

TO THE CORE: THE CONGRESS OF RACIAL EQUALITY, THE SEATTLE CIVIL
RIGHTS MOVEMENT, AND THE SHIFT TO BLACK MILITANCY

by

MICHAEL JIMENEZ
B.S. University of Central Florida, 2009

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts
in the Department of History
in the College of Arts and Humanities
at the University of Central Florida
Orlando, Florida

Spring Term
2012

© 2012 Michael Jimenez

ABSTRACT

To The CORE: The Congress of Racial Equality
and the Shift to Black Militancy

Michael Jimenez

This thesis compares the history of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) to that of its Seattle chapter. The study traces the entire history of CORE from 1942-1968 as well as the history of Seattle CORE from 1961-1968. The goal of this examination is to identify why Seattle CORE successfully fended off the movement for black militancy and consequently why national CORE failed to do so. Juxtaposing the two radically different histories shows an integrated organization, bureaucratic leadership, a plan of action based on nonviolent actions, and a strong attachment to the black community were the central reasons for the success of Seattle CORE, and conversely, these areas were why national CORE struggled. Moreover, this study shows the events and failures over the first two decades created a susceptible environment for the organization to abandon CORE's nonviolent ideology and the subsequent disintegration of the Congress of Racial Equality as the walls of Jim Crow broke down.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	iv
INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER I: HISTORY OF THE CONGRESS OF RACIAL EQUALITY.....	15
1940s.....	17
1950s.....	24
1960s.....	28
CHAPTER II: SEATTLE CORE “TAKING OFF”	47
Building the Foundation of Seattle CORE	48
First Call to Action	52
Seattle CORE Targets Employment.....	58
Reorganization	61
CHAPTER III: DECEPTION, DEMOCRACY, DISSENSION, AND DEEDS	64
Targeting Housing Discrimination.....	65
Shop-in with Seattle CORE	68
Dissension	72
DEEDS.....	76
CHAPTER IV: TAXI CABS, SCHOOLS AND THE DEATH OF CORE.....	81
Taxi Cab Companies	82
Education Discrimination.....	83
Black Power and the Death of CORE.....	87
CONCLUSION.....	98
APPENDIX A: MAP OF NEGRO POPULATION IN 1960 CENTRAL AREA SEATTLE	100
REFERENCES.....	102

INTRODUCTION

In the spring of 1961 a Greyhound bus was bombed and burned in Anniston, Alabama while the police watched. Passengers were attacked, pulled from the bus and beaten. They were Freedom Riders from the national Congress of Racial Equality. James Farmer, the director, had America's attention when he called for a continuation not a retreat. The image of the burning bus on television made a clear case for strategy of sending bus after bus into Jackson, Mississippi until the jails became full and the state would be forced to desegregate inter-state travel facilities. And that is what happened. It was the law of the land. The Supreme Court had established it.

The Appeal produced Riders from across America. While friends began organizing a Seattle chapter of CORE with the goal to raise funds for airfare to Los Angeles, I volunteered to join the California group. Within two weeks of the Anniston bombing I was on a bus bound for New Orleans. The CORE chapter in New Orleans was conducting training classes in the practice of nonviolent civil disobedience.

Now in my mid sixties, I live in the South. The South has changed. America has changed since 1961. It was not the Freedom Riders that produced that transformation. The Freedom Ride's victory was the set up for the voter registration campaign. It was that victory which changed America. If you can vote you are a citizen. The truly brave people in the struggle were local folks who went to the voter registration offices and then returned home and faced the consequences. There were young people from Jackson, black and white, who walked into the segregated Greyhound station, joined us, went to prison and when released returned home in Jackson. These Freedom Riders were the courageous ones.

We arrived in Jackson in June. Police and their vans surrounded the terminal. They watched passively as we walked into the whites only waiting room. Once inside we sat on available benches together with arms locked. The police ordered us out. We declined. Threatened with arrest we went limp and were dragged from the Greyhound station by our feet and were loaded into paddy wagons (The Black Mariah, we later called it). Arrested and booked for unlawful assembly, we entered the jails of Jackson City and County. We were, of course, segregated by race and sex. Our fear was not of police mistreatment, but of the uncertainty of being housed with criminal prisoners. At no point during the summer did this occur. The standard length of incarceration was forty-five days, first in Jackson and ultimately at Parchman Farm Mississippi State Penitentiary. All summer long the buses kept arriving with more Freedom Riders. Our plan to max out the jail facilities was working. What a relief!

At the Parchman Farm, some distance North of Jackson, we first were housed in maximum security cells, three men in a two man cell. We alternated by sleeping on the floor...cement. The summer heat was intense, the food was poor and time stood still. We sang but that quickly enraged the jailer. They threatened to put us out in the farm's cotton fields as forced labor. We refused. It was not the work we feared but the danger of isolation out in the fields with chance of bodily harm. As a group we decided to be beaten together inside, rather than alone in the fields. We remained indoors, unbeaten, until moved to a large communal housing where we met Freedom Riders from across the nation for the first time.

The routine was dull. summer just crawls in the Mississippi heat. We made chess men from Wonder bread, practiced yoga, took cooling showers (cold water). The Broadway musical West Side Story was a hit in 1961. Some New Yorkers had seen it and did a mangled yet entertaining re-creation. There was nothing to read. I slept a lot. On Sundays a rabbi from Jackson visited us for service. Of course, we were all Jews. The guards laughed and said they expected that we were. The rabbi did an inter-denomination service interjecting relevant news concerning world and national events, as well as related to our legal situation. This he did against regulations. Our lawyers were able to communicate, somewhat, with us through the rabbi. The news that buses were still arriving in Jackson encouraged us greatly.

Wonder bread, pork 'n beans, grits, and greens, corn bread and an egg now and then with thin coffee made with chicory and most amazingly a scraping of blackened fried grease... forty seven days in Hell's Kitchen.

- Ray Cooper, Seattle CORE's First Freedom Rider

Ray Cooper's story of resistance against segregation was one shared by thousands of individuals during the 1960s. While each individual's details may differ, their goal was the same; equal rights for all people, regardless of skin color. Cooper's tone in this letter, written over four decades after the fact, displays the pacifist rhetoric of the movement; however, it also carries an underlying theme shared among many African American civil rights activists of the sixties that is not seen from the memoirs of most white activists -- aggression. While white activists were motivated to help end racial discrimination because *it was the right thing to do*, African Americans were angry.

They were tired of fear, discrimination, abuse, and prejudice that they endured for centuries. They were fighting for basic rights that should be allotted to all human beings. The right to a safe home. The right to sit at any open bus seat. The right to have a good job. The right to eat at a lunch counter. The right to use a public restroom. The right to a quality education. African Americans were fighting for a better way of life for them and their children and their children's children and were willing to do whatever it took to end the tyranny. African Americans would push the limits of nonviolence; stepping across it when they felt it was necessary.

For the purposes of this work, there are three terms that need to be elaborated upon. First, pacifism is a commitment to peace and the opposition of war and violence. Nonviolence is defined as a philosophy of abstention from violence. As the civil rights movement advanced and frustration with the slow progress mounted, the displays of civil disobedience increased in aggression, compromising a commitment to peace. At this point, these acts ceased to be pacifist in nature, and are deemed strictly nonviolent. Alternatively, militancy is defined as the state or condition of being combative or disposed to fight.

Despite the nonviolent rhetoric, the Freedom Rides, like most of the civil rights activism of the 1960s, were an aggressive act of resistance. In an article from *The Miami News*, Freedom Rider Francis Randall, an assistant professor of history at Columbia University, "admitted the nonviolent direct action of the Freedom Riders

increases racial tension."¹ The Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) activists were not only challenging the enforcement of laws, they were challenging the way of life that had oppressed them for generations; and they were challenging it in the deepest part of the Jim Crow South. National CORE devised the Freedom Rides to attract attention to the organization. White activists were there because they believed the cause was just. The African American activists were there to earn their equality, but more importantly, to shove it in the face of their oppressors. *They were fed up and not going to take it anymore* and you sense that same feeling when reading Cooper's letter. He was fed up, and doing something about it, no matter what sacrifices he had to make.

Cooper, and his fellow activists launched the Freedom Rides and CORE into the national spotlight. The bravery, resilience, and dedication of these individuals inspired many more to join the cause, and motivated several to open CORE chapters across the country to take up the fight against racial discrimination. One such chapter was located in Seattle, Washington. When most think of the civil rights movement, the struggle in the Pacific Northwest rarely comes to mind; the events are perceived to be only a Southern issue. Even the historiography of the civil rights era has predominantly focused upon the efforts in the Jim Crow South greatly ignoring the fight against injustice in the North. As James Farmer, a founder and national director of CORE in the early 1960s, conveyed in a letter to historian Gene Preuss in 1991:

“...one thing that desperately needs to be researched and written about is CORE activities in the North in the 50's and 60's. Virtually all of the books done about the movement have concentrated on the South, but simultaneous with the South were

¹ "Another Tallahassee Test Due," *The Miami News*, June 18, 1961.

activities in virtually every northern city under the aegis of CORE. This has not been written about. It is an enormous field for historical research.”²

The following study embodies Farmer’s suggestion and assists in filling this void. The civil rights movement was never constrained to the South, and neither was CORE’s efforts. While geographically Seattle lay outside the jurisdiction of the Jim Crow South, for most of its history the city was segregated, as committed to white supremacy as any location in America. People of color were excluded from jobs, neighborhoods and schools, stores, restaurants, hotels, and other commercial establishments, even hospitals.³ CORE prided itself on the organization’s ability to achieve results using peaceful techniques such as sit-ins, wade-ins, standing lines, and marches. The pacifist nonviolent techniques proved very useful in integrating many establishments in the North and the South; coupled with the highly publicized successes of the Freedom Rides, participation in the organization of the March on Washington, and demonstrations at the opening of the 1964 New York World’s Fair helped CORE reach its peak during the early 1960s. Despite the vast number of triumphs the history of the organization is a tumultuous one.

During the mid-1960s the United States witnessed a change in the country’s culture. The movements for civil rights, Black Nationalism, women, peace, an end to the Vietnam War, and the United Farm Workers were mixed with the Cold War tensions, rioting, assassinations, and other cultural influences creating a melting pot of fear,

² James Farmer to Gene Preuss, Feb. 18, 1991, Folder 3, Box 2j. James Farmer Papers, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin. Hereafter cited as Farmer Papers.

³ Segregated Seattle ed. James Gregory (Seattle: University of Washington, 2011) <http://depts.washington.edu/civilr/segregated.htm> (accessed May 26, 2011).

rebellion, and change pushed the country into a more radical and subversive society. Within the civil rights movement, the rise of Black Nationalism reshaped history for decades to come. Specifically in CORE, the Black Power Movement forced a division in the organization. This division quickly tore the organization apart losing James Farmer as its national director in 1966, along with the majority of CORE's funding. By 1968, CORE had turned its back on the organization's white members and had evolved into a full-fledged Black Nationalist organization. Replaced were the morals of Ghandi, the desire for equality amid integration and pacifist philosophies at the heart of the organization from its inception. Instead, CORE centered around the fundamental concerns of the advancement of black interests, values, and culture as an isolated identity. This shift in ideology cost the organization the leadership CORE was founded upon, its financial support, the majority of CORE's membership; and eventually led to its demise as a predominant civil rights organization.

While there is a significant amount of literature on the successes of the Congress of Racial Equality, there is an even greater absence on this shift within the organization. Previous historians have provided few explanations as to why CORE transformed from a pacifist organization to a black militant group during the 1960s. The seminal explanation hypothesized can be found within the canonical monograph by August Meier and Elliot Rudwick from 1973, *CORE: A Study in the Civil rights movement, 1942-1968*. According to Meier and Rudwick, the organization's transformation came due to the afflictions of broader ailments of the movement throughout the 1960s. Meier and Rudwick write "the swelling sense of pride stemming from the successes of black

protest of the early 1960s, disappointment with the Johnson Administration and the white liberals, the fragmentation of the movement, the enormous difficulties in overcoming the problems of the black masses, and the riots that erupted spontaneously in 1964-1965, all prepared the way for the era of Black Power that emerged in 1966.”⁴ Meier and Rudwick argue that the shift to Black Power was an effort to revitalize the dying organization. As the defining work on CORE, this decline thesis has been almost unchallenged for forty years.

During the past decade, the decline thesis has come under scrutiny. The first of two hypotheses that directly confront the Meier and Rudwick thesis, rests inside the 2004 article “The Two-ness of the Movement: James Farmer, Nonviolence, and Black Nationalism” by Leilah Danielson. Danielson writes “certainly CORE was in decline by the late 1960s; its morale was low and membership had dropped dramatically. Yet this interpretation implies that the rise of black nationalism largely was responsible for the organization’s decline and thus obscures the limitations of nonviolent direct action as a strategy....”⁵ The idea that the inherent weaknesses of nonviolence led to the decline in CORE requires further study. If such an argument could be made, then why would this not have affected more nonviolent organizations? Why were CORE and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) the only two civil rights organizations to shift to a radical Black Power doctrine; groups such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the Southern Christian Leadership

⁴ August Meier and Elliot Rudwick, *CORE: A Study in the Civil rights movement 1942-1968* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 412.

⁵ Leilah Danielson, “The Two-ness of the Movement: James Farmer, Nonviolence, and Black Nationalism,” *Peace and Change* Vol. 29, No. 3&4 (July 2004), 431.

Conference (SCLC) continued their fight for equality through nonviolence as the civil rights movement turned its focus from education and suffrage to economics. Danielson assumes nonviolent techniques are weaker than the militancy that CORE evolved to utilize. From the responses of supporters of nonviolent techniques one can demonstrate that nonviolence was a method utilized by the educated; a method that stresses peace in the face of aggression. Retaliation is the real weakness, one that Danielson overlooks. Fighting violence with violence only escalated matters in the South. Furthermore, by 1964 the influence of Black Power already had afflicted the organization negatively during the peak of CORE and the civil rights movement.

The most recent hypothesis on why the transformation from a pacifist nonviolent approach evolved into black power ideology comes from a doctoral dissertation “Cleveland CORE, Community Organization, and the Rise of Black Power” by Nashani Frazier. Frazier argues that Black Power ideologies have always existed among the members and the founders of CORE. Furthermore, the transformation of CORE was inevitable due to the “contradictory notions of its founders and in the incompatible behavior of a few early black members.”⁶ For example, Frazier points out that tensions over the use of nonviolence did not only occur in the 1960s as Meier and Rudwick argued; in fact, Frazier demonstrates through the history of Cleveland CORE that nonviolent methods were challenged from the organizations existence. Frazier makes a compelling argument; nevertheless, it is based upon his own misinterpretations. CORE

⁶ Nashani Frazier, “Cleveland CORE, Community Organization, and the Rise of Black Power,” (Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 2008), 2.

leadership always claimed Black Power ideology had its merit; however, the militancy, violence, and separatism that accompanied these principles were not desired traits to be associated with CORE under James Farmer and the other members who founded the organization.

This investigation begins under the belief that all three hypotheses fail to provide a complete answer as to why a civil rights organization, as successful as CORE, would abandon its fundamental principles so soon after the civil rights movement and President Lyndon B. Johnson had achieved two great triumphs with the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Less than a year after the passing of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, the organization shifted to Black separatism. “When CORE’s official policy shifted to black separatism in 1966, several top staff members including James Farmer, George Wiley, James McCain, and Carl Rachlin resigned,” along with the vast majority of CORE’s funding and membership.⁷ After these losses CORE went through three additional national directors in the following two years.

Meier and Rudwick argue fragmentation that plagued the entire civil rights movement led to the shift to militancy and the eventual death of CORE. This study investigates the Seattle chapter of the Congress of Racial Equality in comparison to national CORE to identify a division in philosophy. Seattle was chosen for many reasons. First, the historiography on the northern civil rights movement is a growing discourse, and the Pacific Northwest has rarely been touched upon. Secondly, it was a

⁷ Microfilming Corporation of America. *The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, Addendum, 1944-1968: A Guide to the Microfilm Edition*. Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms International, 1986. Hereafter cited as Guide to the CORE Papers Addendum.

highly integrated chapter with one of the healthiest black to white ratios in CORE which makes it ideal to study the influence of Black Power ideology. Furthermore, Seattle CORE was one of the few chapters that remained intact after the 1966 change in philosophy until the expulsion of all white members in 1968. And finally, the chapter like most others, faced internal dissension explicitly due to the rising popularity of Black Power in Seattle.

This investigation will demonstrate that CORE's structure assisted in creating the division within the organization. Through this inspection, it will become clear that the black nationalist movement CORE succumbed to in the late 1960s, was far from an overall consensus among membership within the organization. The division that plagued national CORE was persistent in Seattle; however, the Seattle chapter managed to overcome these issues. Inspecting these events in comparison to the events of national CORE's shift to militancy will shed light on why CORE succumbed to black militancy.

Additionally, the chapter's relationship with national CORE highlights a major weakness within the organization's foundational operating structure. The shift to militancy within the organization came from an abandonment of CORE's philosophies as national CORE lacked any real control over the individual chapters. Allowing each individual chapter full autonomy created a situation that made the organization susceptible to the shift from a nonviolent, integrationist policy to a separatist and militant ideology, and weakened the leadership system.

This thesis has two agendas; first to compare the national organization with one of the most accomplished chapters in the organization. By juxtaposing the struggles and mistakes of national CORE against the accomplishments of Seattle CORE, it becomes apparent why black militancy overtook a leading nonviolent organization. Leadership troubles, disorder, inability to raise funds, and a separation between the black community and national CORE debilitated the organization. In comparison, Seattle CORE found ways to thrive in these areas despite facing the same difficulties as national CORE. The second question this thesis sets out to explain is why an organization as established as CORE, changes its strategy from nonviolence to militancy after such monumental accomplishments in 1964 and 1965. The simple answer is African Americans believed it was time for them to control their own fate and lead the organization along with the civil rights movement for their own equal rights. This was driven by a desire for more results. At the national level African Americans were gaining the rights they deserved, but at the local level racial discrimination was still rampant. Eliminating segregation did not assist every African American in finding a job; and the ones who did, rarely found one outside menial labor. Having the right to vote did not improve their living accommodations or remove the de facto segregation of their local communities.

The first chapter establishes a brief history of national CORE dating from its origins in 1942 through the final demise of the nonviolent strategy of CORE by 1968. To understand what sets Seattle CORE apart from national CORE we first need to investigate the chaotic history of the national organization. Chapter 1 highlights national

CORE's failures in building a working relationship with the black community, the organization's inability to raise proper funding, the inefficiency of the organization and inconsistent leadership that all played a major role in its demise.

