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RUNNING WITH THE REDS: AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN AND THE COMMUNIST PARTY DURING THE GREAT DEPRESSION

Lashawn Harris

In a 1931 article in the *Daily Worker*, NAACP leader Walter White proclaimed that African American women who joined the ranks of the Communist Party (CP) were "ignorant and uncouth victims who were being led to the slaughter by dangerously bold radicals."[1] While all African American leaders did not share White's sentiments and did not openly criticize African American participation in the CP during the first half of the 20th century, a significant group of black leaders and intellectuals, including A. Philip Randolph, Richard Wright, Ralph Ellison, and others, voiced their pressing concerns regarding CP activists' role in the black freedom struggle.[2] Although White's indictment of black female communists and African American women who supported CP activists was clearly reflective of broader conflicts between NAACP and other black leaders and the CP, African American women in the CP challenged White's charges against them. The historical record reveals that these black female activists were far from "ignorant" and were in no way "victims who were being led to the slaughter."[3] Many African American women who came from various socioeconomic backgrounds and geographical regions and who possessed varying levels of political experience and education were active in the CP during the 1930s. While northern and midwestern CP women in New York City and Chicago, for example, tended to be working class and members of the black intelligentsia and black-nationalist groups such as the African Blood Brotherhood (ABB) and the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), many black female communists in the South were usually working class and poor, often working as laundresses, sharecroppers, and domestics.

Collectively, this new vanguard of female activists emerged from a legacy of African American women's activism. Like their foremothers, their social and political activism demonstrated race, class, and gender consciousness and emphasized racial advancement and community building. These African American women also built upon the Progressive Era activism of CP leaders such as Elizabeth Hendrickson and Helen Holman by combining leftist reform with the traditional organizing patterns

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among black women. A significant group of African American women viewed the CP as a potential vehicle for black liberation, along with gender and working-class advancement. These women were what political theorist Antonio Gramsci described as "organic intellectuals" who embraced reform that involved working people engaged in social and political contestation against capitalist exploitation. Organic intellectuals often lacked formal recognition from society, opposed mainstream politics through protest and agitation, employed principles that united disparate groups into effective coalitions, and represented a set of political ideologies that was different from those of university-trained intellectual elites.[4] Often dismissed, black female CP leaders and rank and file members endorsed a racial discourse that challenged prevailing black political strategies and embraced liberationist strategies outside women's traditional reform activities. As communists, they became local and national leaders, distributed the CP's *Daily Worker,* served as representatives at major international conferences, ran for political office on the CP ticket, and were active street corner orators. Through their rhetoric, protest styles, and social activism, black women in the CP often reconstructed the "politics of respectability."

Until recently, historians have largely ignored the dynamic role of African American women within the CP. "In much of the history and historiography of the American Left," historian Robin D. G. Kelley has observed, "African American women have largely been invisible, lost in the cracks somewhere between the 'Negro Question' and the 'woman question.'"[5] Because few black female CP activists wrote autobiographical works or memoirs, their stories have often been overlooked. At the same time, the works of Mark Naison, Robin D. G. Kelley, Mark I. Solomon, Irma Watkins-Owen, Marika Sherwood, Erik S. McDuffie, and Glenda Gilmore have delineated the prominent role of black female communists such as Maude White, Esther Jackson, Louise Thompson Patterson, Audley Moore, Eula Gray, and Claudia Jones.[6] The encyclopedic *Black Women in America*, edited by Darlene Clark Hine and others, includes biographical profiles of African American women in the CP and other leftist organizations, including Lucy E. Parsons, Louise Thompson, Esther Jackson, and Marvel Cooke.[7] More recently, Carole Boyce Davies's *Left of Karl Marx: The Political Life of Black Communist Claudia Jones* represents one of the first full-length biographical accounts and analyses of a female African American leader in the communist movement. Nonetheless, the role of African American women in the CP and leftist politics in general warrants more attention from historians.[8]

This essay examines the largely overlooked contributions, political activism, and worldviews of black female communists during the depression era, highlighting the nature of African American women's experiences in the CP and how their beliefs and actions directly challenged racial ideologies and strategies that were associated with the politics of respectability. By exploring why they joined and how they

contributed to the CP, the League of Struggles for Negro Rights, the Unemployed Councils, and the International Labor Defense, this essay explores black women's multiple levels of activism within the CP during the 1930s, and seeks to demonstrate that Bonita Williams, Louise Thompson Patterson, Williana Burroughs, and others engaged alternative sites for black women's reform activities during the Great Depression.

The ideas and activities of African American women in the CP ushered in innovative forms of activism that transcended the conventional image of the "respectable" black female reformer, while offering many African American women space to create and adopt liberation strategies that addressed the socioeconomic and political climate of the 1930s. Their reshaping of normative modes of respectability inspired new styles and expressions of protest, while giving rise to a group of female leaders who took part in social and political activism that some considered too masculine, "unbecoming of a woman," and outside the norms of "female civility." In analyzing the often marginalized voices and stories of African American women in the CP, historians can develop a broader conceptualization of black women's struggle for liberation during the Great Depression.

AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN'S ATTRACTION TO THE COMMUNIST PARTY

African American women joined the CP during the Great Depression for a variety of reasons. The socioeconomic conditions created by the economic collapse exacerbated existing employment problems for African Americans and women and pushed some towards leftist reform. Even before the national economic collapse, many African Americans were already plagued by high rates of poverty, poor living conditions, low wages, and race, gender, and class discrimination.[9] With the implementation of Franklin D. Roosevelt's (FDR) New Deal programs, many African Americans hoped that the plans for economic recovery would result in increased employment, equal treatment, and social progress. While a few New Deal programs provided temporary economic relief for some African Americans, many government agencies and officials, particularly in the South, discriminated against African Americans, denying them public assistance. "African Americans suffered more than their white counterparts, received less from their government, and got what they called a 'raw deal' rather than a 'new deal,'" reported historian Joe William Trotter, Jr. "The depression took its toll on virtually every facet of African American life."[10] In turn, during the 1930s many working-class black women looked to the CP and other militant groups for assistance in confronting the day-to-day problems of unemployment, unfair relief distribution, and persistent race-based discrimination. According to social scientists Horace Cayton and St. Clair Drake, the conditions

during the depression era prompted many black Chicagoans to seek assistance from leftist organizations; and when faced with unemployment and housing evictions, "it was not unusual," Cayton and Drake reported, "for a mother to shout to the children, 'Run quick and find the Reds!'"[11]

Some African American women were attracted to the CP because it actively fought to alter the conditions of the working class and the poor. They were drawn to the CP's campaign against racism, inadequate relief payments, and unemployment, as well as the communists' commitment to uniting black and white workers. Maggie Jones, a CP organizer in Cleveland, declared, "We unemployed workers stand always ready like soldiers, for the many hard battles ahead, looking to the Communist Party for its leadership and a better equipment to fight our enemy the capitalist class."[12] The visibility of white and black men and women speaking on street corners and criticizing local and national economic policies and practices attracted African American women who were actively searching for viable ways to confront their own racial and class oppression. Most importantly, African American women viewed the CP as a source of potential change and were drawn to the CP's evolving position on the race question.[13] The CP's support of black autonomy and self-determination, especially in the South, convinced many African American women that they had found new allies in the struggle against race and class inequalities. Mark Naison and Robin D. G. Kelley pointed out that the "enlightened attitude of the Russian Bolshevik toward national minorities" and the CP's support of black male leadership and cultural expression motivated a small group of black intellectuals and working-class laborers to join the Communist Party.[14] "By defining blacks as an oppressed nation . . . the Comintern had, within the Leninist lexicons of values, endowed the black struggle with unprecedented dignity and importance."[15] For women such as New York City schoolteacher and Harlem community leader Williana Burroughs, the actions of the communists seemed genuine. She believed that the party was sincerely interested in combating class and racial discrimination and in forging an interracial coalition of workers. In 1933 Burroughs observed:

