ALL WHO STAND IN TRUTH ARE GIANTS: THE RIGHTS OF CONSCIENCE COMMITTEE, 1955-1973

By

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ABSTRACT

ALL WHO STAND IN TRUTH ARE GIANTS: THE RIGHTS OF CONSCIENCE COMMITTEE, 1955-1973

By

Rebecca Ann Missonis

The Rights of Conscience Committee played an integral role in carrying out the mission of the American Friends Service Committee, as well as Quaker testimonies, for the duration of its existence, 1955-1973. Recognizing that the Constitution has no impact unless the people demand that its words are upheld, the Rights of Conscience Committee sought to support individuals and groups who, as a matter of conscience, took action to protest injustice and to secure their constitutionally-guaranteed rights. Through a variety of funding sources, the Rights of Conscience Committee made both sufferings grants (a Quaker tradition from the religion's inception in the 1640s) and legal grants to individuals and groups who took a stand of conscience in four main areas – race, personal beliefs and associations, conscientious objection to war, and loyalty oaths. This committee is an illustration of religiously-based civic activism, which was a vital expression of the quest for social change and democratic activism, which was characteristic of many reform movements in the mid-twentieth century.

Dedicated to Molly, Bobby, Bo, and Fred

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Table of Contents

Introduction

The Rights of Conscience Committee was a branch of the American Friends Service Committee from 1955 to 1973. During this time, the Rights of Conscience Committee, or ROCC, provided hundreds of grants, both for legal expenses and every-day living expenses, to individuals who took a stand, as a matter of conscience, against an unjust practice or law. Scholarship on the Rights of Conscience Committee to this point is virtually nonexistent and this group is worthy of scholarly examination because understanding its motives and methods enriches our collective understanding of social justice efforts in the United States. Collective efforts of mass resistance are as old as the United States itself, and the Rights of Conscience Committee combined Quaker faith and practice with a defense of civil liberties in practical ways that ranged from committee members sleeping in the home of a black family in the hopes of preventing their white neighbors from bombing it to funding appeals to the Supreme Court. Shining a light on the work of the Rights of Conscience Committee helps give us a greater collective understanding of the ways in which faith, practice, and the fight for civil liberties can intersect in a productive manner that benefits many individuals as well as the collective good.

Since 1787, ordinary people individually and collectively have struggled to make the nascent United States more democratic, often by

insisting that majorities respect their rights and civil liberties. Members of the Religious Society of Friends, also known as Quakers, can rightfully claim to be among the earliest and most faithful defenders of civil liberties in the United States. From the very first meeting of congress in 1790,[1] Quakers have petitioned the government for redress of grievances when federal, state, and/or local governments have impeded or denied individual rights which are guaranteed by the Constitution. Quakers, both collectively and as individuals, were among the earliest abolitionists and suffragists. They repeatedly and boldly pointed out inconsistency or hypocrisy in laws and policies at the local, state, and national levels and have dedicated significant resources to securing justice.[2]

Quaker political activism embodies the intersection between faith and practice, which is what Quakers call their book of guidelines on what it means to be a Quaker in that particular meeting. *Faith and Practice* is as close to a creed as Quakers come to having, though many Friends would be uncomfortable describing the books as such. A "Monthly Meeting" is akin to a parish or congregation, with weekly Meetings for Worship and monthly Meetings for Worship for Business. A "Yearly Meeting" is an umbrella organization for several Monthly Meetings and it is these Yearly Meetings that each publish their own *Faith and Practice* to inform current and potential members what their practices are, as well as providing queries for friends to ponder. Central to membership in the Religious Society of Friends is "letting your life

speak" and putting faith into practice, particularly when injustice is occurring. In their efforts to make our government consistent in word and deed, Quakers have employed many different tactics. The ways in which an individual or group can go about fighting to secure civil liberties falls into two general categories - "macro-efforts" and "micro-efforts." Macro-efforts are more direct, more visible, and get the most recognition, whether from historians or in collective memory. Petitions to Congress, court cases (particularly Supreme Court cases), marches, demonstrations - these all fall under the category of macro-efforts to secure civil liberties. Micro-efforts are less direct, less visible, less known, but no less important than macro-efforts. Micro-efforts allow the individuals responsible for the macro-efforts to actually make those efforts, by doing things such as paying their salaries, paying their mortgages, paying their heating bills. By taking care of the practical needs of protestors, reformers, and leaders, micro-efforts often allow for the macro-efforts to occur and for civil liberties to actually be secured.

Micro-efforts are rarely considered in the history of a movement because they are frequently, even intentionally, kept hidden, yet the realization of constitutionally-guaranteed freedoms would never have progressed as far as it has without these micro-efforts. One example of this comes in a series of interviews conducted by Lyle Tatum, longtime American Friends Service Committee employee and Rights of Conscience Committee member, for a February 1965 report entitled "Rights of

Conscience Program Survey."[3] Tatum's charge was to assess the usefulness of the micro-efforts of the American Friends Service Committee and their Rights of Conscience Committee (ROCC) program. He spoke with several individuals who had directly benefitted from the ROCC's grants or knew of the ROCC's work and asked them to assess the impact of the grants. Julian Bond, who was at the time of the interview Communications Director of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee, "emphasized the tremendous need for sufferings grants."[4] A major endeavor of SNCC at the time was trying to register people to vote, particularly African Americans, and fear of reprisals kept many African Americans in particular from registering, noting that white supremacists were printing up lists of names of people who had registered and "'deserved' economic reprisals."[5] Bond said that his work would be "tremendously simplified if (he) could tell people that there was an opportunity for financial assistance,"[6] clearly demonstrating the need for micro-efforts in supporting the full realization of the intentions of the Fifteenth Amendment, nearly a hundred years after its ratification.

For the past century, The American Friends Service Committee, or AFSC, has been working to secure constitutionally guaranteed civil liberties for individuals and groups through macro- and micro-efforts. The AFSC was created in 1917 as a means for Quakers to serve their country in a way that sowed peace rather than promulgated violence.

Central to Friends teachings is the testimony of nonviolence, which Quakers believe in adhering to in every possible circumstance. Many Quakers wanted to show that their Conscientious Objector status was not meant as a means of shirking their duties as citizens but rather as a way to abide by their deeply-held convictions. Thus, the work of the American Friends Service Committee has been both spiritual and political in nature, promoting "lasting peace with justice, as a practical expression of faith in action."[7] The work of the AFSC has taken its members to myriad countries and communities, engaging in work as varied as supporting native communities in their fight against colonialism to opposing police brutality.

The AFSC has had several subcommittees throughout its history, with the Rights of Conscience Committee, or ROCC, being at the forefront of expressing Quaker "faith in action" and serving as a consummate example of a group centered around and engaging in micro-efforts. The ROCC was formed in 1955 when the AFSC, once a great friend of many in the federal government, came under increasing scrutiny from the House Un-American Activities Committee and McCarthy acolytes. The ROCC provided direct funding to individuals and groups who took a stand, as a matter of conscience, when their constitutionally-guaranteed rights were being violated. Without this aid, these individuals and groups would have been compromised in or prevented from taking these stands, which ultimately resulted in advancing the cause of securing civil

liberties. The ROCC initially worked to support individuals who were being targeted by HUAC, as well as individuals and groups who were taking a stand on issues of racial injustice. Combating racial injustice and working to promote racial equality remained the committee's central focus throughout the remainder of its existence.[8] By directly supporting individuals and groups who were fighting against violations of their civil liberties, the Rights of Conscience Committee was both a "practical expression of faith in action" and a means of ensuring that the Constitution did what it said rather than simply saying what it did.

The inconsistency of a just application of civil liberties has plagued our country since its inception. Groups like the Rights of Conscience Committee, through its myriad micro-efforts, provide a means by which this denial of rights cannot stand in perpetuity. Thus, the Rights of Conscience Committee, and similar groups, are essential to fulfilling the promise of the American republic, without which civil liberties would flounder and the promises of the Constitution would ring hollow.

Chapter 1 – Quakerism, The American Friends Service Committee, and The Constitution

Since its inception, the Religious Society of Friends has worked for social and economic justice.[9] Its founder, George Fox, "wanted to enforce an outward equality as a way to move toward an authentic equality that grew from spiritual equality."[10] Fox referred to this equality as "inner light," which was "that of God" in every person and he initially called his followers "Children of the Light."[11] The term "Quaker," which the religion is now colloquially known as, was initially used to mock the group for its piousness, but was adopted by many of its members, though most Quakers still call themselves and others "F/friends." Testimonies were another essential part of Quakerism, with the definition of testimonies roughly translating to that which you should seek and embody in order for human beings to realize the will of God. Seeing and seeking that of God in every person makes it easier to pursue Friends' testimonies here on earth, which include peace, integrity, and equality.[12]

Quakers first came to the British colonies, in what is now the United States, in the 1650s. For as long as they have been in America, Quakers have been at the epicenter of political activism, and have frequently been targeted because of their pursuit of equality and social justice. Some of the first Quaker immigrants and converts to the American colonies were hanged for being politically subversive by insisting, among other things, that the light of God was in each person

and therefore ministers were not needed – a position that was deeply threatening to the hierarchical Puritan church and its Massachusetts Bay Colony.[13] Quakers who did not suffer capital punishment for their beliefs frequently found themselves in legal jeopardy for raising issues of conscience and committing acts of civil disobedience in opposition to several causes of social justice, chief among them slavery and suffrage.

A hallmark of Quaker political activism has been drawing attention to and taking a stand against violations of what the Constitution purports to do. A group of Quakers petitioned the first Congress in 1790 for an end to slavery and the slave trade, taking the bold step of "instructing" members of Congress on putting an immediate end to the inconsistency of creating a country founded upon the principles of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness while simultaneously allowing some individuals to own other human beings.[14] A different group of Quakers had already presented a petition asking for an immediate end to the slave trade and members of Congress had argued that Article 1 Section 9 prevented them from interfering in any way with slavery or the slave trade until 1808, but this group of Quaker petitioners argued that slavery was a clear violation of the "general welfare" clause in the preamble and that Congress had the power to do what was "necessary and proper" (Article 1, section 8, clause 18) to ensure this welfare.[15] The petitions were ultimately ignored and not given any formal vote, but not

before they caused great ire and consternation in both the House and Senate.

Scholarship on how civilian action before, during, and immediately after the ratification of the Constitution affected its content and early interpretations is extensive. One such work is *Unruly Americans And The Origins Of The Constitution* by Woody Holton. Holton argues that the Framers of the Constitution actually had little or no intention of giving rights to common individuals.[16] Winning the Revolutionary War did not lead to the economic empowerment and wide-ranging liberties that Americans had been anticipating, Holton argues, and in fact, "within a few years of the victory at Yorktown, free Americans seeking explanations for their distress increasingly focused on a single source. Their greatest tormentors, they believed, were their own state governments."[17]

This dissatisfaction came from a combination of how expensive it was to start a new country, particularly when excluded from British protections, and the fact that thirteen colonies seemed more dissimilar than ever once their common enemy of King George was out of the picture. Holton argues that the Founding Fathers' intent, both with the Articles of Confederation and the Constitution, was to squelch the growing spirit of democracy, to "put the democratic genie back in the bottle."[18] It was the sustained and oftentimes radical efforts of a large number of common people "whose names have long since been forgotten"[19] who demanded limits on the powers of the government and

more codified individual liberties. Holton argues that while what Americans today value most about our Constitution is that it protects "even the most unpopular religions and political ideas, the most mistrusted racial and ethnic minorities – and even people accused of crimes,"[20] those protections are "precisely what the Framers did not intend to write."[21] It was ordinary Americans, mostly farmers who had no political training of any kind, whose agitation and ceaseless demands forced the Founding Fathers to incorporate the Bill of Rights that they had initially denounced and refused to include alongside the original seven articles of the Constitution.[22]

Thus, the ceaseless political action of Quakers and their petitioning of the very first Congress is in line with this tradition that Holton holds up as being the true stewards of democracy in the United States. Quakers worked tirelessly for equal voting rights, with several of the most famous and dedicated figures in the women's suffrage movement, Lucretia Mott, Susan B. Anthony and Alice Paul, coming from Quaker families with long histories in the United States. Women's equality had been central to Quakerism since its inception, making Quaker women natural reformers when rights were systematically denied to them in the United States despite no constitutional justification for these denials.[23] Quakers were encouraged to identify and live their own testimony, which for Mott, Anthony, and Paul, was women's suffrage. Paul lived to see women's suffrage win explicit protection in the

Constitution via the 19th Amendment and immediately set out to realize full protections against sex-based discrimination, writing the Equal Rights Amendment in 1923, which has yet to be ratified.

