

37. On Cinemobile, interview between Jon Triesault and the author, June 1977; and on MPAA efforts to introduce Blacks into television drama: Phil Benjamin to Roy Metzler, May 12, 1965; Ralph Winters to Tony Frederick, May 21, 1965; Ed Perlstein to Charles Boren, April 27, 1965, in MPAA records.

38. Walter Burrell, "Black Films," *Soul*, Dec. 18, 1972, 2-3.

39. *Newsweek*, Dec. 7, 1970, 62-74, on "counterculture"; *Variety*, Aug. 4, 1965, 22, quoted; *Philadelphia Daily News*, June 1, 1972, on Stone; *Newsweek*, Aug. 8, 1972, 88, on "warping"; on scripts, see Sterling Silliphant draft of *Shaft*; Silliphant to Daniel Melnick, MGM, Nov. 27, 1972, Silliphant mss, UCLA; Roger Lewis to Mort Segal, MGM, Sept. 3, 1971, MGM Legal File.

40. Directors Guild of America, *Directory of Members* [1991] (Los Angeles, 1991), 481-92.

## SEPARATE PATHS

*Blacks and Jews in the Twentieth-Century South*

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One third of the population of the South is of the Negro race. No enterprise seeking the material, civil, or moral welfare of this section can disregard this element of our population and reach the highest success." With these words Booker T. Washington began his Atlanta Exposition Address in 1895, a speech that catapulted him from a position as an innovative educator and builder of the Tuskegee Institute to the forefront of African American leadership. By the beginning of the twentieth century, Washington was widely acclaimed as America's preeminent Black man, with more influence than any of his peers. His views on questions of race and relations of whites and Blacks gained him access to the White House as well as to the homes of wealthy white men.<sup>1</sup> As for immigrants, Washington did not see them as integral to the South. "To those of the white race who look to the incoming of those of foreign birth and strange tongue and habits for the prosperity of the South," he observed in the same address, "were I permitted I would repeat what I say to my own race, 'Cast down your bucket where you are.' Cast it down among the eight millions of Negroes whose habits you know..." Washington concluded the paragraph with a metaphor that would become as famous as his call to cast down your bucket: "In all things purely social," he assured his listeners, "we can be as separate as the fingers, yet one as the hand in all things essential to mutual progress."<sup>2</sup>

Less than a decade passed before Washington's "Atlanta Compromise," as it came to be known, was challenged by a young scholar teaching sociology at Atlanta University. W. E. B. Du Bois observed "among educated and thoughtful colored men in all parts of the land a feeling of deep regret, sorrow, and apprehension at the wide currency and ascendancy which some of Mr. Washington's theories have gained." Du Bois singled out three things that "Mr. Washington distinctly asks that Black people give up, at least for the present... First, politi-

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cal power, Second, insistence on civil rights, Third, higher education of Negro youth...." Du Bois took issue with all three. He insisted that he was not alone in his criticism but that other African Americans agreed with him:

that the way for a people to gain their reasonable rights is not by voluntarily throwing them away and insisting that they do not want them, that the way for a people to gain respect is not by continually belittling and ridiculing themselves, that on the contrary, Negroes must insist continually, in season and out of season, that voting is necessary to modern manhood, that color discrimination is barbarism, and that Black boys need education as well as white boys.<sup>3</sup>

Southern whites took little notice of Du Bois's collection of essays, published as *The Souls of Black Folk*,<sup>4</sup> yet it signaled the beginning of a significant debate among African Americans over both the goals of Black endeavor in the South and the best means to achieve them. A similar debate was long in progress among Europe's Jews, who argued among themselves over what, in fact, constituted a genuine emancipation, how to obtain it, and how they should cope with virulent antisemitism. Their argument ultimately was cut short by war, mass migration, the extermination of six million Jews, and asylum in the new State of Israel for the survivors.