Chapter 2 investigates the formation of Seattle CORE. Seattle CORE started small with only a handful of dedicated members in 1961, and quickly rose to one of the largest and most active chapters in all of the organization. The leaders of Seattle CORE played a crucial role in the development of the affiliate and Chapter 2 examines the impact of the founding members whose experience, dedication, and organization were instrumental in creating a sound chapter. This chapter also looks at Seattle CORE policies, rules and regulations as well as the early direct action and the influence Seattle CORE developed within Seattle's black community. It demonstrates the strengths that elevated Seattle CORE and highlights the weaknesses of the national organization that led to its change in ideology and collapse.

Chapter 3 studies a turbulent era within the history of Seattle CORE. It begins with Seattle CORE's expansion into new frontiers of racial inequality in the city in 1963. As the chapter's membership increased to over 200 members, Seattle CORE began activism against housing discrimination while continuing the fight against employment. Their members invented a new nonviolent tactic called the "Shop-in" that gained immediate results in the fight against local businesses' hiring practices. Despite this success, Seattle CORE faced a small group of members who were exposed for attempting to undermine leadership. In 1964, the chapter faced its own coup d'état,

concurrently with the passing and enactment of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Led by six members, including the assistant secretary, the dissenting group was called “The Faction.” In an invitation to a special meeting on August 24, 1964 these six among others were called by the officers of Seattle CORE to “discuss in the open, divisive and derogatory allegations and activities within the chapter by certain members.”⁸ The heated meeting ended with the majority of the faction leaving CORE and forming their own organization, while the remaining members agreed to adhere to CORE principles.⁹ With the dissension behind them, Seattle CORE launched a massive project called the Drive for Equal Employment in Downtown Seattle (DEEDS). DEEDS set a lofty goal that the chapter failed to realize fully. This era witnessed many highs and lows for Seattle CORE; membership hit an all time high, they expanded the focus to include housing discrimination, the Shop-in yielded significant and immediate results. However, internal turmoil overwhelmed the chapter and a massive failure with their largest project exposed the organization's inability to achieve the results they desired. Yet Seattle CORE continued to persevere while national CORE yielded under similar circumstances.

The concluding chapter looks at the final years of Seattle CORE. From their continued assault on employment discrimination, the chapter's entrance into education discrimination, and the loss of many of the founding members of Seattle CORE. More importantly, Chapter 4 looks at the forced shift to militancy in Seattle CORE;

⁸ Special Meeting Notice, August 20 1964, Addendum to CORE Papers.

⁹ Joan Singler, Jean Durning, Bettylou Valentine, and Maid Adams, *Seattle in Black and White: The Congress of Racial Equality and the Fight for Equal Opportunity* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2011), 181.

demonstrating the fragmentation of the organization. Despite declaring itself a Black Militant organization in 1966, Seattle CORE continued working as an integrated chapter through 1967. It was not until national CORE expelled all white members that the final step of the transformation to Black Nationalism occurred. Seattle CORE tried to rebuild the chapter, but could not rally enough supporters; facing drops in membership and funding, the chapter ceased activity just a few months after the expulsion of white members. The narrative concludes with the reactions from white Seattle CORE members, further displaying the division that grew between the foot soldiers of the civil rights movement, the individual chapters within the organization, and the leaders of national CORE.

CHAPTER I: HISTORY OF THE CONGRESS OF RACIAL EQUALITY

This chapter outlines the history of national CORE from its founding in 1942 through the final shift to a Black Nationalist organization in 1968. Along the way, the failures of the national organization become apparent. The ineptitude amongst leadership in the National Action Committee (NAC) and its elected national directors, the lack of organization between national CORE and the local affiliates, the inability to raise proper funding throughout the organization, and a failure to create a relationship with the black community led to radical change in the organization's ideology.

CORE's roots can be traced to another pacifist group, the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR), an English organization created in 1914.¹⁰ In 1915, FOR was founded in the United States to oppose the country's entry into World War I.¹¹ FOR promoted pacifist nonviolent philosophies as the organization's methods of challenging conflict. Early in 1942, James Farmer wrote a memo to Abraham Johannes Muste, the executive director of FOR, outlining ideas for nonviolent direct action against racial inequality called a "Brotherhood Mobilization," that would create an autonomous nationwide nonviolent organization.¹² At the subsequent FOR national Council Meeting

¹⁰ Joe E. Leonard Jr., "We are Catching Hell Down Here": The Struggle For Public Accommodations and Voter Franchisement by the Congress of Racial Equality in Louisiana, 1960-1965" (Ph.D. dissertation, Howard University, 2004), 2.

¹¹ "Fellowship of Reconciliation - For a World of Peace, Justice and Nonviolence," <http://www.forusa.org> <last accessed March 1, 2012>.

¹² Meier and Rudwick, 7.

in Ohio, James Farmer was authorized to organize this pilot project in Chicago based on his ideas from the memo to Muste.¹³

The founders did not want this project to be just “another talking group,” so they set out to create a direct action plan that would attract members who would lay the foundation for a larger organization.¹⁴ In March of 1942, they chose the White City Roller Rink as their first nonviolent direct action target.¹⁵ They chose this location because the roller rink was well known for excluding African Americans a violation of the Illinois' state civil rights law.¹⁶ White City circumvented the law by claiming it was a private club; however, a twenty-four member interracial group, including Farmer, proved this was not the case one night in April 1942. When the group attempted to gain admission, the white members were allowed inside, and the blacks were denied access.¹⁷ This set in motion a series of negotiations with White City; more importantly, it energized the small group of activists. The goal to attract members by directly

¹³ James Farmer to Gene Preuss, Feb. 18, 1991, Farmer Papers.

¹⁴ Meier and Rudwick, 7.

¹⁵ The White City Amusement Park, that originally housed the White City Roller Rink, opened in 1905 however the park was condemned in 1939 and only the Roller Rink remained open. The Amusement Park shares its namesake with the 1893 Columbian Exposition; the expo earned the nickname the "White City" because the builders used white plaster for many of the buildings. It is possible the White City Amusement Park was named after the Expo as they were in the same area of Chicago and the locations were separated by less than 4 miles. It is also a possibility the owners were inspired by the Expo to create the park. According Jean Bond's December 6, 1959 article "White City Dies as She Lived," Chicago Tribune, the owner, Aaron Jones, had visited the Expo and aspired to create a park similar to it. However, articles from the Chicago Tribune in 1906 and 1907 list Morris and Joseph Beifeld, two brothers from Chicago as the owners. Furthermore, the 1910 U.S. Census also lists Morris Beifeld as the owner. In either case, the only possible relation between the 1893 Expo and the park may be inspiration.

¹⁶ Meier and Rudwick, 7.

¹⁷ George Houser, *CORE: A Brief History*, 4. CORE Papers.

confronting discrimination worked. From the initial twenty-four activists the organization swelled to more than fifty people by the following meeting.¹⁸

This pilot project evolved into the Committees of Racial Equality later in 1942. The Congress of Racial Equality, the name adopted in 1943, pioneered the technique of nonviolence to combat racial injustice within the United States utilizing the same *Satyagraha* (nonviolent direct action) philosophies as FOR.¹⁹ An interracial group of Chicago students who founded the Committee of Racial Equality included James Farmer, Bernice Fisher, Joe Guinn, James R. Robinson, George Houser, and Homer Jack. CORE's goal was simple; to directly confront discrimination with nonviolence, not only in the South but also in the overlooked North and Midwest.

1940s

The existence of African American soldiers fighting overseas against oppression in World War II revealed the contradictory social practices within the United States during the 1940s. As Eleanor Roosevelt stated "the nation cannot expect the colored people to feel that the U.S. is worth defending if they continue to be treated as they are treated now." Despite the presence of Jim Crow segregation and quieter discrimination outside the South, African Americans saw the second World War as an opportunity to rise out of poverty and take positive steps towards equality. In the presence of threats

¹⁸ Ibid, 5.

¹⁹ *This is CORE* leaflet (New York, NY: Congress of Racial Equality, 1959), 2 CORE Papers.

to march on Washington, President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued Executive Order #8802 which opened defense jobs to African Americans on the basis of equal pay for equal work. Once WWII ended, African Americans targeted the segregation and discrimination they suffered at home.²⁰ The events of WWII propelled the civil rights movement to the forefront in America as well as organizations such as CORE.²¹

The first years following the creation of CORE, the organization attempted to catch up to its rising popularity. As chapters popped up across the country, the founders worked to establish an overarching national CORE. Cities such as St. Louis, Cleveland, Detroit, Denver, Kansas City, Philadelphia, Minneapolis, Cincinnati and Syracuse were among the first to establish chapters.²² The speed at which CORE spread created institutional problems that plagued the organization throughout its history. The most crippling issues would be a general lack of organization, the inability of local chapters to maintain activity, national CORE's inability to control individual chapters, and funding.

Very early in the organization's history it became apparent to CORE national secretary George Houser that a disconnection between the chapters and national CORE hampered the organization. He wrote:

There is practically no contact between the groups except as an occasional bulletin is sent [to chapter officers] from the volunteer national secretary

²⁰ Virginia Historical Society, "The Civil Rights Movement in Virginia."

<http://www.vahistorical.org/civilrights/ww2.htm> <last accessed December 2, 2011>.

²¹ The current historiography argues the civil rights movement reaches back to the earliest days of slavery. For more see Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, "The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past," *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 91, No. 4 (March, 2005), pp. 1233-1263.

²² Meier and Rudwick, 23-28.

Practically no financial support comes to the national office from the local groups. Last year this amounted to \$113.00 There is no contact between national office and the rank and file members of the affiliated groups Members of CORE in various cities know practically nothing about what is happening nationally. it is impossible to support an organization on the basis of this national scheme.²³

Houser's undated memo from the mid 1940s illustrates major issues in the organization.

First, communication was almost non-existent between the local chapters and national

CORE giving local leaders free rein to lead each chapter the way they saw fit and, in

many cases, not as national CORE expected. Without communication to each chapter

and each individual member, it was impossible for CORE to establish uniformity in

ideology, policy, and training. Second, inadequate funding plagued the organization.

The lack of proper funding limited national CORE's ability to initiate direct action

campaigns, prohibited the hiring of full time employees, and derailed plans to create a

national office. The national organization's failure to establish mechanisms to provide

financial stability through individual chapter membership dues crippled the organization

in its infancy. The lack of local financial support became a source for turmoil between

national CORE and the local chapters in many of the future national conventions.

These points highlight a more important issue. Each chapter governed itself with no

direction from national CORE; this early autonomy made it impossible for national

CORE to exert any control over the individual chapters when it later tried to establish a

chain of command. Once the local chapters were used to these liberties, they would not

surrender them willingly. An undated memo sent out by George Houser argued the

²³ Houser, "Undated Memo to Chapters," quoted in Rudolph Lombard, Staff Reorganization of CORE, (1962).

structure of CORE was unsustainable from the beginning. Houser realized these issues would make it impossible for the organization to survive without significant changes.²⁴

Furthermore, the local chapters were highly unstable. As Meier and Rudwick argued “even the busiest and most successful chapters typically exhibited a pattern of intensive activity followed by decline ending either in a revival or dissolution.”²⁵ For instance, CORE’s first established chapter in Chicago is a prime example of the struggle individual chapters faced. Less than two years after its founding, Chicago CORE became inactive as financial support and membership declined. In the fall of 1945, local NAACP leader, Gerald Bullock revived Chicago CORE; still, he had difficulty recruiting members.²⁶ As Chicago CORE was the original CORE chapter, Chicago operated under the principles by the same individuals who united as the leading governing body of national CORE, the National Action Committee.

The recruitment rules required each individual to be well versed in nonviolent methods, to accept the "Action Discipline" based on the teachings of Ghandi, and to be highly active in CORE's work. As Meier and Rudwick point out, "commitment and dedication were deemed more important than size, and prospective members were carefully investigated and interviewed before being admitted."²⁷ CORE founders also established an anti-leftist policy in an effort to deter Communist issues that undermined

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Meier and Rudwick, 30.

²⁶ Ibid, 32.

²⁷ Ibid, 8.

many other reform organizations of the 1930s.²⁸ Furthermore, each chapter was to be integrated with a healthy ratio of white to black members. When these requirements hampered Chicago CORE's ability to attract new membership Bullock dropped the strict recruiting guidelines and opened membership to allow Chicago's local Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party (SWP). Houser concerned that the SWP would not follow nonviolent protocols warned Bullock to no avail. By the following summer of 1946, Houser's fears became reality. *Chicago CORE-News*, the chapter's monthly newsletter, openly advocated retaliatory violence and the chapter's meetings faced internal disputes regarding the use of violent and nonviolent techniques at demonstrations. In 1947, students from the University of Chicago withdrew from the SWP led version of Chicago CORE and formed their own chapter of CORE adhering to the organization's nonviolent founding principles; the SWP version of Chicago CORE dissipated soon thereafter.²⁹ Houser's inability to intervene in the decision of the Chicago CORE illustrates a problem that the organization's leadership faced throughout its existence: national CORE had no control over individual chapters.

Generating membership was a common problem, but even more pressing was the lack of financial support. In 1945, national CORE's finances could only maintain expenses totaling a paltry \$100 a month.³⁰ The organization could not afford to hire a full-time salaried staff and repeated attempts to gain financial support from local chapters were rejected. In 1946, at the national CORE convention a proposal to split

²⁸ Ibid, 32.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ *CORElator*, December 1945.

dues equally was tabled. Later that year, when the elected Executive Committee of CORE created a project to raise \$7,000 in funds to open and staff a national office, every chapter, except Cleveland CORE, rejected the plan.³¹

In spite of funding and organizational problems, national CORE moved forward with an ambitious plan: The Journey of Reconciliation, a joint venture between CORE and FOR, that would test fulfillment of the recent Supreme Court decision, in *Morgan v. Virginia* (1946), against segregation in public transportation and interstate travel. The Journey would be the precursor to CORE's better known Freedom Rides of 1961. In preparation for the Journey, the participants, an integrated group of eight whites and eight blacks, underwent rigorous training in nonviolent techniques and philosophy. In *CORE: A Study in the Civil Rights Movement*, Meier and Rudwick write that "for hours on end they engaged in sociodramas, acting out the appropriate responses to be taken in the face of abuse behavior...."³² It was a requirement of national CORE that every member undergo extensive training prior to any activism. However, lack of funding and a general disregard from some of CORE's local chapters made training every CORE member impossible. National CORE did provide summer interracial workshops beginning in 1947 to train leaders of local CORE chapters; however, inability to raise funds shut down the summer workshops in 1954. Thus, nonviolent philosophy and methods training was inconsistent throughout the organization.

³¹ Meier and Rudwick, 33.

³² *Ibid*, 36.

The Journey organizers planned a two-week bus trip that originated in Washington D.C. and took the group through Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee and Kentucky. During the trek that began on April 9, 1947, the group incurred twelve arrests as they challenged Jim Crow seating arrangements.³³ Just outside Chapel Hill, North Carolina, the group had their most significant incident. Two of the activists, Andrew Johnson, a law student, and Joe Felmet, a representative from the Workers Defense League were arrested for sitting together. After their arrests, and posting of bail, the group was chased by “two full taxicabs filled with angry whites armed with sticks and rocks,” who threatened to burn down the minister’s house where the group previously arranged to stay the night.³⁴ The group fled to avoid escalation of the event. The charges against Johnson and Felmet would later be dropped. The rest of the trip was relatively quiet, with a couple more arrests but nothing eventful. The report from Houser and Bayard Rustin, the FOR Youth secretary, stated “most white passengers were apathetic,” the responding police were usually “polite and calm,” and the black passengers were “fearful” but would “move from the rear forward” to the front of the bus once they realized the others were not bothered. Houser and Rustin credited the nonviolent, disciplined behavior they learned just before undertaking the Journey.³⁵ More importantly, the experience confirmed the conviction of the early CORE members in the philosophies of nonviolence.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Houser and Rusin, “*We Challenged Jim Crow*, Background Statement on North Carolina Case” [1949] cited within Meier and Rudwick, 33.

³⁵ Houser and Rustin, *We Challenged Jim Crow*, 10-11.

On the heels of the Journey of Reconciliation, CORE's fifth national convention took place. For the first time, all chapters were represented. The national office ran primarily on donations and national CORE hoped to use the Journey's success to approve expansion and funding from the local chapters. To their dismay, the delegates from local chapters continued to refuse arguing that funding national CORE would undermine the autonomy of the local chapters. In a compromise, they agreed to a one cent tax per member that would go to national CORE. For the remainder of the decade, national CORE attempted to convince the local chapters to increase funding to help establish a full staffed national office to no avail. In 1949-1950 the national office received \$1528 in donations compared to only \$437 from chapter payments, a disparity that hampered the organization's development.³⁶

1950s

The first half of the 1950s witnessed a decline in CORE activity. The Los Angeles chapter shut down after the departure of their leader, Berkeley's chapter imploded after a large employment campaign failed to yield any positive results from Oakland's Sears and Roebuck and Chicago, New York, Omaha, and St. Louis all witnessed severe declines in membership and activity. Denver and Minneapolis were too unstable to get campaigns started. In Cleveland, growing sentiment that CORE was insignificant in comparison to fellow civil rights groups after multiple demonstrations

³⁶ Meier and Rudwick, 41.

failed to yield results caused a severe decline in membership; national CORE would declare the chapter defunct in 1953. As seen in Berkeley, Cleveland and Chicago, disappointment following failed campaigns usually meant the death of a chapter. In contrast to the 1940s that saw more local chapters created than disintegrate, the early 1950s witnessed only one successful chapter, Baltimore, open while nearly half of CORE's local chapters shut down. "At the 1952 Convention, Houser admitted 'CORE is stronger as a principle than as an organization;'" and at the 1954 convention he claimed CORE was weaker than ever before.³⁷ Despite the monumental achievement in the Supreme Court ruling of *Brown vs. Board* on May 17, 1954, only seven local affiliates remained, and many were on the brink of collapse. CORE did not see the same reenergizing that other civil rights organizations did from the *Brown vs. Board* ruling due to CORE's inability to build a relationship with the black community. The majority of local chapters rosters were predominantly white and many blacks viewed CORE as a primarily white Northern organization.³⁸ With this perception working against CORE, African Americans who supported civil rights, chose to participate in organizations they believed would benefit African Americans; mainly the NAACP.

Even more troubling than the breakdown of the organization was the failure to recruit African American members to the affiliates and to promote black leadership within national CORE. In the 1950's the top officials were overwhelmingly white. Meier and Rudwick point out that "James Farmer served as national chairman in 1950-1951

³⁷ Ibid, 61.

