San Antonio and Richard D. Evans of Waco pursued various legal strategies against county democratic organizations. But with all their work, by 1934, El Paso only permitted two blacks to vote in the democratic primary, Dr. Nixon and a pharmacist, M. C. McDonnell, but their ballots were marked “colored”.

12 Id.

13 University of Houston, “To Bear Fruit for Our Race.”
http://www.history.uh.edu/cph/tobearfruit/resources_bios_barnett.asp
8. In 1935, the NAACP national office promotes and begins to send individuals to Texas to establish a state conference.14

9. Blacks lost their case in *Grovey v. Townsend*

10. By the end of the era, blacks owned nine insurance companies with headquarters in Houston, Dallas, Austin, Galveston, Marshall and Waco as well as the Fraternal Bank and Trust of Fort Worth.

11. In 1935: NAACP Houston branch ignores the advice of the national office and takes their own case to court. The branch filed *Grovey v. Townsend* which unified Houston’s black community along class, gender, education and economic lines.15

12. In 1935: *Grovey v. Townsend* was rejected by the Supreme Court on April 1, 1935.16

13. 1935: In the wake of the *Grovey* decision the Houston branch of the NAACP falls behind other self-help and civil rights organizations in popularity, financial support, and members.17

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16 Id.
17 Id.

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Dallas and Houston continued during this decade to be the Texas cities with the largest African American populations. By the 1940 census, Dallas had almost 50,407 African American residents or 17% of its population. Of Houston’s more than 384,000 residents, 86,302 or 22% of them were African American.18 During much of this decade, African Americans fought to have and to exercise their right to vote unfettered by the criminal intervention by government, courts and lawless hooligans.

By the end of the period, however, African American interests would expand beyond the ballot box toward inclusion in all facets of American life including educational opportunities and housing.

**NAACP activities in Texas 1936-1945**

1. In 1936, **Antonio Maceo Smith**, described as an organizing genius, helped establish the Texas State Conference of Branches of the NAACP, which he served as secretary19

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18 Taylor, supra n. 3
19 Barr, supra n. 6
2. 1937 Legal Counsel Charles Houston outlined the procedure for initiation a lawsuit for admission to the University of Texas. This was “to begin the fight to get Negroes admitted to the University”. The goal was not deemed feasible in 1937 but did promote an out-of-state scholarship for Prairie View. This scholarship fund was regarded as “the first line of attack” and accompanied by a pledge to create an accredited Negro university in Texas.

3. In an attempt to rectify the affects of the Grovey decision, the Houston branch of the NAACP places Lulu Belle Madison White as director of the Youth Council and Clifford Richardson as senior branch president, in 1937.20

4. In 1937, the 1st State Conference is organized and takes place in a Dallas YMCA. Delegates from five Texas branches attend this historic conference. Those who were in attendance include the branches of Houston, Dallas, Waco, San Antonio, and Marshall.21

5. In 1938, Dr. B.E. Howell, president of the NAACP branch of Dallas outlined a procedure for blacks to follow when summoned for jury services. In September 26, 1938, George Porter was summoned for jury duty. He reported for jury duty along with three witnesses and for two days he was able to serve without issue. Then on September 28, after Porter refused to excuse himself, two white men dragged Porter and threw him down the steps of the courtroom causing permanent injury to the sixty-five year old man. Thurgood Marshall arrives in Dallas on October 8 to investigate the incident.22

6. In 1938, George L. Allen became the first African American to be admitted to the University of Texas. Allen applied with the belief that he would be denied admission and laid the foundation for an NAACP court case. Ten days after registration Allen was informed by a professor that he would have to withdraw. When Allen declined officials canceled his enrollment and prevented his return to class.

7. In 1938, the scholarship provision created in 1937 becomes law. The United States Supreme Court rules in Missouri ex rel. Gaines v. Canada that a state had to provide within its borders equivalent educational facilities for blacks or else admit them to an existing white institution.

20 Hine, supra n. 15
21 Glasrud, supra n. 2
22 Id
8. In 1939, the Houston Branch faces turmoil. National NAACP representative, Daisy Lumpkin visits Houston and discusses what she called “a hornet’s nest.” The problem involved financial mismanagement by 2 or 3 men including Clifton Richardson and Edward Snyder, of whom Lumpkin said “have practically made their living off the NAACP.”

9. 1939: Lulu Belle Madison White assumes the position of interim president upon the death of Clifford Richardson.