Neither the Washington-Du Bois debate nor the arguments raging in Europe engaged the small minority of American Jews who settled in the South in the early decades of the twentieth century. Undoubtedly some were aware of the rising number of lynchings of Black men in the South; the decade from 1896 to 1905 saw over 700 lynchings in the South, a number that declined to just under 500 in the next ten years.<sup>5</sup> Lynchings were popular among southern white folk: they were often advertised in advance and special trains were occasionally added to bring crowds to the selected spot. In 1937 Karl Friedman's Cincinnati relatives came down "out of civilization" to visit his family in Birmingham, where they had settled two decades earlier. Friedman recalled that "my father invited his sisters and brothers who came for the Bar Mitzvah to view a Saturday night lynching in downtown Birmingham." Their response, he remembered, varied. "Some were willing. Some were appalled. All believed it was going to happen."<sup>6</sup> Some Jews may have recognized in the new laws of segregation, legal discrimination, and voting exclusion a systematic effort to establish a social, legal, and political system that subordinated Blacks to whites in all areas of life. But many Jews, especially those who were recent immigrants and "of strange tongue and habits," as Washington noted, merely accepted the southern way of life as they found it and sought to adjust their behavior to fit in as aspiring white Americans. Unlike the millions of Blacks living in the South whose "material, civil, and moral welfare" was integral to the section's economic, social, political, and cultural development, Jews made up a fraction of a percent of the total population and

attracted attention only for their religious divergence from the region's dominant Protestantism.

The history of Jews and Blacks in the South reveals enormous contrasts and few similarities. Differences include demographic and settlement patterns, occupational distribution, forms of culture, religion, and community life, even politics and the prejudice and discrimination endured by each group. Visible Jewish presence in the South is considered so atypical that when large numbers of Jews (that is, over 100,000) actually did settle in a southern city, as they did in Miami and Miami Beach after World War II, the entire area of South Florida was soon dismissed as no longer southern and jokingly referred to as a suburb of New York City. Jews have been and remain marginal to the South. Their marginality is intrinsic to their existence as southern Jews.<sup>7</sup> African Americans have been and remain central to the South. It is impossible to imagine southern culture, politics, religion, economy, or in short, any aspect of southern life, without African Americans. "Race determined the neighborhoods in which people lived, the movies they could attend, the churches in which they worshiped, and the cemeteries in which they would be buried."<sup>8</sup> Not only did the burden of slavery and a history of segregation and "state-sponsored racial oppression and authoritarianism"<sup>9</sup> shape the South in the twentieth century, but so did the moral and religious vision of its Black minority. In the popular mind as well as in reality, the South would not be the South without Black Americans. Jews, by contrast, offer an interesting footnote to understanding the region, an opportunity to examine the possibilities and cost of religious and ethnic diversity in a society sharply divided along color lines.

The eight million African Americans living in the South at the turn of the century increased to ten million by mid-century, but fifty years of migration to northern and midwestern cities reduced their percentage of the total population from one-third to one-fifth. In many rural, Black belt counties in South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and northern Louisiana, African Americans remained a majority in the second half of the twentieth century, though over a million left the South in both the 1940s and 1950s.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, a steady and accelerating stream of southerners left the region: one out of 10 in the 1920s, one out of seven in the 1930s, and one out of five in the 1940s. From the region with over 90 percent of all Black Americans at the beginning of the century, the South became home to little more than one-half eighty years later.<sup>11</sup> After World War II, these patterns gradually changed, but not until the 1960s did more people move into the South than out of it. In the early 1970s the South became part of the Sunbelt, a region of booming population and economic opportunity that attracted Americans, including Black Americans, from a declining rustbelt.<sup>12</sup> For the first time, beginning in the mid-seventies, "the number of Blacks moving into the South exceeded the number departing for other regions of the country."<sup>13</sup> As southern cities grew due in part to federal largesse and the rise of the "gunbelt,"<sup>14</sup> and as southern agriculture became mechanized and cotton acreage was reduced

(both of which discriminated against African Americans since they were denied jobs running the machinery and refused benefits under federal agricultural programs), the heavy preponderance of Blacks in rural areas shifted. The migration from field to factory boosted Black population in cities. By 1950 more Blacks than whites lived in cities in Georgia and by 1960 less than a quarter of all African Americans lived in the rural South.<sup>15</sup> African Americans particularly found the largest southern cities attractive and by 1980 Atlanta, Birmingham, New Orleans, and Richmond had Black majorities.<sup>16</sup> In the closing decades of the century, Blacks moved to the suburbs as well, leaving only a dwindling minority on farms.