³⁸ Simon Wendt, "'Urge People Not to Carry Guns': Armed Self-Defense in the Louisiana Civil Rights Movement and the Radicalization of the Congress of Racial Equality," *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* Volume 45, Number 3 (summer 2004), 262.

but his successors were all whites, and nearly all elected national officers were also white.”³⁹ National CORE leaders knew that without deep roots in the black community CORE lacked the influence necessary to make significant gains in their action projects. Consequently, an effort to increase black membership and leadership was made a priority for the organization in the early 1950s.

By 1955 the organization was on life support despite a major achievement in the civil rights movement with the *Brown vs. Board* decision on May 17, 1954. In the words of Billie Ames, who became a liaison between chapters, if CORE was going to survive “something has got to be done – and quick.”⁴⁰ In December of 1955, Martin Luther King Jr. led the Montgomery bus boycott and drew daily national headlines. National CORE leaders quickly realized their opportunity to reinvigorate CORE rested within the South; not only did the region provide potential for direct action protests, but CORE could attract national attention to revive membership and expand the organization's influence. With the improbability of attracting white involvement in the South, CORE lifted the requirement that all CORE chapters had to have both white and black members from the CORE constitution.⁴¹ This decision had a profound impact upon the organization creating an even greater imbalance of races in the majority of chapters.

The last few years of the 1950s witnessed a rise in the popularity of the civil rights movement. As King motivated blacks to fight for their rights, whites also responded to the call against oppression. While all white civil right activists believed it

³⁹ Meier and Rudwick, 62.

⁴⁰ Billie Ames to James Peck, February 9, 1955. CORE Papers.

⁴¹ *CORE-lator*, Spring 1956.

was the right thing to do, many were also motivated by other factors. Some white Americans looked for a means to rebel against the infringement upon their civil liberties in the 1950s that was aided by McCarthyism; the civil rights movement provided the perfect outlet. With Americans united under a cause, CORE witnessed a resurgence in membership and funding; and a change in leadership stabilized the organization.

By 1958, under the leadership of Finance secretary, James Robinson, the organization's funds more than doubled despite continued refusal of local chapters to supply any assistance to national CORE.⁴² Robinson's work generated enough funds to expand the national staff. As Robinson excelled at fundraising for the organization, Marvin Rich, the newly appointed Community Relations Director, made CORE a household name. For example, Rich used funds to create *This is CORE* and *CORE Rules for Action*, two brochures that enlightened communities about the work CORE was doing locally and nationally. Through the work of Robinson and Rich, CORE expanded from 4500 to more than 9000 contributors in 1959, and 12,000 in 1960.⁴³ In addition, CORE opened new affiliates in Nashville, Tennessee, Rock Hill and Sumter, South Carolina, Portland, Oregon, Miami and Tallahassee, Florida, and Charlestown, West Virginia, while reopening chapters in Columbia, South Carolina, Kansas City, Missouri, and San Francisco and Los Angeles, California.⁴⁴ For the first time in a decade CORE appeared to be growing rather than dying. At the same time, the technique of nonviolence became the dominant strategy of the movement for racial

⁴² Meier and Rudwick, 78.

⁴³ Ibid, 81.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 62-98.

equality. As the 1950s drew to an end, the organization was poised to become a major player in the civil rights movement.⁴⁵

1960s

In 1960 CORE pioneered a new tactic in the fight for equality, the “jail-in.” On the 13th of February in 1960, Patricia Stephens Due along with eight other Florida A&M University students conducted their first sit-in at Woolworth’s lunch counter. As Due put it in an interview in November 2002, “we sat there quietly... hecklers surrounded us, threatening us with bodily harm - one had a gun - but we continued to sit.”⁴⁶ They sat for two hours after being refused service. The following Saturday, February 20th, Due along with ten additional Congress of Racial Equality members returned to the segregated Woolworth’s lunch counter. Once again they sat there quietly and peacefully while being heckled and threatened by the white patrons. However, this time history was made, as the eleven civil rights activists were arrested. Due explained their “crime”: “we sat at a Woolworth lunch counter and tried to order food.”⁴⁷ The initial charges included disturbing the peace and inciting a riot. The eleven individuals included two high school students, eight Florida A&M University students and one African American woman, Mrs. Mary Ola Gaines, who worked as a domestic in the

⁴⁵ Ibid, 98.

⁴⁶ Patricia Due, interview by Tananarive Due, November 2002. <http://tananarivedue.com/interviews.htm> <last accessed December 4, 2011>.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

community.⁴⁸ By their trial date, six additional charges had been levied against them. Unable to hire local attorneys, lawyers traveled over 500 miles to represent the accused. Patricia Due stated "the courtroom was a circus... we were treated with utter disrespect. The word "nigger" was used frequently to describe us in the courtroom. We were in a segregated courtroom waiting for justice when none was forthcoming."⁴⁹ Six of the eight charges were dropped; nevertheless, they were found guilty on two charges which she says "we never knew what [the charges] were."⁵⁰ Due and her co-conspirators were suspended from FAMU and faced the choice of paying a \$300 fine or jail time. Eight of the eleven chose the latter, initiating the first ever jail-in of the civil rights movement.⁵¹ Five of the eight including Due spent 49 days in jail as a protest against segregation in the United States. Similar actions were simultaneously taking place in Greensboro, North Carolina and St. Louis, Missouri. This new direct action tactic launched CORE to the forefront of the civil rights movement. In newspapers across the country, the jail-ins received mixed reactions.⁵² *The Gadsden Times* argued CORE was causing trouble with their "sit-ins, jail-ins, and sleep-ins; the paper also depicted the "Negroes battle plan" in a negative light and questioned the "real objectives of the Negroes' fight for civil rights."⁵³ "The jail-ins demonstrated a shift of leadership to younger, more militant Negroes" argued the *New York Times* author Claude Sittons. In

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Meier and Rudwick, 106.

⁵² Southern coverage supported both sides of the movement. *The Atlanta Constitution* urged for racial tolerance and desegregation. However, some papers completely ignoring the civil rights movement narrative. A Kentucky based newspaper, the *Lexington Herald-Ledger*, apologized for purposely omitting coverage on the civil rights movement in the July 4, 2004 article Front-page news, back-page coverage."

⁵³ "The Negroes' Battle Plan for Integration," *Gadsden Times*, September, 22, 1963.

The Compass, a North Carolina based newspaper, argued "1960 shall be remembered by all, especially Negroes. This was the year of numerous accomplishments toward freedom...." The author later goes on to say "these sit-ins are very well organized" and the "massive sit-ins are at the top of the Negroes collective gains on freedom."⁵⁴

The organization continued the rapid growth it witnessed at the end of the previous decade. By July of 1960 CORE had jumped to twenty-four chapters, an estimated 1000 active members, and there were an additional eleven chapters pending approval to become affiliates as well. CORE's funds also expanded at this time. From June to December national CORE received \$144,000 in contributions in private donations alone. Still the local chapters supplied less than 1% of that amount.⁵⁵ The swift growth also had negative ramifications. In an attempt to support the student activists of the South, CORE sent out their newly hired field secretaries without the proper training in nonviolent philosophy and techniques. Furthermore, the organization's structure came under attack by local chapters. Many decisions were made by national CORE without contacting the local chapters. The organization underwent a massive restructuring; James Robinson, who at the time was the most influential member of CORE, begrudgingly stepped down from his position as finance secretary, but stayed on as membership director, and James Farmer was elected to the new position of

⁵⁴ "Negro Progress in 1960," *The Compass*, February, 1961.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 126.

national director as of February 1, 1961 by the National Action Committee created to direct national CORE.⁵⁶

With Farmer now leading the way, CORE looked for a major campaign that would thrust the organization into the spotlight. The *Boynton vs. Virginia* decision which declared segregation in interstate bus and railways travel unconstitutional provided a perfect opportunity for CORE. Taking a page from their highly successful Journey of Reconciliation in 1947, the organization decided to test segregation laws on buses. This time CORE targeted the terminal facilities in deep South cities, which the organization had been too fearful to confront during the earlier Journey. In a press release, CORE warned that potential Freedom Rider “must be willing to accept threats, violence and jail sentences.”⁵⁷ SNCC, NAACP, SCLC and CORE members from across the country raised the funds necessary to travel South and partake in what would be one of the defining moments of the civil rights movement. CORE organized training in Washington D.C. to assure that each Freedom Rider received the same extensive training that the Journey of Conciliation activists had undergone.

The first CORE Freedom Rides started on May 4, 1961 from Washington D.C. There were 13 activists, split into two interracial groups to test both Greyhound and Trailways bus companies. The two buses traveled through Virginia without incidence.⁵⁸ The Freedom Riders successfully challenged the prohibitions against their use of white

⁵⁶ Derek Catsam, *Freedom's Main Line: The Journey of Reconciliation and the Freedom Rides* (Louisville: University of Kentucky Press, 2009), 68.

⁵⁷ “Freedom Ride, 1961—preliminary draft,” CORE Papers, series 5, box 20, folder 10.

⁵⁸ “The Freedom Rides,” <http://www.core-online.org/History/freedom%20rides.htm> <last accessed March 4, 2012>.

designated lunch counters and waiting rooms. Through North Carolina there was only one minor incident when a Rider was arrested for sitting in a shoe shine chair; he was acquitted on the charges two days later. Violence erupted for the first time at the Rock Hill Greyhound station on May 9, when a mob at the entrance of the white waiting room beat John Lewis and Albert Bigelow. The following day James Peck and Henry Thomas were arrested after sitting down to eat at a white lunch counter in Winnsboro, South Carolina; only to be released 7 hours later with no charges.⁵⁹ The Riders made their way through Atlanta, Georgia without incident.

In spite of warnings from SCLC leader Fred Shuttlesworth that a mob planned on stopping the buses, the Freedom Riders set forth for Birmingham, Alabama on May 14, 1961.⁶⁰ As the Greyhound bus arrived at the Anniston terminal, a group of about fifty surrounded the bus. The mob attacked the bus, denting the sides, slashing tires, and shattering the windows.⁶¹ After about twenty minutes, the Anniston police showed up and escorted the battered bus out of the station. At the city limits the police car turned back and the bus was once again vulnerable to the mob.⁶² As the Riders stayed in their seats, the bus came under attack again with Alabama Klansmen demanding the Freedom Riders come out and get the beating that was coming to them. As the mob grew impatient, Cecil "Goober" Lewallyn returned to his car. Moments later he "suddenly ran toward the bus and tossed a flaming bundle of rags through a broken

⁵⁹ Meier and Rudwick, 137.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Raymond Arsenault, *Freedom Riders: 1961 and the Struggle for Racial Justice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 143.

⁶² Ibid.

window. Within seconds the bundle exploded, sending dark gray smoke throughout the bus."⁶³ The Klansmen tried to keep the Riders locked inside to burn in the bus, but fuel tank explosions drove the mob back. As the Riders escaped, highway patrolmen dispersed the angry mob.⁶⁴ The Greyhound Riders were taken by the carload to the Anniston Memorial Hospital.

The second group of Freedom Riders, arrived at the Anniston terminal approximately an hour after the first bus. Klansmen assaulted Peck, Thomas, and two other Freedom Riders, Charles Person and Walter Bergman. After the Klansmen beat the Riders to the brink of death, they dragged the four men to the back of the bus and restored Jim Crow segregated seating.⁶⁵ The Klansmen joined the Riders aboard the bus for the next leg of the trip; they threatened, taunted, and abused the Riders all the way to Birmingham. What the Riders did not know was the Klansmen were there to keep the bus moving to Birmingham, where another, much larger mob waited for them. The Klansmen had a deal to have a 15 minute time window to assault the Riders before the police would show up.⁶⁶

As the Trailways bus came up to Birmingham the Freedom Riders "cleaned themselves up as if they were going to a party or something. Except we knew it wasn't going to be any party or picnic" recalled Peck.⁶⁷ Once the bus pulled into the depot, Peck first saw a group of white men: he described the group as around 25, "all young,

⁶³ Ibid, 144.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 146.

⁶⁵ Ibid, 150.

⁶⁶ Ibid, 154.

⁶⁷ Catsam, 162.

and grinning at each other;" hidden out of view were four or five dozen others.⁶⁸

Despite being bloodied and beaten, Peck along with Person entered the Birmingham station and headed for the lunch counter. Groups of men attacked the two. The assault was caught on film and would be shown a few days later in the program *Who Speaks for Birmingham?* a CBS special on race relations in the city.⁶⁹ Peck and Persons were badly injured in their assault, with Peck requiring 50 stitches after he was knocked unconscious.⁷⁰ After the allotted window elapsed, the Birmingham police arrived, but the attackers had already left.

The Riders questioned if they should go on after their experiences at Birmingham, yet they decided it was their only choice; however, no bus drivers would transport them and CORE was forced to suspend the Freedom Rides. In lieu of bomb threats and angry mobs planning to assault the airport transporting the Freedom Riders, all plane traffic was suspended. The Freedom Riders were stuck in Alabama until the Justice Department made secret arrangements to transport the group to New Orleans for evacuation.⁷¹

Attorney General Robert Kennedy pled for a "cooling off period."⁷² Despite the request from the Attorney General, another group formed by students in Nashville led by Lewis. Ignoring the larger issue of constitutional rights, Alabama authorities restored 'law and order' by branding the Tennessee students as troublemakers and criminals;"

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid, 163.

⁷⁰ Meier and Rudwick, 138.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² "Jail 27 After Freedom Rides," *The Southeastern Missourian*, May 25, 1961.

Alabama police placed the Nashville Riders in "protective custody." Two days later, four were "released" at 4 A.M. at the Alabama and Tennessee border with orders to return to Nashville.⁷³ The Nashville Riders were determined to make it to New Orleans and made arrangements to return to Birmingham later that day by car. After traveling back roads, the group made it to Birmingham unscathed, and were met by reinforcements raising the total to 21 Freedom Riders.⁷⁴ The plan was to board a 10:00 A.M. bus to New Orleans on Friday May 19, 1961; however, Greyhound drivers refused to take the Freedom Riders who were forced to stay overnight at the terminal.⁷⁵ It took the intervention of President Kennedy to find a driver willing to take the Riders to New Orleans, but on May 20th, the Freedom Rides were finally back on track.

At the next terminal in Montgomery Alabama, a mob of 200 were hidden and awaited the bus arrival.⁷⁶ The Freedom Riders arrived with only one lone police officer escort. The mob quickly ascended on the Riders, severely beating and injuring most of the Riders. A personal representative of the president, John Seigenthaler, had been dispatched to Alabama as a federal peacekeeping force to maintain order. As he arrived a few minutes after the bus did, he witnessed the mob assaulting the Riders. In an attempt to help two of the female passengers, he was attacked by the mob; he suffered a fractured skull and several broken ribs.⁷⁷ Once news spread to the White House, the Attorney General was forced to act. The Kennedy administration ordered

⁷³ Arsenault, 189-199.

⁷⁴ Ibid, 199.

⁷⁵ Ibid, 201-205.

⁷⁶ Ibid, 211.

⁷⁷ Ibid, 213-220.

600 U.S. Marshals into Alabama to the dismay of Alabama Governor John Patterson.⁷⁸ The pressure applied by the Freedom Riders created a rift between Patterson and the Kennedy administration. By challenging local and state segregation statutes the Freedom Riders forced the Kennedy administration to choose a side on the struggle for civil rights.⁷⁹ On one side was Patterson upholding his state sovereignty, and on the other, was the federal government intervening to protect the constitutional rights of U.S. citizens. Moreover, at the request of Robert Kennedy, the Interstate Commerce Commission, outlawed segregation in interstate travel that took effect on November 1, 1961.

Farmer and the National Action Committee felt CORE was being upstaged by Martin Luther King and others in the civil rights movement.⁸⁰ "Much of Farmer's competitive drive was, of course, directed at King. Still smarting from the SCLC leader's usurpation of the nonviolent movement during the bus boycott" CORE dispatched Farmer and a group of New Orleans CORE members to Montgomery "to share the spotlight."⁸¹ "Lewis, recalled years later, that Farmer began and ended with self-serving pronouncements on CORE's centrality:

It was clear to everyone that he wanted to take the ride back now, when we all knew that without our having picked it up, there would have been no more Freedom Ride. It didn't matter to me at all who got the credit; that wasn't the point. But from where Farmer stood, that seemed to be all that mattered. He

⁷⁸ Meier and Rudwick, 138.

⁷⁹ Arsenault, 5.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Arsenault, 225.

saw this ride in terms of himself. He kept calling it 'CORE's ride,' which amazed everyone.⁸²

It was true that Farmer's inclination was to reassert CORE to the forefront of the Freedom Rides. Farmer admitted in his autobiography that "although I welcomed the intervention of SNCC, a concern burned with me. I could not let CORE's new program slip from its grasp and be taken over by others."⁸³ Many saw garnering national attention as the root of CORE's return to the Freedom Rides, not the cause itself.

On Sunday May 21, 1961, Farmer joined King, the freedom riders, other civil rights leaders and 1500 supporters at the First Baptist Church in Montgomery with the protection of the marshals. However, the marshals were unprepared and undermanned to handle the increasingly hostile mob. Around 10:00 PM, Patterson ordered martial law in the city of Montgomery and dispatched the National Guard.⁸⁴ The National Guard surrounded the church and placed everyone inside under protective custody. Everyone inside was under the control of Patterson and the National Guard but without the intervention, it was very likely the mob would have seized control. It was not until 4:00 AM was the congregation finally evacuated.⁸⁵

On Wednesday, May 23, 1961, after two days of rest and debate about the future of the Freedom Rides, a group of twelve decided to continue to their next stop in Jackson, Mississippi choosing to test Trailways buses. This time, they were heavily defended by the Alabama National Guard. The bus experienced only minor incidents

⁸² Ibid, 249.

⁸³ James Farmer, *Lay Bare the Heart: An Autobiography of the Civil Rights Movement* (New York: Arbor House, 1985), 204.

⁸⁴ Arsenault, 235-240.

⁸⁵ Ibid, 240.

on the way to the border; however, upon reaching it, rumors of a dynamite attack delayed the bus over an hour while National Guardsman investigated the area.⁸⁶ At the same time a second group of fifteen Freedom Riders, including Farmer who reluctantly joined, reached Montgomery to test Greyhound's compliance to the laws as well.⁸⁷ No one, outside the activists, anticipated more Freedom Riders. Shortly after a third group of Riders departed from Atlanta.⁸⁸

As the Trailways Riders safely reached Jackson, they filed into the white waiting room. As police captain J. L. Ray ordered them to move on, the Riders ignored his demand. All twelve Riders were arrested and charged with inciting a riot, breach of the peace, and failure to obey a police officer.⁸⁹ The second group of Riders, that included Farmer, followed a similar pattern that resulted in the arrest of all fifteen Riders. Both groups refused bail with the intention of remaining in jail until Mississippi authorities agreed to recognize the legality of desegregated interstate transit.⁹⁰

The Freedom Rides had grown from a small display of activism to a national movement. Over 360 arrests related to the Freedom Rides were made that summer.⁹¹ The Freedom Rides significantly influenced the development of CORE. For the first time the mass media saw CORE as a major civil rights organization.⁹² Membership rosters exploded, funding rose sharply and chapters popped up all across the country.