10. 1939: One month after president, in a letter to national executive director, Walter White, Lulu Belle Madison White calls for called for an investigation of the Houston branch after the branch is beset with financial and management problems.

11. 1939: Upon completion of the investigation that was conducted by the national office field worker, Daisy Lampkin, Lulu Belle Madison White’s suspicions were confirmed. Subsequently, a slate of new officers was elected without Lulu Belle Madison White who refused the nomination and becomes a local field worker and director of the membership drive.

12. 1940: Black leaders and lawyers in Houston, Texas along with the strong financial and moral backing of local blacks and the NAACP continue to challenge the constitutionality of the exclusion of blacks from the Democratic primary. This fight resulted in the Thurgood Marshall and William Hastie taking Smith v. Allright all the way to the Supreme Court after Lonnie Smith was denied the right to vote in the Texas primary.

13. In 1940 a public housing project in South Dallas displaced 400 black families encroaching on a white neighborhood. A wave of violence, including 13 bombings, went on without a single arrest. An interracial committee composed exclusively of white men investigated and created an unconstitutional ordinance for segregation approved by the city council. The Dallas branch of the NAACP filled a lawsuit against the ordinance which was dismissed shortly thereafter by the city council.

14. 1940: Reverend Lucas was elected state president. He was succeeded by C. Austin Whittier two years later.

15. In 1941: the NAACP Houston branch, under Thurgood Marshall’s leadership launched a challenge to the Harris County elections. The election judge S. E. Allright had denied a primary ballot to Dr. Lonnie Smith, a Houston physician. In Smith v. Allright the U.S. Supreme Court voted eight to one to strike down the all white Texas Democratic primary.

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23 Glasrud, supra n. 2
25 Id
26 Id
27 Id
16. In Mill City, Texas, The Universal Improvement Association was started as a division of the national association formed by Marcus A. Garvey in 1914. The UNIA pan-Africanist movement challenged the integrationist platform of the NAACP. The state NAACP conference of 1940 outlined a ten-year program to eliminate the white primary, achieve educational equality, and end segregation by law.

17. In 1942: Dr. Lonnie Smith, a Houston dentist filed suit against the white primary rule of the state democratic party. His efforts were supported by the Houston branch and the national NAACP. His lawyers included W.J. Durham of Sherman, Carter Wesley of Houston, and William Hastie and Thurgood Marshall from the national office.

18. In 1942, in a case sponsored by the Dallas NAACP, the United States Supreme Court reversed the conviction of Henry Allen Hill on the ground that blacks had been excluded from his jury at the trial level.

19. As the Houston branch of the NAACP prepares for what it hopes will be a final assault on the white primary in Texas, recognizes the need for more members and workers. To address this need, the executive board voted to set a goal of five thousand members for its upcoming membership drive, in 1942.

20. In 1942, Lulu Belle Madison White is selected as the first full-time salaried executive secretary of the Houston branch, making her the first female of the South to hold such a post.

21. In 1943, Thurgood Marshall and William Hastie argue in front of the United States Supreme Court in Smith v. Allwright, Election Judge et al., 321 U.S. 649 (1944) in order to disband the white primary. Based on their arguments, the United States Supreme Court in its decision outlawed the white primary.

22. Lulu Belle Madison White leads a boycott against Weingarten Store that results in the dismissal of one the store’s security guards, who struck a black customer in 1943.

23. In 1943, John J. Jones, was elected state president and presided for a full decade.

24. In 1944, the United States Supreme Court ruled in favor of Smith and reversed its decision in the earlier case filed by Richard Randolph Grovey in 1935 by holding that the white primary was unconstitutional.

25. The state conference of NAACP chapters championed equal job
training and employment during the 1940s.

26. The state NAACP unsuccessfully promoted the creation of a permanent federal Fair Employment Practices Commission to check discrimination in industries with federal contracts.37

27. The plea was expanded to include black longshoremen and oil files workers.

28. Under the leadership of Lulu Belle Madison White the membership grew from 5,679 in 1943 to 10,705 in 1944.38

29. Lulu Belle Madison White anticipates a favorable Supreme Court decision in Smith v. Allright and launches a “pay your poll tax” campaign in 1944.39

30. In the Smith v. Allright case, the Supreme Court declares the Texas Democratic primary unconstitutional. This represented a major victory for black Texans and the NAACP in 1944.40

31. In 1945, the Texas legislature officially constitutes Prairie View as Prairie View A & M University to avoid integration at the University of Texas or having to create a Negro university.