At the time when the suffrage movement was reaching its peak and about to realize its goals, the American Friends Service Committee was formed. The United States, having spent three years trying to avoid direct conflict, entered the Great War in April 1917. For the second time in the country's history, the draft was activated, resulting in the main impetus for the formation of the AFSC by a group of Quakers who wanted to demonstrate that their conscientious objector status was not meant to be "draft dodging." The AFSC was founded expressly as a means for conscientious objectors to serve their country "without joining the military or taking lives."[24]

The AFSC quickly expanded their peacemaking and social justice efforts around the world. Their work has included labor, agricultural, economic, and food justice, nonviolence education, economic and political development in low-income areas of the United States and countries around the world. The AFSC has been the subject, either in whole or in part, of several scholarly works which fall into two general categories – a comprehensive history of the AFSC to that point (with the first books being published in the 1940s) or a case study-type format of a particular point in history and the AFSC's role in it.

Though the AFSC provided a tremendous amount of aid during World War I and in post-WWI Europe, most scholarship about the AFSC focuses on their activities during World War II. Two of the most notable works on this topic were written by Allan W. Austin and Anne M. Blankenship. The AFSC launched an early and broad effort to combat racial profiling of Japanese Americans and then to combat Japanese internment while also providing support for internees. The AFSC engaged in both macro- and micro-efforts to ensure the adherence to, and then restoration of, Japanese Americans' civil liberties.

Allan W. Austin's *From Concentration Camp to Campus: Japanese American Students and World War II* is largely the product of research in the AFSC archives in Philadelphia, which provide an extensive and comprehensive documentation of the myriad subcommittees and groups for which the AFSC has been the umbrella organization for the past century. *From Concentration Camp to Campus* focuses on the efforts of the AFSC to provide programs which aided Nikkei[25] in resettling out of internment camps, usually through university admission and attendance, a program which became known as the National Student Relocation Council. Austin focuses extensively on individuals such as Thomas Bodine, a Quaker who joined the AFSC "when his local draft board came calling."[26] Bodine had lived on the East Coast his entire life and knew nothing of the plight of Nikkei in America until the AFSC sent him to work in Seattle and San Francisco in 1942. Bodine "played a

leading role"[27] and was "an outspoken advocate"[28] for incarcerated Nikkei students. Bodine's work was part of a larger program coordinated by the AFSC, which they forged in partnership with General Eisenhower, of "student resettlement."[29] Austin documents the extensive efforts of the AFSC and other Quaker groups and individuals to directly petition the government for an end to internment, fundraise extensively to provide direct relief to Nikkei in the camps, and in particular to create a program by which Nisei could leave the camps and attend college or university. This program was not without controversy, as the AFSC was at times viewed warily by other groups who were launching similar efforts, such as the YMCA/YWCA[30], but the AFSC worked successfully with other groups in running the program, ultimately winning support from Eleanor Roosevelt.[31] Austin documents the support the AFSC gave to Gordon Hirabayashi[32], a Quaker himself who was the plaintiff in one of the Supreme Court cases that challenged internment.

Another book that deals extensively with AFSC activism and Japanese internment is *Christianity, Social Justice, and the Japanese American Incarceration During World War II* by Anne M. Blankenship. She takes a comparative approach, documenting the efforts of many different Christian groups in protesting internment. She credits the efforts of Quakers and the AFSC as being the most sustained and effective of all of the groups she examines, which in addition to Quakers includes Catholics, Baptists, and Main Line Protestants. Blankenship begins with

evidence of Quakers protesting racism in U.S. law, including the 1924 National Origins Act.[33] This law targeted immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe and Asia, with the AFSC naming their protest on the grounds of "racial justice, human dignity, and Americanism."[34] Blankenship documents the "Interracial Newsletter" that the AFSC published throughout the 1920s and 30s, a period of some of the most intense nativism and racial tension in American history, clearly demonstrating Friends' commitment to social justice.[35] Blankenship's focus is broader than Austin's – she does mention the National Student Relocation Council and notes that it was an important Quaker program.[36] She goes further than Austin in demonstrating that Quakers were more radical and more strident in their political activism than other Christian groups. She calls Quaker actions "bold and decisive," [37] and that of other Protestants' "well-intentioned but cautious"[38] with regard to protesting and successfully countering Japanese internment. She writes about Bodine as well as Floyd Schmoe, a Quaker who had grown up on the West Coast. He was a professor at the University of Washington at the time of the attack on Pearl Harbor and wound up being one of the most important figures in fighting Japanese internment as the leader of the AFSC Seattle office, established after the Pearl Harbor attack.[39] Blankenship shows how Quakers were among the few individuals warning about the growing anti-Japanese sentiment in the United States, before the attack on Pearl Harbor, documenting various acts of racism

and not shirking their own complicity, writing in May of 1941 in regard to increasing anti-Japanese racism "the fault rests 'squarely upon us as a people who have permitted prejudice, fear, and hatred to flower into intolerance and violence.'"[40]

Blankenship documents Quakers' "immediate"[41] action to apologize to Nikkei communities for the U.S. government's actions in the wake of the Pearl Harbor attacks and tell Nikkei that they stood ready to help them and to fight any unconstitutional government action as strongly as they could. Blankenship carefully documents the disagreement within the Quaker community itself, with representatives from the AFSC going to the camps to serve as teachers even as some Friends declared "that's helping the government, and you ought to resist!"[42] Blankenship astutely summarizes the situation by saying "Friends rejected the incarceration unanimously but disagreed how to support Nikkei."[43] In spite of the disagreements, Blankenship provides ample evidence for Quaker's efforts against internment and in support of the Nikkei as being the most effective of any Christian groups' efforts, writing "The AFSC's pragmatic approach faced the realities of the political climate and challenged flaws within America's society and political system rather than trying to work around them."[44]

Another book by Austin, *Quaker Brotherhood: Interracial Activism and the American Friends Service Committee, 1917-1950*, ends its focus just before the ROCC was created but provides important insight into the

conditions present in the AFSC that led to the creation of such a committee. The book carefully details "Quaker racial hypocrisy"[45] which stemmed from a disconnection of faith from practice, or more pointedly, many Quakers who claimed to believe in an egalitarian world while engaging in discriminatory practices. Austin argues that viewing Quakers and the AFSC as hypocrites or heroes is unhelpful, and that the history of the first 33 years of the AFSC is most effectively looked at as one of "ongoing struggle to understand better how shared agency might function in an imperfect and often racist world."[46] Quakers and the AFSC were by no means immune to racism, but the work of the AFSC demonstrates a commitment to reckoning with that racism and working to overcome it, both within their own group and in the larger world, as Austin carefully documents. Where Austin stops is when the work of the ROCC began, with the major focus of the ROCC quickly turning toward fighting racial injustice. Thus, an examination of the impact of the work of the ROCC serves as a compliment to and continuation of Austin's book.

Published in 2016, *A Centennial History of the American Friends Service Committee* by Gregory A. Barnes is the most comprehensive attempt at documenting and synthesizing the work of the AFSC to date in one volume. Barnes examines the origins of the group, whose first major action was sending hundreds of conscientious objectors to rebuild northern France in 1917.[47] The AFSC began with a $115,000 budget,

which was an enormous sum at the time but still inadequate for the work that AFSC volunteers, which also included women in its earliest volunteer groups, would be doing in postwar Europe.[48] Barnes documents the building of the organization, which began largely as a feeding program, bringing food and medical supplies to the sick and starving in France and then Russia, to a multinational NGO that had offices and partnerships in five continents, working alongside such giants as the American Red Cross internationally and American Civil Liberties Union on domestic issues. Barnes mentions the Rights of Conscience Committee only a few times, remarking that it was founded in 1955 with a grant from the Fund for the Republic.[49] Barnes also notes that while the Fund for the Republic grant was exhausted after three years, the AFSC valued the committee highly enough that it managed to keep the ROCC going for nearly two more decades, calling the ROCC and its frequent partnership with the ACLU and NAACP "a modest alliance for confronting government bodies on one side and segregationist forces on the other, particularly inasmuch as many other Quaker constituencies held themselves aloof."[50] Barnes' consideration of the ROCC is sparse, but he does trace the trajectory of the ROCC as helping to drive some of the main efforts of the AFSC at the time, largely in the area of race relations in the 1950s and early 1960s, with the antiwar effort in Vietnam taking over by the mid-1960s.[51]

The AFSC's opposition to the federal government's actions during World War II constitute both macro- and micro- efforts and have therefore won the attention of several scholars in the field. What is missing from the scholarship on the AFSC is the continual and expansive efforts of the organization to combat the violations of civil liberties, primarily through racial injustice, after the close of World War II. Hence, an examination of the Rights of Conscience Committee elevates the value of the micro-efforts of Quaker activism that largely go unnoticed and unremembered in public memory and in the historiography.

The Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to the American Friends Service Committee in 1947 for its work "from the nameless to the nameless,"[52] an acknowledgement of Quaker's efforts to not draw attention to themselves as individuals, but rather to work for a better world for all in various ways. The work of the Rights of Conscience Committee, which was established in the 4th decade of AFSC's existence, is very much in this vein, doing work of great importance on a micro-level with the intention of affecting lasting change.[53]

The origins of the Rights of Conscience Committee root themselves in the earliest Friends' practices. Along with Meeting for Worship, the earliest Friends engaged in "Meeting for Sufferings" both in England and in the American colonies. Aptly titled, Meetings for Sufferings were a place where Friends would document instances of Quakers being persecuted, many of whom wound up in jail. Meetings for Sufferings

would organize political and monetary aid in the form of petitions, bail money, and direct grants for personal expenses to help Quakers who were taking a stand as a matter of faith.[54] Organizing as a group to support individuals in their acts of conscience is a micro-effort that is central to Friends tradition and has been in existence since the inception of the religion.

Continuing this three-centuries-old tradition, The Rights of Conscience Committee was established in 1955 with a grant from the Fund for the Republic, a think tank created in 1952 by the Ford Foundation charged with studying the effects of anticommunist activities under Senator McCarthy and the House un-American Activities Committee. The American Friends Service Committee had long enjoyed a warm reception from many lawmakers in Washington, including a particularly close relationship with the Roosevelt administration, owing largely to Eleanor Roosevelt's support for the group's work. Even during Japanese internment, the Roosevelt administration remained in contact and dialogue with AFSC officials, fully cognizant of AFSC's efforts to counter interment however they could.[55]

With the increasing strength of anticommunist fervor in the 1950s, the AFSC's reputation in Washington took a decidedly downward turn, and the organization became the target of scrutiny by the middle of the decade. This produced a major impetus for the formation of the Rights of Conscience committee which worked to combat the perception of

Quakers and the AFSC as "un-American" and to support any individuals, Quaker or otherwise, who were called to give testimony to the HUAC. The taking of oaths is a practice that George Fox, the founder of the Religious Society of Friends, strongly objected to, and Quakers have followed his teaching ever since. For Quakers, to take an oath would mean to say that they are being less truthful when they are not under oath. Quakers believe in telling the truth at all times, rendering oaths unnecessary, so refusing to give testimony about one's "un-American" activities would be something Quakers would do and support others in doing. The Fund For The Republic was aware of the AFSC's work in this area and was happy to support it.[56]

The other impetus for the establishment of the ROCC was combating racial injustice. The AFSC had been concerned with equality of all kinds since its inception and the ROCC's predecessor, the Race Relations Committee (RRC), was established by the AFSC in 1943 to encourage and aid, on a local level, in interracial integration in schools, neighborhoods, and the workplace.[57] In 1952, the committee was renamed the Community Relations Division, reflecting the committee's belief that "race" was too narrow a descriptor. By this time, the RRC believed that their work was not just about "race relations" but "the effect of prejudice, segregation, and discrimination upon men and women thrown together in the 'bundle of life,'"[58] leading to a broadening of the group's name to more accurately reflect its aims. It was through the

Community Relations Division that the Rights of Conscience Committee was born, with those who took a stand against racial injustice, prejudice, segregation, and/or discrimination being chief among the matters of conscience that the committee sought to fund.

The ROCC initially secured $150,000 of funding, which they expected to allow the program to exist for approximately two years.[59] Yet the ROCC wound up being an integral branch of the AFSC well into the 1970s. As such, the ROCC was involved with and funded numerous figures and cases of the Civil Rights movement, working directly with Thurgood Marshall, Julian Bond, Martin Luther King, and John Lewis, among others. The ROCC funded in whole or part several individuals who challenged unjust labor practices, school segregation, oath-taking requirements, and violations of religious freedoms.[60]

The goals of the ROCC remained consistent throughout the committee's existence. They included broadening the legal recognition of the rights of conscience, helping individuals or groups "involved in difficulties as a result of conscientious motivation," and "to create a more sympathetic climate for nonconformity and individual liberty."[61] The ROCC "never agreed on any absolute definition of criteria for selection of cases to be assisted"[62] but in making a decision about assistance, the factors the committee considered were "conscientious motivation of the applicant, legal plausibility of the issues, importance of the issue, and need of the applicant and his supporters."[63] The committee was able to

stretch their funds, often to the extreme, thanks to lawyers who found similar reason to support their client's stands of conscience and often accepted reimbursement from the ROCC only for their out-of-pocket expenses, charging little or nothing for the time they spent on the case(s).[64]

From the start, the ROCC partnered with other organizations, including the Southern Christian Leadership Council, Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, Central Committee for Conscientious Objectors, and, most commonly, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and the American Civil Liberties Union. These partnerships demonstrate the ROCC's desire to serve in the most effective manner, often picking up funding when other organizations could not provide it. The ROCC shunned publicity, often explicitly asking the individuals to whom they provided funding not to publicize their funding,[65] which helps to explain at least in part why the work of the ROCC is absent from scholarship, even Quaker political scholarship, to this point.