⁸⁶ Ibid, 260-265.

⁸⁷ Ibid, 266.

⁸⁸ Ibid, 269.

⁸⁹ Ibid, 271.

⁹⁰ Ibid, 286.

⁹¹ Meier and Rudwick, 140.

⁹² Ibid, 144.

In 1962, CORE reached its peak of 53 chapters. A substantial number of African Americans joined CORE; especially in cities with all black chapters.

Nevertheless, the Freedom Rides were a colossal financial burden on CORE. By the end of July 1961 CORE had spent over \$138,000 on the Rides in bail and legal fees. In an effort to bankrupt CORE, Mississippi authorities ordered all "196 persons released thus far to be arraigned within 10 days."⁹³ In addition, fearing punishment local bonding firms refused to supply bonds to Freedom Riders; facing another \$372,000 in bail that the organization could not afford, CORE borrowed heavily.⁹⁴

National CORE went from raising \$240,000 in the fiscal year of 1960-61 to accumulating \$607,000 in 1961-62, CORE's largest income for any year.⁹⁵ In 1962-63 CORE raised an additional \$520,000. However, their debt also increased. In February of 1962, Farmer sent out a letter announcing "our financial cupboard is bare; today there is only \$2081 in the bank. Unpaid bills total \$25,540."⁹⁶ In the summer of 1962, national CORE had difficulties meeting their payroll expenses and forced the staff to go on half-pay.⁹⁷ Failing to handle their funds properly while not preparing for a future crippled the organization once the funding stopped. The lack of foresight in the organization is especially troubling given the organization's rollercoaster history with activity and funding.

⁹³ Ibid, 142.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid, 149.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

However, the influx of membership also strained CORE. There were too many individuals entering the organization too rapidly and the chapters were not providing the proper training in nonviolent methods. Without this training, these new black members expressed more skepticism of nonviolent methods as well as a yearning for black separatism in the organization. Spurred on by the Black Muslims, Malcolm X, and the emergence of Black Power, CORE experienced the implosion of some chapters due to ideological differences. For example, the Detroit chapter controversy began because of concern the chapter was too white. The chapter divided between the members who either believed CORE should be a blacks only organization, or at least all leadership should be African American and the members who believed CORE should remain integrated with democratic voting. The chapter split as blacks and whites separated into their own groups. In the New Orleans CORE chapter white members quit after interracial dating was banned by African American leaders. Newark and Baltimore CORE both saw “anti-white” debates overwhelm their chapters. National CORE remained unsure how to deal with Black Power and finally attempted to distort the meaning for organizational use. Farmer argued that Black Power meant “building equality and trying to organize the Negro community politically and economically.”⁹⁸ In the Northeast, especially in densely populated urban areas that had a high population of African Americans, Black Power ideology spread rapidly within the local chapters. However, in smaller cities and as the media and other militant organizations utilized a radical definition, the contradictory usage of Black Power only confused CORE

⁹⁸ Singler and others, 196.

members and recruits across the country. Furthermore, the spread of Black Power was also driven by a lack of results at the local level. While the South witnessed advances against Jim Crow and disfranchisement, the local Northern chapters were still inundated with job, housing, and education discrimination. There was a distinct division between the Northern and Southern chapters of CORE regarding the results of the movement. In the South, even the small advancements seemed monumental; however the progress of the civil rights movement had little effect on the North. Northern chapters such as Brooklyn, Harlem, Detroit, and Baltimore are highly reflective of this division. Each of these chapters were driven to militancy because the advancements of the movement did not appease these chapters' memberships.

The chief impetus for black militancy in CORE came from a sense of failure. For instance, after years of minimal success in Brooklyn, fatigue and frustration set in for Brooklyn CORE by 1964. Desiring changes that affected them personally, the Brooklyn chapter elected an entirely new leadership and pushed a far more radical agenda. Their planned demonstrations for the 1964-1965 New York World's Fair became an organizational wide dilemma.⁹⁹ Brooklyn CORE created a plan that would intentionally stall cars on highways and picket subways to limit access to the fair. The "stall-ins" were created to attract attention to the racial discrimination in the urban North as well as to voice displeasure with unfavorable hiring practices at all the pavilions within the fair. Brooklyn CORE leader, Isaiah Brunson, threatened that over 2000 cars "would run out

⁹⁹ It is interesting to note that the 1963 World's Fair also named the Century 21 Exposition in Seattle has no record of discrimination or racism, and there is no record of Seattle CORE investigating or picketing the fair. The 1963 World's Fair theme was space, science, and the future - perhaps the fair was ahead of its time in regard to Civil Rights as well.

of gas on the way to the fair" if the chapter's demands - "integrated crews on all city construction sites, better inner-city housing conditions, total desegregation of public schools, and a citizen-based review board of complains of police brutality" - were not met.¹⁰⁰ The national director of CORE, James Farmer, responded in a newspaper article that the stall-ins would "merely create confusion and thus damage the fight for freedom."¹⁰¹ Farmer suspended Brooklyn CORE and the entire chapter's roster. In a letter to Brooklyn CORE, Farmer wrote "your chapter and all members thereof are immediately ordered to refrain from making public statements and any news releases or taking any actions in the name of CORE."¹⁰² The chapter ignored the demands of the national director and continued their stall-in plans. Other chapters and organizations supported Brooklyn CORE's plans and wrote directly to Farmer himself asking the national organization "to settle the differences with the Brooklyn chapter."¹⁰³ If anything, the suspensions fueled Brooklyn CORE's resolve. Instead of rethinking their strategy, "Brooklyn CORE reveled in their status as a radical chapter."¹⁰⁴ Despite the suspension and protest of the plan by national CORE, the organization could not stop the stall-ins. The suspension was lifted, the stall-ins were executed, and national CORE could act only to limit the damage of the stall-ins. In hope of diluting any negative national press,

¹⁰⁰ Lawrence R. Samuel, *The End of the Innocence: The 1964-1965 New York World's Fair* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2007), 34.

¹⁰¹ *New York Post*, April 10, 1964.

¹⁰² James Farmer, "Letter to Brooklyn CORE," *CORE Papers*.

¹⁰³ Purnell, 423-424.

¹⁰⁴ Purnell, *A Movement Grows in Brooklyn: The Brooklyn Chapter of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and the Northern Civil Rights Movement During the Early 1960s* (PhD. diss. New York University, 2006), 423.

CORE set up more moderate demonstrations inside the fair.¹⁰⁵ However, the stall-ins "were much weaker than police and fair authorities had feared" according to the *Wall Street Journal*.¹⁰⁶ Lack of control over the local chapters was a major issue for national CORE and led to many Northern chapters rejecting nonviolence and embracing militancy. In addition, the summer riots of 1964 and 1965 in New York, New Jersey, Chicago, and California only increased the desire to use retaliatory violence in those regions of the organization.¹⁰⁷

In 1964, Farmer came under scrutiny; his leadership and his marriage with a white woman were targeted by more radical members of the local chapters. When Farmer "suddenly departed for a month-long African trip at the end of 1964, leaving the organization with an acute financial crisis and other unsolved problems," CORE spiraled into a struggle over leadership. The National Action Committee led by Floyd McKissick attacked Farmer and the national office. At the same time the legitimacy of retaliatory violence threatened the nonviolent methods of CORE. With the sudden upsurge in funding that accompanied the popularity of the Freedom Rides, CORE experienced massive membership expansion in 1964. The quick rise in membership was followed by an equally rapid decline in activity and donations that left the organization with a

¹⁰⁵ Purnell, 423.

¹⁰⁶ "Lack of Support for Negro Extremists Shown by Failure of World's Fair 'Stall-In,'" *Wall Street Journal*, April 23, 1964.

¹⁰⁷ Meier and Rudwick, 397.

\$200,000 deficit.¹⁰⁸ The following year, the trend continued adding another \$220,000 to the deficit.¹⁰⁹

Debt hampered the organization as it spiraled back into the ineffectiveness and obscurity of the 1950s. With mounting unhappiness regarding the direction of the organization in national CORE, Farmer stepped down from his position as national director in 1966. Farmer was a brilliant orator, yet he lacked the bureaucratic skills of CORE's previous leader, James Robinson. Before Robinson CORE suffered from inactivity, poor funding and instability. The organization was on the brink of collapse until Robinson turned it around. Under Robinson's leadership the organization's contributors nearly tripled from 4,500 to 12,000; funds grew from \$8,200 yearly in 1955 to \$144,000 in 1961; and the number of chapters quintupled from seven to thirty-five including the eleven pending approval.¹¹⁰ Nonetheless, Robinson came under fire. National Action Committee members argued Robinson's personality impeded CORE in its external relationships; In a letter to the National Action Committee member, Marvin Rich wrote "[Robinson] is not an adequate image of the forceful, aggressive yet responsible organization. He is unable to meet with the leaders of other organizations and represent us. He is inadequate as a public figure in the press or on television and radio."¹¹¹ Soon after the National Action Committee replaced Robinson with Farmer. While a brilliant orator, Farmer lacked the bureaucratic skills of Robinson and CORE rapidly returned to the instability of the 1940s and early 1950s despite the record

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, 335.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, 401.

¹¹⁰ Ibid, 78, 126.

¹¹¹ Rich to Oldham, Nov. 10 1960. CORE Papers.

increases in activity and funding. Farmer may have been exactly what the National Action Committee wanted, however, Robinson was the leader CORE needed.

Farmer would be replaced by separatist proponent Floyd McKissick after McKissick won a twenty person vote (12-8) held by CORE's National Action Committee, the same committee that elected Farmer over Robinson. The election of McKissick was highly criticized by local chapters, with some, rebelling as they had no voice in the decision to elect McKissick. Under McKissick's guidance, the organization shifted in "new direction" to a separatist militant organization. McKissick moved national CORE headquarters to Harlem, then in June at a march in Jackson, Mississippi, he declared "1966 shall be remembered as the year we left our imposed status of Negroes and became *Black Men*... 1966 is the year of the concept of Black Power. The year when black men realized their full worth in society—their dignity and their beauty—and their power—the greatest power on the earth – the power of *right*."¹¹²

The election of McKissick and his first actions as national director disenchanting the white members of the local chapters; they turned away from the organization in droves. With a mounting debt that reached over a million dollars in 1968 and a growing anti-McKissick sentiment in the organization, McKissick knew it was time to leave. He resigned from CORE to found his Soul City project in North Carolina. The Soul City project was an intended multi-racial community, built from the ground up with all the infrastructure to prosper in one area. It was supposed to be a community where one could live without fear or discrimination. This rural utopian society was meant to be an

¹¹² Ibid, 412.

alternative to the overcrowded cities. Despite being well funded, it was ultimately a failure due to poor organization and planning. After McKissick, and a brief interim period by Lincoln Lynch, Roy Innis was selected to assume the role of national director by September of 1968. Shortly after his ascension to power Innis finished what McKissick had started; he declared the Congress of Racial Equality a Black Nationalist Organization. One of his first press releases declared the organization “once and for all... Separatist – a system under which blacks would control their own destiny.”¹¹³ This was the final nail in the coffin for the white members of CORE and for the organization itself. CORE still exists today but only as a shell of its old identity. Since the shift to Black Nationalism the organization has existed in name only. In the words of James Farmer from an interview in 1993, "CORE has no functioning chapters; it holds no conventions, no elections, no meetings, sets no policies, has no social programs and does no fund-raising. In my opinion, CORE is fraudulent."¹¹⁴

¹¹³ Ibid, 424.

¹¹⁴ Nick Charles, “Equal Opportunity Scam: CORE Hustles White Firms With Race,” *Village Voice News*, 2003. <http://www.villagevoice.com/news/0317,charles,43542,1.html> <last accessed August 6, 2011>.

CHAPTER II: SEATTLE CORE “TAKING OFF”

The history of the Seattle chapter of CORE starkly contrasts to the national Congress of Racial Equality. Even though the local affiliate employed the same policies and faced similar problems in raising funds, achieving results with their activism, and a movement towards militancy in Seattle, the national organization the two blazed very different paths. The following chapter explores the early history of Seattle CORE, the impact of the founding members, the first direct action campaign, and a reorganization that set the affiliate up for sustained success into the future.

The efforts by the founding group established Seattle CORE as one of the strongest affiliates in the national organization. Each of these early members were motivated by a common desire: to change the racially divided city of Seattle. Many of the first participants were part of, or leaders in, local civil rights organizations and churches; this previous experience greatly benefited the development of Seattle CORE. In addition, the founding group put an emphasis on African American leadership and involvement that legitimized the chapter in the eyes of the black community. This relationship flourished as Seattle CORE earned a reputation for forcing employers to abandon discriminatory hiring practices in the early 1960s.

Building the Foundation of Seattle CORE

In a chance meeting in May of 1961, four white strangers met during intermission of a showing of the play *Raisin in the Sun*; the four, Ray Cooper, Ken Rose, and Ed and Joan Singler, were moved by the message of hope in the play as well as the events of the Freedom Rides in the South.¹¹⁵ After it concluded they met with one of the actors, Norman Johnson, and the conversation quickly shifted from the play's message to the civil rights movement and the segregation in their hometown of Seattle. The group decided to meet again to discuss what they could do; during that second meeting the Seattle chapter of the Congress of Racial Equality was born. This was not the first time Seattle activists attempted to bring a CORE affiliate to the city. A few years earlier a group led by Don Matson failed to rally enough support to establish a chapter. With the reinvigoration in the civil rights movement driven by the black student demonstrations in the South, Seattle CORE "took off."¹¹⁶ Seeing the walls that were falling in the South, African Americans in Seattle were also more motivated to object to the discrimination in their own city.

Matson was instrumental in establishing Seattle CORE on the second attempt. He brought organizing skills, leadership, and a wide network of contacts to the newly founded chapter. At the time he also led a small committee of Unitarians for Social Justice (USJ); an organization devoted to integration. This committee included Doris Eason, Jean Jones, Mary Barton, and John Cornethan; who all joined Seattle CORE

¹¹⁵ Singler and others, 16.

¹¹⁶ Ibid, 17-18.

that summer.¹¹⁷ Matson recruited heavily for the organization. He first contacted the individuals interested in CORE when he attempted to establish a chapter in 1957. This included some of the most influential members in Seattle CORE's history including Ray Williams, Walt Hundley, and Ivan King, among others.¹¹⁸ These three in particular, played significant leadership roles in the chapter; Williams became the first chairman of Seattle CORE and was instrumental in organizing the chapter at its infancy, Hundley held the position of vice chairman in 1964 and chairman in 1965, and was the chapter's representative on the Central Area Civil Rights Committee, and King, who was on the staff of the Urban League of Metropolitan Seattle, played a major part in the fight against education discrimination. He also wrote the Triad Plan that was presented to the Seattle School Board in 1965 that proposed to end segregation in Seattle schools.¹¹⁹ Moreover, Matson utilized his relationships with local churches to spread information to the black community. The churches would provide some of the strongest support for Seattle CORE. In addition, Matson opened his home to CORE members, and many nights he and other activists toiled in his basement using an old mimeograph machine to create the leaflets and flyers that they would pass out at demonstrations.¹²⁰ From the beginning Matson was an essential member to the development of Seattle CORE.

¹¹⁷ Ibid, 18.

¹¹⁸ Trevor Griffey interview with Ivan King, May 25, 2006, Seattle Civil Rights & Labor History Project <http://depts.washington.edu/civilr/CORE.htm> <last accessed March 3, 2012>.

¹¹⁹ Ibid, 147.

¹²⁰ Ibid, 31.

The first goal of the chapter was to raise the funds necessary to send Ray Cooper to the Jim Crow South to partake in the Freedom Rides.¹²¹ Through their own donations, and using local church connections through Matson, the chapter paid to fly Cooper to New Orleans for his Freedom Rider training. After training Cooper and his fellow Freedom Riders rode a bus to Jackson Mississippi. Upon their arrival they were immediately arrested and sent to Hinds County Jail. Sid Gerber, who helped create the first “Freedom Now” button for Seattle CORE, used those funds along with some of his own personal money to bail Cooper out of jail.¹²²

That July, the group met to establish the bureaucracy of the chapter. First, they elected the officers to fill the four positions of chairman, vice chairman, treasurer and secretary. The group believed African Americans should lead this struggle for their equality and elected Ray Williams as the first chairman of Seattle CORE. Ed Singler was elected the first vice chairman, and also provided legal counsel for the chapter. Norman Johnson was elected the first Treasurer and the chapter also elected Ken Rose as its first secretary. However, Williams who had a full-time job, a family to care for, and was an advisor with several other organizations, stepped down after only three months as chairman, as he could not give the position the attention it required.¹²³ Ed Singler would assume the position until the next elections were held and would be the only white chairman in the history of Seattle CORE. Seattle CORE decided to hold annual elections in November for the officers and no person could retain their position in

¹²¹ Singler and others, 16.

¹²² Thank You Letter from Ray Cooper to Sid Gerber, University of Washington Special Collections, Seattle, Washington. Hereafter cited as Matson Collection.

¹²³ Ibid, 24.

consecutive years. In addition, the chapter added a new position by the next election, assistant secretary to help with the increased work load as the chapter expanded. The five official positions that led the chapter would be recognized as the Executive Committee.

The small group of five that started the campaign to bring a chapter of CORE to Seattle had already reached 30 by the end of July; making Seattle CORE one of the three largest chapters of CORE in the West.¹²⁴ The chapter also setup their mandatory orientations for new members; these training sessions were led by Matson. Once a month the chapter held an orientation meeting and training in nonviolence seminar that were mandatory to partake in any of Seattle CORE's direct action projects. After finishing the required training, and committing to the nonviolent rules of the organization each applicant would have to pass, a two-thirds vote by active members, to be accepted into the chapter. If the applicant's vote passed, they would then choose between becoming an active member or an associate member. Active members were assessed a \$2.00 yearly fee and had the rights to vote on other applicants, vote in the annual elections for officials, and vote on issues in the chapter. Associate members were charged only \$1.00 yearly dues but did not have the ability to vote.¹²⁵

The large membership roster eased the financial burden for Seattle CORE, but the founding group also aggressively attacked fund raising; not only for the chapter but for national CORE as well. On top of the "Freedom Now" buttons they sold and the

¹²⁴ Meier and Rudwick, 150-151.