32. In June 1945, the NAACP chapters agreed to a court test of segregation at the University of Texas and in February, 1946, Heman M. Sweatt, a graduate of Wiley College and a World War II veteran unsuccessfully attempted to register for law school at the University of Texas.

33. 1945: Under the leadership of Lulu Belle Madison White, the membership grew from 10,705 to 12,700 in 1945.41

34. In 1945 the NAACP sponsored Herman Marion Sweatt’s application to the University of Texas Law School. University President Theophilus S. Painter refused to admit Sweat because of his race. A four and a half year legal battle ensued. The state went beyond establishing a separate law school for Sweatt and created a separate Negro university.

African Americans in Texas
1946-1955

The Houston Negro Chamber of Commerce in 1946 showed L H Spivey as president and with at least 19 male members.

31. During the 1940s and 1950s, the black population in Texas grew from 924,391 in 1940 to 977,458 by the 1950 census, representing a 6% increase in Texas’s black population.

32. Many Texas blacks moved from Texas to the Pacific Coast in search of employment opportunities created by the war. There, they worked in the shipyards, many of whom were black women who were relegated to cleaning, weeping and painting ship hulls while the

37 Id
38 Hine, supra n. 15
39 Id
40 Id
41 Hine, supra n. 15
white women were given welding jobs that were considered the easiest position on the yards. But wartime jobs guaranteed the African American work even though it did not guarantee equitable treatment.

In Texas, aircraft firms in Dallas and Fort Worth and shipbuilding companies in Houston hired few black workers. In May 1943, the Dallas Express newspaper reported that 26 major war plants in Dallas do not employ Negroes in skilled jobs. With the exception of the Hughes Tool Company, which hired its first black workers in 1918, few manufacturing plants in the city employed African Americans. The Houston Informer reported in December 1942 that the Houston Shipbuilding Company, the largest employer in the city, refused to hire qualified and competent skilled black workers. This transpired in the midst of regular complaints from defense contractors that there was a shortage of workers.

Black Texans still fought for political equality and in the larger Texas towns and cities blacks began seeking public office. When Rev. L H Simpson ran unsuccessfully for a position of the Houston city council, the threat of blacks holding office caused Austin, in 1951, to change its city council representation from geographical districts to an at-large basis to guarantee white control of all council seats.\(^{42}\)

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\(^{42}\) Barr, supra n. 6

\(^{43}\) Hine, supra n. 15
changes bodies experienced in emergencies and during post-operative recoveries. He would later become the first African-American to serve on the Texas State Board of Medical Examiners.44

3 February 26, 1946, **Heman Sweatt** attempts to register at the University of Texas.

4. In 1947, NAACP attorneys represent **Sweatt** at a five day hearing. The hearing marks a change in strategy for the group which now focuses more on the “Separate but equal doctrine” mandated under *Plessy v. Ferguson*. The NAACP will no longer focus on the equality provision of Plessy but rather focus on full integration.

5. By 1947 the number of blacks challenging the University of Texas increased in the graduate, medical, dental, and correspondence programs with help from the NAACP. The amount became so great the University President Painter stated “the financial burden was becoming too heavy.”

6. In 1947, **Thurgood Marshall** argues that the NAACP should begin challenging the legality of segregation in general. This will be an uphill battle as polls show that blacks are in favor of separate but equal segregation.

7. In 1949, the NAACP orchestrated a mass registration attempt by 35 black college seniors at the University of Texas. In April of 1949, 33 black students arrived at the University’s campus and marched to the registrars’ office. Once denied admission they proceeded to march to the Capitol.


9. The NAACP board of directors, in 1949, votes to “withhold active support from any federal legislation in the fields of housing, health, or education which does not expressly forbid segregation.”

44 University of Houston, “To Bear Fruit for Our Race.”
http://www.history.uh.edu/cph/tobearfruit/resources_bios_barnett.asp
In 1920, Christia Adair took some schoolchildren to meet the train when Republican Warren G. Harding was campaigning for the presidency. After seeing him shake hands only with the white children, she became a Democrat.

10. In 1946, a regional office of the NAACP was established in Dallas with an annual budget of $17,000. The region established included Texas, Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, and Oklahoma.

11. In 1947, Juanita Craft, under the direction of regional secretary Donald Jones, assumed responsibility of state youth director. The NAACP was making a strong push to include younger generations and it became the regions policy to regard a branch lacking a youth council as not functioning properly.