At virtually the same time that the Rights of Conscience Committee was coming into existence, 29 pacifists were taking a stand, as a matter of conscience, against war exercises in New York City. The Civil Defense Authorities scheduled an air raid drill for June 15, 1955, warning all residents of the city to "seek shelter" between 2:05 and 2:13pm that day.[66] Writing for the group, four of these pacifists wrote directly to

Abraham Stark, acting mayor of New York City, and told him that they would not be abiding by the order, writing that drills and preparations are futile efforts and that they only way to counter the growing atomic threat was through the "abolition of war."[67] They also explicitly cited their moral and religious reasons for taking such a stand: "we do not believe that any nation has the moral or spiritual right to visit atomic and biological destruction upon any other people, at any time, or for any reason whatever. Those of us who are Christians declare this in the name of Christ; but on whatever ground, this is for all of us a profound conscientious conviction."[68] The group purposefully gathered in City Hall Park at the start of the drill and all were arrested.[69]

Bayard Rustin, a Quaker and former employee of the American Friends Service Committee, was a member of this group, and that likely caught the attention of the Rights of Conscience Committee. At the same time, Rustin's participation was incidental – the actions of the group constituted a clear and meaningful stand of conscience in the cause that had led to the creation of the American Friends Service Committee – pacifism. Thus, this was an ideal early project for the Rights of Conscience Committee, and one that helped grow the group into a flourishing existence. The group of 29 were asked to write a statement to the newly-forming ROCC about their act of conscience, which they did and which remains on file in the AFSC archives. In their statement, the group wrote that they refused "on the grounds of conscience"[70] to obey

the order from the Civil Defense Administration because "even in war time civil liberties are not totally abolished...and we do not believe that the government has a right in effect to create a state of martial law in connection with a peacetime civil defense demonstration."[71] Thus, the group believed that they were "acting within our rights in a conscientious effort to bear our witness and to bring our convictions to the attention of our fellow citizens."[72] Among those convictions were an opposition to all war and a belief that such an exercise endangered the collective security and democratic values.[73]

The pacifists signed their name to the report and The Rights of Conscience Committee was eager to help each of them after reading it. Each was facing a $500 fine and up to a year in jail.[74] The judge remanded a female protestor to Bellevue, accused the group of murder, and set bail at $1500 per defendant.[75] One member of the group refused to pay bail, the rest were released within three days and directly sought the help of the AFSC.[76] Within a month, George Willoughby sent a letter of support and a check to Bayard Rustin in the amount of $1000 "to assist with legal expenses in bringing the civil case to trial."[77] Willoughby wrote that the committee "recognizes the importance of testing the rights of conscience to refuse cooperation in these civil defense measures."[78] Virtually every correspondence from the ROCC going forward would cite the recognition of taking a stand for a civil liberty as a matter of conscience and support for such actions at the time and in the future.

The work of the ROCC has largely gone unpublicized, even by the AFSC. The reasons for this are in line with the purpose of the group, which is to ameliorate injustice whenever possible and work for the betterment of humanity. As a matter of conscience, Quaker teachings do not allow for any type of self-congratulation, and the Rights of Conscience Committee is no different. Yet it is only through these micro-efforts, these moments when injustice has occurred and someone stands up and says "no, I will not allow this to continue," that our civil liberties are preserved and justice can prevail. By this measure, Rights of Conscience Committee is a giant in the history of the quest for equality and the full realization of the promises of our Constitution.

Chapter 2 – The Rights of Conscience Committee and Housing Integration

Throughout its existence, combating racial injustice was a major focus of the Rights of Conscience Committee's funding. In 1957, for instance, the ROCC made legal grants totaling $23,750 and sufferings grants totaling $7,890.[1] A significant portion of the legal grants and "except for $500 all of the sufferings grants were in the race relations field."[2] Throughout its existence, the ROCC made sufferings and legal grants to hundreds of individuals and groups who took a stand, as a matter of conscience, against racist laws and practices. Much has been written about desegregation of public schools and of public spaces such as water fountains, buses, and lunch counters. Massive and overt cases of racial discrimination in housing, whether that be in purchasing or renting property or in securing financing for the purchase of a home, has been a topic of significant scholarly consideration in recent years. A major focus of the Rights of Conscience Committee in its early years was funding individuals and groups who took a stand, as a matter of conscience, against these racist housing laws and policies. Whether it was black families purchasing homes in white-only neighborhoods, white families selling their homes in violation of local ordinance or mortgage deed, or lawyers representing those who sought to overturn racist housing laws, the ROCC clearly and decisively moved to support these issues of constitutional and moral significance.

Housing segregation and racist zoning laws have been among the more popular topics in U.S. History scholarship in recent years. Hundreds of books exist on either or both topics, with most scholarship contextualizing the housing or zoning laws of one particular city or suburb within the larger racial climate of the United States at the time. One such work is *Second Suburb: Levittown, Pennsylvania*, edited by Diane Harris, and published in 2010. Various authors, including historians and former Levittown residents, contributed chapters in an effort to document the complicated and overtly racist history of the building of suburban America. Harris writes the introduction, beginning the study in 1951, a time when the Levitt family had completed construction of their first planned community on Long Island, NY, and was now beginning construction of their second planned community in Bucks County, PA.[3] Richard Longstreth's chapter *The Levitts, Mass-Produced Houses, and the Community Planning in the Mid-twentieth Century*, describes how the postwar era resulted in the creation of several new manufacturing industries and sites, which spurred the need for more varied and affordable housing options.[4] This presented tremendous opportunity for enterprising developers like William Levitt, who built his first "Levittown" for middle class workers in what was believed to be reasonable commuting distance to New York City. Longstreth documents how Levitt's primary market was veterans, who were attracted to Levittown by the size of the houses and yards, both much bigger than

what they could typically afford in the city. Veterans were also able to take advantage of low interest rate mortgages, a program which greatly contributed to the explosion of suburbs in the 1940s and 50s.[5]

As was the case in the first Levittown, the Levitts required potential purchasers to come in person to a sales center in Bucks County, ensuring that only white families would be able to purchase a home in this new development.[6] In *Jim Crow's Last Stand: The Struggle to Integrate Levittown*, Thomas J. Sugrue demonstrates how William Levitt did all he could to ensure that his eponymous towns would bar non-whites from even entering the community, forbidding "the use of these premises by persons other than Caucasians"[7] in his seemingly ironclad property deeds and agreements of sale. Sugrue documents how Levitt intended to forbid Levittown residents from leasing or reselling their homes to any non-white individuals and even to prevent them from allowing nonwhite children to play in any Levittown streets or yards.[8]

Sugrue also documents how The NAACP involved itself in several cases in the Long Island Levittown, suing when Levitt evicted black tenants, as well as when white communists, who owned houses in Levittown, NY, and purposefully invited black children over to play in their yards with their children.[9] Thus, both Levitt and the NAACP were accustomed to challenging one another in the area of racial segregation when Levitt started building his Bucks County, PA town. What Levitt was not accustomed to when he broke ground in Bucks County, as Sugrue

shows, was the organized political activism of Quakers. This second Levittown was built in the heart of Quaker country, about 20 miles from Philadelphia and in an area where virtually every town had a thriving Friends meeting. Philadelphia was and is also home to the headquarters of the American Friends Service Committee, and Quakers began efforts to oppose Levitt's racial segregation plans as soon as he opened his model home in Bucks County in 1951.[10]

Jane Reinheimer and Jack Wilmore were two Quakers who worked for the Community Relations Division (CRD) of the American Friends Service Committee, the group that would come to be the "parent committee" of the Rights of Conscience Committee when it began in 1955. Reinheimer and Wilmore, working in an official capacity for the CRD and then ROCC, spent much of 1953-1956 searching for a black family to support in their purchase of a resale house in Levittown. As Sugrue documents in *Jim Crow's Last Stand,* many prospective families who the CRD considered ultimately turned down the opportunity for fear of violence from whites or isolation from the black community.[11] These reservations were summed up in a report by the CRD which stated that the family that would desegregate Levittown, PA would be doing so absent personal gain, making them "pioneers, and there are not many of them in any group."[12] While extensive in its documentation, *Second Suburb,* or any book on racist housing laws and policies, does not include an examination of the efforts of the Rights of Conscience

Committee. The committee dedicated extensive resources to various pioneers in desegregating various neighborhoods across the Eastern seaboard, and documenting these efforts makes an important contribution to the understanding of how suburbs and neighborhoods came to be integrated.

William and Daisy Myers turned out to be the pioneers in Levittown that were so desperately needed. A couple in their 30s with three children who were living in nearby Bristol Township, they sought to purchase a house in Levittown knowing full well the risks and threats as well as the important step toward justice that they were assuming. The seller was Irving Mandel, a white man who had been trying to sell his house for the previous two years. Once the full identity of the Myers family became public, riots and violence would soon engulf their property and neighborhood to the point that even a police presence was not enough to ensure the family's safety.[13] Fellow Levittown residents and people from neighboring areas, sympathetic to the Myers' situation, were stationed outside their home, particularly in the evening, to protect them against the many protestors who were intent on forcing them out of Levittown.[14]

Desegregating Levittown would be an act of conscience, a purposeful stand against William Levitt's discriminatory and unconstitutional practices, and one that resulted in great suffering for both the seller and the purchaser of the home. All of these circumstances

meant that the Myers' case was an ideal one to be taken up and supported by the newly-formed Rights of Conscience Committee. Sam Snipes, a Quaker lawyer in nearby Yardley Borough, represented the Myers in their purchase of the house and met with several white Levittown residents to try to ease their concerns about the Myers' move and deescalate the situation for everyone involved. At the urging of friends who were on the committee, Snipes wrote to the Rights of Conscience Committee in October 1957, detailing some of the difficulties he and the Myers had experienced in securing the house in their name. The Myers struggled to secure an adequate down payment, then struggled to find an insurance company that would cover the house against damage because of "abnormal risk of loss."[15] The purchase almost did not go through because of difficulties securing enough money for the down payment, but Snipes eventually was able to help with that as well, through the estate of Daisy Myers' mother.[16]

After those hurdles were cleared, "a harassment program of considerable proportion"[17] was launched against the Myers, resulting in Snipes and other supporters meeting with several public officials, including the state Attorney General, in an attempt to ensure that the sale of the house would go through and the Myers would be protected from harm. Snipes asked the ROCC for some payment, which he did not specify, of the considerable legal fees he has amassed in working to settle the house sale and ensure that the Myers could live there comfortably.

Correspondence among Sam Snipes, William and Daisy Myers, and various officials of the ROCC demonstrates how fully the ROCC embraced this issue as one of considerable constitutional and ethical significance. Three weeks after Snipes' request for payment of his legal fees, the ROCC sent him a check for $1,000 and a letter stating that the whole committee supported his efforts and felt that he was "in the forefront of one of the more significant phases in the effort to right a social injustice."[18] In an October 1956 memo from associate secretaries Fred Fuges and Clarence "Mike" Yarrow to the ROCC staff, Fuges and Yarrow noted that in supporting Snipes and the Myers family by seeking an injunction against those who would "interfere" with the Myers' move to Levittown, "such a decree would be broader than state and local laws."[19] This demonstrates that the ROCC was aware that their support of individuals at the local level could have impact in securing greater social justice at the national level. Further evidence of this awareness is provided in the memo when Fuges and Yarrow note that Snipes "has consulted with a legal committee of the American Jewish Congress as well as with representatives of the NAACP to plan the strategy in any such injunction proceedings."[20] Neither of these national organizations would be able to do their work without individuals being able to take a stand at the local level, which they will struggle mightily to do if they do not know how their mortgage or their heating bill will be paid. Enter the micro-efforts of the ROCC sufferings grants.