> [T]he hard consistent work and sincere attitude of the Communist members who were working in the American Negro Labor Conference easily convinced me that they were sincere in their interest towards the Negro people. I also began to realize that it was only through a united fight against the oppressors of both the Negro and the white workers that the Negro could be freed.[16]

Williana Burroughs's attraction to the CP and Marxism was also fueled by personal experience, most notably her trip to the Soviet Union during the mid-1920s. While the specific reasons for Burroughs trip to the Soviet Union remain obscure, she did reveal that her visit had a profound impact on her views of Marxism. She

noted that "the successful way the race problem had been solved in the Soviet Union inspired [her] to put [her] heart and soul into the work for a new society, which would be devoid of suffering and race hatred."[17] Armed with this experience, Burroughs "entered the revolutionary movement [the Communist Party] thru the medium of the American Negro Labor Committee" in 1926.[18] Her party name was "Mary Adams."[19]

African American women's growing frustration with prevailing African American leadership also influenced their search for new avenues for social protest. In the pages of black radical and communist newspapers such as the *Harlem Liberator*, African American women boldly criticized the positions of "race spokespersons." They argued that the future direction of black leadership and protest called for new actors, political departures, and the end of white patronage. In 1930 southern reformer Mary Peavey expressed these sentiments at the National Anti-Lynching Convention held in St. Louis, Missouri, and sponsored by the American Negro Labor Congress (ANLC). Disturbed by the state of black politics, Peavey told black preachers and "fakers" that African Americans could not afford to take a moderate stance on social protest and "must be willing to die if necessary for the cause of Negro liberation."[20] Embodying the concerns of many workers, Peavey questioned the direction that black reform groups had taken in confronting racial discrimination and violence.

Similarly, Williana Burroughs continually criticized the efforts of mainstream black leaders. In 1934 Burroughs declared that black "reformist leaders, nationalist organizations, and renegades from the revolutionary movement . . . deliberately worked against the unity of Negro and white," preventing the development of radical liberation movements.[21] Even Harlem communist Louise Thompson Patterson, who had close professional and personal relationships with prominent black leaders such as Mary McLeod Bethune and W. E. B. Du Bois, criticized the contemporary black leadership. In *The Role of Proletarian Fraternalism in the Liberation Struggle of the Negro People*, Patterson argued that "bourgeois fraternalism, both white and Negro, is against the liberation movement. . . . The Negro masses are learning that the race loyalty taught to them by their bourgeois leaders is but a sham behind which these very leaders hold them back from struggle."[22]

African American women's entrance into the CP was also significantly influenced by the activities of the CP's relief organizations. During the 1930s communist-sponsored groups such as the League of Struggles for Negro Rights (LSNR), the Unemployed Councils (UC), and the International Labor Defense (ILD) were active within black communities. Often confronting issues that affected the daily lives of black workers and the poor, these groups handled housing evictions, provided relief such as food for the unemployed, and led hundreds of hunger and labor marches and strikes. While those groups played pivotal roles in the lives of many African Americans, they also served as the catalyst for the social activism and

politicization of black women. The UC, ILD, and other organizations presented working-class and poor black women the opportunity to play leading roles within local, national, and international campaigns against racial, class, and gender oppression. These groups also offered black female activists a place to contribute to community advancement and institution building, and the opportunity to infuse issues of race and gender into CP politics.

LEAGUE OF STRUGGLES FOR NEGRO RIGHTS AND THE UNEMPLOYED COUNCILS

Formed in 1930, the League of Struggles for Negro Rights replaced the CP's defunct American Negro Labor Congress. The LSNR attempted to build a mass movement in southern and northern communities, supported "black self-determination" in the South, advocated militant resistance against racist oppression and openly opposed lynching. Although the LSNR sought to play an active role in southern communities, the organization's membership and activities were primarily in northern cities such as New York and Chicago. African American women in the LSNR played a leading role in mobilizing black residents around issues such as housing evictions, job discrimination, and reduced relief allotments. They organized rallies and open-air meetings, picketed, and coordinated mass demonstrations in the streets of many northern cities.[23]

One of the LSNR's key members was West Indian-American and Harlem activist Bonita Williams. According to CP leader George Charney, Williams was a talented poet and militant leader and was "blessed with a luminous personality and a rich native idiom, that captivated her followers and put her enemies to flight."[24] Williams's "down home eloquence" and ability to relate to working-class and poor African Americans gave her the ability to draw local black men and women to the CP.[25] Through her poetry, sometimes printed in the *Harlem Liberator* and read during the LSNR open-air meetings in Harlem, Williams encouraged African American men and women to organize against mounting class and racial oppression. In one of her rarely published poems, entitled "Fifteen Million Negroes Speak," she urged African Americans to "express our opinion, in our candid way [and] not be in fear like prisoners thrust in a cell each day . . . [and] demand a Bill of Civil Rights."[26] Williams's passion for and commitment to civil rights was demonstrated by her affiliation with both leftist and black liberation organizations. She was an executive member of the New York District Council of the LSNR and a leader within the Harlem Unemployed Council and the Harlem Tenants League. During the 1930s Williams closely worked with other Harlem CP activists such as Richard B. Moore and Maude White to ensure that city officials and politicians addressed the issues of job discrimination, poverty, unemployment, and increasing rent and meat prices.[27]

In June 1935 Williams led a successful campaign by African American working-class women against high meat prices. According to historian Mark Naison, the campaign against high meat prices was initially started by CP leaders in Jewish neighborhoods in New York City and quickly took hold in Harlem; and black working-class women became the leading actors in the protest over rising food prices. Already suffering from the economic downturn by the early 1930s, many African American women found it increasingly difficult to provide for their families. On 3 June 1935 Williams, along with other protest organizations, led "a flying squad of black housewives" in Harlem, as they "marched through the streets of Harlem demanding that butchers lower their prices by 25 percent."[28] Women even threatened butchers who failed to lower their prices. They warned that if high meat prices continued, then store owners would witness a repeat of the Harlem riot earlier that year. The successful protest along with the threat of violence forced many store owners to lower their meat prices by 25 percent. According to the *Daily Worker*,

> All stores between 129th street and 145th street, with the exception of L. Oppenheimer's . . . have reduced prices 25%. So great was the sense of power of the worker that when butchers agreed to cut prices, housewives jumped up on the tables in front of stores and tore down old price signs and put up new ones. . . . No store held out for more than five minutes after the picketers arrived.[29]

Building on the momentum of the lowering of meat prices, African American women, with the help of the CP, also forced butchers to close their shops for a period of four days. "More than 300 Harlem butcher shops committed themselves to such a closing after being 'visited' by delegations of angry women."[30] African American women hoped that the closing of butcher shops would place pressure on meatpackers and the City Market Commission to maintain low meat prices. Although many butchers held out for a few days, many re-opened after the meatpackers and City Market Commission told them not to participate in the strike.[31]

The CP's Unemployed Councils of the United States of America (UC) also attracted a significant number of African Americans, especially working-class women, into its ranks. Established in 1930, the UC had branches throughout the country, and represented a "largely local and decentralized movement" that addressed the concerns and conditions of the unemployed.[32] The UC demanded "all unemployed shall be entitled to unemployed benefits sufficient to secure the maintenance of their families and dependents during the whole period of unemployment."[33] The councils handled housing evictions, advocated free lunches for the unemployed and their children, rallied against discriminatory practices of relief agencies such as the Red Cross, led hunger marches, and fought for the passage of an "Unemployed Insurance Bill."[34]

While the UC attempted to confront the economic needs of the working class and the poor, the organization also advocated gender equality and the fair distribution of relief benefits to men and women. The UC asserted that women workers, especially black women, "shall be entitled to unemployment benefits to the same amount as that of male workers" and that it should be made illegal for an employer "to dismiss expecting and nursing mothers."[35] Though the UC was not always successful in its fight against the mistreatment of the unemployed, it was successful in winning the respect of many African American women.