Most of the several hundred thousand Jews in the South before mid-century lived in its cities and towns, distinguishing themselves not only from their fellow southerners, Black and white, but from their fellow Jews, who typically preferred metropolises like New York and Chicago. Even in some of the bigger New and Old South cities like Birmingham, Memphis, Charleston, New Orleans, Atlanta, and Richmond there were merely a few thousand Jews. Larger numbers did not move down until after World War II, which introduced a generation of Jewish GIs to the South. Jews settled in selected cities, drawn in substantial numbers first to Miami and neighboring Florida cities, and then to Atlanta and suburban Alexandria, Virginia. These three metropolitan areas hardly offer a characteristic view of the South, yet they account for the majority of southern Jews in the closing decades of the twentieth century.<sup>17</sup> When people think of the southern Jewish experience, they often conjure up the exceptional experience of small town Jews, of settlements ranging from several hundred to several dozen, where Jews lived close to the southern way of life yet nonetheless apart from it. In his collection of essays, *The Lonely Days Were Sundays*, native Southerner Eli Evans explains that the "phrase was epigrammatic of the emotional terrain of the immigrant generation of Jews who arrived in the small towns of the South in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. And that loneliness of soul is at the core of every Jew who lives in the Bible Belt," although urban experience characterizes Jews in the twentieth-century South.<sup>18</sup>

Irrespective of where they settled (except, of course, for Miami), Jews usually worked in middleman minority occupations not considered typically southern: as peddlers, shopkeepers, merchants, manufacturers, and occasionally professionals (doctors, dentists, druggists).<sup>19</sup> Main street was their domain. Initially Jews lived behind or above their stores; as they prospered they moved to white residential sections of town. In the early years of the century, unmarried Jewish women worked in their parents' store or as teachers or office workers. Later, most Jewish women took care of the household and, when they could afford to hire household workers, devoted some of their time to volunteer work. In the last decades of the century, inspired by the feminist movement, Jewish women have sought careers, which they often combined with marriage and motherhood.

By contrast, African Americans worked at a wide range of occupations from

sharecropper and farmer, to day laborer and industrial worker, to a handful of middle and upper class positions, including storekeepers, teachers, entrepreneurs, and professionals serving a segregated society. What Sarah Hughes wrote of Virginia was true for the rest of the South: "Segregation permeated the economy during the first seventy years of the century. There were Black restaurants, hotels, grocery stores, barbershops, blacksmiths, cleaners, gas stations, and resorts."<sup>20</sup> In a society driven by caste, Black entrepreneurs occasionally found a precarious niche. Unlike Jews, many of whom were self-employed, Blacks largely worked for others, usually whites, restricted by custom and prejudice to the least desirable jobs in each sector of the economy. "Even trained college graduates took jobs as porters and baggage handlers. And we couldn't do a whole lot about it," reflected Warren Cochrane about work in Atlanta.<sup>21</sup> Despite economic oppression and subordination that forced women as well as men to work outside the home, African Americans in the South sustained stable families during the first half of the century. Married and unmarried women worked alongside their men in the fields and farms as well as in service occupations in cities and small towns. A few became teachers, midwives, and nurses. Middle-class standing was reflected less through women withdrawing from paid labor than through home ownership, education, and standards of public and private rectitude.