12. November 5, 1947, NAACP leaders at the National Youth Conference in Houston organize a protest against the newly created Texas State University for Negroes.

13. In 1949, the Southwest region of the NAACP experiences a huge drop in membership from 58,420 to 20,589. In Texas the average number of members dropped from 26,000 to 9,464.

14. June 1949, Lula B. M. White resigns from her position as secretary amidst accusations of communism and leaves the Houston branch. With her absence begins a decade of tension in the branch.


16. During the 1950’s problems within the Houston branch and the National Boards response showed just how much autonomy could be exercised by large regional sections of the organization.

17. 1947, Thurgood Marshall and W.J. Durham file suit on behalf of C.G. Jennings in his attempt to enroll his daughter in a white school after the black school had been destroyed in a fire. The court rules in favor of Jennings but leaves the segregation statute intact. The black school receives some improvements but Jennings later turns to the NAACP again when it is not enough.

18. 1948, Donald Jones, George Fleming and Richard Hill agree to help organize a mass registration attempt at a white school in the Mosher Valle community near Fort Worth. On September 5 a group of 35 parents and children attempted to register and were meet by a crowd of 150 whites who threatened the group
and attacked journalists. 24 hours after the demonstration workers began improvement to the black school.

19. In 1951, Durham and Tate file a suit on behalf of six local plaintiffs who had been denied admission to Hardin Junior college. After receiving a favorable decision more than forty blacks enrolled at Hardin Junior College the following September.

20. In 1954, school authorities at Texarkana Junior College attempted to thwart the efforts of the NAACP by creating a hastily and inadequate Jim Crow junior college. When the school opened in September no students enrolled due to NAACP leader John J. Jones efforts to unite the black community and reject the school.

21. In 1949, the NAACP begins to challenge the exclusion of blacks from state and local recreational facilities such as the state’s park system. In April several blacks attempted to enter Tyler State park and after being denied William J. Durham filed a lawsuit. The state in response passed an emergency measure for segregation in state parks and the closing of parks without separate but equal facilities. The effect was the closing of many state parks.

22. In 1950, Durham filed suit on behalf of Dr. A.W. Beal for use of the city of Houston’s three municipal golf courses. Although denied at the district court level the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals overturned the ruling citing a clear case of discrimination. The city opened its courses to blacks in June 1954.

23. In 1949, the Houston branch sought to end separate library facilities and permission for black doctors to use the city-county hospital.

24. When the United States Supreme Court banned segregation of interstate transportation, the Houston NAACP launches protests to airlines and local officials about plans for segregation in the new city airport.

25. In 1953, amidst pressure from the NAACP-Houston branch, Mayor Fred Hofheinz desegregates all air terminal facilities except the restaurant.

26. Mayor Hofheinz desegregates the city’s libraries, in 1954.

27. In 1955, a federal court bans segregation in restaurants.

28. Medical associations and hospitals in Bexar, Dallas, Harris and Travis counties desegregate in 1955.45

29. A suit brought forth by Fort Worth NAACP president George Flemmings desegregates the city’s golf courses, in 1955.

30. In 1953, the Houston Branch of the NAACP sponsored a lawsuit, Plummer v. Casey, to open the cafeteria of the courthouse to blacks. Upon winning the case lawyer Henry Doyle and a college attempted to test the ruling and were attacked. The court thereafter converted the

45 Barr, supra n. 6
cafeteria into a private club but it was short lived and eventually the facilities were desegregated.

31. In 1954, NAACP president in Sulphur Springs filed suit to desegregate the city’s school. Whites responded by firing shotgun blasts into his home. He removed his family to Cleveland and it took almost a year to persuade members to come out of hiding and organize a membership campaign.

32. In September 1954, The Dallas branch of the NAACP sponsors a registration attempt at an all white Linfield Elementary School.

33. In 1953, membership statewide in the Texas NAACP went from 9,342 to 16,672 in the wake of the Brown decision.

34. In July 1955, the Fort Worth branch of the NAACP successfully petitioned the school board to open Mansfield High School to blacks. At the fall registration a mob of 300 whites gathered in front of the school and threatened any blacks who tried to enroll. The representative for the NAACP did not have the students register because of the extreme possibility of violence.

35. In 1955 Maceo Smith formally relinquished the State Conference position as executive secretary.

NAACP Activities in Texas 1956-1965

The 1960 census reported that among the twenty cities in the United States with the largest black populations, by order of population Houston ranked second, Dallas, third, Fort Worth sixth, San Antonio tenth, and Beaumont thirteenth.