Historians have not determined the exact number of African American women who joined the UC, however, leftist periodicals such as the *Daily Worker* and the *Working Woman* were flooded with hundreds of letters from working-class black women from throughout the country who actively participated in the councils. Fanny Austin, a Harlem domestic worker and local CP leader, wrote numerous letters and editorials highlighting the plight of black female workers and called upon them to join "the Party of your class, the Communist Party."[36] Left-wing newspapers also detailed the life experiences and militant activism of poor black women workers such as Martha Jeffries of the council in Philadelphia and Mary Tabb from Cleveland's UC.[37] African American women joined the UC in New York City, Detroit, Cleveland, Boston, San Francisco, Minneapolis, Indianapolis, Chicago, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, Birmingham, Richmond, and Kansas City, Missouri. Having little education and experience as activists, the UC gave black women such as Martha Jeffries, Mary Tabb, and Alabama native Capitola Tasker the opportunity to participate in educational seminars on Marxism and attend national and international workers' conferences.[38]

Born in Montgomery County, Alabama, Capitola Tasker was a farmer and the wife of Charles Tasker, the local Unemployed Council leader in Birmingham. Entering the CP for the "benefit of [her] children," Tasker directed the Share Croppers' Union's (SCU) Women's Auxiliaries and became an international activist speaking on the behalf of southern workers and "oppressed Negro women from the Black Belt of the South."[39] From 4–6 August 1934, Tasker attended the International Women's Conference against War and Fascism in Paris, France. Sponsored by European female activists, this conference marked the 20th anniversary of the beginning of World War I and gathered women from around the world to speak out against the spread of warfare in China and fascism in Europe.[40] The conference was also intended for women from various nationalities and geographical, socioeconomic, and political backgrounds to discuss issues that impacted their lives as wives, mothers, and laborers. Listed as Equile McKeithen to conceal her identity, Tasker spoke before the delegation and told "of the misery, of the starvation and slavery forced upon [black southerners] by the white landlords" and "of discrimination, Jim Crowism, and terror used by landlords to keep Negro and white

separated."[41] For Tasker, this international conference influenced her belief that social and racial inequality was "no individual fight. It's a world-wide fight. . . . There's nothing to lose [and] there's everything to gain. But we must organize, we must."[42] Her encounter with women "from every walk [of] life," who wanted to organize based on common experiences as exploited people "was a breath of fresh air."[43]

The UC provided women such as Tasker a platform to confront issues that affected their daily lives. Economic instability brought on by the Depression encroached upon their traditional roles as caretakers and workers. Many African American women argued that unemployment and extreme poverty made it hard to perform basic functions as mothers. Some stated that they "[could] not get food [or] clothes for [their] children" and that they were "tired of seeing [their] children go naked and hungry, crying for bread. . . ." They declared, "We must raise our voices louder against this."[44] In the *Party Organizer*, CP leader and writer Ann Damon noted that black working-class women fought and demanded immediate relief for their families. Most notably, Damon highlighted the activism of black women within Cleveland's UC. She commented that African American women in this council were "the most militant and leading forces in the unemployed activism."[45] Led by Maggie Jones, the Cleveland Council had over five hundred female members, and the majority were African American. Council members organized mass demonstrations against hunger, formed a "Nurse Corps," demanded that city officials provide unemployment insurance, free milk, and medical treatment for children, and organized a special women and children's "Hunger March" in 1932.[46]

Through the UC, African American women were able to confront and challenge the discriminatory practices of social workers, relief organizations such as the Red Cross and the Salvation Army, and local city relief boards. Because the operations of most relief programs were controlled by local whites, many African Americans, compared to their white counterparts, received less generous benefits, were denied aid, and were subject to unannounced home visits. Relief workers routinely made home visits to assess the economic needs of persons requesting relief benefits. During such home inspections, African Americans were treated with little respect and often had to conceal radios, clothes, and other personal items that relief workers considered "superfluous."[47] During the 1930s in Birmingham, Alabama, black domestic worker Helen Long and bookkeeper Addie Adkins organized several mass demonstrations against the local Red Cross's treatment of black clients and the city welfare board's failure to provide food and clothing for the unemployed. Some African American women in Birmingham even threatened to use violence against relief workers. According to CP worker Curtis Maggard, Ida Shepherd, "one of the most notorious black social workers in Birmingham," was threatened by a "group of angry black women," who "almost whooped her naked."[48] Similarly, New Orleans native and UC leader Ida Bates, along with white CP organizer Jane Speed, led a mass demonstration

of black and white working-class men and women on 6 August 1934. Bates and over 5,000 black and white workers demonstrated in front of Mayor Thomas Walmsley's office to demand relief for the unemployed and the return to the relief rolls of 15,000 "unemployables" who had been dropped and "left literally to starve."[49] As a result of Bates's "brave and militant leadership and the actions of thousands of workers," more than half of the 15,000 unemployables were returned to the relief rolls.[50]

THE INTERNATIONAL LABOR DEFENSE AND THE SCOTTSBORO CASE

Black women's attraction to the CP was greatly influenced by the International Labor Defense's (ILD) handling of the Scottsboro case. Founded in 1925, the ILD was the legal wing of the CP and represented union members, political activists, immigrants, minorities, and working people. During the 1920s the ILD defended and mounted national and international campaigns over the arrest and convictions of white radicals, unionists, and socialist leaders such as Tom Mooney and Warren Billings. By the 1930s the CP's special emphasis on black civil rights prompted the ILD to take on legal cases involving African Americans.[51] Its most famous case was the successful defense of nine African American teenagers in Scottsboro, Alabama, in litigation that lasted over a decade. In 1931 the black teenagers, also known as the "Scottsboro Boys," were accused, convicted, and sentenced to death for allegedly raping two white women aboard a freight train near Paint Rock, Alabama.[52]

From the beginning, this high profile case galvanized African American support for the ILD and the CP because many African Americans believed that they had found new partners in their struggle against racial inequality. For African American women, especially the mothers of the Scottsboro Boys, the case offered them the opportunity to become central actors in the defense of black men and the struggle against class and racial oppression. No one fought harder to prevent the legal lynching of the Scottsboro Boys than their mothers, including Janie Patterson, mother of Haywood Patterson; Ada Wright, mother of Leroy and Andrew Wright; Mamie Williams Wilcox, mother of Eugene Williams; and Viola Montgomery, mother of Olen Montgomery.

Prior to the arrest and conviction of their sons, the Scottsboro mothers were working-class and poor women who labored as farmers and domestic workers. Their direct involvement in the campaign to save their sons transformed them from poor, semiliterate southern workers into confident and fiery social activists. The Scottsboro mothers, with the help of the CP and ILD activists, led mass demonstrations with seasoned activists such as Lucy Parsons, wrote and signed editorials to local newspapers, and went on national and international speaking tours.[53] As the mothers spoke to mass audiences, they highlighted the racial injustices in the United States

and the critical need to rally behind the ILD and the CP. During one of her speaking engagements in the fall of 1932, Janie Patterson noted, "[Many] tried to tell me that that ILD was low-down whites and Reds. . . . I haven't got no schooling, but I have five senses and I know that Negroes can't win by themselves. . . . I have faith that they will free him [Haywood Patterson], if we all is united behind them. . . . I don't care whether they are Reds, Greens, or Blues. They are the only ones who put up a fight to save these boys and I am with them to the end."[54]

Scottsboro mother Ada Wright, who was a domestic worker, publicized her son's plight even in Europe. Having never traveled outside the South, Wright was invited by the International Red Aid to participate in a six-month European lecture tour in 1932.[55] With the aid of her chaperone, J. Louis Engdahl, socialist writer and general secretary of the ILD, Wright's speeches (sometimes prepared by Engdahl) often linked the Scottsboro case with the contemporary threat of fascism in Europe. Her speeches not only highlighted the hardships of southern black women and the attempts of a mother to try and save her son's life, but also addressed class struggle, advancing fascism, and Marxist ideology. Wright spoke of the need to eradicate racism in the United States and the need to mobilize "the masses against the imperialist war."[56] She argued that the Scottsboro case was a "struggle against imperialist war, because the Scottsboro persecution grows out of the war preparations of the American boss class."[57] While Ada Wright's European tour provided an opportunity to gain international support for the Scottsboro Boys, it also allowed the CP and ILD leaders to use Wright's image as a poor southern black woman to their own political advantage.