¹²⁵ Ibid, 25-26.

dues fees they collected, the chapter raised funds by raffling items off such as tickets to the 1962 Seattle World's Fair or professional basketball games. They also received healthy donations from members of the chapter. Ed O'Keefe in particular donated every month; his donations ranged from \$10 to \$150.¹²⁶ At this early stage Seattle CORE had relatively no problems with raising funds. The community, especially local churches, was more than willing to donate to Seattle CORE and the chapter assisted national CORE financially on a monthly basis.

The election of African American members as the leaders of the chapter helped establish a relationship within the Black community. The founding members held a belief that blacks should lead the fight for their own equality; the white members were only there to help. In comparison, national CORE was founded by a majority of white members, and these individuals mostly made up the National Action Committee. National CORE never established the foothold in the black community like other civil rights group, or even, some of CORE's local chapters did.

First Call to Action

Seattle CORE investigated local department stores, banks, and grocery store chains for evidence of hiring discrimination. As part of CORE procedure, each chapter must "investigate the facts carefully to determine whether or not racial injustice existed." Furthermore, direct action would only be taken if no solution could be found through

¹²⁶ Singler and others, 188.

negotiations.¹²⁷ Groups were sent out to survey the number of minority employees and potential discrimination at local businesses; sometimes even asking employees directly about their employer's hiring practices. Safeway Supermarkets emerged as the worst offender, "with three stores in the Central Area that had an 80 percent customer base from the black community, only a handful of employees were black."¹²⁸ In addition, no minority held a managerial position in any of the Supermarkets investigated.¹²⁹ Within the Central Area, only 6 of more than 1,700 Safeway employees in King County, were black.¹³⁰ The Seattle chapter of the NAACP had previously negotiated with Safeway Supermarkets to no benefit, so Seattle CORE decided to take immediate action against the company. Using the local churches to spread the word through the Black community, Seattle CORE hoped for a large turnout at their first direct action campaign.

On a hot day in August 1961, Seattle CORE took their newly created chapter to the predominantly black neighborhoods surrounding Safeway Supermarkets. In each region CORE members went door to door to pass out hundreds of leaflets reminding local black citizens "Don't Shop Where You Can't Work!," "Quit Buying Discrimination," "Return Your Charge Card!" and "Shop in Other Areas Now!"¹³¹ The goal of the leafleting campaign was to force unwanted attention onto Safeway Supermarkets and to persuade the local managers to begin using fair hiring practices. At the bottom of the

¹²⁷ Singler, "Report on Action Project," January 15, 1962, CORE, Matson Collection. Hereafter cited as Singler, "Report on Action Project."

¹²⁸ For a map of the Central Area of Seattle, see Appendix A.

¹²⁹ Singler and others, 37.

¹³⁰ Singler, "Report on Action Project."

¹³¹ "An Appeal to Black and White Alike," *Seattle CORE Papers*, UW Special Collections. Acc #1563, "Employment DEEDS Ephemera." <http://depts.washington.edu/labpics/repository/v/core/> (accessed May 23, 2011).

leaflets, there was a voucher that could be completed and returned back to Seattle CORE for those looking for work. The voucher stated “I am available for supermarket work immediately;” provided mailing directions; space for the person’s name, age, address, phone number and asked if they needed training for this work.¹³² Since the chapter did not have official offices a mailbox was activated to receive the vouchers.

CORE received nearly a hundred returned job vouchers from the Safeway leafleting campaign. Without delay CORE’s Co-chairman, Wallace Johnson, established a program to train those individuals needing work. Johnson created the program to develop the skills necessary to obtain employment and work in a supermarket. There were interview simulations, customer-employee role play, and math building skills related to cashiering.¹³³ The program not only helped job seekers but gave CORE an idea of how qualified the individuals were, and where they were applying. The chapter used these individuals to test the hiring practices of individual stores.

During the ensuing negotiations with Safeway Supermarkets CORE provided the evidence they gathered on the company. Only three stores employed African Americans out of thirty eight in King County, and in those three stores, only six employees were black.¹³⁴ Safeway refuted the statistics arguing that they only hired people who lived close to a store, that many of their locations were in all white neighborhoods, that among black applicants they could not find many qualified

¹³² “Don’t Shop Where You Can’t Work” flier, CORE, Matson Collection.

¹³³ Singler and others, 39.

¹³⁴ Safeway’s Policy of Racial Discrimination,” [October 1961], CORE, Matson Collection.

individuals, that stores were not hiring currently and any recent applicants had not been considered.¹³⁵

As the negotiations stalled, Seattle CORE decided to test the claims made by Safeway Supermarkets as a way to gather more evidence against the company. They sent interview teams to speak with the managers in 25 of the 38 stores to get answers to a specific list of questions. The teams identified themselves as “people engaged in an employment survey” and asked a series of questions relating to the hiring practices that Safeway provided during negotiations. Questions focused on where employees lived, the number of minorities employed by the store, and if they were hiring or had recently hired anyone.¹³⁶ Seattle CORE also staked out the stores to verify the accuracy of the answers they received. After a four week investigation, the organization had the proof they needed to stage demonstrations. The results of their experiment confirmed Seattle CORE’s suspicions, distance from the store had no bearing on employment status. Only six employees were black out of the 581 employees; and most importantly, thirty-one people – all white – had been hired since the negotiations started.¹³⁷

With the evidence in hand, Seattle CORE decided it was time to escalate their campaign against the grocery store chain; and staged their first set of direct action protests. With assistance from the NAACP and local Baptist ministers, CORE spread the word of their upcoming boycott. On the morning of their planned picketing, the

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Singler and others, 41.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

group of participants met at the NAACP office. There the rules were laid out for all the members:

- 1) Do not respond to jeers and insulting remarks – ignore these.
- 2) Those participating in the demonstrations will dress neatly. Women no slacks please.
- 3) pick up any leaflets that are thrown on the ground.
- 4) And finally, “this is a nonviolent demonstration... if you feel at anytime you can no longer remain non-violent, report to the picket captain and excuse yourself from the line immediately.”¹³⁸

Friday October 27 1961, was the first day of the “Selective Buying Campaign.” The group chose to target the Safeway at 23rd and Union. About fifty activists from CORE and the NAACP carried fliers, signs, and sang songs. Very few customers crossed the line and the news quickly spread of the demonstrations. The following day, an unexpected large number of the local black community showed up to boycott. So many came that the demonstration had to be split into two, with a second Safeway Supermarket being targeted on Saturday.¹³⁹ Two days later, Safeway Supermarkets contacted CORE to request immediate resumption of the negotiations. This time Safeway Supermarkets not only agreed to hire black workers, but also opened a branch employment office at the Safeway Store to help train and recruit black workers. Within two months Safeway had hired 22 black employees, with many outside the Central Area.¹⁴⁰ Seattle CORE’s first direct action project was a major success, not only for the

¹³⁸ "CORE Rules and Procedures for Picketing," UW Special Collections. Acc #1563, "Employment DEEDS Ephemera." <http://depts.washington.edu/labpics/repository/v/core/> (accessed May 23, 2011). Hereafter known as Seattle CORE Papers.

¹³⁹ Singler and others, 44.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid, 45.

newly employed black citizens of Seattle. It also showed the members of the chapter exactly how powerful nonviolence could be.

In December, the chapter wrote a constitution and bylaws, actions which were necessary for completion of their application to obtain recognition as an official CORE chapter. Even though they had already begun nonviolent activism against Safeway and financed two Freedom Riders, it was not unusual for a chapter to be active while it was pending national approval. At the same time Seattle CORE was awaiting official recognition, eight other chapters were under review and six of those were already actively participating in the civil rights movement under the name of CORE.¹⁴¹ The Seattle activists launched the *CORElator*, a monthly newsletter designed to keep members up to date on their CORE activities. The *CORElator* would be produced by the secretary and the newly added position of assistant secretary. It was not until February of 1962, that the chapter was officially recognized by national CORE as one of its affiliates.¹⁴²

That same month, Seattle CORE was selected to host the *Freedom Ride* film. The documentary captured the journey of Freedom Riders and would be screened across the state. Ray Cooper would travel with the film and retell his own Freedom Rides story at each showing. The chapter received a portion of the ticket income as

¹⁴¹ Meier and Rudwick, 150.

¹⁴² Singler and others, 24.

well as many donations at the showings and the local publicity helped increase membership.¹⁴³

Seattle CORE Targets Employment

Seattle CORE focused solely on employment discrimination for the first two years of its existence. After Safeway the chapter targeted Lucky and Foodland grocery stores along with The Atlantic and Pacific Tea Company, better known as A&P Supermarkets, with varying degrees of success. With each enterprise the chapter gained valuable experience that would enhance their influence in the future; however, it was a small group of members doing most of the work. Despite having over fifty active members, only a handful knew the elements of negotiations and the effort it took behind the scenes to run the chapter.

In May of 1962 Seattle CORE began negotiations with Lucky's Supermarkets that went through November. The negotiations once again proved unsuccessful. Following the same investigative and training tactics that worked so well in preparation for their first boycott, Seattle CORE launched another Selective Buying Campaign. On the second day of picketing the store manager came out and told the picket captain that Lucky's hiring policy would change. In less than one day Seattle CORE produced the results months of negotiations did not. In one month the number of black employees

¹⁴³ Ibid, 27-28.

went from five to eleven, and within ten months, Lucky's increased that total to fourteen.¹⁴⁴

There were two factors prohibiting Seattle CORE from quickly organizing against many grocery stores. First, the chapter used only a handful of trusted members comprised mostly of the founding members and elected officers to negotiate with companies. At times Seattle CORE was in negotiations with up to fifteen businesses at once.¹⁴⁵ Second, the chapter faced deceptive tactics by the employers. CORE investigators showed that Safeway blatantly lied about a policy of only hiring individuals who lived nearby as well as claims that they were not hiring at the time of negotiations. Other supermarkets gave in during negotiations just to rid themselves of Seattle CORE; then resumed their discriminatory practices. In the spring of 1962, the chapter began negotiations with A&P Supermarkets. At the time the A&P had zero African American employees out of over four hundred in the Seattle area.¹⁴⁶ Without any direct action, A&P agreed to hire black employees; there were three immediate hires and promises to continue this practice. After the initial hires A&P did not live up to the agreement and, over the next few months, the grocery chain returned to their discriminatory methods; no new blacks were hired for the next six months. Seattle CORE pressured A&P in ongoing negotiations and A&P hired more black workers.¹⁴⁷ But once again, after the initial hires, no more black workers were employed. A year after negotiations began, the chapter decided to take action against A&P based on the grocery chain's continued

¹⁴⁴ "Survey of Seattle Lucky and Foodland Stores," August 19, 1963, *Seattle CORE Collection*.

¹⁴⁵ Singler and others, 49.

¹⁴⁶ "A&P Report," March 1962, CORE Papers.

¹⁴⁷ *CORElator*, October 1962, CORE Papers.

practice designed to placate CORE negotiators without substantive change.¹⁴⁸ After the first set of demonstrations A&P once again negotiated and hired two black employees and agreed to continue; once again they did not fulfill their side of the agreement after the initial hires.

In December 1963, A&P came to another agreement with Seattle CORE. This time, with pressure from local newspapers and significant publicity including a press release by A&P committing publicly to an agreement, Seattle CORE believed the settlement would be adhered to by the company. According to the *Seattle Times*, the agreement between A&P and Seattle CORE was a “major advance toward equal job opportunities” and it “assures that jobs and advancement will continue to be available to the qualified person, regardless of race color or creed.”¹⁴⁹ This agreement did not end the discriminatory hiring practices of the A&P.

Targeting employment was a crucial move for Seattle CORE. The chapter showed the black community their efforts were not in vain. Conversely, national CORE targeted elusive goals or challenged national laws that made the impact of the national organization unclear. Blacks outside the South saw more benefits through the actions of local groups. Albeit very minor, the gains made by Seattle CORE versus job discrimination had a significant impact in the local black community.

¹⁴⁸ *CORElator*, March 1963, CORE Papers.

¹⁴⁹ *Seattle Times*, “Food Chain, CORE Reach Job Accord,” December 20, 1963, CORE Papers.

Reorganization

In 1963, newly elected chairman, Reginald Alleyne, acted to improve the chapter.¹⁵⁰ Alleyne, was a graduate from Howard University who had studied labor law and was a very active member in the chapter. By Seattle's membership had grown to over one hundred members establishing the chapter as the largest on the west coast. Alleyne recognized the chapter needed to find a quick and fair way to mobilize the chapter's efforts, improve their policies to handle the increased membership, and lower the workload on the officers. To this point, all decisions were based on a majority vote from active members; however, this process was time-consuming and sometimes delayed the handling of pressing issues. The chapter established an Emergency Committee; a group of fifteen consisting of all five officers and ten elected active members with the power to dictate policy. The group met weekly in addition to the regular monthly chapter meetings.¹⁵¹ The chapter expanded the number of negotiators to spread out the workload. The formal Negotiation Committee led by Walt Hundley and Jean Adams established negotiation criteria and addressed workload issues.¹⁵²

The Negotiation Committee first established the rules for negotiations. Negotiation teams would consist of three to four individuals who had an individuals with defined roles.. The spokesman was the leader of the group and was required to be African American; the secretary, recorded the facts and figures of the negotiations; the

¹⁵⁰ Letter regarding 1962 Annual Elections to James McCain from Seattle CORE, December, 1963. Reel 20:167, Series III, Addendum to CORE Papers.

¹⁵¹ Singler and others, 44.

¹⁵² Ibid, 48.

third member's role was to support the points made by the spokesman with the evidence accumulated by the chapter, and the fourth member if necessary was an expert on the subject at hand.¹⁵³ The negotiating teams could not make the final decision on negotiations. This was left up to the elected officers known as the Executive Committee. Adams established the documentation guidelines for keeping records and communication. Hundley, who acted as spokesperson in several negotiations, created a training program that would teach CORE members how to properly negotiate. This training simulated a series of negotiations, in which individuals served on a negotiating team, each member gained experience in all three team roles. This program quickly provided the chapter with over thirty negotiators and enabled Seattle CORE to actively negotiate with several organizations simultaneously.¹⁵⁴

Building a strong foundation and establishing relationships in the black community were key to the success of Seattle CORE. The relationships built with local churches paid great dividends to the chapter. Not only did the church leaders identify problems in the black community and assist with negotiations, the churches also provided a stream of membership, funding and an open channel of communication with the black community. Having the local church leaders working actively with Seattle CORE legitimized the organization within the black community. This relationship drove more black members to Seattle CORE and even though the chapter made only modest strides towards equality, the black community saw their effort result in new jobs.

¹⁵³ Ibid, 49.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid, 149.

Seattle CORE first targeted employment discrimination; starting with Safeway Supermarkets in 1961. Following the strict guidelines of the "Rules for Action" laid out by national CORE, the local affiliate confirmed suspected discrimination. With proof in hand, the chapter reached out to negotiate; however, neither grocery chain was willing to change their hiring policies. Seattle CORE leapt into action with boycotts and picketing that forced the supermarket chains to negotiate. The negotiations resulted in token hires to appease the chapter and stop the activism against their stores.

By the end of 1963 Seattle CORE was well established in the black community. Their exploits in assisting African Americans in training and obtaining jobs were well known. They had a large membership of black members, one of the healthiest of all CORE affiliates, and the chapter made extra efforts to have African Americans at the forefront of the organization in various leadership roles. The reorganization of the chapter enabled Seattle CORE to handle their growing membership roster and further expansion of their activism against other aspects of discrimination in the city. While employment was always the main priority, the chapter ventured into housing and education discrimination in the upcoming years.

CHAPTER III: DECEPTION, DEMOCRACY, DISSENSION, AND DEEDS

After setting up the chapter for continued expansion and sustained success, Seattle CORE moved into a period of ambiguity. This era witnessed many highs and lows for the civil rights group. First, with a blossoming relationship in the black community, the affiliate reached a peak in membership that made the chapter one of the most active in all of CORE. In addition, Seattle CORE had one of the healthiest white to black ratios in the organization. Yet, when the local affiliate ventured into housing discrimination cases, they were overwhelmed by the discriminatory practices of realtors and the Seattle Real Estate Board.

After failing to achieve any progress in the housing sector, the chapter returned to the fight against employment discrimination; and in doing so, they founded a new, highly successful, method to achieve results against discriminatory grocery stores. To stop deceptive tactics normally employed by the grocery chains, the local chapter invented a tactic they called the "Shop-in" that changed the dynamic of the negotiations and forced Safeway and Tradewell to adjust their hiring practices. After the grocery store chains, the chapter set their sights on ending the de facto segregation created by Seattle's housing situation and transforming the racially divided downtown area of the city. The chapter created their largest and most ambitious project, the Drive for Equal Employment in Downtown Seattle (DEEDS). However, by the beginning of 1965 internal turmoil and a colossal failure of the chapter's pet project had overwhelmed the chapter.

Targeting Housing Discrimination

After solely focusing on employment discrimination, Seattle CORE looked at the housing segregation within the city. This started in the summer of 1963 as Seattle CORE established a Housing Committee, led by Joan Singler.¹⁵⁵ At this time, Seattle neighborhoods were heavily segregated. The white neighborhoods, consisting of nearly all of the homes outside the Central Area, refused to sell or lease to potential black buyers no matter how qualified they were. Seattle CORE believed the realtors rather than the sellers dictated selling practices in the white neighborhoods, even more so than the sellers. However, the Housing Committee had to prove this under the guidelines of national CORE's "Rules for Action."

The Housing Committee devised simple tests to evaluate the realtors. Seattle CORE sent out one black couple, who inquired about sale or lease, tried to arrange a showing, inquired about pricing, and established their interest in acquiring a property. Later that day, Seattle CORE would send out a white couple to do the same. In each case the realty company had signed an agreement with the State Board Against Discrimination promising that their company would not use discriminatory practices. The Housing Committee's experiments found the discrimination they expected. The committee conducted tests from May 25, 1963 to October 20 of the same year.¹⁵⁶ In every case the black couple could not view the home they desired or they were quoted a significantly higher price than the white couple. Sometimes the black couple was told

¹⁵⁵ Singler and others, 107.

¹⁵⁶ CORE Housing Committee, "Report on Housing Discrimination by Real Estate Industry" October 1963, Addendum to CORE Papers. Hereafter cited as Report on Housing Discrimination.

the house had been sold already, only to have the white couple be shown the home hours later. Even more shocking were the ways the companies mistreated the black couple. Some of the companies closed their offices as the black couple approached, or did not show up for appointments leaving the couple waiting for hours.¹⁵⁷ In addition, the Housing Committee discovered similar tactics were used when they tested apartment leasing. CORE documented their testing and sent copies of their report to the Seattle City Council, the Washington State Board Against Discrimination, and federal, state, and local government officials. The chapter received no response from any of these governmental agencies.¹⁵⁸

CORE decided to take the matter into their own hands. In July 1963, they launched "Operation Windowshop." The idea was simple; black couples interested in purchasing a home would visit "open houses" outside the Central Area.¹⁵⁹ To promote the idea, CORE used the same tactics they had utilized when rallying against employment discrimination; spread the word through the local churches and other civil rights organizations, as well as, initiate a leafleting campaign in the black neighborhoods in Seattle.