The Houston Independent School District maintained the nation’s largest legally segregated school system as late as 1960. In 1956 a lawsuit challenged the school segregation, which is credited with the landslide victory of six segregationists’ members out of seven seats to the local school board. These members vowed to prevent race mixing. But by 1959,
NAACP Chief Counsel, Thurgood Marshall joined the Houston attorneys who had initiated the *Ross v Houston Independent School District*.

During this time students at Texas Southern University launched sit-ins at a nearby Weingarten grocery store lunch counter which lasted for a month before Houston Chamber of Commerce president Leon Jaworski began negotiations with 28-year-old Eldewey Sterns, a TSU law student who presided over the Progressive Youth Association which was a coalition of students from TSU, Rice and all-black Erma Hughes Business College.

The actions the students took prompted the Houston business community to seek amicable resolution in order to promote and maintain healthy business climate.

By 1960, the federal district court in Texas ruled in the Ross case that Houston schools would desegregate a grade per year and on September 8, 1960, first grader; Tyrone Raymond Day became the first African American to attend a desegregated school in Houston. But by 1964 only 3% of Houston schools were desegregated as the district employed numerous Jim Crow measures to thwart the court’s ruling.

As a result Barbara Jordan and the Reverend William Lawson called for a boycott of the city’s black high schools. Demonstrations lead by Jordan, Lawson, the Houston branch of the NAACP and PUSH marched in front of HISD offices demanding that desegregation be accelerated.

Pictured: Rev. William Lawson

**NAACP Activities in Texas 1956-1965**

1. Wiley and Bishop College students begin a series of nonviolent demonstrations in Texas in 1960 protesting segregation in restaurants and theaters.

2. Prairie View students boycott Hempstead merchants in 1963.

3. Local chapters of the NAACP picket, petition and boycott against segregation in Austin, Houston and San Antonio. The activities sparked action throughout Texas. In El Paso, the city council desegregated public accommodations by ordinance in 1962. Voluntary desegregation of hotels, restaurants, theaters and other facilities followed suit throughout the state.

4. After years of protesting injustice, the NAACP and other organizations efforts helped stimulate the hiring of black policemen by the late 1940s.
By 1966, forty blacks served on the Houston police force, fifteen in Dallas, seven in Fort Worth and others scattered in Jacksonville, Lubbock, Midland, and Paris.

5. The NAACP-Houston branch campaigns unsuccessfully for police review boards following numerous incidents of police brutality.

6. 1957: Lulu Belle Madison White’s last campaign for blacks to run for public office, before her death in 1957 resulted in the election of Hattie Mae White to the Houston school board and making her the first black Texan Hattie Mae White to be elected to public office since Reconstruction-HISD Administration Bldg.

7. Under Juanita Craft the Dallas Branch expands its membership to 7,000 by 1946.

9. In the spring of 1956 the city of San Antonio desegregated its municipal pool system due to the efforts of the local NAACP branch and its involvement in Byars et al v. White et al., Mayor of the City of San Antonio.

10. In 1956, an injunction barred the NAACP from participating in a suit and new group composed of NAACP members called the Committee on Justice and Good Will represented Marion Williams in a school segregation suit.

11. September 11, 1956: NAACP’s national board of directors appoints a special committee to consider operations in southern states. The committee decides that the NAACP should warn its prospective members that it may be compelled to release its membership list to authorities but to continue the important voter registration campaign. Texas officials asked to be exempt from the new action.

12. Beginning in 1956 Attorney General John Ben Shepperd began strategic attacks against the NAACP planning coordinated investigations on the Houston and Dallas branches. While the group was able to show that the NAACP was “criminal instigating lawsuits of which they had no part” they were unable to obtain other important items such as membership lists.

Pictured: Juanita Craft
13. Shortly after the raids Judge Otis T. Dugan issued a temporary restraining order that barred the NAACP from doing business in Texas. The hearing challenging the TRO was held in Tyler, Texas, a location that was of extreme inconvenience to NAACP lawyers. The judge found that the NAACP was a foreign New York corporation doing business in Texas illegally without a permit. He enjoined the NAACP from soliciting funds for lawsuits, from requesting individuals to file suits, organizing chapters, or exercising their corporate function.