The NAACP was intervening on behalf of the Myers family and the American Jewish Congress was intervening on behalf of the seller, Irving Mandel, who had suffered significant consequences for selling his house to William and Daisy Myers. He lost his job as a tailor and had to get an unlisted phone number because of continual harassment. His harassers took the particularly craven step of increasing their malicious calls during Rosh Hashanah, knowing that he would be home at the time.[21] Upon learning this, the ROCC authorized an immediate grant of $100 and then an additional $50 so that he could place ads in local papers on behalf of Myers, as he had been continually rejected by employers once they learned who he "really" was.[22] The ROCC wrote him a letter to send to prospective employers imploring them to believe that Mandel was not a "radical" and that he should not be permanently put out of work for agreeing to sell his house to a black family.[23]

The Myers' move resulted in job loss and sustained harassment for Mandel, and it resulted in nearly two months straight of rioting outside the Myers' home. Of particular constitutional relevance was whether the protestors, whose ultimate goal was to drive the Myers out of Levittown, constituted a violation of the Myers' Fourteenth Amendment rights in the efforts to deny them the property which they had lawfully purchased.[24] At both the state and local levels, the Myers were failed by police departments who provided a token physical presence in the midst of the demonstrators who invaded the Myers' lawn every night but who

provided no real assistance. Police officers went on the record as considering the Myers to be the "subversives" and therefore responsible for all the trouble.[25]

At the same time, the Myers received significant and visible support during this period. More than two hundred white people, most of them residents of a town other than Levittown, visited them in their first two months of residency in Levittown.[26] Tom Colgan, of the ROCC, actually moved into the Myers home for three weeks after the rioting started.[27] It was Colgan who became the liaison between the Myers and the ROCC, as the committee continued to support the Myers for months after their move. Between November 1957 and June 1958, the ROCC gave the Myers family over $1000 of aid through a series of small grants, as they were struggling with the additional expenses that came with their new, larger home. This went beyond the ROCC's policy of giving a maximum of $200 to any individual or cause.[28] The ROCC again violated this policy by giving an additional $300 to Irving Mandel when he was still unemployed in September of 1958,[29] and gave $200 to Peter von Bloom, a neighbor and friend to the Myers who had lost a good deal of business, and had a cross burned on his lawn, because of that friendship.[30]

These grants, though breaking the "rules" of ROCC funding guidelines, were modest by most measures. Yet they were vital to their recipients at the time. To William and Daisy Myers, the money and

personal contact that members of the ROCC provided demonstrated to them that they were not alone in their struggle against racist housing laws and policies. The money they received from the ROCC allowed them to move into their home in Levittown, keep their home when they wanted to do so, and then move on from that home on their own terms, rather than being forced out by a bank. For Irving Mandel and Peter von Bloom, the money was a show of faith in them as individuals and as social justice warriors, as well as an expression of gratitude. The value of these micro-efforts can not accurately be assessed, nor should they be dismissed.

The Myers case was not the only time the ROCC supported the integration of housing in the Philadelphia area. On May 27, 1958, George and Iola Raymond and family were to move into their home in Rutledge, PA, becoming the first black family to live in that town.[31] The morning before, however, the house was destroyed by a fire "of undetermined origin," sustaining $9,000 in damage.[32] On behalf of the Rights of Conscience Committee, Thomas Colgan had been working with the Delaware County Council on Human Relations for a month prior to the move, to take "precautionary measures" which included "alerting friendly people in the area and a last minute notice to the police."[33] Despite these efforts, someone was able to set fire to the house, thus preventing the Raymonds from moving in as planned.

Beyond the fire, the ROCC was cognizant that "an extremely sensitive community relations problem" had resulted from the fire, with the local newspaper reporting that the fire was likely a result of arson, and the Civil Rights Section of the Pennsylvania Department of Justice getting involved.[34] The Raymonds had purchased insurance for their house and made public their intention to rebuild, which allowed for the ROCC to engage in an "educational program" for the community, in partnership with the Delaware County Committee on Human Relations and The Swarthmore Area Housing Committee.[35] There were some costs not covered by insurance, such as the clean-up of the property, storage for what they could salvage, and rent on their temporary apartment, which Tom Colgan estimated to be $2303.[36] As the Raymonds made $94.49 per week, supported their son's family while he was serving in the U.S. Army, and now had to pay $70 per month in addition to their $89 per month mortgage, the ROCC stepped in to pay the Raymond's mortgage until they were able to reoccupy their home.[37]

The Raymonds accepted the offer for help with their mortgage "with a deep sense of humility and profound gratitude."[38] By October, the house had still not been rebuilt. As the Raymonds had secured the house via a VA loan, the VA had to approve plans before the rebuilding could commence, which added several months to the project.[39] The Rights of Conscience Committee continued to pay the Raymond's mortgage until November, when construction finally began and the insurance company

then began to cover the mortgage during the rebuilding period.[40] Delays persisted and the ROCC sent the Raymonds another $211 to help with their rent as the family as still living in their temporary apartment in April 1959.[41] They were able to move into their reconstructed home later in 1959 and remained there for several years. Again, micro-efforts made a tangible impact on the lives of a family who were taking a stand as a matter of conscience against racism. The first people to take any stand against racist housing laws and policies in any community do so at great risk to themselves, financially and otherwise, and the expression of faith of the Rights of Conscience Committee, through their sufferings grants, made this "first stand" possible in Rutledge, PA.

Through the public actions and private, internal correspondence surrounding the Myers and Raymond cases, it is clear that the ROCC's actions were in the manner of ensuring that both civil liberties and morality were upheld. In the short term, results were mixed – police abandoned their protections of the Myers home and a local official blamed the Myers for the violence, telling them to "go back from where you came from."[42] The Myers themselves moved out of Levittown in 1959, weary of the attacks which, though they had grown less violent and overt in nature over time, were still an omnipresent threat.

At the same time, any unconstitutional act, such as racially-based residential segregation, has to be challenged one case at a time and any individuals involved in that challenge are contributing to the ultimate

realization of justice. Just before the ROCC began its involvement in the Myers case, a memo went out to all regional offices of the AFSC. It was from ROCC members Alan Howe and Fred Fuges, reminding Friends of the earliest Quaker practices. They wrote "The Representative Meeting, which was originally constituted as a Meeting for Sufferings to help Friends and others who were suffering from persecution by protecting their legal rights, appealing to authorities and promoting remedial legislation is again concerned with the protection of civil liberties. Since civil liberties have been a primary concern of the Society of Friends from its beginning we believe it is useful for us to review from time to time our testimony on this subject, especially at present when our thinking requires clarification because we are confronted with this old issue in a more threatening form."[43] Any stand that any person would take, on any level, to demand their civil liberties would be a cause worthy of ROCC support.

While they were making grants to various constituents in the Myers and Raymond cases, the ROCC was getting involved in another case of racist housing policies, this time in Louisville, KY. This case differed in some important ways from the Myers case, perhaps most notably in the fact that Carl and Anne Braden, a white couple, purchased a home in a white Louisville neighborhood for the sole purpose of transferring it to Andrew and Charlotte Wade, a black couple, in direct violation of zoning laws and mortgage regulations. The Bradens

transferred the property to the Wades in May 1954 and news of the transfer quickly spread throughout the community, resulting in the Wades' house being shot at, having crosses burned on its lawn, and then nearly entirely destroyed by a bombing, all in the span of a few weeks.[44]

Thus began a three year period in which Carl and Anne Braden, along with five others, were indicted on 13 counts under the Sedition Act of Kentucky[45], while the Wades sought money to rebuild their bombed out house. Ultimately, only Carl Braden was convicted of the charges, and he was sentenced to serve 15 years in jail and pay a $500 fine in late 1955.[46] It was at this point that the Rights of Conscience Committee got involved, initially giving a grant of $750 to Carl Braden out of the sufferings fund. Such funding was not without controversy, as by the time the grant was made in 1956, Carl and Anne Braden became known in the community not just for their actions to combat racial injustice, but also as ardent communists.[47] The issue of communism was one that Quakers split over, at times quite bitterly, in terms of whether communism was in line with Quaker ideals or whether it was inherently anti-American and therefore a philosophy that Quakers should reject. Illustrative of this division, the ROCC's support of Carl Braden "was the cause of great anxiety on the part of one of Louisville's leading Friends."[48] This individual, later identified as Robert Burger,[49] felt that the ROCC should have made "a more thorough investigation...before action of any

kind was taken, (or) at least the regional office involved should have been informed of the possibility previously."[50]

Thus, even within the Quaker community itself, great divisions persisted about what constituted an "acceptable" act of conscience. For its part, the ROCC did launch a comprehensive investigation of Carl and Anne Braden, sending Robert Godsey and Max Heirich to Louisville to investigate them in March 1956.[51] Findings were mixed. One attender of Louisville Friends Meeting said that Carl Braden's motivations in transferring the home to the Wades was "to build up Communist Party membership among Negroes" and that Carl Braden had followed "the old Communist pattern of educate, agitate, and organize."[52] Another attender was "pro-Braden" prior to moving to Louisville, but then felt that "the furtherance of cause of the Negro in race relations was at best only secondary in Braden's motivations and actions."[53] A black teacher who occasionally attended the Louisville Friends Meeting and frequently attended AFSC public meetings felt differently, claiming that Braden's actions "were consistent with Friends beliefs" and that there was "no clear evidence that Braden did not act out of conscience principle."[54] As for Carl Braden himself, Heirich reported that Braden told him about race relations in the south "the situation is never going to be settled by violence: if there ever was a time for that the time has passed."[55] Heirich wrote that he was "impressed by Carl Braden's sincerity and what seems to be a real depth of integrity."[56] These feelings were buoyed by Heirich's

interviews with Andrew Wade and his father, Andrew Wade Sr., who said Carl Braden was "honest and well-motivated" and went even further to call him "a fool because he will not condemn individuals who have not clearly stood up for him, but rather tried to justify their actions."[57] One of the final statements that Godsey made in summing up his extensive interviews about Carl Braden was "in conclusion, all of the individuals with whom I spoke, both in Louisville and elsewhere, who knew Carl Braden personally, felt that he was a strongly motivated, sincere, conscientious person. Several reported that he was conversant in Marxist ideology and influenced by it. No one who knew Carl Braden personally spoke disparagingly of his sincerity."[58]

The criticism that the Rights of Conscience Committee experienced from within the Quaker community is important to acknowledge and document. Even when individuals take clear stands to oppose laws and practices which are counter to Friends' testimonies, like the Bradens did in purchasing and transferring their house to the Wades, some Friends will look to find reasons to not support these acts of conscience, particularly under periods of intense political pressure, as in the case of anti-communist fervor of the mid-1950s. At the conclusion of the ROCC's investigation into their sufferings grant to Carl Braden, J. Roland Pennock, who was at the time leading the ROCC, wrote to Robert Burger, the "leading Friend," who had expressed concern over the grant being made in the first place. Pennock told Burger that after carefully studying

Godsey and Heirich's reports, the ROCC " felt reassured that it was the heavy preponderance of opinion of those who had been consulted that Braden's action – wise or unwise, right or wrong – was conscientiously motivated."[59] That the ROCC would take the extraordinary measure of investigating their own determination and funding speaks to the committee's desire to authentically support stands of conscience, even if the Quaker community itself is divided on the motivations for such stands.

In this regard, the ROCC can accurately be deemed on the radical end of the spectrum, even by Quaker institutional standards. As much as Quakers are guided by peace-centric testimonies, what constitutes "peace-seeking" is left for each individual to decide, and one could make a case that Carl Braden's means of seeking peace did not always justify the ends. The ROCC's contribution in this case can be seen as another example of the committee believing that Braden's stand of conscience did make a positive contribution to society and successfully combat, by some measure, racist and unconstitutional housing laws.

The ROCC did not confine its attention to the mid-Atlantic or the Border South. It also undertook a housing case in Gadsden, Alabama. Arthur Burns, an attorney wrote to Fred Fuges in December 1957 to tell him about the Urban Renewal Program, a federally and city-financed program which made no secret of the fact that "renewing" Gadsden would involve eliminating black people from the main residential areas of

the city.[60] This would mean hundreds of individuals would lose their homes and/or businesses in the name of "redevelopment." A group of Gadsden citizens organized themselves in opposition to the Urban Renewal Program, calling themselves the Citizens Protective Association, and hired Arthur Burns to represent them.[61] They were a group of 25-30 families who were facing eviction as a result of the plan, and parishioners at three churches in the Birmingham Street Area, which was the area targeted for redevelopment.[62] Burns tells Fuges that for taking the group's case, he had "gone through the usual telephone threats and anonymous letters" and that he took the case because there are no black attorneys in the county and the group would have likely been unable to secure legal representation otherwise.[63]

Adding to the presence of a matter of conscience is the issue of the NAACP and Alabama in the 1950s. Arthur Burns learned of the ROCC through Connie Motley of the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund.[64] He and the Citizens Protective Association had reached out to the NAACP for help, but the organization was unable to assist them for two reasons. One was that the NAACP was outlawed in Alabama at the time, and while the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund was not explicitly outlawed, because Alabama authorities didn't know it existed, the Fund had to be very careful in choosing which case(s) to support because it could lose its tax-exempt status if anyone at the IRS questioned any of its contributions.[65] Thus, supporting the Citizens

Protective Association meant that the ROCC would be supporting a group who was taking a stand against racial discrimination as a matter of conscience and putting itself at some risk by getting involved in perhaps its most racially-charged situation yet. Additionally, it was putting itself and the American Friends Service Committee in general of falling victim to the same ban that the NAACP was facing at the time. Negotiating the balance between providing aid and not being legally prevented from doing business within a state was a delicate one, and provides support for the ROCC's micro-efforts. Giving smaller grants and purposefully not seeing publicity allowed the ROCC to keep a low profile, which worked to its advantage time and again, and certainly in the case of the Gadsden housing project.