CORE drew so much attention to Operation Windowshop that they were "shocked" by what would happen next.¹⁶⁰ On the planned weekend for Operation Windowshop, the real estate industry in Seattle shut down. Real estate agencies

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Singler and others, 109.

¹⁵⁹ Operation Windowshop Meeting Notice, July, 1962, Seattle Civil Rights and Labor History Collection.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid, 111.

closed for the weekend and open houses were canceled. Even more shocking, the actions was taken on the instructions of the Seattle Real Estate Board, which also flooded the *Seattle Times* with ads against the demonstration.¹⁶¹ One ad claimed that sole purpose was to “disrupt and invade the homes of peaceful citizens.”¹⁶² With Operation Windowshop thwarted, the Housing Committee attempted to open negotiations with the Seattle Real Estate Board. Seattle CORE recruited some allies in the NAACP and from local churches to assist. However, the Seattle Real Estate Board responded “...since there was no problem and no discrimination by realtors, there would be no point in meeting.”¹⁶³

Already embroiled in the picketing of A&P stores, Seattle CORE tried a more political approach to address housing discrimination. On two separate occasions CORE presented evidence to the Citizens’ Advisory Committee, an ordinance was put to vote that would penalize realtor companies found guilty of discrimination. An “Open Housing Ordinance” was passed and scheduled to be placed on the ballot for the next general election. However, Seattle CORE quickly found itself on the defensive. The Seattle Real Estate Board distributed flyers that claimed the ordinance would create forced housing if passed.¹⁶⁴ Realty agencies played on fears that property values would drop and the Apartment Operators Association “threatened a criminal record for any landlord

¹⁶¹ Report on Housing Discrimination.

¹⁶² “Nonwhites Will Repeat Realty Search,” *Seattle Times*, July 28, 1963, CORE Papers.

¹⁶³ Singler and others, 114.

¹⁶⁴ Seattle Real Estate Board leaflet, “Before You Vote... What about Forced Housing?” CORE Matson Collection.

who rented ‘to a person of your choice.’”¹⁶⁵ Spurred on by the fear campaigns, Seattle voters defeated the ordinance by a two to one margin on March 10, 1964.¹⁶⁶

Seattle CORE’s overall progress was slow to say the least. A handful of jobs here and there at local grocery stores barely scratched the surface of employment discrimination in Seattle. Their Open Housing Ordinance was defeated by the residents of Seattle. While most were happy that progress was being made, the frustration and a feeling of ineffectiveness began to creep into the chapter. Members expected far more results than they achieved and worried that, at the rate they were going, “...it would take 700 years for Negroes to secure jobs” at a percentage equal to white workers.¹⁶⁷ The failure of the Open Housing Ordinance only added to the unrest overtaking the chapter and Seattle CORE would never focus on housing discrimination again. The unhappiness within the organization boiled over in the summer of 1964.

Shop-in with Seattle CORE

The struggle with the A&P returned in March of 1964. The same old cycle had continued and Seattle CORE, fed up with the lies of the A&P negotiators, decided to resume direct action protests by March. This time would be different; they were going to do something that would force the A&P to make substantial changes in their hiring practices. Seattle CORE also wanted to make a bigger statement than their previous

¹⁶⁵ Singler and others, 122.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid, 123.

¹⁶⁷ CORElator, November 1964, CORE Papers.

boycotts. Their brainstorming produced an initiative they called a “shop-in.” The shop-in placed activists inside the store as well as on the streets. Their aim was to slow down the business of the A&P and hurt the company in a way that would be noticeable.

Some Seattle CORE members worried about the shop-ins, as they were more aggressive than prior direct action. The activists anticipated hostility from employees and even other shoppers. To combat this, the project required special training to prepare for the potential for violent responses. The chapter decided to train enough members so they could grind business to a halt for hours and every activist had to partake in the extensive nonviolent training session.

Seattle CORE also set some guidelines for the shop-in; they wanted to remain courteous to the regular shoppers and they did not allow perishable items to be put in the carts. If someone broke an item, they had to pay for it.¹⁶⁸ The chapter did not want the shop-in to look like vandalism with the destruction of A&P’s merchandise. Their goal was to frustrate A&P employees, educate shoppers and turn away potential customers who saw the demonstration underway.

Seattle CORE led successful shop-ins at three different A&P locations. The demonstration was simple yet effective. A large group of Seattle CORE members loaded up shopping carts with non-perishable items, and proceeded to the checkout counter. After the cashier rang them out, the activist informed the clerk that “they did not want the groceries and were not going to shop at the A&P because of its

¹⁶⁸ Singler and others, 57.

discriminatory hiring practices.”¹⁶⁹ What seemed to be an extra busy day, turned into a nightmare for the grocery store. Checkout lines backed up into the aisles with a mix of demonstrators and real customers. Rows of carts full of merchandise lined the front of the store as A&P employees were too busy to put them away. At every checkout lane cashiers frantically tried to keep up with what looked like long lines of shoppers with full carts. Real customers had difficulty even securing an empty cart for shopping and many left without making a purchase.¹⁷⁰

The A&P Shop-in demonstrates a change in Seattle CORE. Frustrated with A&P’s deceptive negotiations, the shop-in was far more radical than previous protests. There was nothing the chapter could do if A&P agreed to changes during negotiations made a small gesture then returned to their old discriminatory practices; once an agreement was made and A&P went through with the hiring of black workers, CORE had to relent on their direct action campaigns. Thus, Seattle CORE realized they needed to do something significant to scare the company, and the shop-ins did just that. The back-and-forth negotiations that had lasted over two years but finally came to end with the shop-in demonstrations and cost A&P Supermarkets over \$4,000 a week.¹⁷¹ A&P agreed to live up to the previous terms established in the last set of negotiations and within four days they hired six black employees.¹⁷² The shop-ins in March and April were the last activism Seattle CORE would need to use against the A&P. Over the next

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ *CORElator*, November 1963, CORE Papers.

¹⁷² *CORElator*, April 1964, CORE Papers.

months A&P changed their hiring practices and African American workers could be found at all fifteen of their store locations in the Seattle area.¹⁷³

A&P Supermarkets were not the only grocery store to face the shop-in demonstrations. Two Tradewell Supermarkets locations also faced Seattle CORE's new shop-in tactic in July of 1964. The first occurred on July 1st. Activists inside the store refused to pay for shopping carts full of goods, while Seattle CORE members on the outside passed out leaflets explaining the circumstances that had produced the shop-in. Flyers read "Seattle CORE has been negotiating with Tradewell for over two years... CORE knows of qualified Negro applicants who have applied at Tradewell and have not been hired when openings were available... Token Hiring is Not Enough, Support Equal Job Opportunity."¹⁷⁴ A week later on July 18, Tradewell hired ten black workers.¹⁷⁵ The chapter announced the end of the boycott against Tradewell Stores on July 30th.¹⁷⁶

While the shop-ins against the A&P and Tradewell successfully forced a change in two discriminatory businesses; they also had a negative effect on the chapter. The shop-ins emboldened some members after they witnessed the immediate impact of a more aggressive approach had on companies. It became difficult to maintain investigation and negotiation tactics prior to active demonstration as some of the newer

¹⁷³ Singler and others, 59.

¹⁷⁴ Flyer advocating boycott of Tradewell Stores Inc., July 11, 1964 (written in pencil on flyer), CORE Collection, Accession 1563-1, University of Washington Libraries, Special Collection Division, "Tradewell Stores Inc. Clippings and Ephemera." <http://depts.washington.edu/labpics/repository/v/core/> (accessed May 23, 2011).

¹⁷⁵ *CORElator*, August 1964, CORE Papers.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

members felt the discrimination was too obvious to spend time investigating. With many members attracted to Seattle CORE due to “dramatic nightly portrayals of racial injustice;” the new wave of members were not as disciplined as the first members of the chapter despite the training in nonviolence.¹⁷⁷ One Seattle CORE member said the chapter “was growing faster than we can assimilate the numerous capable new people and ideas and is becoming a big structure.”¹⁷⁸ Even with the monumental passing of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 on July 1st and the success with the shop-ins, some of the African American members of the chapter were not seeing the results they expected. These members of Seattle CORE desired a more militant approach and some wished for separation from white activists. During the spring and summer of 1964, these members made an attempt to take over the chapter.

Dissension

Between the shop-ins, Seattle CORE began picketing Picture Floor Plans, a real estate company based in the city. During these demonstrations, a group of new Seattle CORE members violated the CORE Rules for Action. Longtime CORE members registered complaints that this group ignored the mandatory check-in with the picket captains, and refused to follow directions. Instead of peacefully demonstrating, they aggressively provoked reactions, engaged in verbal arguments, and confronted Picture Floor Plans employees. Led by six members of Seattle CORE including the assistant

¹⁷⁷ Singler and others, 178.

¹⁷⁸ Meier and Rudwick, 226.

secretary, the dissenting group was called “The Faction.”¹⁷⁹ In *Seattle in Black and White*, Singler, Durning, Valentine, and Adams wrote "members of the Faction seemed to need to prove their commitment by lengthy picketing, sometimes lasting all day, in contrast to the more usual two or three hour shifts—commendable dedication but with the potential for escalating tensions.”¹⁸⁰

Throughout the summer, multiple complaints were lodged against the Faction members:

- At a Picture Floor Plans demonstration, “Faction members... refused to follow instructions... For example, A. Bodin and C. Howlett returned again and again to handing out leaflets in the midst of Aurora traffic after W. Hundley and B. Valentine had repeatedly instructed them to cease this dangerous practice.”
- “During the Tradewell shop-in... A. Bodin and I. Bodin both disobeyed... instructions against taking perishable and breakable items. This behavior was repeated after the authorized project leader, W. Hundley, called the group together and went over the instructions again.”
- “Last Saturday afternoon... new people joined the line [who] shared the philosophy of this questionable group...With their addition the composition of the line changed dramatically from an orderly peaceful line to a raucous, sauntering, casual looking line... They in effect ‘took over’ and the entire tone of the demonstration was changed. Several people expressed their concern to me over the underlying tone of violence in the chants and shouts.”
- Malicious and vulgar slogans, such as ‘let them see my backside’ were repeatedly sung or chanted during the picketing of Picture Floor Plans offices. This practice continued after it was pointed out that such behavior is a violation of the Rules for Action... engaging in this behavior were E. Fusco, M. Howard, I. Bodin, J. Howlett, D. Paul, K. Cooper, and R. Sherman.
- “They also share an attitude of provocation. They seem to hope something will happen. They are excited by the sight of police cars or policemen and react in a challenging or chip on the shoulder manner. It is a thrill-seeking attitude, as though they hoped to become heroes or martyrs in the movement.”¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁹ Singler and others, 178-179.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid, 179.

¹⁸¹ Ibid, 179.

This behavior was not the only issue with the Faction members. The group attempted to undermine CORE leadership and recruit members to their side for an impending takeover. In the invitation to the special Meeting to be held on Monday August 24, 1964, the Faction's claims were laid out for all members to see.¹⁸² They listed six complains about the Seattle CORE Executive Committee:

1. The Executive Committee conceals from the membership information received from the CORE national office.
2. The Executive Committee prevents the group from engaging in direct action.
3. The Executive Committee foisted a compromised agreement with Tradewell on the membership.
4. The Executive Committee kept the resignation of the Negotiations chairman a secret in order to avoid making a new appointment.
5. The CORE Leadership, especially the chairman and Vice-chairman are too "responsible": as they have jobs, families and homes, and are thus afraid to engage in direct action. CORE really needs – they say – negro leaders who have NO jobs so that they can be truly militant.
6. The Executive Committee has secret meetings and exercises illegal power to start or stop or frustrate direct action projects or proposals.¹⁸³

The meeting would "discuss in the open, divisive and derogatory allegations and activities within the chapter by certain members."¹⁸⁴

After the Seattle Real Estate Board levied charges against the Faction members, Seattle CORE leadership limited itself to "one picket per business establishment against Picture Floor Plans Real Estate Dealers as a temporary injunction."¹⁸⁵ However, national CORE did not punish the chapter for any wrongdoing; in fact the national organization rarely punished local chapters for any infractions upon the Rules for Action.

¹⁸² Invitation: "Special Meeting regarding Dissension," August 20, 1964. Addendum to CORE Papers.

¹⁸³ Special Meeting Notice, August 20 1964, Addendum to CORE Papers. Hereafter cited as Dissension Meeting Notice.

¹⁸³ Singler and others, 181.

¹⁸⁴ Dissension Meeting Notice.

¹⁸⁵ Letter from Seattle CORE to James McCain, September 30, 1964, Addendum to CORE Papers.

All Seattle CORE members were invited to the special meeting on August 24, to hear both sides from the Faction and Executive Committee; and afterward the chapter would need to decide on how to move forward. Six members, David Paul, Judy Esparza, Aaron Bodin, Mona Howard, Charles Howlett, and Richard Cole, among others were called into question by Seattle CORE leaders. The meeting was “extremely emotional” with each side confronting the other.¹⁸⁶ Some members stepped forward to confirm allegations made against the Faction. After hours of intense debate, the meeting ended with five of the members of the faction leaving CORE to form their own organization, and the remaining members agreeing to adhere to CORE principles.¹⁸⁷

The dissension illustrates the importance of nonviolent training and the belief in nonviolence by the members of the Seattle chapter. Only five of over two hundred members decided to leave the organization. The vast majority backed the leadership, the Executive Committee, and the nonviolent methods that Seattle CORE stood for. Seattle CORE moved forward from this, strengthened and united. All members once again shared a common goal of ridding the city of discrimination through nonviolence.

Seattle CORE is the only case of a chapter overcoming the desire for militancy in the organization. Chapters in the North including Brooklyn, Baltimore, Harlem, Cleveland, and Philadelphia all saw similar revolts that led to a more militant doctrine as early as 1964. Internal strife caused the Detroit chapter to implode completely. In addition, chapters across the country witnessed a dramatic drop in white membership

¹⁸⁶ Singler and others, 181.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid, 181.

and high racial disparities establishing an environment much more susceptible to Black Nationalism. For example, by early 1965 the San Francisco chapter evolved into 80% black membership with all leadership roles being held by black members. White activists did not stop fighting for civil rights, but they moved onto other areas of activism that were not related to racial discrimination. Frustration with local failures also added to the turmoil of the organization. In national CORE similar wrangling over the black/white issues and CORE's internal structure handcuffed the organization.¹⁸⁸ Seattle CORE exhibited a unique ability to overcome these problems that overwhelmed the rest of organization.

DEEDS

While the dissenting group did not take over, they did influence members of the chapter. Even the Executive Committee openly admitted Seattle CORE wanted to do more than the modest gains they made thus far. With the passing of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 in July, employment discrimination was banned in the United States. However, very little had changed in hiring practices in Seattle. These factors propelled the chapter to take on the largest project in Seattle CORE history, one that would make the impact that they were seeking to make. That is when the Drive for Equal Employment in Downtown Seattle (DEEDS) was born.

¹⁸⁸ Meier and Rudwick, 390.

First, Seattle CORE would investigate. Dr. Charles Valentine, a faculty member in anthropology at the University of Washington, joined Seattle CORE in the early 1960s. Under his direction, a four phase study consisting of over thirty Seattle CORE activists, generated a seventy-five page report on the employment discrimination in downtown Seattle. The phases included a retail employment study, a survey of private offices in eight major office buildings, a survey of all downtown government workers at the federal, state, and county offices, and finally a customer survey of all retail stores observing the ethnicity of each shopper.¹⁸⁹ The report claimed that “negroes hold approximately 8,400 jobs in the Seattle Metropolitan Area, whereas if they were employed in proportion to their numbers their share would be approximately 10,500 paid positions.” The report goes on “This racial deficit of more than 2,000 jobs also reflects the fact that unemployment has steadily remained, over a good many years, twice as high among Seattle Negroes as for the general population of the city.”¹⁹⁰ Blacks accounted for less than 3.5% of jobs in downtown Seattle, and the vast majority were menial labor positions.¹⁹¹

Seattle CORE set a lofty goal with DEEDS, the creation 1200 new jobs for African Americans in downtown Seattle by early 1965 (or 300 jobs per month).¹⁹² Seattle CORE recruited from every organization with whom they had a previous

¹⁸⁹ Rachel Smith, “CORE’s Drive for Equal Employment in Downtown Seattle, 1964,” http://depts.washington.edu/civilr/core_deeds.htm#_ednref17 <accessed August 22, 2011>.

¹⁹⁰ “Fact Sheet on national and Local CORE” (August 1964), Seattle CORE Papers, UW Special Collections. Acc #1563, “Employment DEEDS Ephemera.” <http://depts.washington.edu/labpics/repository/v/core/> (accessed May 23, 2011).

¹⁹¹ Charles A. Valentine, “DEEDS Background and Basis: A Report on Research Leading to the Drive for Equal Employment in Downtown Seattle,” October 1964, Addendum to CORE Papers, 2.

¹⁹² Ibid, 5.

connection with for this monumental task. The NAACP, Seattle urban League, Greater Seattle Council of Churches, Catholic Interracial Council, Unitarians for Social Justice, Baptist Ministers Alliance, and the Central Area Committee on civil rights all committed to the DEEDS project.¹⁹³

Valentine's research also showed that normal turnover opened about 5,350 jobs per year.¹⁹⁴ Seattle CORE's focus would be on these jobs. They did not need companies to hire additional employees to meet their goal, they only needed to fill cyclical openings with qualified African American workers. To match qualified workers with the right openings, negotiators informed the companies about the Urban League Job Line. The Seattle Chamber of Commerce pledged to hold a Jobs Fair in October, assist in connecting companies with the Job Line, and open an Equal Opportunity Centers that would serve as another method for qualified black workers to find job opportunities. At the same time, Seattle CORE members prepared for direct action. By September, they were holding neighborhood meetings to inform the black community about DEEDS and they were already leafleting the black communities to spread the word.¹⁹⁵

In October, things began to fall apart. The Chamber of Commerce failed to come through on their promises. First, the Jobs Fair was postponed indefinitely due to lack of employer response.¹⁹⁶ Secondly, the Equal Opportunity Centers that were opened, did

¹⁹³ Smith.