Many African American women and mothers around the country identified with the Scottsboro mothers because they understood the harsh reality that their own sons and husbands could also be falsely accused of rape. African American women not only identified with the cause, but they also formed local support groups, raised funds, and organized demonstrations on behalf of the Scottsboro Boys. In May 1933 in Richmond, Virginia, over a thousand African American men and women gathered at the Fifth Street Baptist Church to endorse the ILD and "pledged their militant support to the world-wide struggle for the freedom of the nine men."[58] In Detroit, New York, and other northern cities, black women founded organizations such as the Nat Turner Workers Club and "planned to draw as many organizations as possible into the Scottsboro defense."[59]

The legal efforts of the ILD inspired some African American women to join the CP. Former Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) leader Audley Moore recalled that she was drawn to the CP through the work of the ILD in the Scottsboro case in 1933. Even though she considered herself a black nationalist, Moore was impressed by the CP's commitment to racial justice and working-class liberation. She noted that the party members were "interested in freeing the

Scottsboro Boys and they were interested in an anti-lynch bill; they [were] interested in a voters' rights bill; they [were] interested in civil rights; they had a civil rights movement going. They were interested in all of those things; they [were] into the people not paying exorbitant rents. All of that was good for me, you know, and I learned a lot, and I participated, I joined in with both feet."[60] Trinidad native and Harlem resident Claudia Jones was also impressed by the work of ILD and joined the Communist Party and the Young Communist League (YCL) in 1936. Jones would go on to be the most celebrated black female communist in the 1940s.[61] At the age of 86, prominent labor activist Lucy Parsons joined the CP in 1939 after working with the ILD for over a decade.[62]

RECONSTRUCTING THE POLITICS OF RESPECTABILITY

African American women's involvement in the CP departed from past ideologies that placed "respectability" at the center of female activism. According to historian Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, the politics of respectability was a strategy for social reform employed by many black church women and political activists during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The politics of respectability "emphasized reform of individual behavior and attitudes both as a goal in itself and as a strategy for reform of the entire structural system of American race relations."[63] African American female reformers employed the politics of respectability as a strategy to survive intense racial, gender, and class oppression, and as a way of gaining equal rights. They hoped to create a set of guidelines and behavioral patterns that portrayed a moral, well-mannered, and culturally advanced group. For these activists, the display of domesticity and appropriate behavior was necessary to counter racial stereotypes about African American women and to demonstrate their social and cultural advancement. They believed this would lead to the improvement in African Americans' socioeconomic and political status and foster interracial cooperation. As Margaret Murray Washington argued, "[It would] prove to our enemies that our condition physically and morally is nothing inherent or peculiar to race, but rather the outcome of circumstances over which we can and will become masters."[64]

Many African American women in the Communist Party modified or rejected certain aspects of the politics of respectability because they were neither seeking legitimacy from whites for their institution building, nor were these women trying to reconstruct black images through proper etiquette or accomplished housewifery. These women saw themselves as CP organizers who moved beyond the politics of respectability to participate in the struggle for equal rights, particularly for black workers who deserved better treatment. For these emerging CP activists, respectability was about asserting and demanding fundamental rights through direct action protest and confrontation.

Black communist women's reconstruction of the politics of respectability was displayed through their writings and public lectures and speeches. For example, Louise Thompson and Williana Burroughs reshaped normative definitions of womanhood and appropriate behavior, and served as models of female leadership and social activism. This was also clearly evident in their style of reform and their involvement in protests, which some considered "outrageous" and confrontational. In contesting class, gender, and racial oppression, black communist women used their bodies and the public domain to stage racial dramas and to create situations and public controversy in hopes of exposing the problems facing black and white workers in the United States and abroad. They organized and led protest marches, strikes, and boycotts, and when necessary, resorted to violence in self-defense. In 1931 Lillian Lynch, a black CP member in Cloverdale, Pennsylvania, led a picket line of fifty-two black and white, immigrant and native-born women who "would not give up without a fight" even against police officials. One black female activist even shook the sheriff "like a puppy" while others vowed to "fight unto the death if necessary" to obtain higher wages, better working conditions, and an end to gender discrimination.[65] African American women's involvement in militant protests challenged traditional ideas about female civility, and mirrored masculine forms of social activism.

Masculinity discourse and the use of violent protest tactics heavily influenced leftist politics.[66] Robin D. G. Kelley suggests that the pervasive theme of male leadership and militancy were celebrated in CP and black radical newspapers such as the *Liberator* and the *Daily Worker*. Black communist leaders such as William L. Patterson often identified political militancy and leadership with maleness. In the *Daily Worker* in 1928 Patterson declared that it was time for black men to "be mass leader[s] of the working class" and for them "to reclaim their space as providers and protectors of their families."[67] In the 1930s masculine images and the use of violence as a protest strategy became central to CP politics and influenced the forms of black women's protest activity. While black women communists such as radical activist Elizabeth Hendrickson still continued to use traditional organizing strategies that stressed intra-community building, they also took part in protests that some considered "unfeminine."

In the late 1920s Elizabeth Hendrickson became involved in militant forms of protest. Born in 1884 in St. Croix, Danish West Indies, Hendrickson immigrated to New York City in about 1899 and was a member of Harlem's inner circle of African American and Caribbean radicals. She attended the socialists' Rand School of Social Science in New York City; served as president of the American West Indian Ladies Aid Society (AWILAS); co-founded the Virgin Islands Protective League with Ashley Totten; assisted Francis Rothschild, a fellow transplant from the West Indies, with the publication of the Caribbean newspaper *The Emancipator;* and was a

member of several black and leftist organizations such as the Harlem Tenants League.[68] As a student at the Rand School of Social Science, Hendrickson came into contact with some of Harlem's best-known radicals, including Hubert Harrison, Frank Crosswaith, and Maude White, CP leader of the Needles Trade Union. Hendrickson, along with Grace Campbell and Maude White, was among the small number of black women who joined the CP in the 1920s. Hendrickson was also one of the few women who spoke out at the corner of 135th Street and Lenox Avenue along with Hubert Harrison and Frank Crosswaith. According to Harlem writer Claude McKay, "Soapboxers [street orators] were [usually] rough men of the people whom educated Harlemites considered amusing or dangerous."[69] The streets represented a rough terrain that was masculine, unwholesome, and rowdy—a place where protestors could potentially be arrested for "obstructing traffic, disturbing the peace, and speaking without a permit."[70] Elizabeth Hendrickson and other CP women used the streets as an informal space to challenge mainstream black leaders, to lecture on the plight of Caribbean migrants and Caribbean-Americans, and to mobilize black residents in Harlem.