14. April 29 at a second hearing for a permanent injunction the new attorney general Will Wilson did not attack the NAACP on operations or barratry. The hearing concluded with the NAACP being restricted from involvements that were not educational or charitable as authorized by their charter.

15. December 6, 1958, the board for the NAACP appoints a special committee of distinguished members to investigate the problems of leadership and membership decline.

**African Americans in Texas 1966-1975**

Through the 1960s, more than 6 million black people moved from the south to the north in an effort to escape Jim Crow laws and government sanctioned discrimination. But that trend reversed during the 1970s with more Blacks moving south than leaving it.

By 1966, The Civil Rights Movement was being greatly impacted by the emergence of the Black Power Movement. This also expanded the NAACP agenda to include racial dignity, economic and political self-sufficiency and freedom from oppression. The struggle for civil rights was now far more than just civil rights under law; it had become also about fundamental human rights issues of freedom, respect, and economic and social equality.

This was a period of significant change in America. Much of that change had come as a result of organizations like SNCC, CORE and the NAACP which had been instrumental in non-violent protests like the Montgomery, Alabama Bus Boycott in 1955-1956; the Greensboro, North Carolina sit-in in 1960 and the Selma to Montgomery Alabama freedom marches in 1965.

The passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 banning discrimination in employment and public access to accommodations, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, that restored and protected voting rights, the Immigration and Nationality Services Act of 1965 that opened American borders to non-European immigrants and the Civil Rights Act of 1968 that banned housing discrimination served as inspiration for
many African Americans that Jim Crow was dead.

The Riverside National Bank and the Standard Savings and Loan Association were established in Houston. While Texas’s wealthiest black entrepreneur, Mack Hannah, Jr. who had operated a rubber plant in Beaumont during World War II branched out into the insurance and building and loan businesses.

**NAACP Activities in Texas 1966-1975**

1. In 1967, Houston Police shoot up dormitories on the campus of Texas Southern University during what became known as the Texas Southern University riots. Thousands of dollars of damage and arrests caused increased dissension between Houston police department, and the white and black communities.

2. Various conflicts between the police and African Americans sparked disorder, dissent and violence throughout Texas. In Houston, Texas Southern student Lee Otis Johnson, an anti-war protestor, who publicly criticized the Houston mayor received a thirty-year sentence for giving a police undercover agent a marijuana cigarette. He served four years before his conviction was overturned. He was 62 years old when he died in Houston.


4. NAACP and parents in Houston, Dallas, and San Antonio join together to challenge the school desegregation plans.

5. In the summer of 1971 the NAACP branches in Dallas, Fort Worth, Austin, Corpus Christi, Amarillo, Odessa and Midland file lawsuits on the issue of public school desegregation and busing.
Dallas and Austin Independent School District present controversial plans to achieve desegregation through television and field trip contacts between Anglo and minority students in lieu of actual school integration.

In 1972, Eddie Berneice Johnson is elected to the Texas House of Representatives as a Democrat in 1972 and served for three terms.

**African Americans in Texas 1976-1985**

In 1972, George Thomas “Mickey” Leland was elected to the State Legislature from the 88th District of Houston. He served in the Texas House of Representatives until 1978. In his capacity as a State Representative, Mickey became a champion for the health care rights of the poor. In 1978, Mickey was elected to the United States Congress, and in 1985, Mickey served as Chairman of the Democratic National Convention’s Black Caucus.

Additionally, while Mickey Leland was serving in the House of Representatives, Juanita J. Craft became the first African American woman to vote in Dallas and was a national delegate to the Democratic convention.

In the 1970’s and 1980’s State Representative Wilhelmina Delco tries to get constitutional funds dedicated to UT and Texas A & M to be shared with TSU and Prairie View and she ultimately achieves a compromise where the Legislature appropriates about an additional $100 million for the HBCU’s.

Some African American students at their local universities started to gain recognition for their respective contributions such as James Means, John Hill Westbrook, and Curtis Mills. Curtis Mills was the first African

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49 The Mickey Leland Center on World Hunger and Peace at Texas Southern University, [http://www.lelandcenter.org](http://www.lelandcenter.org), (Last visited September 02, 2009)

50 Id

American inducted into the Texas A&M Athletic Hall of fame. Curtis Mills was inducted primarily due to his triumphant win and record setting track and field run against two Olympic gold medalists in 1970. Also, John Hill Westbrook was the first black student to play varsity football in the Southwest Conference.