Separation forced by segregation characterized community life. Probably the single most important communal institution was the Black church. Virtually all African Americans, seeking individual salvation and collective spirituality, joined a church, which was usually either Baptist or Methodist. The church not only offered Sunday services and schooling, but it also sponsored social welfare, and civic and cultural activities. In her study of Indianola, Mississippi, during the Depression, Hortense Powdermaker observed: "No week passed without my attendance at some Negro social function—a chitterling supper in a church basement, an entertainment to raise funds, a meeting of the Ladies' Missionary society in a member's home. During some weeks there were two or three socials."<sup>22</sup> Ministers led the Black community, articulated collective aspirations, and served as ambassadors to white society. The church expressed African Americans' hopes and sacralized aspects of their culture. "The church services were powerful, with an almost ritualized intensity," recalled an African American of his Mississippi childhood. "Always, our prayers were for fair play, justice for all people, and freedom from fear. We echoed President Roosevelt's sentiments, and added our own."<sup>23</sup> Music, especially, gave voice to both sacred and secular dimensions of life. Black churches made music integral to their worship services, thus contributing to a dynamic relationship between the everyday world of work and sorrows and the sacred realm of prayer and ecstasy.

Synagogues assumed far less centrality in the Jewish community, though far greater percentages of Jews joined them in the South than in the North. Reform Judaism dominated Jewish religious expression during the first half of the century. In the largest cities where some Jewish religious diversity existed, Reform

congregations attracted the more wealthy and established Jews. In Greensboro, North Carolina, after World War II "approximately half the members of the Reform Temple were raised outside the South, compared with nine out of ten in the Conservative Temple. The upper class of Southern origins, as elsewhere in the South, was concentrated in the former. They, as in the South generally, were the ones who belonged to the most esteemed country club, were members of law firms and other enterprises with Gentiles, and circulated socially with the local Gentile elite."<sup>24</sup> In smaller towns, Jews considered themselves fortunate if they could support a single congregation and a Reform rabbi. Like their Black peers, Reform rabbis accepted the responsibility of representing their community to the white Christian world. "Handsome and robust, something of a scholar, an eloquent speaker, and a sophisticated but enthusiastic participant in civic affairs," Rabbi Edward N. Calisch of Richmond's Beth Ahavath Temple personified the southern Reform rabbi of the first half of the century. "He exchanged pulpits with Protestant clergymen; he delivered patriotic speeches during both World Wars; he lunched with President Taft at the White House and with Lord Reading at the vice-regal palace in India; he was treasurer of the English Speaking Union, president of the Richmond Peace Council, and president of the Richmond alumni chapter of Phi Beta Kappa; in 1939 the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* put his name on its Roll of Honor as one of the ten outstanding men of Virginia."<sup>25</sup>

Usually accepted as white, and not summarily excluded from participation in civic affairs as were African Americans, Jews tried to maintain communal institutions focused upon internal Jewish needs, such as community centers, B'nai B'rith lodges, social welfare organizations, as well as women's clubs and Zionist groups, while supporting white community endeavors not connected with the church, such as cultural activities, better business and chamber of commerce groups, and philanthropic endeavors. Their success in this dual enterprise depended upon politics; during the heyday of the Ku Klux Klan after its reestablishment in 1915 in Georgia, Jews generally found themselves unwelcome in both political and civic endeavors. This chilly environment warmed substantially during World War II, and southern Jews faced the dawning of the postwar civil rights era feeling integrated into the white community. Observers in the 1960s discovered even among relatively small Jewish populations that two communities often coexisted, divided sharply by their "degree of Southernness." These divisions extended to country club and college fraternity memberships, as well as to ideology, specifically support for Zionism. Opposition to Zionism, and by extension Jewish nationalism and ethnicity, coincided with a high degree of "Southernness." Irrespective of ideology, however, southern Jews uncovered no antisemitism among their neighbors, although many feared that it might be "stirred up" by political change.<sup>26</sup> Outsiders visiting their fellow Jews rarely understood such sentiments, those heartfelt expressions by southern Jews of their sense of belonging to a white community whose heritage they saw as their own. Coming down to Mississippi to help with legal defense of those involved in the