For Hendrickson and women like her, the streets represented a place where they could develop their skills as community organizers and public speakers. In her examination of the social activism of Amy Jacques Garvey and Ella Baker, historian Ula Taylor argued that the streets symbolized an arena for black activists to mature politically and intellectually and to master the "intellectual skill of thinking on their feet."[71] Black women could freely speak their mind and use "street talk [that] was virile and unconventional . . . unchained, free, even daring."[72] Audley Moore recalled that the streets were an ideal place to preach messages of radicalism because "none of the churches would let [us] in with our kind of talk."[73]

The public behavior of communist leader Williana J. Burroughs directly tested the limits of "respectable behavior" for African American women. This resilient reformer actively fought on behalf of African Americans, women, the poor, and the working class in Harlem and other areas. Born in Petersburg, Virginia, in 1882, Burroughs attended Hunter College and became an active local and national organizer for the Communist Party in 1926. She was a member of the Harlem Tenants League, a contributing writer for leftist and black publications such as the *Harlem Liberator* and *Working Woman*, and even a local politician.[74] In 1933 the CP nominated Burroughs to run for Comptroller of New York City and for Lieutenant Governor of New York State in 1934.[75] She was the running mate of gubernatorial candidate and CP organizer Israel Amter and they developed a diverse political platform that included jobs and insurance for the unemployed, an anti-lynching bill, and the right of workers to organize unions and fight for higher wages. Burroughs and Amter did not win the election, but they received the largest number of votes ever cast for communist candidates for the governorship.[76]

While Burroughs's social and political activism was well known in New York City, she also worked as a teacher for the New York City Board of Education. Burroughs was a committed teacher who continuously fought on behalf of children, the poor, and workers' rights. In 1933 she was dismissed from her teaching position at Public School 48 in Queens, New York.[77] On 24 May 1933 Burroughs and white public schoolteacher Isidore Begun from Public School 69 in the Bronx marched into the New York City school board meeting and protested "the terrible conditions that existed in Harlem schools, including the failure of the city to provide free lunches to the children of the unemployed."[78] As result of their actions, both Burroughs and Begun were dismissed from their teaching positions. According to Burroughs, "I was expelled from the New York school system, you know, for conduct unbecoming to a teacher. I was angry, of course, because the expulsion was the usual cowardly punishment for radical activity."[79] The *Harlem Liberator* ran a well-publicized account of Burroughs's firing and her trial for reinstatement, which was held on 30 June 1933. During the trial William O'Shea, New York City's superintendent of public schools, testified that Burroughs was "loud, boisterous and [acted in a] contumacious manner . . . and even fought a policeman when he was ordered to eject her from the board meeting."[80] O'Shea added that Burroughs's behavior was "unbecoming of a teacher" and "prejudicial to good order and discipline."[81] After O'Shea's damaging testimony, Burroughs was not reinstated by the board of education. Prominent black leaders and social reformers such as W. E. B. Du Bois, hundreds of public school teachers, and members of the Harlem Parents' Association, however, supported her courageous efforts.

After her firing, Burroughs continued to be one of Harlem's most influential leftist activists. She became the director of the Harlem Workers' School in 1933, initially located at 200 West 135th Street, but later moved to 415 Lenox Avenue. Established by James Ford, black communist leader and the CP's 1932 vice-presidential candidate, the school was created to train African American workers in Marxist theory and revolutionary principles. Under Burroughs's leadership, the Harlem Workers' School offered seminars on Marxism, the "History of the Negro in America," and related topics, and featured lectures by leading white and black CP leaders such as Mike Gold, James Ford, and James S. Allen.[82] Burroughs also penned a regular column, the "Women's Department," in the *Harlem Liberator* beginning in 1935.[83] She used the black radical newspaper to promote gender equality and as a platform to voice the concerns of women. Burroughs contributed numerous articles on subjects ranging from child labor and education to the role of women in international protest movements. In 1937 at the recommendation of the CP leadership, Burroughs moved to the Soviet Union to work as an announcer and editor for the English-language broadcast of Radio Moscow and became known as the "Voice of Moscow."[84]

Like Burroughs, Louise Thompson Patterson's affiliation with leftist politics challenged conventional definitions of female respectability and she openly criticized the "bourgeois fraternalism" of black leaders who promoted corporate capitalism that served as "an excellent weapon in the hands of the white master class with which to combat the liberation struggle of the Negro people."[85] Patterson's criticism of the black leadership class was based on her experiences working within leading black educational and social institutions, including Hampton Institute in Virginia and the National Urban League in New York City.[86] Louise Patterson's close relationships with important black intellectuals and activists such as W. E. B. Du Bois also inspired the young activist to call for more militant and confrontational strategies for black advancement. While such professional and interpersonal relationships allowed Patterson to hone her skills as an effective community organizer and leader, she was disenchanted with contemporary black politics and leaders.

Patterson's work within the CP represented a significant departure from her earlier affiliation with black social reform organizations. Born Louise Thompson in Chicago in 1901, she moved to California and attended the University of California, Berkeley, graduating in 1923. In 1926 Thompson was hired as an instructor at Hampton Institute. Although she enjoyed working at the black institution, she maintained that the school's administrators were hypocritical, racist, and backward. She claimed that white faculty held "a missionary attitude . . . to civilize the heathens." Thompson also found that the school's enforcement of Victorian notions of respectable behavior seriously constricted the lives of students and faculty.[87] She became even more disenchanted by the school's segregated faculty facilities and the discouragement of interracial interactions on campus.[88] Beginning on 9 October 1927, 1,200 Hampton students organized a strike against these Jim Crow policies, and for a week they refused to attend class and forced the white president, James Edgar Gregg, to close the school. According to school officials, Thompson's support of the strike was inappropriate for an instructor and "such persons . . . were not wanted at Hampton," and she was asked to leave.[89] As a teacher, Thompson was expected to serve as a model of refinement and decent behavior, not agitation. She left Hampton at the end of the school year.

By 1928 Thompson had accepted a one-year Urban League Fellowship at the New School for Social Research in New York City. As an Urban League Fellow, Thompson worked as a social worker in the poorer sections of lower Manhattan. She made routine home visits to the apartments of poor black mothers and was expected to write reports on "urban poverty." For Thompson, writing such reports, especially at the beginning of the depression, proved to be a daunting task. Thompson concluded that the poor did not need social theories, but rather practical solutions that dealt with the realities of poverty and unemployment. For Thompson, the Urban League's solutions to addressing urban poverty compelled her to question the effectiveness of

middle-class liberalism and the strategies of black social reform organizations.[90] Thompson's expanding relationships with Harlem left-wing intellectuals and writers such as Langston Hughes and Gwendolyn Bennett as well as prominent communist reformers Earl Browder, James Ford, and ILD leader William Patterson, whom she later married, provided the context for Thompson's entrance into the CP in 1933.

As Louise Thompson entered leftist politics, close friends and mentors such as clubwoman Mary McLeod Bethune warned her about such an affiliation. Bethune "tried to dissuade" the young reformer from affiliating with the party. In a "kind way" Bethune asked Thompson, "Do you know what you're doing, Louise? . . . You're throwing your life away!"[91] Thompson later revealed that Bethune was not the only prominent middle-class reformer who warned her against getting involved with the communists. Thompson recalled, "Everyone I knew—Walter White, Mary McLeod Bethune, W.E.B. Du Bois, Elmer Carter—had asked me not to work closely with the Communist party."[92] They "put it on the basis of you were ruining your life, your prospects. . . ." and that "getting mixed up with radicals and reds, you know, you won't have any career in the bourgeois world."[93] Although Thompson respected the opinions of Bethune and Du Bois, she defended her position for a more radical approach to black advancement. She believed that black leadership "among the Negro people must pass into new hands, into the hands of working class leaders. . . ."[94] She told Du Bois, "You have been . . . more or less my idol. . . . I[t] has been your [older reformers'] way for a long time and look where we are. Some of us younger people have a right to move further."[95]