The following month, Mike Yarrow wrote to Arthur Burns, telling him that the committee was "very well impressed" on three counts with regard to the Gadsden case: that this case was important "as an effort to stop official segregation in housing," that this case clearly warranted legal representation which required compensation, and that Burns himself showed "courage" in taking the case.[66] The committee funded the case in the amount of $1500, believing this "would at least ensure that the case would be brought into the District Court and carried through all necessary stages."[67] An additional $500 was later granted at the request of Burns, who always provided a detailed account of his expenditures.[68]

The Alabama Supreme Court ruled against the Citizens Protective Association and in favor of the City of Gadsden, as did the Fifth Circuit. The Supreme Court refused to hear Barnes' writ of certiorari, and thus the case was lost.[69] Fred Fuges and Mike Yarrow had identified the possibility of this outcome in their initial memo to the ROCC about the case, pointing out that federal law on urban redevelopment "unfortunately has no provision against discrimination, so there is no administrative recourse to federal authorities."[70] Fuges, Yarrow, Burns, and everyone involved in the case were hoping that the *Brown* ruling and similar recent rulings holding that racial discrimination was unconstitutional would compel the Supreme Court to extend this to housing and zoning laws, but this was not to be.

The Fair Housing Act would come in 1968. It prohibits discrimination concerning the sale, rental, or financing of housing on the basis of race, religion, sex, or national origin. Cases like the one brought by Burns and the Citizens Protective League were important steps on the way to the passage of that law. Contributions from the Rights of Conscience Committee and the partnerships that the ROCC made with other groups in support of dismantling racist housing laws were essential to the ultimate demise of these laws.

True to their original values, for William and Daisy Myers, for Irving Mandel, for Peter von Bloom, for George and Iola Raymond, for Arthur Burns, for the Citizens Protective League, for Carl and Anne

Braden, the Rights of Conscience Committee used their "sufferings fund"[71] to make a statement of personal and political support to individuals who were attacked for doing things that were constitutionally and morally just. In doing so, the Rights of Conscience Committee contributed to upholding civil liberties and making tangible and positive contributions to the perpetual quest for social justice.

Chapter 3 – Fighting For The People Who Were Fighting The People Fighting *Brown v. Board of Education*

Supporting efforts to fight racial injustice became a central aim of the Rights of Conscience Committee early in its existence.[1] The committee gave special consideration to "the provision of economic assistance to individuals and groups who have sought to implement their civil rights, especially in the deep South."[2] One hallmark of racist and racially unjust laws that have been passed at the state and local level has often been language that adheres to the language of the existing laws but which violates the spirit of those laws. An example of this would be the Grandfather Clauses, poll taxes, and literacy tests that peppered the voting districts of the former Confederate states until the passage of the 1965 Voting Rights Act. These laws did not violate the language of the Fifteenth Amendment, which prohibited obstruction to voting on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude, but which did not specifically bar these other obstructions. The cat-and-mouse game between making progress in securing civil rights in one area and making sure they get upheld in all areas is a constant struggle for those seeking social justice.

In the wake of the *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling, many southern states responded with a variety of "massive resistance" measures, including school closing laws. Additionally, through legal means and police measures, states persecuted African American plaintiffs and their

supporters who sought access to equal education. States exercised their powers to compel civil rights organizations to turn over membership lists which, once published, exposed these constituents to physical and economic harm, including the loss of employment and access to credit.[3]

One such example of this grotesque dance occurred in the small city of Elloree, South Carolina. In 1954, the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision declared segregation in public schools to be a violation of the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. Rather than work with "all deliberate speed" to become racially, ethically, and in all other ways inclusive, which the 1955 *Brown II* ruling mandated, many districts passed laws that were intended to stymie integration efforts for as long as possible. Many of these laws focused on the students, but some focused on school staff as well, attempting to suppress any pro-integration efforts on the local and even school-specific level, which was the case in Elloree and in all of South Carolina.[4]

In March 1956, Bill H819, H1998, "An Act To Make Unlawful The Employment By The State, School District, Or Any County Or Municipality Thereof Of Any Member Of The National Association For The Advancement Of Colored People, And To Provide Penalties For Violations" was passed by the South Carolina legislature, prohibiting employment by the State of South Carolina to any person who would not swear they were not a member of the NAACP. The Act stated that the NAACP "disturbed the peace and tranquility which has long existed between the White and

Negro races...encouraged and agitated the members of the Negro race in the belief that their children were not receiving educational opportunities equal to those accorded white children...made a strenuous effort to imbue the members of the Negro race with the belief that they are the subject of economic and social strangulation which will forever bar Negros from improving their station in life" which resulted in a campaign "designed to produce a constant state of turmoil between the races, (that) membership in such an organization is wholly incompatible with the peace, tranquility, and progress that all citizens have a right to enjoy."[5] Taking effect 30 days after Governor George Bell Timmerman signed the bill into law on March 17, 1956, the Act also made it "unlawful for any member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People to be employed by the State, school district, county or any municipality thereof."[6] Any board member of any public school or state supported college was "authorized to demand of any teacher or other employee of the school, who is suspected of being a member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, that he submit to the board a written statement under oath" swearing that s/he was not a member of the NAACP.[7] Failure to do so would result in immediate termination. The Act also authorized a fine for any person in a supervisory role who did not abide by and enforce it, and the fine was multiplied for each individual employee who was not made to adhere to these new regulations.[8]

That spring in Orangeburg County, School District #7, in the city of Elloree, black teachers were required to fill out and sign a "Teacher Application" form. The form began by requiring the applicant to give their age, sex, race, marital status, number of children, whether they were living with their husband or wife, years of experience as a teacher, degrees attained, religious preference, club or organization membership.[9] It then asked several questions specifically about the NAACP, such as "Do you support the NAACP in any way (money or attendance at meetings)? Does any member of your family belong to the NAACP? Do you believe in the Aims of the NAACP? If you should join the NAACP while employed in this school, please notify the superintendent and chairman of the board of trustees (with a "yes/no" designation next to it).[10] The application also asked questions like "Do you feel that you would be happy in an integrated school system, knowing that parents and students do not favor this system? Check (yes or no) and give reason for your answer" and "Do you feel that the parents of your school know that no public schools will be operated if they are integrated?"[11] Twenty-four teachers refused to complete this form and six refused to resign.[12]

Very quickly, the Rights of Conscience Committee became involved in the fight against this law. The situation had several layers of interest to the ROCC, including racial discrimination, an effort to obstruct a Supreme Court ruling, and a requiring of oath-taking, all of which involved matters of conscience for the teachers who were required to fill

out this application. At the time of the passage of H819, H1998 and the distribution of the Teacher Application, Walker Emmanuel (W.E.) Solomon was the secretary of the Palmetto Education Association, which was a parallel organization for black teachers to the South Carolina Education Association, as the SCEA barred black teachers from membership. Solomon reached out to the AFSC for assistance, as did Frank Loescher of the Fund for the Republic, asking if the AFSC could provide assistance to the teachers who refused to sign the application and/or refused to resign. Quickly, it was decided that the ROCC was the proper committee to handle the case.[13]

Fred Fuges, ROCC director, sent a memo to his staff on June 12 detailing the situation. In it, he states his feeling that there is a "rather clear issue of conscience here" and that "an individual who is a member of the NAACP and refuses to resign in order to comply with the South Carolina statute at least prima facie is taking a position based on conscience and one which will result in loss of employment."[14] Recognizing the significant constitutional issues at play in this case, Fuges wrote that both those who refused to sign the application and those who refused to resign were clearly "choos(ing) to suffer the consequences rather than to surrender First Amendment rights,"[15] and that "the right of association is one vitally related to efforts to attain equal opportunity for all regardless of race, religion, or national origin. This case would therefore appear to be an area with which Friends ought

to be concerned."[16] The intersection between conscience, the Constitution, and Quaker values were evident in this case, making it one that the ROCC would want to assist in any way possible.

The ROCC reached out to the NAACP directly to clarify what assistance was needed. Thurgood Marshall, lead attorney for the plaintiffs in *Brown* and now director of and lead counsel for the NAACP, wrote to Fred Fuges that the NAACP was planning to cover all legal fees of the 24/6 teachers but that "perhaps an even more important factor, and certainly insofar as the teachers are concerned is the question of what is going to be done financially for them now that they are at least temporarily unemployed."[17] This suggestion was completely in line with the sufferings model long practiced by Friends and already employed by the ROCC several times in its first year of existence, and the ROCC got to work finding the money from within their own organization as well as reaching out to others with similar aims. In January 1957, Barbara Moffett, secretary of AFSC's Community Relations Program, wrote to Oscar Lee, Executive Director of the National Council of Churches of Christ, asking if other organizations might assist the teachers as well. She wrote that the ROCC had already sent out questionnaires and determined that 9 of the Elloree Teachers had urgent needs totaling about $3000 and that the ROCC was prepared to fund "something slightly less than 50%" of their needs.[18]

By March 1957, the ROCC had contacted each of the 24/6 teachers and received responses from most of them about their current employment status and what assistance they were in need of at the time. Using W.E. Solomon as a point person, Fred Fuges wrote to Solomon and sent the ROCC's first donation of $1050 to be distributed among seven of the teachers, with amounts for each person specified in the letter.[19] Needs ranged from Ola Bryan's mortgage payment[20] to Betty Smith's hospital expenses[21] to Hattie Felton Anderson's sister's college tuition.[22] Paying at least a portion of these teachers' bills allowed them to focus on suing the school district and the state. The intersection of Friends faith and practice in this micro-effort of providing daily living expenses once again contributed to contesting unconstitutional practices on a national scale.

The Elloree teachers' case continued to be a major focus of the ROCC's efforts throughout 1957. Alan Howe sent out a detailed memo in May 1957 after a visit by W.E. Solomon to AFSC headquarters. The memo carefully documents the legal proceedings that the teachers had been engaged in to that point, with the legal help of the NAACP and sufferings help of the ROCC, including an in-process Supreme Court filing after a split decision by a federal district court in Charleston said they would not hear the case until all local and state appeals were carried out.[23] The NAACP decided to appeal directly to the Supreme Court, particularly considering the complicating matter of a new law

passed by the South Carolina legislature in the interim, taking away the requirement of foreswearing the NAACP for government employees and instead requiring applicants to list all organizations in which they hold membership.[24] The teachers agreed this was an attempt to prevent the previous law being ruled unconstitutional while still having the same impact, and thus they proceeded with the filing in the Supreme Court. At this point, the sufferings grants made by the ROCC totaled $3275, with Solomon requesting another $2150 for legal fees borne by the Palmetto Education Association, independent of the legal services provided by the NAACP,[25] and the ROCC met $1000 of this request.[26] Clearly, the ROCC support was instrumental to the legal efforts of the teachers to reclaim their constitutionally-guaranteed rights which were currently being denied them.

Even as the ROCC was making direct and repeated grants to teachers taking a legal stand, they found it worthy to help other teachers who had been fired and were not participating in the lawsuit. One such person was Laura Pickett, who had been a teacher in Elloree but was able to find another teaching job in New York and chose not to participate in the lawsuit with the NAACP. Nevertheless, the ROCC learned that she had taken out a loan of $300 in her period of unemployment and that the loan company was demanding a repayment at 30% interest.[27] Fuges wrote to the loan company, Pratt and Pomars Associates, pointing out that the interest rate they were charging her was excessive, and asking

for a lower settlement amount. Fuges explicitly states that the ROCC was helping Pickett because she had taken a stand on integration and that they believed that Pratt and Pomars knew that Pickett had no ability to settle the loan at $300, let alone with the 30% interest rate.[28] The loan company agreed to settle the debt for $250, with the ROCC making final payment in January 1958.[29] The Pickett case clearly demonstrates that not only did the ROCC use micro-efforts to help bring a case to the Supreme Court, they also had deep and abiding interest in helping people who took a stand as a matter of conscience, even if that stand went no further than the individual.

Supporting individuals who made these stands required multiple micro-efforts as well as tracking contributions. The total amount that the ROCC gave to teachers in Elloree made their case one of the most well-funded in the years of 1957 and 1958.[30] In this instance, the ROCC provided both sufferings and legal grants, allowing the teachers who took this stand, as a matter of conscience, both to have some measure of comfort as they sought new jobs, as well as to seek legal recourse against the unconstitutional law that resulted in their firings.