NAACP Activities in Texas 1976-1985

1. In 1976, acting on a request from the NAACP fund and with the lawyers from Georgia, Florida, and Texas, Supreme Court Justice Powell, issues an order that stays the impositions of the executions of three inmates. With this stay, Powell stayed the effect of a decision handed down on July 2, in which all three states were told that their capital laws are constitutional.

2. In 1978, the NAACP leaders announce a voter registration campaign aimed at blacks in 16 states and the cities of Chicago and Detroit. The states include Georgia, Florida, South Carolina, North Carolina, Michigan, Arkansas, New Mexico and Texas. The NAACP allots $50,000 for the campaign but they expect for additional money to be given from nonprofits, and labor organizations, along with some businesses, and private foundations.

3. In 1978 while in Detroit, NAACP chief Benjamin Hooks, told the Republican Party that it can reclaim the black vote only if it adopted “progressive programs that will make the guarantees of democracy for all.” By doing so, Hooks went ahead and gave the Republican Party a shopping list of legislative and other goals of the NAACP, that the Republican Party could use if they wanted to win the support of blacks.

4. In 1979, the Victoria Branch of the NAACP has its first annual “Jubilee Day.” Jubilee Day is a special day for reflection, rededication, and celebration of black heritage.

African Americans in Texas 1986-1995

By 1990, the United States Census reported that African Americans represented 12% of the U.S. population. The NAACP has challenged the numbers for decades claiming that blacks are

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52 The New York Times “Record Expected in 600 at Garden,” January 22, 1970,
54 Freelance Star Newspaper, ”Executions Delayed by Powell’s order” -July 23, 1976,
55 Boca Raton News “NAACP charts large scale voter registration drive” May 18, 1978,
56 Eugene Register-Guard “NAACP chief tells how to win blacks” July 21, 1978,
woefully under counted in an effort to minimize the significance of the black population and reduce the community’s political influence.

In 1988, Lee Roy Young\(^{57}\) becomes the first black person to be selected to the Texas Rangers. The rangers were a 165 year old peacekeeping force assigned to major crimes. \(^{58}\)

In 1991, Judge Al Green, then President of the Houston Branch, published the “State of Black Houston.” The report was heralded as a thoughtful analysis of the lives of African Americans in Houston. The branch enjoyed unprecedented growth under Green’s presidency. The former NAACP-Houston Branch president now serves as United States Congressman for the Ninth Congressional District in Houston.

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Pictured Below: On May 6, 1995, Ron Kirk became the first African American mayor of Dallas winning 62% of the vote. He would serve as the Dallas mayor until 2002.

Pictured: Al Green, United States Congressman 9\(^{th}\) District

One of the most serious and long standing issues within African-American communities is poverty. Poverty itself is a hardship as it is related to marital stress and dissolution, health problems, low educational attainment, deficits in psychological functioning, and crime. In 2004, 24.7% of African-American families lived below the poverty level. In

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\(^{57}\) African American Registry, www.aaregistry.com/african_american_history/344/First_Black_Texas_Ranger_hired

\(^{58}\) Charlotte Observer, “Texas Peacemakers make history, select first black ranger” July 30, 1988
In 2007, the average African-American income was $33,916, compared with $54,920 for whites.\textsuperscript{59} However, the average wealth proved more disparate with Blacks having a net worth of about $8,000 while whites had a net worth of about $90,000.\textsuperscript{60}

While the state of Texas ranks near bottom in the quality of education and educational attainment in the United States, black Texans have a higher drop-out rate than white Texans, a far lower college enrollment rate than whites and a disparately low college graduation rate than white Texans. For African American males the rates are even more startling. African Americans continue to suffer from achievement gaps and performance at schools and on standardized tests.

On the other hand, African Americans have a buying power of over $892 billion and African American owned business account for more than one million of the United State’s twenty three million businesses. African Americans continue to be overrepresented in prisons in every American state.

**NAACP Activities in Texas 1996-2009**

1. In the mid 90s, **Howard Jefferson** as President, lead the NAACP-Houston in a successful campaign for minority and women business participation in major city contracts. His initiatives significantly expanded participation by minorities and women in multi-million dollar contracts as sub and general contractors. Jefferson is President Emeritus of the Houston Branch and serves as a board member of the National NAACP.

   ![Howard Jefferson](image)
   **Pictured: Howard Jefferson**
   **President Emeritus**

2. In 2000, the Texas State Conference of NAACP Branches conducts a study on racial profiling in the State of Texas.

3. In 2003, NAACP-Houston launches campaign to educate prisoners to reduce recidivism. The initiative was spearheaded by **Dr. Luckett Johnson** while serving as President of the Houston Branch.