voter registration drive, Marvin Braiterman, a lawyer, decided to attend services at a local synagogue to escape the tensions of the week. "We know right from wrong, and the difference between our God and the segregationist God they talk about down here," his Jewish hosts told him. "But their God runs Mississippi, not ours. We have to work quietly, secretly. We have to play ball. Anti-Semitism is always right around the corner." Braiterman suggested that "your silence either makes things get worse, or things get worse in spite of it. You might as well open your mouths and do something about what you think." His hosts responded, "No. No. What you're talking about is suicide." Yet all Braiterman could suggest in response was that Jews leave Mississippi.<sup>27</sup>

Profound discrimination, prejudice, and the entire oppressive weight of a segregated society left Black southerners with no illusions regarding the parameters of their community. As in all other aspects of life, race defined communal endeavor. African Americans created in the South as comprehensive a community as they could afford, including education and cultural activities, social welfare assistance and health projects, and modest civic associations. They did this in an environment of fear of reprisals should their actions somehow threaten a precarious status quo and provide an excuse for white violence. Even where they did not organize, their segregated social patterns contributed to shaping collective cultural expressions. In larger cities where a Black middle class gained a secure foothold, class distinctions divided the African American community. In his classic study *Black Bourgeoisie*, E. Franklin Frazier ridiculed the pretensions of these strivers and condemned their efforts to imitate white society, advocating instead a rejection of its biased pretensions and recognition of the rich cultural creativity of the Black working classes. Frazier scorned the internalization of white values and fear of economic reprisals and violence that led middle-class African Americans to avoid protesting an unjust white society.<sup>28</sup>

Although African Americans were forbidden to mix in white society, Black culture repeatedly crossed the divide. In some areas, such as music and dance, white southerners were aware of the borrowing and cultural exchange; in other areas, such as literature and architecture, the process of exchange and cultural transformation was often obscured. Both self-consciously and unconsciously, Black southerners influenced the culture of the region: its folkways and diet, its literature and art, its music and dance. Through their impact on the South, African Americans influenced many aspects of American popular culture and produced what has often been considered most characteristically American. By contrast, southern Jews failed to produce the kinds of cultural contributions typical of their Western European coreligionists despite familiarity with minority status through a long diaspora history. Like German Jews, southern Jews were less than one percent of the population; unlike German Jews, their intellectual and artistic achievements have been modest. Most southern Jews appeared to have assimilated regional mores rather than interacting with them and responding creatively to the challenges of shaping a new culture. "They did not affect the South so much

as they imbibed its values and became part of it," historian Melvin Urofsky concluded.<sup>29</sup> Perhaps the desire for a better life inherent in migration drew Jews eager to accommodate. When Ronald Bern's grandfather bought the railroad ticket that took him south to Anderson, South Carolina, he had no particular destination in mind other than one that was quiet and warm.<sup>30</sup> Seeking economic opportunity, southern Jews were largely unwilling to stand aloof from southern culture. Jewish religious observances borrowed little of the enthusiasm and spirituality of the evangelical Protestantism of Black and white southerners, but rather took southern Episcopalian sobriety and decorum as a model.