At the same time that it was supporting the Elloree teachers, the case of another teacher, this time in Philadelphia, was being brought to the attention of the Rights of Conscience Committee. In November 1955, Philadelphia attorney Philip Dorfman wrote to Fred Fuges about his client, Goldie Watson. Dorfman told Fuges that Watson's "was as clear a

case of conscience as can possibly be found and is one which merits the support of your organization."[31] Fuges agreed, and he prepared a memo for the entire ROCC, which he distributed on November 30. In it, he details Watson's case, the main points of which noted that Watson, a teacher for 35 years at the Martha Washington school in West Philadelphia,[32] had been called to testify in front of the House Committee on Un-American Activities and "refused to answer questions about whether she was ever a member of the Communist Party, whether she ever attended a Communist school; and whether she was ever active in the National Negro Congress."[33] She cited her First Amendment rights as explanation for her refusals.[34] After her appearance in front of HUAC, the Superintendent of Schools of Philadelphia charged Watson with incompetence and fired her.[35] Watson defended herself by claiming "that the advancement of (her) race requires a free exercise of the right of association; that if persons can be questioned about their associations, meetings, etc. this creates an atmosphere of fear and thus curtails the efficacy of the association; and that freedom of religion necessitates the right to free association."[36]

As with the Elloree teachers, this case was seen by the ROCC as a clear stand of conscience and the committee forwarded Watson a legal defense grant of $750 in February 1956. Watson wrote to Fred Fuges to express her gratitude and hope that her case would provide a "reaffirmation of the First Amendment by our courts."[37] Instead,

Watson's defense on the basis of the First Amendment was not accepted by U.S. District Court Judge Henry Schweinhaut, who fined her $1000 and gave her a three month suspended sentence and one year probation.[38] With continued support from the ROCC, Watson was able to appeal her case and her conviction was overturned by U.S. District Court on June 18, 1960.[39] Again, the work of the Rights of Conscience Committee directly benefitted the securing of constitutional rights that had improperly been denied. Additionally, the committee wrote to Watson's lawyer in 1961 to make sure that there were no additional costs that needed to be covered, wanting to ensure that the committee had fulfilled the obligations it had made to Watson and Dorfman.[40] Following up, checking and rechecking, to ensure that the committee had done what it said it would do was common practice, and is another testament to how thorough and effective the ROCC was at enacting its mission and ensuring that it provided as much assistance as possible to the individuals and cases it undertook to support.

The ROCC did not confine its attention to teachers struggling against the massive resistance to *Brown v. Board.* In fact, those efforts connected ROCC staff with another group, a not immediately obvious victim of H819, H1998, which was farmers. Because of the aid that the ROCC was giving to the teachers, James McCain, Executive Secretary of the South Carolina Council on Human Relations and affiliate of the AFSC, approached Fred Fuges to let him know of the plight of several farmers in

Elloree. In spite of the farmers owning their farms and carrying no debt, banks were refusing to lend the farmers money for seed, fertilizer, and other expenses.[41] These banks had given loans to these farmers in the past, and the farmers had always repaid these loans in full, but now the banks were taking their cues from H819, H1998 and refusing to give loans to anyone who would not sign a statement saying they "do not want school segregation" and were not a member of the NAACP.[42] The scope of the denial of civil liberties in South Carolina was spreading.

As was the case with the teachers, the ROCC determined that the farmers who refused to sign these statements were taking a stand of conscience. Very quickly, the committee organized a shipment of dungarees and shoes, which, though not a monetary donation, "certainly served a needed purpose."[43] After a period of discernment, Fred Fuges sent a check in the amount of $2500 to James McCain to distribute as loans to the Elloree farmers for seeds and fertilizer.[44] Local attorney Ira Kaye was retained and entrusted with making the loans, which he was able to give to nine different farms at a 6% interest rate, which was 1% below market rate at the time.[45] Soon thereafter, the AFSC made another grant of $2,000 to be used for low-interest rate loans to the farmers, with a promise that the ROCC would "pay all expenses in connection with the lending of this money and its collection" so that the loans could be kept up indefinitely through this independent system, thus circumventing the law that put the farmers in this position in the first place.[46]

South Carolina's machinations in repealing H819, H1998 and replacing it with the milder version requiring government employees to list all organizations in which they had membership worked in that the Supreme Court remanded the case to the U.S. District Court in Charleston because the law in question was now technically off the books.[47] The court in Charleston decided that the case was moot because the law had been repealed. In a reflection memo, the ROCC expressed their position as "not all that we had hoped for," but "we felt that we had been able to make a worthwhile contribution by assisting these individuals who were willing to make an issue of First Amendment freedoms."[48] What was perhaps most essential in the ROCC's involvement was that "all but one could have honestly answered the question in a manner that would have assured them continued employment."[49] The ROCC did not initially ask, nor did it matter to them, whether these teachers actually were members of the NAACP. What was at stake was their right to be members if they so chose, and their right to not answer the invasive, leading, and racist questions contained in Elloree's "Teacher Application" while still keeping their jobs.

As for the teachers themselves, their outcomes were mixed. Some quickly found re-employment while others relied on grants from the ROCC for an extended period.[50] Decades later, two of the teachers reflected on how their stands of conscience had impacted them. Rosa Stroman directly recalled Principal Charles Davis, who also resigned in

protest of the law, "worked with the American Friends Service Committee of Greensboro, N.C. to ensure that each of the plaintiffs were given $50."[51] This was in addition to the money that had already been given to the teachers through the ROCC sufferings fund. Hattie Fulton Anderson said "it took me seven years to get a teaching position. It was heartbreaking and a bitter pill to swallow when other black applicants applied for our former jobs. Over the years, I have had some reflections of that history-making time. We changed the course of history."[52] Anderson's comments speak to the fact that she and her fellow Elloree teachers who refused to sign the "Teacher Application" were in the very small minority, representing less than 1% of teachers in the district, and certainly far less than that state-wide (though some teachers in other districts had refused to abide by the law, none did so in the numbers that Elloree teachers did).

The Elloree Teachers' early stand inspired many similar stands during the burgeoning civil rights era, such as those involved in the state's Orangeburg Movement a decade later (Elloree is in Orangeburg county). When Donald Russell was elected Governor in 1962, he held the first integrated inauguration in South Carolina's history.[53] Several localities followed suit and began integrating their town and school board meetings, with the marked exception of Orangeburg County, home to the City of Elloree. By the end of 1963, 1500 people had been arrested in Orangeburg County in protest of the county's persistent racial

discrimination.[54] One of the people who had been arrested, "five or six times" by the end of 1963, was school teacher and civil rights leader Gloria Rackley.[55] The Superintendent stated that Rackley was "an excellent teacher" and others claimed it was a "provable fact" that she never demonstrated except on her own time, nor did her participating in demonstrations affect her teaching responsibilities in any way.[56] Nevertheless, she was fired in October 1963 and W.E. Solomon called on his old friends at the Rights of Conscience Committee to see if they would support her case. By this point, the Civil Rights Movement was extremely active on a national scale and would provide the committee "at least a small opportunity to become directly involved in the civil rights struggle in the South."[57] Additionally, the case was in line with what the Rights of Conscience Committee had always advocated, which is the right of citizens to take stands as a matter of conscience.[58]

Rackley sued the school district for wrongful termination, requesting reinstatement and/or complete salary for the 1963-64 school year.[59] No formal charges had been brought against her, though a police lieutenant claimed that she was inciting her students to riot, despite her always protesting on her own time.[60] This was not Rackley's first lawsuit alleging discrimination – in 1961 she had brought her daughter to the Emergency Room of Orangeburg Hospital and sat in the whites-only waiting room.[61] She was arrested for refusing to leave this waiting room, sued the hospital for violating her 14th Amendment rights, and won.[62]

In seeking support from the ROCC, Rackely wrote to them that though she had never been "warned" against demonstrating, her contract had come late on two occasions, prompting her to request a meeting with the Superintendent in 1962.[63] The Superintendent explained that her "activities with the police" were jeopardizing her teaching contract, to which Rackley replied that she thought it was "the imperative and privilege for Negro teachers (especially) to be vocal citizens in this time of social, economic, and racial struggle...that we must teach American freedom by precept and example."[64] This was clearly a case well-suited for support by the ROCC, and representatives from the Southeast Regional Office of the AFSC wrote "our School Desegregation Program staff have gotten to know Gloria Rackley fairly well...and find her case to be a deserving one," recommending a grant from the sufferings fund for $500.[65]

The ROCC forwarded $500 for direct distribution to Rackley and a letter to W.E. Solomon in January 1964, writing "we are very glad you brought this case to our attention."[66] Rackley responded with gratitude, writing "The American Friends Service Committee has been very helpful in many aspects of our Movement in Orangeburg. The visits, advice, concern, encouragement, and contributions from your organization are vital to our continued efforts."[67] As per their request, Rackley continued to keep the ROCC informed on the progress of her case, which she did, writing in June 1965 "please know that I deeply appreciate the personal

assistance your organization gave to me last year...You are truly FRIENDS."[68] On September 16, 1966, U.S. District Court for the District of South Carolina ruled that Rackley was entitled to back pay dating from the day after she was fired, October 15, 1963, to June 1, 1964, with six percent interest, and an immediate reinstatement of her teaching job at a pay rate and status equal to what she had at the time of her firing.[69]

Gloria Rackley's triumph was, in many ways, a vindication of the Elloree Teachers' stand a decade prior. Though the Elloree Teachers case did not produce a tangible victory at the time, it was an inspiration for Rackley and many others in the Orangeburg Movement, a movement that attracted the attention of national Civil Rights leaders, including Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., ultimately resulting the 1964 Civil Rights Act, in addition to individual victories such as Rackley's. The Rights of Conscience Committees' efforts in all of these cases were integral to keeping the momentum going in the rising tide of protest that led to the toppling of racially discriminatory laws in the workplace.

Chapter 4 – The Rights of Conscience Committee and Citizen Activists

Much of the work of the Rights of Conscience Committee involved supporting individuals who did not garner much attention in the press, let alone in later scholarship, and that was almost by design. The committee was interested in supporting those cases that did not otherwise receive funding, and many of the cases that received moderate or significant publicity also frequently received at least some funding from larger organizations such as the NAACP or ACLU. Many individuals whom the ROCC supported did have their cases heard by the Supreme Court, with many winning on appeal, but most of these individuals remained in relative obscurity, though their efforts were a part of a larger resistance movement. However, the ROCC did at times assist individuals who were known at the state or national level, nearly always in ways that were unpublicized, and always in ways that provided essential support for their cause. During the 1960s, when efforts to ensure justice at home led to criticism of injustices inflicted abroad by the United States foreign policy, the ROCC encountered many activists who needed its help.

As the reputation of the Rights of Conscience Committee spread among those fighting for racial justice, more and more individuals began contacting the AFSC, as well as the ROCC directly, to ask for assistance. At times, those individuals were of some prominence, such as Hazel Brannon Smith, a journalist who owned and published her own

newspapers in Holmes County, Mississippi. Much has been written about Brannon Smith, including a lengthy profile in *Look* magazine in 1965, when she was the #1 target on the KKK "kill list"[1] to a more recent book, *Hazel Brannon Smith: The Female Crusading Scalawag*, published by Jeffery B. Howell in 2017. This scholarship largely focuses on Brannon Smith's role as a fearless crusader against the white establishment, but Holmes' book traces her journey and shows that her crusading was an act of redemption after earlier beliefs and writing that were much more in line with the institutionalized racism with which she was raised. Noting that in 1930s Mississippi, most middle class white women "got married, stayed at home, and raised children,"[2] Brannon Smith's career in journalism in and of itself made her a renegade. Howell documents how she was socially conscious even as a young journalist, documenting the evils of alcohol abuse and organized crime, and shows how the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision changed her mind on segregation and turned her into a crusader for racial justice.[3] Documenting Brannon Smith's long-term and significant relationship with the ROCC adds to our collective understanding of how citizen activists can be most effectively empowered in their work.

In February 1956, Brannon wrote to Fred Fuges, Director of the Rights of Conscience Committee, and explained her situation. She stated that her husband had recently been fired from his job as a hospital administrator because she had become a "controversial figure" in their

community in Holmes County.[4] Two years prior, Brannon Smith had begun investigating the shooting of an unarmed black man, Henry Randle, by the white Sheriff of Holmes County, Richard Byrd.[5] Byrd happened upon Randle and a group of his friends, who were not engaging in any illegal activity, ordered them to disperse, and shot Randle as he was walking away.[6] Byrd left town when he learned of Brannon Smith's investigation, and she ran a story on the shooting followed by a front page editorial in her newspaper, "The Advertiser," in which she called on Byrd to resign.[7] Byrd sued Brannon for libel and damages in the amount of $57,500.[8] Byrd won his initial case against Brannon Smith in October 1954, being awarded $10,000 in damages, but lost on Brannon Smith's appeal in November of 1955 with the Mississippi Supreme Court dismissing all damages.[9]

Hazel Brannon Smith wrote to Fred Fuges after this ordeal for a few reasons. One is that she believed her case was initially lost because of the unfortunate coincidence of the White Citizens Council being organized in her county a few months after the shooting, with the aim of "1. Seeing the preservation of segregation is maintained in all walks of life despite any court rulings to the contrary, 2. To especially see that there is no integration in Mississippi schools on any level, and 3. To see that Negroes are not allowed to vote – and to discourage them any way possible 'short of violence'"[10] (Brannon Smith added "so they said").[11] She felt that racial tension was stirred by the creation of the White Citizens

Council and that the group was responsible for the reversal of the general feeling on the shooting in the county, which went from "general indignation" to one where she initially lost the libel case 10-2.[12] Friends of the Sheriff had flocked to the Council after his lawsuit was overturned on appeal and started to target David Minter, the white doctor who had treated Henry Randle, and ordered him to leave the county. This is also how Brannon Smith's husband lost his job, for Minter worked and Randle was treated at the hospital where Brannon Smith's husband was an administrator.[13]

Brannon Smith wrote to Fuges because she needed money and because she believed she was taking a stand, as a matter of conscience, in keeping her paper running and continuing to report on stories of racial injustice. She wrote "now, more than ever, we need a newspaper that will print the truth, print what happens regardless of who it hits or how bad it hurts."[14] Town supervisors stopped going to her with their news and members of the White Citizens Council were pressuring local businesses to stop advertising in her papers, resulting in a loss of hundreds of dollars of revenue per month.[15] She also had $4000 of unpaid attorney's fees to pay from the Byrd case and asked the ROCC directly for assistance with her legal bills, writing "please believe me, I don't want anyone to assume by moral obligations and this is the first time in my life I've ever asked for help in any way from anyone. But I know a voice needs to continue to be raised here in this county for truth, and freedom

and justice – and I want to be able to continue doing it in the very best way that I possibly can if God is thus willing."[16] Her letter to Fuges was extensively marked up in red pen by members of the ROCC and this section received the most attention, clearly demonstrating the connection between Brannon Smith's request and the mission of the ROCC.