¹⁹⁴ Singler and others, 79.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

not provide access to job openings, and CORE members saw them merely as counseling centers. Seattle CORE along with some of the organizations contributing to the DEEDS project held a downtown nonviolent direct action boycott on the day the fair was supposed to be held – the NAACP and Urban League declined to participate.¹⁹⁷ The boycott's purpose was to divert money from the downtown businesses to other neighborhoods. In this regard, the boycott was successful as companies witnessed a large decline in business according to the Federal Reserve Bank report.¹⁹⁸

Nevertheless, DEEDS's only action was a boycott of the entire downtown area. The Chamber of Commerce estimated that one hundred to two hundred new jobs had been offered to African Americans during the DEEDS campaign, a figure that does not take into account any blacks who may have been hired without the DEEDS campaign. DEEDS fell short of the goal of 1,200 set by the organization in October. In the February 1965 *CORElator*, Valentine argued that the community response “produced much evidence that employment remains the civil rights issue which interests Seattle Negroes most.”¹⁹⁹ The organization would continue tackling employment discrimination yet the failure of DEEDS raised many questions. Could Seattle CORE count on the other civil rights organizations that were allies in the past? Could the chapter trust organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce who all but reneged on their promises to support the campaign? Could the Seattle chapter produce more results other than a

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid, 81

¹⁹⁹ *CORElator*, February, 1965.

handful of hires here and there? What type of effect would the events over the summer followed by the failure with DEEDS have on the chapter?

This period of time was a turbulent era for Seattle CORE. It witnessed the chapter reach over 200 members, one of the largest active rosters in all of CORE; invent a revolutionary tactic – the Shop-in – that earned immediate results and put fear into companies who did not change their discriminatory practices; and they finally won battles against the A&P and Tradewell grocery chains who had been breaching their agreements with Seattle CORE for over two years. However, the Seattle community rejected their first and only foray into housing discrimination rejected by the Seattle community and the chapter also experienced dissension when small portion of their membership refused to follow the Rules for Action and attempted a hostile takeover of the Executive Committee and chapter leadership; and they ended the year with the failed DEEDS project – their largest effort to change employment discrimination in the city. National CORE as well as other local affiliates also faced similar issues. However, what broke the rest of the organization, only strengthened Seattle CORE. Even though their pet project failed, Seattle CORE showed its commitment to nonviolence and changing the city as they continued forward to target taxi cab companies, and trade unions in the chapter's final years.

CHAPTER IV: TAXI CABS, SCHOOLS AND THE DEATH OF CORE

Unlike many of the other local chapters in the Congress of Racial Equality, the failure of a pet project did not destroy the Seattle affiliate. Instead, Seattle CORE continued to move forward after DEEDS to focus on the discriminatory hiring practices of local taxi cab companies and trade unions. In addition, the chapter also ventured into education discrimination which resulted from a de facto segregation due to the housing situation within the city. After the Seattle Public School Board rejected proposals to realign the school zones, Seattle CORE devised a highly popular yet highly controversial boycott that would remove children from public schools and came under fire for promoting truancy.

As Seattle CORE moved forward, the national organization collapsed. Chapter 4 examines the final years of Seattle CORE and the effect the Black Power Movement had on the civil rights movement and in National CORE. It becomes apparent that Seattle CORE's strengths that led to progress against Seattle area discrimination and their ability to push forward and overcome the desire for militancy that plagued Northern chapters of CORE were also the main causes for the disintegration of the national CORE as a leading civil rights organization. Poor leadership, disorganization, and fragmentation led to inactivity, massive debt, and a fatal decision that destroyed the Congress of Racial Equality.

Taxi Cab Companies

A 1964 study by the Washington State Board against Discrimination on the Taxi Cab Companies in Seattle found that racial discrimination was rampant in the transportation business. The Yellow Cab Company, the Farwest Cab Company, and the Graytop Cab Company were all investigated. The Yellow Cab Company employed 35 black drivers of their 300 total or 11.7%.²⁰⁰ The Farwest Cab Company employed zero black drivers with 250 employed drivers, and the Graytop Cab Company employed zero black drivers with 130 drivers.²⁰¹ The president of Farwest Cab Company, Fred Hosking, argued that white passengers would refuse to get in a cab behind a black driver.²⁰² Once again Seattle CORE decided to take direct action against Farwest and Graytop Cab Companies, however, the chapter would need to find a creative way to target a business that was mobile.

Seattle CORE rounded up their usual allies; local black churches and fellow civil rights groups in the area, to launch "Operation Pogo Stick." They planned to use roving picket lines at popular taxi cab locations such as airports, restaurants, hospitals, and hotels. Furthermore, the chapter created bumper stickers that read "Don't Ride Farwest-Graytop Cabs / They Discriminate!" that supporters attached to their vehicles.²⁰³ The idea was to hurt the companies' business by increasing public awareness of the discriminatory hiring practices. With a third alternative, The Yellow

²⁰⁰ Charles A. Valentine, DEEDS Background and Basis, October, 1964. CORE Papers Addendum.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² Singler and others, 83.

²⁰³ Ibid, 85.

Cab Company that did hire black drivers, Seattle CORE's expected a dip in business that would force Graytop and Farwest to change their discriminatory policies. In addition, Seattle CORE learned that the Farwest Cab Company had signed a nondiscrimination clause in an exclusive contract with the Seattle School Board which required that Farwest "not discriminate against any employee or applicant because of race, creed, or national origin."²⁰⁴

With the pressure mounting on the cab companies, they relented just five months after Seattle CORE initiated Operation Pogo Stick. In February of 1965 Graytop hired its first African American driver, and in March, Farwest employed their first two black drivers.²⁰⁵ It was another modest victory for Seattle CORE, yet a welcomed one after the shortcomings of DEEDS and the turbulent previous year. The Seattle chapter saw one more area of employment discrimination that they needed to target; over the next two years, Seattle CORE shifted its attention to education segregation.

Education Discrimination

Motivated by the news of Bloody Sunday in Alabama (March 7, 1965) and the other ongoing violence in Mississippi, Seattle CORE turn its full attention on education. Despite the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision in 1954 and the Civil Rights Act of

²⁰⁴ Letter, "Boycott of Named Taxicab Services," August, 1964, CORE Collection, Accession 1563-1, University of Washington Libraries, Special Collection Division, Taxi Service Out 1963-1964. <http://depts.washington.edu/labpics/repository/v/core/> (accessed May 23, 2011)..

²⁰⁵ CORElator March, 1965. CORE Papers.

1964, Seattle's Central Area schools were nearly all black due to the de facto housing segregation. By the spring of 1965 CORE and the NAACP were in negotiations with the school board to end the segregation in schools. The School Board rejected the Triad Plan as well as a plan created by the NAACP to realign the school zones to integrate Seattle Schools. Superintendent Ernest Campbell told the Urban League, "The public schools do not exist for the purpose of imposing broad social reforms upon the people."²⁰⁶ In lieu of the school board's unwillingness to integrate, Seattle CORE decided it was time for a drastic measure that was the "most controversial" moment in Seattle's fight for equality.²⁰⁷

The chapter decided upon a two-day boycott of Seattle public schools during which they provided a substitute educational program for children from kindergarten to high school seniors" called the "Freedom Schools."²⁰⁸ The goal of the Freedom Schools was to provide an alternative to public schools in an integrated setting. There would be one white and one black co-principal at each school, as well as white and black students and teachers.

To make this work CORE would need a mountain of assistance from their allies. Local black and white churches in the Central Area including Mount Zion Baptist, Tabernacle Baptist, First AME, Madrona Presbyterian, Goodwill Baptist, and Cherry Hill Baptist all volunteered space for the classes. Furthermore, the East Madison YMCA,

²⁰⁶ Seattle School Board minutes, May 12, 1965, Seattle Public School Archives, Record 61, pp. 302-5.

²⁰⁷ Interview by Trevor Griffey and Janet Jones with John Hurst Adams, June 24th, 2005, <http://depts.washington.edu/civilr/adams.htm> <last accessed February 1, 2012>.

²⁰⁸ Singler and others, 157.

East Cherry YWCA, Prince Hall Masonic Temple, Woodland Park Presbyterian Church, St. Peter Claver Center, and the Atlantic Street Center also committed to aid Seattle CORE's school boycott.²⁰⁹ Finally, the chapter needed teachers to support their supplementary schools; over one hundred volunteers would aid Seattle CORE's boycott. Seattle CORE set up a mandatory training session for the volunteer teachers and co-principals to provide a quality learning experience and plan the curriculum for each class.²¹⁰

To fill the classes CORE initiated leaflet and mailing campaigns in the Central Area. Local television and newspaper coverage also aided in spreading public awareness; however, it was not all positive. Starting on March, 15, 1966 the *Seattle Times* published interviews debating the validity and legality of the school boycott. Published opinions from local church leaders, ACLU lawyers, parents, teachers, and CORE members argued for and against the boycott. For instance, the Very Reverend John C. Leffler, of St. Mark's Episcopal Cathedral, supported school integration; however, he argued against truancy as a form of protest. Other white clergymen also argued against the boycott claiming it "implanted the idea of lawlessness in children's minds."²¹¹ Yet the amount of publicity raised public awareness of segregation in Seattle schools to an all time high. As Herb Robinson stated on March 20, "even if only a handful of children are absent from class those two days, the boycott sponsors have

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ Lane Smith, "Morality of Boycott: Clergy Has Mixed Feelings," *Seattle Times*, March 25, 1966.

accomplished their purpose by stirring up the most vigorous public debate in Seattle to date on racial imbalance in the schools."²¹²

The publicity leading up to the boycott created a huge response from the Seattle area community. Seattle CORE was prepared for 75-100 students per site, however, the Freedom Schools witnessed 150 students per site and the First AME Church tried to accommodate 175 children. Some Central Area public schools saw a 50% absentee rate on the two-day boycott.²¹³ Although the Freedom Schools had a budget of only \$800 for nearly 4000 students the project was highly successful.²¹⁴ There was not an immediate response to the activism but it raised public awareness on segregation. Seattle CORE, initiated the first step in changing the city's public schools. Over the next decade, Seattle public schools enhanced curriculum in regards to African American culture and history, paid for the transportation costs in a voluntary transfer program that helped integrate schools, added sensitivity training for teachers and staff, and hired more African Americans.²¹⁵

The Seattle CORE public schools boycott was a part of the fight against segregation ongoing throughout the country. In June 1966, James Meredith was shot and injured in Mississippi near the beginning of his "March against Fear," Three months after the boycott the federal government also took action to stop segregation in schools. The Department of Education funded a Desegregation Training Institute run by the

²¹² Herb Robinson, "Reaction to Boycott Surprises Backers," *Seattle Times*, March 20, 1966.

²¹³ Singler and others, 160-8.

²¹⁴ Ibid, 158.

²¹⁵ Ibid, 171.

political science department at the University of Oregon. The institute provided a six week training program created to break down and deal with the inherent problems of de facto segregation in public schools.

Until this point, Seattle CORE avoided the problems and dysfunction of other chapters and the national organization. Leadership changes, mounting debt and fragmentation and infighting overwhelmed the CORE yet Seattle found ways to avoid these problems and remain effective. However, the national organization transformed radically in an attempt to stay relevant with the rise of black power in the civil rights movement; and these changes altered the fate of Seattle CORE.

Black Power and the Death of CORE

Within CORE, Black Power divided the organization at every level. It became clear that Black Power's popularity was on the rise shortly after Stokely Carmichael coined the term on June 16, 1966 when he commented "this is the 27th time I have been arrested and I ain't going to jail no more! The only way we gonna stop them White men from whuppin' us is to take over. What we gonna start sayin' now is Black Power!"²¹⁶ Carmichael echoed the sentiments of many African American activists who witnessed atrocities in the South. In Mississippi in 1964, four civil rights activists were murdered with another four critically wounded, eighty Freedom summer workers were violently assaulted, thirty-seven churches were bombed, and another thirty black homes

²¹⁶ *The Black Power Movement*, <http://www.blackhistory.com/content/62378/the-black-power-movement> <last accessed January 3, 2012>.

were burned to the ground. Racial unrest spread across the country as thousands rioted in Los Angeles in 1965, and in Detroit in 1967.²¹⁷ Tired and frustrated with the pace of nonviolence and the civil rights movement and appalled by the violence in the South, the ideals behind Black Power were a welcomed change in the minds of many blacks, especially in the North. The advancements of the South, had little impact on the everyday lives of Northern blacks and that created a divide in the civil rights movement in the North and South.

The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, with Carmichael as a spokesman, was the first nonviolent organization to change its philosophy. The Black Power movement further fragmented the civil rights movement as it divided activists into two groups; one side following Martin Luther King Jr. and his nonviolent methods, and the other following Carmichael and the newly minted Black Power movement. CORE was caught in the middle. CORE, much like SNCC, was founded upon nonviolent principles, however many Northern chapters were already pushing militant agendas. Brooklyn, Detroit, Cleveland, Baltimore, Harlem, San Francisco, and Philadelphia experienced upheavals in leadership that resulted in a more militant ideology in these chapters. Some CORE leaders, such as Floyd McKissick, believed Black Power was the next step in the evolution of the civil rights movement but accused the media of distorting Black Power to include separatism and militancy. Facing declining membership and overwhelming debt, McKissick declared "1966 shall be remembered as the year we left our imposed status of Negroes and became Black Men...." McKissick

²¹⁷ Singler and others, 197.

continued, "1966 is the year of the concept of Black Power. The year when black men realized their full worth in society -- their dignity and their beauty -- and their power -- the greatest power on the earth -- the power of *right*, in hopes of revitalizing the organization."²¹⁸ In reality, this had the opposite effect; CORE lost more funding, inactivity rose sharply, and many white supporters turned away from the organization.

By the 1967 national convention, CORE was divided. There were two factions, one led by McKissick with the support of Midwest and Southern chapters; and another led by Sol Herbert, the Bronx CORE chairman, who had the support of the Northeast chapters. Herbert and the Northeastern chapters demanded the ouster of the remaining whites and a shift to an entirely separatist militant organization.²¹⁹ By the spring of 1968, McKissick decided to leave CORE, and one of his supporters, the newly elected associate national director, Roy Innis, assumed leadership of the organization and finished what McKissick started. The March edition of the *CORElator* declared "CORE All Black."²²⁰

As seen in CORE, the desire for militancy was a northern phenomenon. There were two reasons northern African Americans looked to a more militant stance in their fight for equality. First, Northern blacks did not see change in their everyday lives that Southern blacks witnessed as the walls of Jim Crow broke down; and second, Northern blacks were fed up with the lack of results and the slow pace of nonviolence and the civil rights movement as a whole. In the South, there was tangible progress being made

²¹⁸ Meier and Rudwick, 412.

²¹⁹ Ibid, 423.

²²⁰ *CORElator*, March 1968.

as the civil rights movement progressed. For instance, the Voting Rights Act of 1964 and Civil Rights Act of 1965 witnessed change across the South. The change was real, and it affected every Southern black on a daily basis. However, in the North, racial discrimination was less obvious. As seen in Seattle, housing discrimination created de facto segregation. Companies hired some blacks, but only to menial labor jobs, and in disproportion to the population percentage of blacks. As the civil rights movement progressed, these types of discrimination were barely addressed and it was far more difficult for Northern blacks to feel any change was happening. A desire for a new strategy grew as the more subtle forms of discrimination in the North still thrived.

Seattle was not immune to these feelings as a Black Panther group formed in the city and Seattle CORE faced a rebellion by a group of its own members desiring militancy; however, Seattle CORE's leadership and foundation of the chapter overcame the revolt. Sticking to the strict recruitment and training guidelines and processes laid out by national CORE, Seattle CORE built a membership who believed in nonviolence. However, the survival of the Seattle CORE only highlighted the downfall of the national organization. Each chapter governed itself, allowing for separate rules, regulations, and ideology from one chapter to the next. This fragmented the entire organization with some chapters leaning towards militancy, and others continuing with nonviolent methods. The Black Power Movement was a catalyst for fragmentation. Founding members in the National Action Committee could not agree on the use of Black Power with the national office employees, chapters in the Northeast desired separatism and militancy while chapters in the South and Midwest desired nonviolence and integration,

and black members were pushing out white members at regional meetings. Despite this, Seattle CORE remained vigilant. The chapter continued fighting against discrimination in education, taking on trade unions in 1967 into 1968 until CORE became a separatist militant organization in the spring of 1968.

The white members of the chapter did not fight the national organizations decision to expel all of the white members throughout the national organization; however, it was met with some confusion, some animosity, and finally acceptance within the ranks of Seattle CORE. In an interview for the University of Washington's Seattle civil rights project, Jean Adams remembered voting for an African American for a leadership position solely because they were black; "it should be black people who were making these decisions, it was better for white people to not be involved in this and black people were saying 'you should not be involved.'" She goes on to say "originally, I believed they meant [whites] not be involved as a spokesman," but still be able to assist in the fight against discrimination.²²¹ "Some did not see the necessity of this change in policy and left feeling hurt. Some were sad that the organization they had devoted so much time and energy to was no longer the same CORE. Some resented being excluded racially."²²² A meeting later that month, on March 28, was set up to explain the decision to the white members but no one showed up.²²³

²²¹ Trevor Griffey and James N. Gregory interview with Joan Singler, Bettylou Valentine and Jean Adams, October 6, 2006, Seattle Civil Rights & Labor History Project <http://depts.washington.edu/civilr/CORE.htm> <last accessed January 25, 2012>.

²²² Singler and others, 203.

²²³ Ibid.

Seattle CORE tried to reform as a black militant group, electing new leadership and attempting to unite the black members to revive the dying chapter; however, mounting debt, inexperience, and lack of membership was too much to overcome. The last CORElator was published in April 1968, and the Seattle chapter of CORE ceased to exist shortly after.

Seattle CORE had marched on despite many setbacks. The DEEDS failure, lack of results fighting discrimination in housing and education, and minimal gains in employment discrimination did not deter the chapter. In 1965, the chapter targeted education discrimination for the first time while they continued their assault on employment discrimination focusing on taxi cab companies and trade unions. Seattle CORE continued as the rest of the organization crumbled; however, the poor decisions made by national CORE piled up. The National Action Committee and the national office struggled over the direction of CORE. The fragmentation between the two governing bodies crippled the organization and created more division between local chapters and national CORE. Some of the local chapters and the National Action Committee led by Floyd McKissick assaulted Farmer's leadership, and the local chapters that did not shift to a militant doctrine, struggled with inactivity and obscurity that plagued the organization in the early 1950s. Militancy did not overtake the Seattle chapter. A declaration by newly elected CORE chairman McKissick announced CORE as an organization under Black Power did not impact Seattle CORE. It was not until the national organization made the fatal mistake of expelling all white members from the organization, that the Seattle chapter was affected. Despite outrage from both the white

and black members in the chapter, Seattle CORE begrudgingly accepted the national organization's decision. The chapter tried to reinvent the chapter under the new black nationalist ideology, but could rally enough support; not only did the chapter lose half its membership of white members, but many of the African Americans also left as they too were unhappy with being forced to disband their successful association; membership inactivity skyrocketed, funding plummeted and many of the founding members who were the cornerstone for Seattle CORE were forced to move on to new projects.