Given these disparate and contrasting Black and Jewish worlds that coexisted in the South, it is not surprising that politics rarely brought them together. Prior to 1915, Jews participated in electoral politics and occasionally won election to municipal or state office. The nadir of Jewish involvement in southern politics came during the heyday of the Ku Klux Klan, which attacked Jews and Catholics as well as Blacks.<sup>31</sup> African Americans, on the other hand, suffered their most bitter political defeats in the years prior to World War I, the era that generated the acrimonious debate between Washington and Du Bois. Those years saw the largest numbers of lynchings, a flourish of mob violence designed to terrorize Blacks, deny them their civil rights, and prevent them from voting. Segregation and systematic discrimination were entrenched. Black soldiers returned from World War I convinced that they needed to continue the fight for democracy and freedom at home. Chalmers Archer discovered "no change in the way we lived," when he arrived back in southern Mississippi. "The day I came home, my mother was in the field helping my brother Nick. It was then that I decided that she should no longer do any type of field work," he recalled. "I was a war hero from France, and that's the only way I could let out my frustrations. That was the one change in our lives that I could make."<sup>32</sup> During the interwar years, African Americans pressed for anti-lynching laws on both state and federal levels, brought cases to court challenging the refusal of registrars to let Blacks register to vote, fought against unequal school conditions and pay for teachers, and worked with New Deal liberals to eliminate the poll tax. Although they achieved few substantive changes, "expectations rose; Black powerlessness decreased; white hostility diminished. Together, these gave the proponents of civil rights hope."<sup>33</sup>

World War II changed southern Jewish attitudes toward politics, but not enough to bring them into convergence with African Americans' increasing demands for equal civil rights and for an end to desegregation. Jews migrating to the South after the war carried their politics in their suitcases, but since 80 percent of these northern newcomers went down to Miami, they exerted little influence on the emerging civil rights movement.<sup>34</sup> A handful of young rabbis joined forces with Christian clergy across the color line, but most feared to speak out lest they lose their positions. Many Black ministers also were cautious, yet they were ready to provide leadership when African Americans challenged segregation. Martin Luther King, Jr. responded to a request for leadership of the

Montgomery bus boycott though he did not initiate the protest. His moral vision and philosophy of Christian love and nonviolence, however, soon inspired and shaped the civil rights movement. Following the 1954 Supreme Court decision in *Brown vs. Board of Education*, which overturned the separate but equal doctrine upholding legal segregation, the movement to desegregate southern institutions expanded. The Court's decision put civil rights on the nation's political agenda. Southern Jews found themselves caught between the demands of racist white Southerners, who organized White Citizens Councils beginning in 1954, and the expectations of liberal northern Jews whose Jewish defense organizations actively supported equal rights. Imagining themselves between a rock and a hard place, most southern Jews were immobilized. Even a series of synagogue bombings by white antisemites in five southern cities in 1957-1958 failed to resolve their dilemma.<sup>35</sup>

The shift from protest to politics—especially the voter registration drives organized by SNCC in 1964 that drew large numbers of northern Jewish students to the South—exacerbated southern Jewish discomfort. The rabbi of Meridian, Mississippi, urged Michael Schwerner to leave, fearing that white anger at Schwerner might turn against local Jews. "He argued that Schwerner was already labeled 'that goddamned bearded atheist communist Jew,' and that consequently he was not helping Negroes but hurting Jews," Lenora Berson reported. "Progress will come with time and from within; it will not be made by outside agitation," the rabbi concluded.<sup>36</sup> Birmingham rabbis joined Christian clergy in urging King to be patient in his demands for change, criticizing his nonviolent philosophy for provoking white violence. Writing from his jail cell in 1963, King observed that "Lamentably, it is an historical fact that privileged groups seldom give up their privileges voluntarily." As for waiting, King remarked bitterly that "'Wait' has almost always meant 'Never':"

Perhaps it is easy for those who have never felt the stinging darts of segregation to say, "Wait." But when you have seen vicious mobs lynch your mothers and fathers at will and drown your sisters and brothers at whim; when you have seen hate-filled policemen curse, kick, and even kill your black brothers and sisters; when you see the vast majority of your twenty million Negro brothers smothering in an airtight cage of poverty in the midst of an affluent society;...when you are humiliated day in and day out by nagging signs reading "white" and "colored"; when your first name becomes "nigger," your middle name becomes "boy"...and your wife and mother are never given the respected title "Mrs."; when you are forever fighting a degenerating sense of "nobodiness"—then you will understand why we find it difficult to wait.<sup>37</sup>

Although few Jews championed the policy of "massive resistance" advocated by white southern segregationists, only after the rise of Black Power did more Jews

recognize the possibility of supporting the demands of moderate Black leaders by joining forces with white Christians to denounce violence and espouse gradual change.