Louise Thompson Patterson's comments symbolized the increasing tensions between NAACP leaders and other seasoned reformers and a rising generation of young activists who believed that earlier reform strategies were detached from the actual socioeconomic conditions facing African Americans during the depression era.[96] Historian Beth Tompkins Bates found that "the moderate approach of the 'old guard,' represented by those leaders who wanted to maintain a somber, reformist stance, contrasted sharply with that of a more militant 'new crowd,' which was emerging from the economic turmoil of the Great Depression."[97] Younger activists such as Thompson and fellow communist leader Harry Haywood wanted to transform the direction of black protest and employ reform strategies and tactics that directly confronted the economic plight of the black working class and poor. Haywood declared that the "old methods of pacifying the masses are no longer effective in the present situation. New ways must be found to check the rising spirit of rebellion of the Negro masses against their deepening misery. New weapons . . . must be forged."[98]

Despite the disapproval of some leading race spokespersons, Louise Patterson remained in the CP and joined the International Workers Order (IWO), a CP-affiliated fraternal order, and by 1935, she had become the IWO's national recording secretary. Patterson's election to a national position demonstrated that the CP was somewhat

willing to incorporate African Americans and women into positions of power. She recalled that this was "a very fruitful and warm experience of working with the entire membership and seeing not only their willingness, but eagerness to accept leadership from a Negro woman."[99]

CONSEQUENCES OF LEFTIST ACTIVISM

Like many African American women reformers during the depression years, black communist women were subject to various forms of harassment. They faced job loss, encountered violence, and often became targets of police and government surveillance and harassment. In Fairfield, Alabama, for example, police officers monitored and led a campaign against union and CP activists in the 1930s. They raided the homes of several suspected activists in hopes of finding "Red literature" and physically assaulted black and white men and women.[100] On 8 October 1932, southern CP leader Helen Long, while at the home of a suspected CP worker, was brutally beaten, knocked unconscious, and placed "under investigation" by police. Long was later charged with "disorderly consult and aggravated assault."[101] Similarly, in 1934 Louise Thompson Patterson was arrested and charged with vagrancy and criminal anarchy in Birmingham, Alabama. Patterson went to Alabama to participate in a workers' demonstration. She spent the night in jail "with fourteen other Negro women held on charges ranging from drunkenness and pickpocketing to murder . . . with no chance given to communicate with friends or a lawyer."[102] During her trial, Patterson was harassed, called a "Nigger" repeatedly, and accused of having sexual relations with white male communists.[103]

Despite the possibility of violence or arrest, Patterson, Long, and other black women remained committed to the CP and to the struggle for racial, gender, and class equality. The threat of violence did not deter or prevent African American women from affiliating with the CP, and participating in various protests organized by leftists. Black female communists were willing to place their bodies on the line and even sacrifice their livelihoods to bring about much-needed social and economic change. They understood that freedom was worth such a sacrifice. According to one southern black woman, a member of the Share Croppers' Union, "I would risk my life for the Share Croppers' Union and [am] willing to go down so our husbands can get work and so our babies can eat."[104]

While black women communists were subject to arrest and violence, they also faced challenges from within the CP and faced gender and racial bias and discrimination. They sometimes encountered white chauvinism, gender exclusion, and verbal and physical abuse. Although the CP had taken a public stance supporting racial equality, some white members, both men and women, exhibited behavior that was both racist and patriarchal. Some white male CP members believed that African

Americans and women should play a secondary role in the party. According to Louise Thompson Patterson, these white organizers "felt that they had all the answers, and that blacks were there to learn from them."[105] Some CP activists were not interested in recruiting African Americans or fighting racial oppression. They were more interested in maintaining the traditional party line that emphasized confronting class inequality. In 1932, for example, Joe Birns, a white CP organizer, was charged with racism and physical assault against a fellow CP member Maude White. After a heated argument, Birns shoved White and shouted: "Negro workers do not show any appreciation for all we [whites] have done for them." Birns was brought before the Communist Party's "Workers' Court" at the New Harlem Casino at 100th West 116th Street and was found guilty and placed on probation for six months.[106]

Black female communists' experiences with "white chauvinism" were compounded by gender discrimination. Many black women were relegated to the "rank-n-file" and were excluded from leadership positions. According to Maude White, "few blacks held leading positions, especially black women in the party."[107] While CP leaders chose some African American women such as Williana Burroughs and Louise Patterson for national offices, they were among the small number of black women who held these positions. The CP's exclusion of black women from leadership positions was problematic for Patterson and other black communist women. Patterson observed that the CP not only overlooked the social and political activism of black women, but also did little to develop "special ways" to recruit them into the party. On 6 June 1937 in New York City, Patterson and ninety-two black CP women held a special conference that focused on status and the "role of the Negro woman in the Party."[108] Conference participants addressed the role of African American women in labor unions and the CP, the need for the CP to actively advocate for black female leadership, and against racial and gender discrimination within the party. One of the major aims of the conference was the development of ways to recruit more African American women into the CP. Louise Patterson and others attending the conference demanded that "special attention [be] given to bring them [black women] in, hold them, train them."[109] Black female communists understood that the recruitment of black women to the CP was critical to building support among African Americans for the party. Patterson argued, "Getting large sections of Negro women is going to root the Party among Negroes. I think it is true—get the Negro women into the Party, and not only will the men follow, but we will see that we will have a Party among the Negro people."[110] It is unclear whether this particular conference changed the status of black women in the CP, or whether the CP took a more active role in recruiting African American women. What is apparent, however, is that as black female communists encountered white chauvinism and gender discrimination within the CP, they created alternative spaces for themselves where they addressed issues of race, gender, and class publicly and privately.

Despite many challenges and obstacles, African American women became central figures within the CP during the depression years. As historian Nell Irvin Painter suggested in her account of Alabama CP worker Hosea Hudson, African American women, like the men, "made the Party their own."[111] They became leading local, national, and international leaders within the CP and used leftist politics to confront racial and gender oppression. Most importantly, African American women's CP activism reconfigured dimensions of the politics of respectability and challenged prevailing bourgeois approaches to racial uplift. By transcending middle-class notions of respectability, African American women leaders within the CP offered alternative images of female reform, and demonstrated their willingness to embrace radical strategies for relieving the suffering that workers—male and female, black and white—experienced during the depression decade.

NOTES

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[1]"Mothers of Scottsboro Victim Denounces NAACP Leaders as Bunch of Liars, Fakers," *Daily Worker*, 17 July 1931, 1.

[2]Walter White and A. Philip Randolph argued that the CP's concentration on class struggle and politics failed to address the "race question." According to White, the CP, especially in its defense of the Scottsboro Boys, sought to sacrifice "Negro Martyrs" in order to advance communist propaganda. Randolph's criticism of the CP came after it began to dominate the National Negro Congress (NNC). As the first president of the NNC, Randolph believed that the CP was becoming a dominant force within the NNC and expressed such concerns at the NNC's Third National Convention in 1940. He asserted that the NNC's close affiliation with the CP and its positions supporting the Soviet Union rendered the NNC incapable of expressing the concerns and objectives of African Americans. Recognizing the stigma of being labeled a communist, Randolph asserted, "Negroes cannot afford to add to the handicap of being black the handicap of being Red." Former CP member Richard Wright also criticized the Marxist organization. Wright's "I Tried to Be a Communist" expressed his view that the CP's promotion of racial equality and black recruitment was superficial. Richard Wright, "I Tried to Be a Communist," in *The God That Failed,* ed. Richard Crossman (New York, NY, 1949); Mark Naison, *Communists in Harlem During the Depression* (New York, NY, 1983), 177–88, 210, 294–98; Paula F. Pfeffer, *A. Philip Randolph: Pioneer of the Civil Rights Movement* (Baton Rouge, LA, 1990), 40.

[3]Claude Patterson to Walter White, 13 August 1931; Scottsboro Legal file 3, NAACP Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

[4]David Forgasc, *The Gramsci Reader: Selected Writings, 1916–1935* (London, 1999), 425.