What was problematic about this request is that she was making it some time after incurring the expenses, and it had been the policy of the ROCC to fund people who were currently fighting injustice.[17] At the same time, the ROCC noted that she was continually taking a stand for justice, as a matter of conscience, by writing for and publishing her newspaper.[18] The committee realized that if she were forced to shut down, there would be no publication in Holmes County that looked favorably upon integration.[19] In May 1956, the ROCC forwarded to Brannon Smith a check for $2,000 along with a letter apologizing that it was not the full amount of her outstanding legal expenses but promising to tell other sympathetic organizations about her plight in the hopes that one or more could provide additional aid.[20]

Fuges followed through on this promise and thus began one of the longest relationships that the ROCC had with any individual. Brannon Smith regularly sent her articles to the ROCC, as she did in her very first letter to them, and these articles reveal a clear and sustained effort to expose racism, racial discrimination, and injustice in Holmes County. In November 1956, she wrote of the elimination of the "Negro Extension

Department," a group which provided assistance to black farmers and their families, and the subsequent firing of the three employees of the department.[21] Attaching a note to the article, Brannon Smith wrote "it was a risk to print the story – but I felt the people had a right to know what was going on – and that if they learned about it through a news story in the paper that we could, by working quietly and undercover, get enough pressure brought to bear upon the supervisors themselves to make them back-track."[22] That is exactly what happened, with "the cooperation of a number of other citizens in the county, many of them business people,"[23] and just under a month later the *Advertiser* reported that the Holmes County Board of Supervisors voted to rescind the order they issued to discontinue the Negro Extension Department.[24] Clearly, Brannon Smith's acts of conscience were making tangible and positive contributions to the cause of racial justice in her community.

In May 1957, the Rights of Conscience Committee gave another $2,000 to Brannon Smith, but the committee was in a precarious position at this time. The money from the Fund for the Republic, with which the committee was able to begin its work, were nearly exhausted and, at this point, "not expected to last beyond the year."[25] Yarrow wrote to Brannon Smith that the committee wished "that sometime soon the tide may turn in Mississippi and more people locally will appreciate the contribution you have made."[26] Brannon Smith responded with a lengthy thank-you letter, telling Yarrow that the donation gave her tangible and

spiritual support in continuing with her publication. She wrote that she wished she could be more direct in her editorializing, but that "no small town (or city, either, I firmly believe) editor is able to say exactly what he thinks or feels. While the majority of Southern editors undoubtedly go along with the White Supremacy views of the white masses of the South, still there are some who feel that human rights are important and that all people, regardless of race, are invited to share, or entitled to share in the benefits of a democratic society based upon Christian ideals."[27] Nearly every person who received a grant from the ROCC expressed their thanks to the committee in writing, but few did so as eloquently and extensively as Hazel Brannon Smith. The epistolary relationship that she maintained with members of the committee seems to have sustained both parties' confidence in the mutually beneficial nature of their continued partnership.

The ways in which the ROCC helped Hazel Brannon Smith at this point were evident, and the work that she was doing in Holmes County was clearly the work that the ROCC wanted to support, so the ROCC was certainly seeing their investment pay off through the continued publication of Brannon Smith's newspapers. Such relationships could and did become reciprocal. Once Brannon Smith learned that the ROCC was on the verge of ceasing to exist, she asked her supporters to donate to the ROCC. Over the course of the first several months of 1958, the ROCC received several donations from supporters of Brannon Smith and

The Advertiser. George A. Dreyfous of New Orleans, LA sent $50 "payable to the American Friends Service Committee, (which) may be used at your discretion, but said letter would indicate that good use of it can be made by the Rights of Conscience Committee."[28] Dreyfous later sent an additional $1,000 to the committee.[29] Alfred Baker Lewis of Old Greenwich, CT, sent $100 "to help make it possible for Mrs. Hazel Brannon Smith to continue publishing her weekly paper in Lexington, Mississippi, despite the harassment and boycott apparently directed and organized by the White Citizens' Council."[30] David Minter, the physician from the first case that Brannon Smith reported on that had landed her in legal trouble in the first place, sent $25[31], the Southern Regional Council sent $100[32], and Amy Spingarn of New York City, via the NAACP, sent $100.[33] These are just a sampling of the donations that the ROCC received in early 1958 as a result of their friendship with Hazel Brannon Smith. Many factors went into the continuation of the ROCC beyond its initially projected two year existence, ultimately existing well into the 1970s. Large grants, such as one that came in 1961 from the Robert Marshall Civil Liberties Trust, were certainly essential to the committee's continuation.[34] But donations like the ones secured via the relationship the committee had with Hazel Brannon Smith served as evidence for the top officials of American Friends Service Committee that the Rights of Conscience Committee was a worthy investment.

In spite of being "boycotted, bombed and burned, sued for libel and slander, socially ostracized,"[35] and being notified in 1965 by the FBI that she was "'number one' on the KKK list to be killed,[36] Brannon Smith continued to publish her papers. Her efforts resulted in going from zero registered black voters in 1961 to over 7,000 by 1965 (with 4,800 white voters, comparatively),[37] which happened because of direct efforts of Brannon Smith and her publications. Ultimately, the ROCC gave Hazel Brannon Smith just over $9,000, making her one of the largest individual recipients of their grants.[38] For their investment, Brannon Smith was able to document several victories, including winning the Pulitzer Prize in 1964 and the Columbia Journalism School creating a fund in honor of her to support journalists and publishers who continue to produce articles in spite of significant threats to their careers and/or lives.[39]

By the mid-1960s, a main focus of the ROCC, which had, to this point, been issues of racial injustice, was expanding to include those who were opposing the United States' increasing presence and warmongering in Vietnam. One person whose case exemplified the intersection between race, constitutional rights, acts of conscience, and the Vietnam War was Julian Bond. Much has been written about this giant of the Civil Rights movement who was a co-founder of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee, Georgia state representative, chairman of the NAACP, and first black president of the Southern Poverty Law Center.

Bond himself has written several books, though none autobiographical. To this point, an examination of the Rights of Conscience Committee's support of Bond at the beginning of his political career has not been published in the scholarship.

Members of the Rights of Conscience Committee were in Atlanta when the Georgia State Legislature voted in January 1966 to refuse to seat Julian Bond, who at the time was 26 years old and recently elected to the GA House of Representatives. The legislature's reason for denying Bond his seat was "his statement criticizing the conduct of the war in Vietnam and asking Congress to make alternative service to the civil rights movement available to young men opposed to serving in the war in Vietnam."[40] Julian Bond was a graduate of George School, a Quaker boarding school in Bucks County, PA, and he credited the school and his Quaker education with the origins of his pacifism.[41] Virtually every reason that could be given about Bond's reason for taking his stand of conscience would make him a fitting candidate for assistance from a ROCC grant.

Bond's legal expenses were being taken care of by the ACLU, but the weekly salary of $85 that was owed to him by the state of Georgia, and denied to him while he was being denied his seat, was not being paid by anyone, and that's where the Rights of Conscience Committee saw an opportunity to provide support.[42] The committee paid his salary for

several weeks while he was bringing his case through legal channels, trying to force the Georgia House of Representatives to seat him.[43]

Bond lost his initial lawsuit in a 2-1 ruling in Federal court on February 11, 1966. The two judges who upheld the Georgia legislature's decision said that Bond's statement "was a call to action based on race," and "at war with the national policy of this country."[44] Bond responded by saying "the court was either unwilling or unable to protect the democratic process and the rights of the citizens of my district to select the man they wished to represent them."[45] Bond did not bow to any of the pressure facing him and the very same day he lost his initial case, he called on a group of 300 college students to make "an organized movement of Negroes to avoid military service on racial grounds" because "we're first class citizens on the battle field but second class citizens at home. Why fight for a country that has never fought for you?"[46] At the same time, Bond and his legal team, via the NAACP, were continuing to make their case through the channels of the Supreme Court, who had agreed to take up the case.

On December 6, 1966, the Supreme Court ruled 9-0 that Julian Bond's right to free speech had been violated when the Georgia House refused to seat him.[47] This marked "the first time that an American court had overruled a state legislature's decision on the qualifications of an elected member."[48] Bond went on to serve many years in the Georgia House of Representatives and later the Georgia State Senate. The

handful of weekly paychecks that the Rights of Conscience Committee provided him were not essential to his survival, either politically or literally. But the micro-effort of paying his salary shows the committee's continued efforts to support people taking a stand, as a matter of conscience, against tyranny, and Julian Bond's stand was at the intersection of everything for which the Rights of Conscience Committee existed.

Julian Bond's opposition to the Vietnam War was based on a belief in pacifism and a belief that the war was being promulgated through racist policies, both in the United States and in Vietnam. As the ROCC was supporting Julian Bond's stand as a matter of conscience against the Vietnam War and the draft, the committee was looking to support others who stood in opposition to the draft and war as well. Refusing to support or engage in violence was a major impetus for the creation of the American Friends Service Committee in 1917. The AFSC put out several documents against the war, including "AFSC Response to Conscription," published in February 1968. As the United States' presence in Vietnam dramatically increased, so too did "demand for draft information and counseling from young men who oppose this war."[49] The AFSC went on to outline a six point plan which they had developed over the course of 1967, including providing counseling for anyone who was seeking Conscientious Objector Status, workshops for those seeking to get CO status from their local drat boards, and the organization of a legal

defense fund specifically for COs.[50] One step in seeking CO status was to refuse induction, which is a felony, and then seek judicial review of their case.[51] Thus, each man who sought CO status was potentially in need of moderate to significant funding to see his case through the judicial process.

The scholarship on Conscientious Objectors frequently centers at least some of its focus around Quakers and/or the American Friends Service Committee. *Liberty and Conscience: A Documentary History of the Experiences of Conscientious Objectors in America Through The Civil War*, edited by Peter Brock and published in 2002, contains several pieces on Quaker Conscientious Objectors, including "The First Quaker Conscientious Objectors in America, 1658," "Witnessing to the Quaker Peace Testimony," "Continuing Quaker Witness Against War, 1801-1824," and "Trials of a Quaker Conscientious Objector in the Confederate Army."[52] This is a collection of primary documents, detailing the experiences of Conscientious Objectors in the colonies and then the United States, organized, according to Brock, because learning about the experiences of COs in twentieth century United States is fairly easy, but to that point little had been published about earlier CO experiences.[53] Examining the ROCC's support of COs during the Vietnam War demonstrates the continued importance of the micro-efforts methods employed by the committee since its inception.

Daniel Seeger won a seminal Supreme Court case in 1965, aided significantly by the AFSC, and by sufferings and legal grants from the ROCC. Seeger was initially denied CO status because the draft board ruled that his objections to serving were not a result of a belief in a "Supreme Being," and therefore the objection did not derive from a belief in that Being, which was a requirement to obtain CO status at the time.[54] In response to the question "do you believe in a Supreme Being?" Seeger responded "of course, the existence of God cannot be proven or disproven...I prefer to admit this and leave the question open rather than answer "yes" or "no," which in and of itself doomed his application for CO status.[55] Seeger went on to answer other questions, asking him to elaborate on his response to the "Supreme Being question" by writing things like "before atomic or hydrogen bombs were even dreamt of Tolstoi (sic) observed that men do far more harm and inflict far more injury on one another by attempting to prevent evil by violence than if they endured the evil," and "the unparalleled slaughter of two global wars has failed to make the world safe for democracy. Are we to believe that World War III will be more successful? It is our moral responsibility to search for a way to maintain the recognition of the dignity and worth of the individual, the faith in reason, freedom, and individuality, and the opportunity to improve life for which democracy stands."[56] Statements like these made two things clear – one was that Seeger's petition for CO status would be denied, and two was that the Rights of Conscience

Committee would find an issue of conscience and a new individual case to support.