   ![Dr. Luckett Johnson](image)
   **Pictured: Dr. Luckett Johnson**

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\textsuperscript{59} Income, Poverty, and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States:2007; U.S. Census Bureau, issued August 2008

4. In 2003, the Texas State Conference lead the investigation of a mentally challenged African American Man, **Billy Ray Johnson**, who had been beaten unconscious and dumped along a country road in Linden, TX by four white assailants. Mr. Johnson received a civil judgment of $9 million in 2007.

5. In 2005, On November 22, 2005, NAACP-Austin Branch, NAHB, and the HBA of Greater Austin, filed a federal lawsuit against the City of Kyle. The complaint alleges that ordinances passed by the Kyle City Council, imposing requirements such as all-masonry construction, expanded home size, and expanded garage size, drive up the cost of starter homes by over $38,000 per new unit. The trial was completed in April 2008. On March 30, 2009, the court determined that while the Fair Housing Act prohibits municipalities from using their zoning powers in a discriminatory manner, "a dollar impact on home construction costs alone" does not establish a prima facie case of discriminatory effect.


7. March 2006, Dallas NAACP and LULAC work with Texas Criminal Justice Coalition to investigate the racial disparity of traffic stops in Garland, TX.

8. March 2006, Texas State Conference of NAACP President **Gary Bledsoe** argued for the redistricting and creation of the 9th Congressional District.

9. April 2006, the Texas State NAACP started a campaign to secure the release of **Shaquanda Cotton**, a 14 year old black girl from Paris, TX who had no prior record that was sentenced to 7 years for shoving a hall monitor. State Conference 1st Vice President **Bob Lydia** solicited the TYC Conservator on behalf of Ms. Cotton and she was released on April 1, 2007.

10. May 2006, the Texas State Conference of NAACP Units started an effort to get **Tyrone Brown** a Dallas man who had served 16 years of a life sentence after testing positive for marijuana usage while on probation. This effort involved the Dallas County DA, sentencing judge and 1st Vice President **Bob Lydia**. On March 15th 2007 Mr. Brown was released from TDC.


12. August 2007, NAACP filed suit in Los Angeles federal court against 14 of the country’s largest lenders, alleging systematic, institutional racism in sub-prime home mortgage lending.

13. September 2008, NAACP members were trained by the American Red Cross to work throughout Texas and Louisiana after the onslaught of Hurricane Ike.

14. October 2008, Texas NAACP sets up hotline for voters to report
intimidation and other complaints as well as insure that Galveston voters, displaced by a recent hurricane, have the chance to vote.

15. On October 28th, 2008, members of the Paris, Texas NAACP - Unit 6213 met to discuss the murder of Brandon McClelland and our zero tolerance response to any hate crime in our community. On September 16, 2008, McClelland was killed after being run over by a vehicle and dragged beneath it. Finley's estranged wife and another of his friend said the defendants told them that, after an argument about who was sober enough to drive, McClelland got out, and Finley bumped him with the truck until knocking him over, and then drove over him and dragged his body under the truck. The two men were charged with killing McClelland. Both pleaded "not guilty." The prosecutor cited a lack of evidence dropping murder charges in June, 2009.

16. 2009 Legislative Session the Texas State NAACP was successful in lobbying against the passage of a proposed voter ID bill and the elimination of the Top 10 Rule for admission to the UT System.

17. ID bill and the elimination of the Top 10 Rule for admission to the UT System.

18. June 2009, President of the Texas chapter of the NAACP states that the University of Texas still continues to fall short on minority equality and must make a stronger effort. Also in his speech, President Gary Bledsoe comments on the strained relations between the Austin Police Department and the local African American community.

19. June 2009, The Texas NAACP, a party in the recent Northwest Austin MUD case just decided by the United States Supreme Court, applauds the decision because of the majority’s respect for the rule to be applied in all Supreme Court decisions–taking the least obtrusive legal alternative reasonably available. Though the Northwest Austin MUD is no longer covered by the Act, the Act still remains strong and in effect.

20. June 2009: Bob Lydia, the 1st vice-president of the Texas NAACP and a national NAACP board member states that there is a rise in membership in the Klu Klux Klan in response to the election of President Obama.
# TEXAS NAACP BRANCHES

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