[5]Robin D. G. Kelley, "The Left," in *Black Women in America,* vol. 2, ed. Darlene Clark Hine, et al. (New York, 2005), 237.

[6]Mark Naison, *Communists in Harlem During the Depression* (Urbana, IL, 1983); Robin D. G. Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe: Alabama Communists During the Great Depression* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1990); Mark I. Solomon, *The Cry Was Unity: Communism and African Americans, 1917–1936* (Jackson, MS, 1998); Marika Sherwood, *Claudia Jones: A Life in Exile* (London, 1999); Erik S. McDuffie, "Long Journeys: Four Black Women and the Communist Party, U.S.A., 1930–1956," Ph.D. diss., New York University, 2003; Erik S. McDuffie, "She Devoted Twenty Minutes Condemning All Other Forms of Government but the Soviet: Black Women Radicals in the Garvey Movement and in the Left During the 1920s," in *Africa Diasporic: A Reader*, ed. Michael Gomez (New York, 2006), 219–49; Glenda Gilmore, *Defying Dixie: The Radical Roots of Civil Rights, 1919–1950* (New York, 2008).

[7]Marilyn Kern-Foxworth, "Early Journalism," in Hine, *Black Women in America*, II, 177–85; Robin D. G. Kelley, "The Left," 237–44; Robin D. G. Kelley, "Lucy Parsons," in *Black Women in America*, II, 469–71.
[8]Carole Boyce Davies, *Left of Karl Marx: The Political Life of Black Communist Claudia Jones* (Durham, NC, 2007).
[9]Joe William Trotter, Jr., *From a Raw Deal to a New Deal? African Americans, 1925–1945* (New York, 1996).
[10]Joe William Trotter, Jr., "From a Raw Deal to a New Deal?: 1929–1945," in *To Make Our World Anew*, ed. Robin D. G. Kelley and Earl Lewis (New York, 2000), 409.
[11]St. Clair Drake and Horace R. Cayton, *Black Metropolis: A Study of Negro Life in a Northern City,* vol. 1 (New York, 1945), 87.
[12]"Negro Working Woman Organizer of Cleveland," *Working Woman*, December 1931, 6.
[13]For discussion of the CP's evolving relationship with the black struggle during the 1920s, see Harvey Klehr, *The Heyday of American Communism: The Depression Decade* (New York, 1984); Harry Haywood, *Black Bolshevik: Autobiography of an Afro-American Communist* (Chicago, IL, 1978).
[14]Naison, *Communists in Harlem During the Depression*, 3; Robin D. G. Kelley, *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class* (New York, 1994), 112, 114.
[15]Naison, *Communists in Harlem During the Depression*, 18.
[16]"Communist Ranks Increase Fourfold, States Ms. Burroughs," *Harlem Liberator*, 18 November 1933, 3.
[17]Ibid.
[18]Ibid.
[19]Harvey Klehr, John Earl Haynes, and Fridrikh Igorevich Firsov, *The Secret World of American Communism* (New Haven, CT, 1995), 199.
[20]*Southern Worker*, 29 November 1930.
[21]Williana Burroughs, "Harlem Workers School," *Negro Liberator*, 7 July 1934, 6.
[22]Louise Thompson, "The Role of Proletarian Fraternalism in the Liberation Struggle of the Negro People," *Negro Liberator*, 28 July 1934, 6.
[23]Naison, *Communists in Harlem During the Depression*, 119, 136, 149, 271, 161; Max Steinberg, "Achievements and Tasks of the New York District," *Communist*, May 1935.
[24]George Charney, *A Long Journey* (Chicago, IL, 1968), 34.
[25]Naison, *Communists in Harlem During the Depression*, 136; "Branch Life Column," *Negro Liberator*, 1 August 1935, 2.
[26]Bonita Williams, "Fifteen Million Negroes Speak," *Harlem Liberator*, 14 October 1933, 5.
[27]"Lib's East Harlem Mass Meet Draws Large Crowd," *Harlem Liberator*, 8 July 1933, 2; Betty Patterson, "LSNR Launches Fight on Job Discrimination in Harlem," *Harlem Liberator*, 26 August 1933, 5.
[28]"Housewives Will Picket Meat Plants," *Daily Worker*, 3 June 1935, 1, 2; Ann Barton, "Revolt of the Housewives," *New Masses*, 18 June 1935, 18–19.
[29]"Housewives Will Picket Meat Plants," *Daily Worker*, 3 June 1935, 1.
[30]Naison, *Communists in Harlem During the Depression*, 149.
[31]Ibid., 149–50.
[32] Mari Jo Buhle, Paul Buhle, and Dan Georgakas, *Encyclopedia of the American Left* (New York, 1998), 839.
[33]Philip S. Foner, *Women and the American Labor Movement*, vol. 2 (New York, 1980), 264.
[34]Roy Rosenzweig, "Organizing the Unemployed: The Early Years of the Great Depression, 1929–1933," *Radical America* 10 (July–August 1976): 37–60.
[35]Foner, *Women and the American Labor Movement*, 264.
[36]Solomon, *The Cry Was Unity*, 100; Fanny Austin, "The Negro Working Women," *Working Woman*, June 1930, 6.
[37]"Martha Jeffries Fights for Her Dependents," *Working Woman*, December 1931, 2; Rose Burt, "Ohio Negro Women Active in State Hunger March," *Working Woman*, June 1931, 3.
[38]"Unemployed Struggles of the Thirties" in *Political Affairs*, box 3, folder 8, Mark Solomon and Kaufman Research File on African Americans and the Communist, Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York University, New York, NY (hereafter, Wagner Labor Archives); "Organizing Study Groups," *Party Organizer*, March 1930, 8.
[39]Si Gerson, "Negro Woman Delegate to Anti-War Congress in Paris," *Daily Worker*, 25 August 1934, 4.
[40]"Prepare Throughout U.S. for Int'l Women's Congress Against War," *Daily Worker*, 1 June 1924, 4.
[41]Jerome Arnold, "Negro Woman Share-croppers off to Paris Congress, Tell of Oppression in South," *Daily Worker*, 25 July 1934, 1.
[42]Si Gerson, "Negro Woman Delegate to Anti-War Congress in Paris," *Daily Worker*, 25 August 1934, 4.