The Central Committee For Conscientious Objectors formed after the 1948 Selective Service Act and established its headquarters near AFSC headquarters. While not technically affiliated, the CCCO was established by several individuals with ties to AFSC, including George Willoughby, and it was the CCCO that brought the Seeger case to the attention of Eleanor Eaton and the ROCC. While he lost his initial case, he won on appeal, and the U.S. government appealed that appeal to the Supreme Court. Along the way, the Rights of Conscience Committee contributed $2,276 to Seeger's legal fees, and earmarked another $1300 for his case when it reached the Supreme Court in 1965.[57] In addition to donating their own funds, Clarence Pickett, Executive Secretary of the AFSC, and Lyle Tatum, director of the ROCC, sent out a fundraising letter in January 1965 on behalf of Seeger's case. Pickett and Tatum wrote that the 1948 "Supreme Being" clause in the draft law "sought to establish orthodoxy where none can or should be. Our individual faith is too precious and too personal to be subjected to any government test, for any purpose whatever."[58] Clearly, the Seeger case involved a stand against promulgating violence, oath taking, and infringement on personal beliefs, all central to the mission of the ROCC since its inception.

The Second Circuit Court of Appeals had upheld Daniel Seeger's claim that the 1948 draft law violated his First Amendment rights,

writing "we feel compelled to recognize that a requirement of belief in a supreme being, no matter how broadly defined, cannot embrace all those faiths which can validly claim to be called 'religious,"[59] and on March 8, 1965, the Supreme Court upheld this ruling. Justice Clark, delivering the 9-0 opinion of the court, wrote "we have concluded that Congress, in using the expression 'Supreme Being,' rather than the designation 'God,' was merely clarifying the meaning of religious training and belief so as to embrace all religions" and "where such beliefs have parallel positions in the lives of their respective holders, we can not say that one is 'in a relation to a Supreme Being' and the other is not," thereby reversing the draft board's initial ruling and upholding Seeger's claims.[60]

This was a significant victory for the ROCC and the CCCO. Lyle Tatum and Clarence Pickett's fundraising letter ultimately resulted in $3,822.43 being raised for Seeger's legal expenses, which were delivered to his attorney, Kenneth Greenawalt in February 1965.[61] The donations came from 423 individuals, demonstrating broad support for Seeger's case.[62] Seeger's association with the AFSC continues to this day. He has been the Executive Secretary and is currently a member of the AFSC Board of Directors. Supporting individuals who want to secure CO status remains a significant focus of the work of the AFSC, even as the Rights of Conscience Committee ceased to exist as an official committee.

There are myriad ways in which various individuals took a stand, as a matter of conscience, as private citizens during the years that the

ROCC was operational. In each instance of a particular case being brought to the attention of the committee, its membership considered the individual's motivations carefully and acted to support many cases with both sufferings and legal grants. Whether it was the continuation of a newspaper being able to publish truthful articles with a little extra sense of security, or a person running for public office feeling supported in making their statements of truth, or a person objecting to a war that they felt was unjust, regardless of religious belief, the Rights of Conscience Committee's support in each of these instances had significant ripple effects. The Supreme Court rulings in the Bond and Seeger cases, which provided protections for countless individuals, and the decades of influence of Brannon Smith's publications are in a large part a direct result of the support of the Rights of Conscience Committee.

Conclusion

From its inception, the Rights of Conscience Committee was on tenuous footing. The initial grant of $150,000, though a significant amount of money in 1955, was spent very quickly as requests flooded in as news of the committee's aims spread throughout the Quaker community, those with ties to the AFSC, and beyond. Members of the ROCC were predicting their demise as early as May 1957, with Fred Fuges writing in a memo "although we set up a budget to run until September 30, 1957, the thought now is that we curtail the program as of July 1, 1957 in an effort to conserve resources."[1] Fuges set up a plan by which existing cases would continue to be funded, he would return to full-time to his law practice, and would charge a nominal fee to be kept on retainer by the AFSC to review additional cases of conscience that might come in for funding on an ad hoc basis.[2]

This nominal fee turned into essentially free work by Fred Fuges by the end 1958, when the committee still had $16,000 in reserves.[3] In 1959, Lyle Tatum wrote to a supporter "The Rights of Conscience program continues to limp along. The limping along is due to our curtailed financial ability rather than to any feeling on our part that all the legal problems of conscience have been solved."[4] A more formal memo, "Rights Of Conscience Program," was presented October 1, 1959 and distributed to AFSC board of directors and associates. This memo begins by connecting the work of the ROCC to Quaker martyr Mary

Dyer's refusal to renounce her faith in 17th century Massachusetts Bay Colony, resulting in her trial and hanging in 1660 in Boston, and then memorializing with a statue in 1959 on the very lawn on which she was hanged. The collective authors of the memo wrote "two hundred and ninety-nine years is not necessarily sufficient time to make a final judgement on a nonconformist act of conscience."[5] The memo goes on to draw a parallel to those in 1660 who did not speak up when they saw a "gentle mother of six children" about to be hanged with contemporary issues by asking "when we look at today's newspaper and see that a man is facing prison for refusing to name his associates or for not taking part in the nation's military program or for insisting on sitting in a certain seat in a bus, is it May, 1660 for us?"[6]

The authors of the memo, and supporters of the program, would affirm that in many ways it was, and that crises of conscience will always be facing individuals in any given society. The committee was always reevaluating itself even as the AFSC was periodically evaluating the usefulness of the committee and what funds to devote to it. In 1961, the Robert Marshall Civil Liberties Trust gave a grant from of $23,641[7] from their "special funds" to the Rights of Conscience program, which allowed the ROCC to continue to make payments on their current commitments, if need be, and to consider new requests.[8] In 1963, oversight for the ROCC came to fall under the Community Relations Division of the AFSC,

where it would remain for the remainder of its existence as an independent committee.[9]

1965 proved to be a seminal year for the Rights of Conscience Committee, for one anticipated and one unanticipated reason. The anticipated reason was the completion and publication of a survey in February 1965. Lyle Tatum conducted the survey throughout 1964 as a means of discerning whether the Rights of Conscience program should continue, as its funds were projected to be exhausted by the end of 1965 without further commitment from the AFSC.[10] Tatum interviewed dozens of individuals who had knowledge of and/or were associated with the ROCC throughout the years, conducting these interviews in Philadelphia, New York City, Washington D.C., and Atlanta, in addition to conducting several via correspondence.[11] The views of thirty-six individuals representing twenty-six organizations were ultimately represented in the published results.[12] Intentionally, none of the individuals who Tatum interviewed were members of the Rights of Conscience Committee or Philadelphia Yearly Meeting.[13]

Reflecting on the committee's grants over the previous decade, Tatum wrote that the committee's grants had fallen into one of four categories, "race, belief and association, Conscientious Objection to war, and loyalty oaths."[14] He found that of these four classes, grants for race issues have taken the most money, about 1/3 of the committee's total expenditures.[15] Sufferings grants took a little more than half the money

in the race category[16], reaffirming the committee's, and Quakerism's, central goal of assisting those in need, whether or not those individuals are able to win legal victories. To put it in more practical terms, Tatum wrote "the need was reported as crucial, for economic reprisal is the most effective weapon the white supremist (sic) uses. Apparently the fear of brute physical force is not considered to be as threatening as economic reprisal by the Southern Negro."[17]

In conducting this survey, Tatum clearly documented a major way in which the ROCC was a significant contributor to the advancement of racial justice during the 1950s and 60s. Tatum wrote "a number of instances were told me of publication or public posting of names of Negroes moving ahead in civil rights and then getting fired when their names were circulated."[18] These economic reprisals were "the key factor which keeps people from sending youngsters to an all-white school, registering to vote, or otherwise standing out in public for racial change."[19] Thus, "the availability of funds for sufferings grants would not only assist those in trouble and raise the morale of those in the group involved, but the knowledge of possible financial assistance for some injured persons would temper fears and serve as a stimulus for more forthright action."[20] This is clear evidence that the 300+ year tradition of meetings for sufferings and making sufferings grants was now having a measurable, positive impact in helping to bring social justice and erase racial injustice in the United States.

The unexpected reason why 1965 was a seminal year for the Rights of Conscience Committee was the murder of Unitarian minister, AFSC director, and SCLC member James Reeb. Reeb was severely beaten by white supremacists as he participated in the seminal demonstration and march for voting rights in Semla, Alabama in March 1965, dying two days later. An outpouring of support, often in the form of monetary donations, followed Reeb's murder. Consequently, the Unitarian Universalist Association, Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and American Friends Service Committee issued a statement that they would be receiving contributions "to lessen the hardships of those who have suffered in the civil rights cause, to which James Reeb was so deeply committed."[21]

For the AFSC, this meant the creation of a new division, the Family Aid Fund. In the process of discerning the direction that the Reeb donations should go, the comment was made that "it would be difficult to explain the Rights of Conscience Fund in a 30 second radio announcement,"[22] which is one of the reasons why the "Family Aid Fund" was created. Originally named "Family Aid Fund – A Memorial for James Reeb," it was decided that the Rights of Conscience Committee would administer these funds, using the same criteria for sufferings grants as they had since their inception.[23] One of the first places to which the Family Aid Fund of the Rights of Conscience Committee made grants was to people who were "in dire need of financial aid in Selma, resulting

directly from their participation in the civil rights struggle."[24] It was Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. who brought this need to the attention of the FAF/ROCC,[25] again demonstrating the degree of recognition and importance that the Rights of Conscience Committee had attained in the Civil Rights movement.

The 1970s brought "new challenges" for the Rights of Conscience program, and ultimately, its demise.[26] A big change from the 1950s to the 1960s was that grants in the 1950s had been primarily legal grants, with sufferings grants secondary, and the 1960s saw sufferings become primary, with legal grants becoming secondary.[27] By 1970, the ROCC's funding was, once again, dwindling. In 1970, the committee articulated its area of interest as "the negative impact of government or an organized part of the private sector of society on the attempt of individuals for more creative self-fulfillment," and their desire "for building a society within which the rights of conscience can be maintained and promoted."[28] These efforts were largely being shepherded by the Family Aid Fund by the early 1970s, with that fund making significant contributions to families all over the United States, but mostly in the deep south. As "victories won by the civil rights movement of the sixties were consolidated and made real,"[29] the centralized ROCC and FAF began to give way to the "development of strong, grassroots community organizations"[30] that were self-sustaining and therefore, perhaps, heartier. This empowerment of community groups at the local level led to

the first income-producing project, the creation of Lowndes Wood Products, Inc., a wood products plant in Lowndes County, Alabama, where AFSC had had a long involvement.[31] Within two years, the plant employed a workforce of 18 who produced a monthly income of more than $30,000, which allowed "community people to learn management and marketing skills...and above all to develop confidence in their ability to succeed."[32]

Simply reading the title of the 1973 memo "The Family Aid Fund, A division of the Rights of Conscience Program of the Community Relations Division of the American Friends Service Committee" gives one an understanding of how consolidation might occur, and that is exactly what happened to the Rights of Conscience Committee. There was no formal end date, no formal ceasing of operations of the committee – over the first few years of the 1970s, it became absorbed by the Family Aid Fund, which became absorbed by the Community Relations Division, which continues to exist to this day.

Even as the ability of the ROCC to exist as a distinct committee was dwindling, because of lack of sustained funding, the committee was continuing to identify and articulate its importance to society, with Lyle Tatum, one of its most long-serving members writing in 1970 "the Constitution is not an 'impotent, bloodless document,'"[33] citing a phrase from a *New York Times* editorial, warning that this is what the document was at risk of turning into, "but neither is it self-enforcing. The legal and

social problems of equality before the law irrespective of skin color are basic but relatively simplistic."[34] He wrote that because of the work of the ROCC, "there are indicators of work in the right direction...adequate legal services for the poor and other powerless groups do help share power. Organizations such as the American Civil Liberties Union and the NAACP continue to make contributions on the legal front."[35] Tatum recognized a social shift at the dawn of this new decade, writing "the thrust for the seventies will be assistance toward freedom of life styles and promotion of sharing of power. This probably will shift the emphasis of the program from assistance of individuals to assistance for groups. It will be toward the end of building a society more conducive to freedom of conscience."[36] This is exactly the direction that the American Friends Service Committee moved in, as evidenced by their stated action items today, which include stopping border militarization, creating "sanctuary everywhere," resisting racism, stopping the criminalization of boycotts, and providing humanitarian assistance abroad, among other efforts.[37]

The Rights of Conscience Committee was a bastion of hope to the individuals and groups who relied on it in the roughly two decades of its existence. The sufferings and legal grants made by the committee helped over 250 individuals and their "right to dissent, right of individual conscience, and (their) right of equal protection under the law in the face of physical or economic harassment."[38] The committee's work was a continuation, in the most essential form, of Quaker political protest and

mass resistance to injustice. The members of the Rights of Conscience Committee understood that the Constitution was not self-enforcing and that it never would be, and that helping to demand that its stated civil liberties be enforced was the truest work of a citizen. The effectiveness of the committee can be debated, but for the recipients of its sufferings and legal grants, the impact was transformative and incalculable. Wrote Lyle Tatum in his 1965 survey, "as one enthusiastic Washington lawyer summed it up, he'd never seen so much freedom purchased with so little money."[39] Understanding the Rights of Conscience Committee's work enhances our overall understanding of how greatly and positively the intersection of faith, practice, and conscience can impact our society. The Constitution is words on a piece of paper – it's the work of individuals like those who made up the Rights of Conscience Committee who ensure that its words have meaning and enact justice.

Notes

Introduction

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Chapter One

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Chapter Four

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