Returning to the historical debate on why CORE shifted to militancy, one can see where each of the three hypotheses previously covered in the introduction had merit but also where each comes up short. Meier and Rudwick were accurate in arguing the ideological shift from nonviolence to militancy was an attempt to save a dying organization; Danielson was also correct inspecting the inherent weaknesses of nonviolence. The pace of nonviolence played a significant role in agitating black activists who turned to militancy to achieve the results they desired. Frazier identified the turmoil between leadership that also played a major part, but he focused on the wrong aspect of leadership. The real issue in leadership was the ineffectiveness of the founders, and the mistake of changing leaders from Farmer to Robinson in 1961, not an inevitable transformation to militancy due to a hidden agenda among the founding members. On top of these areas of weakness, CORE struggled due to the foundation of the organization. CORE set itself up to fail from the beginning. The failure of the founding members to establish the groundwork for long sustained success crippled the

organization throughout its history. As time went on, these problems magnified until they drowned the organization.

First, national CORE failed to setup a working foundation for the organization in the 1940s. The founding members never achieved the support from the local chapters it needed to succeed. Local chapters repeatedly shot down the idea of sharing their funds with the national organization. National CORE's inability to gain financial aid from local chapters crippled the organization's ability to develop. Staffing a national office, creating unemployment offices, hiring civil rights lawyers on retainer to assist against discrimination for free, establishing nonviolent training programs in each region for the local chapters were all plans national CORE were forced to shelve for decades. It was not until the Freedom Rides in the 1960s that national CORE finally had the funding to expand. During the Freedom Rides, CORE received record donations that the organization used to establish its national office and hire lawyers to defend the Freedom Riders. However, CORE failed to understand the limitations of funding based on singular events and when the funding declined, CORE was trapped under an avalanche of debt. The debt limited national CORE's effectiveness as the organization could no longer afford large scale demonstrations, staffing for a national office, lawyer fees, and programs to aid the community.

National CORE had little to no control over local chapters. This was evident in the inability to force local chapters to support national CORE financially, but also in controlling the doctrines of each individual chapter. Despite establishing very strict rules

and regulations for each chapter to follow, national CORE never enforced these. Northern chapters especially exploited the relaxed system of government, pushed a militant agenda as early as the late 1940s and continued to spread a black nationalist agenda until it overwhelmed the organization in 1966. Even more damning, the national organization did not follow their own sets of rules. National CORE never investigated discrimination before taking direct action; instead, the organization focused on challenging legislature to stir up controversy. National CORE's focus was always gaining publicity which only furthered the "white organization" stereotype as it focused very little on issues affecting black communities.

The early leadership of George Houser demonstrated the ineffectiveness of national CORE to establish any control over the chapters. Repeatedly, Houser futilely attempted to establish a foundation of government for the organization that was rebuffed by the local affiliates. It was not until James Robinson assumed command in the late 1950s that CORE prospered. The late 1950s witnessed an increase in funding and relevance, while the organization expanded. As James Farmer ascended to the leadership role in the 1960s, CORE witnessed the organization's peak. CORE reaching its highest number of chapters, active members, and funding. As the civil rights movement witnessed a slowing of popularity, CORE suffered. With the rising debt of the organization Farmer came under scrutiny and stepped down in 1966. Floyd McKissick was elected as his replacement and quickly changed the identity of the organization from nonviolence to militancy as an attempt to revitalize the dying organization. McKissick's inability to turn CORE around encouraged his exit from

organization in 1967. Marvin Rich assumed control and has led what is left of CORE ever since. While it is easy to point to the loss of Farmer as national director as the reason CORE shifted to a militant agenda, a more important factor is the switch to Farmer from Robinson. Under Robinson's leadership in the late 1950's, CORE pulled itself away from ineffectiveness and inactivity while setting itself up for sustained success. The bureaucratic style of Robinson created a funding surplus, kept local affiliates in check, and established a foundation for the national organization to grow; Farmer, on the other hand, was charismatic and brilliant orator, yet even he admitted he lacked bureaucratic skills - which CORE desperately needed as their popularity exploded during the early 1960s.

A second problem, was a dual leadership system that hampered the organization's direction. CORE had a governing council called the National Action Committee that was formed by founding members. The job of the council was to oversee the health of the organization. There was also a national office, led by the executive secretary until 1960 when the position of national director was created by the National Action Committee. The director ran all the day to day operations of the entire organization and the chairman's power was only usurped by the Committee. This dual power system created two notable divides in the organization. First when the National Action Committee supplanted James Robinson with James Farmer in 1961 and then again when the committee drove Farmer out of the national director position in favor of Floyd McKissick in 1966. Prior to the creation of the position of national chairman, the executive secretary was elected democratically at the National Convention. The

National Action Committee's creation of a new position removed that power from local chapters, and in both occurrences the local chapters had no say in the final decision. This only strained the relationship between the national organization and the local affiliates further.

What destroyed the Congress of Racial Equality was not what happened in the mid 1960s but the events leading up to that period. CORE was unprepared to handle funding and the pressure Black Power put on the organization. The weaknesses of national CORE created upon its founding made the organization vulnerable. National CORE's weaknesses were Seattle CORE's strengths: an integrated organization, bureaucratic leadership, a plan of action based on nonviolent actions, and strong attachment to the black community.

CONCLUSION

Tracing Seattle CORE's history in comparison to national CORE highlights the failures of the Congress of Racial Equality and why one of the leading civil rights organizations of the 1960s drastically changed its philosophy from nonviolent integrationist to black nationalism; and in turn destroyed the organization. The weaknesses of the national organization were areas of strengths for the local affiliate; the foundation and organization of the chapter, leadership, the relationship with the black community, and the ability to raise adequate funding were the central reasons Seattle CORE rose to one of the strongest chapters within the organization.

The foundation of the chapter was a vital reason Seattle CORE fended off black militancy while other Northern chapters and national CORE succumbed. Leadership from members during the chapter's infancy, such as Ray Williams, Don Matson, Reggie Alleyne, and Walt Hundley, organized the chapter for sustained success. Leadership contrasted greatly from the National organization; well organized, strong planning, and experienced the leaders of Seattle CORE pushed the chapter to find success. Furthermore, Seattle CORE required training in nonviolent methods, use of African Americans in leadership roles, and following a strict set of guidelines that rewarded great dividends. Training every new member of Seattle CORE in the way of nonviolence prepared the chapter for activism as well as instilling the morals and values the organization desired in its members. In addition, Seattle CORE also made excellent use of the little funding they received. They used their funds on direct action campaigns

that helped the local black community and never over extended. Whenever they could afford to do so, they donated extra funds to national CORE.

Seattle CORE built a relationship with the black community through churches and making tangible progress that everyday blacks could see. Even though the steps forward were minimal, it was enough to legitimize the organization within the black community. Furthermore, the use of African Americans in positions of leadership also broke down the "white organization" stereotype. Having the support of local blacks was paramount to the success of Seattle CORE and fending off black militancy that arose in the city as unrest swept across the nation. The training and interracial relationships built among members also assisted in fighting off black nationalism in the chapter.

Their results never reached the expectations of the chapter, but the members refused to yield to the internal and external pressures that national CORE succumbed to. Internally, Seattle CORE members relied on their training, values, and relationships to deal with their shortcomings and to unite against a small group named the Faction to end a revolt for militancy. Externally, the Seattle affiliate overcame the dysfunction that plagued the rest of the organization, until national CORE's decision to expel their white membership; the decision meant to save the organization instead destroyed it.

**APPENDIX A: MAP OF NEGRO POPULATION IN 1960 CENTRAL
AREA SEATTLE**

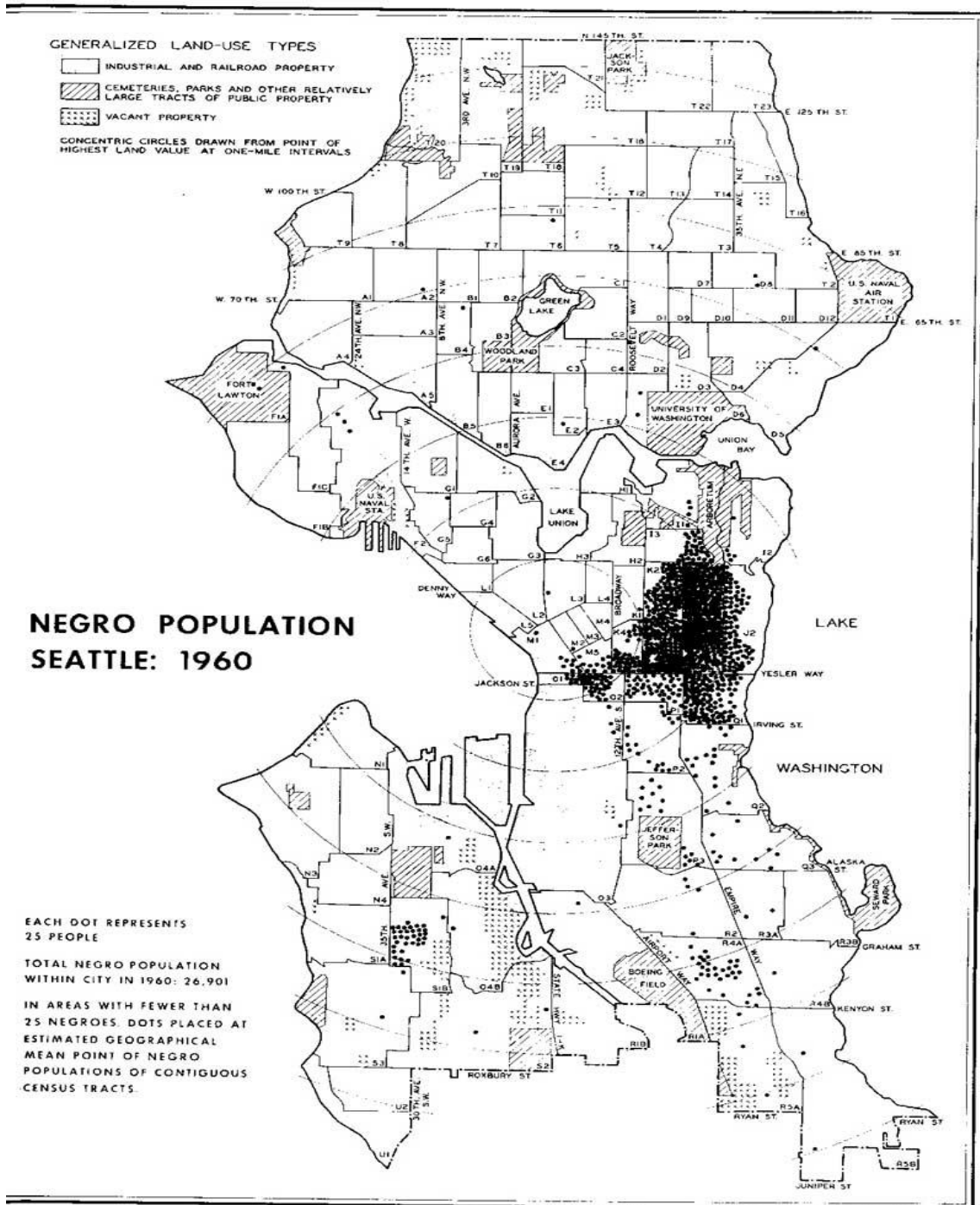


Figure 1 - 1960 Map of the Negro Population in Seattle, Seattle Civil Rights and Labor History Project, University of Washington, Seattle, Washington.
<http://depts.washington.edu/civilr/display.cgi?image=segregated/schmidt-black-1960.jpg> <last accessed 3/30/2012>.

REFERENCES

Archives and Collections

Google News Archive.

Seattle CORE, Matson Collection, University of Washington, Seattle, Washington.

Seattle Civil Rights and Labor History Project, University of Washington, Seattle, Washington.

James Farmer Papers, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin, Austin, Texas.

Seattle CORE Papers, University of Washington Special Collections, Accession 1563-1, Seattle, Washington.

Seattle Public School Archives, Seattle, Washington.

Books

Arsenault, Raymond. *Freedom Riders: 1961 and the Struggle for Racial Justice*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006.

Bell, Inge Powell. *CORE and the Strategy of Nonviolence*. New York: Random House, 1968.

Catsam, Derek. *Freedom's Main Line: The Journey of Reconciliation and the Freedom Rides*. Louisville: University of Kentucky Press, 2009.

Due, Tananarive and Due, Patricia Stephens. *Freedom in the Family: A Mother-Daughter Memoir of the Fight for Civil Rights*. New York, NY: Ballantine Books, 2003.

Farmer, James. *Freedom When?* New York, NY: Random House, 1966.

Farmer, James. *Lay Bear the Heart: An Autobiography of the Civil Rights Movement*. New York: Arbor House, 1985.

Garrow, David J. *Bearing the Cross: Martin Luther King Jr., and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference*. New York: William Morrow, 1978.

Meier, August, and Elliott Rudwick. *CORE: A Study in the Civil Rights Movement, 1942–1968*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1973.

Microfilming Corporation of America. *The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, 1942-1967: A Guide to the Microfilm Edition*. Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms International, 1983.

Microfilming Corporation of America. *The Papers of the Congress of Racial Equality, Addendum, 1944-1968: A Guide to the Microfilm Edition*. Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms International, 1986.

Samuel, Lawrence R. *The End of the Innocence: The 1964-1965 New York World's Fair*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2007.

Singler, Joan, Durning, Jean, Valentine, Bettylou, and Adams, Maid. *Seattle in Black and White: The Congress of Racial Equality and the Fight for Equal Opportunity*. Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2011.

Journal Articles

Danielson, Leilah. "The Two-ness of the Movement: James Farmer, Nonviolence, and Black Nationalism," *Peace and Change* Vol. 29, No. 3&4 (July 2004): 431-452.

Jones, Charles E. "From Protest to Black Conservatism: The Demise of the Congress of Racial Equality" *Black Political Organizations in the Post-Civil Rights Era*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press (2002): pp. 80-98.

Lang, Clarence. "Between Civil Rights and Black Power in the Gateway City: The Action Committee to Improve Opportunities for Negroes (Action), 1964-75," *Journal of Social History*, Vol. 37, No. 3 (Spring, 2004), pp. 725-754.

Rich, Marvin. "The Congress of Racial Equality and Its Strategy," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* Vol. 357, The Negro Protest (Jan. 1965): 113-118.

Wendt, Simon. "Urge People Not to Carry Guns": Armed Self-Defense in the Louisiana Civil Rights Movement and the Radicalization of the Congress of Racial Equality," *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association*, Vol. 45, No. 3 (summer 2004): 261-286.

Microfilm

Boehm, Randolph, Dale Reynolds, and Congress of Racial Equality. *Congress of Racial Equality Papers, 1941-1967*. Black Studies Research Sources: Microfilms from Major Archival and Manuscript Collections. Frederick, MD: University Publications of America, 1981.

Congress of Racial Equality, Martin Luther King, Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change, Library and Archives, and Microfilming Corporation of America.

Congress of Racial Equality Papers Addendum, 1944-1968. Sanford, N.C.: Microfilming Corp. of America, 1983.

Newspaper and Newsletter Archives

Atlanta Constitution	Chicago Tribune
Chicago CORE-News – 1945-1947	<i>CORE-lator</i> – 1942-2011
Lexington Herald-Ledger	New York Post
New York Times	Seattle <i>CORElator</i> – 1961-1968
Seattle Post-Intelligencer	Seattle Times
The Birmingham News	The Carolina Times
The Compass	The Gadsden Times
The Miami News	The Philadelphia Trumpet
The Southeast Missourian	Wall Street Journal

Thesis/Dissertations

Droker, Alan. "The Seattle Civic Unity Committee and the Civil Rights Movement." Ph.D. dissertation, University of Washington, 1974.

Frazier, Nashani. "Cleveland CORE, Community Organization, and the Rise of Black Power." Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 2008.

Goldberg, Louis C. "CORE in Trouble: A Social History of the Organizational Dilemmas of the Congress of Racial Equality Target City Project in Baltimore (1956-1967)." Ph.D. dissertation, John Hopkins University, 1970.

Leonard Joe E. "'We are Catching Hell Down Here': The Struggle For Public Accommodations and Voter Franchisement by the Congress of Racial Equality in Louisiana, 1960-1965." Ph.D. dissertation, Howard University, 2004.

Purnell, Brian. "A Movement Grows in Brooklyn: The Brooklyn Chapter of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and the Northern Civil Rights Movement During the Early 1960s." Ph.D. dissertation, New York University, 2006.

Rachel Smith, "CORE's Drive for Equal Employment in Downtown Seattle," 1964.

White, Robert M. "The Tallahassee Sit-ins and CORE: A Nonviolent Revolutionary Submovement." Ph.D. dissertation, Florida State University, 1964.

Online Sources

Charles, Nick. "Equal Opportunity Scam: CORE Hustles White Firms With Race," Village Voice News, 2003.

<http://www.villagevoice.com/news/0317,charles,43542,1.html>.

"Fellowship of Reconciliation - For a World of Peace, Justice and Nonviolence."
<http://www.forusa.org>.

"Segregated Seattle" ed. James Gregory (Seattle: University of Washington, 2011)
<http://depts.washington.edu/civilr/segregated.htm>.

"The Black Power Movement," <http://www.blackhistory.com/content/62378/the-black-power-movement>.

Virginia Historical Society, "The Civil Rights Movement in Virginia."
<http://www.vahistorical.org/civilrights/ww2.htm>.

Pamphlets and Miscellaneous

Congress of Racial Equality. *This is CORE*. New York, NY: Congress of Racial Equality, 1959.

Cooper, Ray. *Memories of a Freedom Rider*, letter from Ray Cooper to Joan Singler, December 28, 2006.

Valentine, Charles A. *DEEDS, background and basis; a report on research leading to the drive for equal employment in downtown Seattle* (Seattle, Congress of Racial Equality, 1964).

Washington State Board against Discrimination. "Non-white Participation in the Building Trade Unions--Seattle--October/November 1965." Report, 1965.

Interviews by Trevor Griffey and James N. Gregory

Jean Adams
Vivian Carter
Walter Hubbard
Ivan King
Joan Singler
Marion West

John H. Adams
Dorothy Hollingsworth
Charles V. Johnson
Lyle Mercer
Bettylou Valentine

Interview by Tananarive Due

Patricia Due