[43]Ibid.
[44]"Must Raise Voice Louder Says Sharecropper Girl," *Daily Worker*, 16 June 1934, 4.
[45]"Work Among Women," *Party Organizer*, February 1932, 29.
[46]"Negro Working Woman Organizer of Cleveland," *Working Woman*, December 1931, 6; "Work Among Women," *Party Organizer,* February 1932, 29.
[47]Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe*, 20, 22.
[48]Ibid., 242.
[49]"Historic Demonstration Stirs Working Class," *Negro Liberator*, 1 September 1934, 5.
[50]Ibid.
[51]Klehr, *The Heyday of American Communism*, 333.
[52]Dan T. Carter, *Scottsboro: A Tragedy of the American South* (New York, 1969), 5–6, 48.
[53]International Labor Defense Papers, box 5, folder 10, Schomburg Center for Research in Black History, (SCRBH), New York Public Library, New York (hereafter, ILD Papers); Carolyn Ashbaugh, *Lucy Parsons: American Revolutionary* (Chicago, IL, 1976).
[54]Richard Moore, "Report of Fall 1932 Tour of Mrs. Janie Patterson," ILD Papers.
[55]"European Workers Learn of Brutality of White Bosses as Mrs. Ada Wright, Scottsboro Mother, Speaks to Millions," *Harlem Liberator*, 15 October 1932; James A. Miller, Susan D. Pennybacker, and Eve Rosenhaft, "Mother Ada Wright and the International Campaign to Free the Scottsboro Boys, 1931–1934," *The American Historical Review* 106 (April 2001): 401.
[56]Ibid.
[57]Ibid.
[58]"Richmond Masses Support March," *Harlem Liberator*, 6 May 1933.
[59]Ibid.; "Bronx Workers Rally to Scottsboro Mass Defense," 6 May 1933; Victoria Wolcott, *Remaking Respectability: African American Women and the Politics of Identity in Inter-War Detroit* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2001), 214.
[60]Audley "Queen Mother" Moore interview with Cheryl Gilkes, in *The Black Women Oral History Project,* ed. Ruth Edmonds Hill (Westport, CT, 1991), 132.
[61]Between 1945 and 1946, Jones became editor of the *Daily Worker's* "Negro Affairs" column and was elected to the National Committee of the CP; Davies, *Left of Karl Marx,* xxiv.
[62]Ashbaugh, *Lucy Parsons,* 261.
[63]Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880–1920* (Cambridge, MA, 1993), 187.
[64]"An Account of Addresses by Booker T. Washington and Mrs. Washington Delivered at Charleston," 12 September 1898, in *The Booker T. Washington Papers,* vol. 4, ed. Louis R. Harlan (Urbana, IL, 1975), 468.
[65]"Mrs. Lynch to Join Delegation to Soviet Union," *Harlem Liberator*, 24 October 1931, 4.
[66]Kelley, *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics and the Black Working Class*, 112.
[67]William L. Patterson, "The New Negro," *Daily Worker*, June 1928.
[68]American West Indian Ladies Aid Society (AWILAS) Papers, box 1, folders 1–3, (SCRBH); vertical file "West Indian in New York," clipping, n.d., (SCRBH); W. Burghardt Turner and Joyce Moore Turner, *Richard B. Moore, Caribbean Militant in Harlem Collected Writings 1920–1972* (Bloomington, IN, 1988), 217; Ruth Moolenaar, *Profiles of Outstanding Virgin Islanders* (St. Thomas, 1986), 52; Communist Party Records, reel 139, Wagner Labor Archives.
[69]Claude McKay, *Harlem: Negro Metropolis* (New York, 1940), 192.
[70]*New York News*, 1926; *New York Amsterdam News*, 29 September 1926.
[71]Ula Taylor, "Street Strollers: Grounding the Theory of Black Women Intellectuals," *Afro-Americans in New York Life and History* 30 (July 2006): 155.
[72]"Fire First Guns in Harlem, Free Speech Campaign," *New York Amsterdam News*, 29 September 1926, 1–2.
[73]Hill, *The Black Women Oral History Project*, 132.
[74]Charles Burroughs, *Home* (Chicago, IL, 1987), 36; Florence Murray, *The Negro Handbook, 1946–1947* (New York, 1947), 284–85.
[75]"Nominated by Communist Party," *Harlem Liberator*, 12 August 1933.
[76]"Best Showing Ever Made Here by a Communist Candidate for the Governorship," *New York Times*, 28 November 1934, 2.
[77]"School Board Ousts Mrs. Burroughs," *The Harlem Liberator*, 1 July 1933, 3.
[78]"Teachers Suspended For Heckling Board," *New York Times*, 1 June 1933, 19.
[79]"Williana J. Burroughs," in private papers and collection of Carola Burroughs in New York City.

[80]Ibid.
[81]Ibid.
[82]"Harlem Schools Hold Summer Cultural Courses," *Harlem Liberator*, 24 July 1934, 5; Williana Burroughs, "Workers School Rents Up-To-Date Quarters," *Harlem Liberator*, 22 September 1934, 5.
[83]Williana Burroughs, "Women's Department," *Harlem Liberator*, 15 March 1935, 15 April 1935, 15 May 1935, 1 June 1935, 1 July 1935, 1 August 1935, 2 September 1935.
[84]Harvey Klehr, John Earl Haynes, and Fridrikh Igorevich Firsov, *The Secret World of American Communism* (New Haven, CT, 1998), 200–202; Florence Murray, *The Negro Handbook, 1946–1947* (New York, 1947), 285.
[85]Louise Thompson, "The Role of Proletarian Fraternalism in the Liberation Struggle of the Negro People," *Harlem Liberator*, 28 July 1934, 6.
[86]Louise Thompson Patterson (LTP) Papers, box 24, folder 10; LTP interview with Ruth Prago, tape 1, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Division, Robert Woodruff Library, Emory University, Atlanta, GA (hereafter, LTP Papers).
[87]In an unsigned letter published in *The Crisis,* Patterson claimed that she had "become keenly aware of the state of hypocrisy, racial prejudice, and backwardness" at Hampton. LTP Papers; Prago, tape 2.
[88]LTP Papers; Prago, tape 3.
[89]Patterson even contacted W. E. B. Du Bois, who had written several articles about the school's Jim Crow policies during the early 1920s. "The Hampton Strike," *The Crisis,* December 1927, 347–48; McDuffie, "Long Journeys," 89; W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Correspondence of W. E. B. Du Bois, 1877–1934*, vol. 1 (Amherst, MA, 1997), 360, 363.
[90]Ibid.; McDuffie, "Long Journeys," 72–73.
[91]LTP, interview with Prago, tape 4, LTP Papers.
[92]Ibid.
[93]Ibid.; "U.S. Will Yield to Communism, Du Bois Tells Conference," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 20 May 1933. Du Bois believed that a revolution based on working-class ideology was limited. He argued that race ideology was also an integral part of class struggle.
[94]Louise Thompson, "Southern Terror," *The Crisis,* November 1934, 328.
[95]LTP, interview with Prago, tape 4, LTP Papers.
[96]For a full discussion on the rising tension and ideological differences between seasoned Progressive Era reformers and a younger generation of 1930s black activists, see Beth Tompkins Bates, "A New Crowd Challenges the Agenda of the Old Guard in the NAACP, 1933–1941," *American Historical Review* 102 (April 1997): 340–77 and James O. Young, *Black Writers of the Thirties* (Baton Rouge, LA, 1974), 3–34.
[97]Bates, "A New Crowd Challenges the Agenda of the Old Guard," 341.
[98]Harry Haywood, "The Crisis of the Jim-Crow Nationalism of the Negro Bourgeoisie," *The Communist,* April 1931, 332; see also V. P. Franklin, "Harry Haywood: In Defense of the Black Working Class," in *Living Our Stories, Telling Our Truths: Autobiography and the Making of the African American Intellectual Tradition* (New York, 1995), 139–184.
[99]Roger Keeran, "The International Workers Order and the Origins of the CIO," *Labor History* 30 (Summer 1979): 385–408; LTP interview with Prago, tape 4, LTP Papers.
[100]"Negro Woman Beaten, Jailed in Alabama," *Daily Worker*, 9 October 1934, 2.
[101]Ibid.
[102]Thompson, "Southern Terror," 327.
[103]Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe*, 79.
[104] Rubbie Hart, "Women Risk Lives to Organize Sharecroppers," *Harlem Liberator,* 19 May 1931, 3.
[105]Earl O. Hutchinson, *Blacks and Reds: Race and Class Conflict* (East Lansing, MI, 1995), 66–67.
[106]Philip S. Foner and Herbert Shapiro, *American Communism and Black Americans: A Documentary History, 1930–1934* (Philadelphia, PA, 1991), 177; "Trial Finds White Worker Guilty of Race Hatred," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 13 February 1932, 1.
[107]Maude White Katz, interview with Ruth Prago, 19 December 1981; "Oral History of the American Left: Radical Histories, 1920–1980," Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives.
[108]Robert Shaffer, "Women and the CPUSA, 1930–1940," *Socialist Review* 45 (May–June, 1979): 73–118; Louise Thompson, "Negro Women in Our Party," *Party Organizer*, July 1937, 25–27.
[109]Thompson, "Negro Women in Our Party," 27.
[110]Ibid.
[111]Nell Irvin Painter, *The Narrative of Hosea Hudson, His Life as a Negro Communist in the South* (Cambridge, MA, 1979), 16.