Once large numbers of African Americans acquired the vote and entered southern politics, Jews discovered ways to build coalitions to sustain liberal change. The 1969 election of Sam Massell, Jr., Atlanta's first Jewish mayor, drew substantial Black support and helped topple the city's white power structure. Jews subsequently reciprocated in 1973 by voting for Maynard Jackson, Atlanta's first African American mayor.<sup>38</sup> Especially in such cities as Atlanta, New Orleans, and Richmond, Jews were willing to vote for Black politicians who championed pragmatic politics that encouraged economic growth and racial accommodation.<sup>39</sup> In the 1970s and 1980s, despite the resort to gerrymandering district boundaries to minimize Black political power, African Americans scored substantial gains, not only in local elections but even in statewide contests. Virginia elected Douglas Wilder as its first African American governor in 1992; since Blacks made up only 20 percent of the state's population, Wilder won with the support of many whites, including Jews. Political cooperation with African Americans was possible in the post-civil rights era because Jews could cooperate with African Americans as whites, not as Jews. Sufficient diversity and flexibility existed among southern whites so that Jews did not fear rousing either white or Black antisemitism. Jews could help create and sustain a political atmosphere not dominated by appeals to race prejudice and massive white resistance to civil rights. Jews have also joined with African Americans to defeat outspoken bigots like David Duke when he ran for governor of Louisiana in 1992.

Such political cooperation, with its potential implications of cordial relations between leading African Americans and southern Jews, represents a significant departure from earlier patterns of conflict and avoidance. Because their histories present divergent paths of widely different significance for the southern experience, rarely did either Blacks or Jews serve as a reference point for the other. More often Jews and Blacks in the South saw each other triangulated in relation to northern Jews. Those urban, ethnic, and often politically radical Jews read various meanings into southern Black suffering, protest, and resistance. Southern Jews were aware of how their northern coreligionists interpreted and judged southern mores, though they usually rejected both interpretation and judgment. When Baruch Charney Vladeck, a Jewish socialist and later member of the New York City Council, witnessed an anti-Negro riot in Norfolk, Virginia, in July 1910, he was shocked. Comparing it to a Russian pogrom, or anti-Jewish violence sanctioned by the state, he urged his fellow Jews to intervene on behalf of the African Americans. "He was told that he did not comprehend the situation. Blacks were 'nothing but animals.'"<sup>40</sup>

Some Black leaders distinguished Jews as a white minority group, usually through reference to northern Jews or Jewish suffering in Europe, but Jews figured significantly as a distinctive white minority neither in the consciousness

nor in the lives of most southern Blacks. Most African Americans saw Jews through the lens of Protestant Christianity. "All of us Black people who lived in the neighborhood hated Jews, not because they exploited us but because we had been taught at home and in Sunday school that Jews were 'Christ killers,'" the novelist Richard Wright wrote about his youth in Arkansas and Tennessee. "To hold an attitude of antagonism or distrust toward Jews was bred in us from childhood; it was not merely racial prejudice, it was part of our cultural heritage."<sup>41</sup> African Americans generally shared the norms of southern Christian society's biased attitudes toward Jews; southern Jews usually followed southern racist conventions in their attitudes and behavior toward Blacks.<sup>42</sup> Even when living and working among African Americans, Jews did not participate in the life of the surrounding Black community on either a formal or informal basis.

Occasional moments of conflict did erupt between Blacks and Jews, vividly indicating their contrasting positions in southern society. The most traumatic moment for Jews came from events that unfolded in 1913. On Confederate Memorial Day a teenage white worker, Mary Phagan, stopped by an Atlanta pencil factory to pick up her pay envelope from the manager, Leo Frank, on her way to celebrate the holiday. She never made it to the parade. Early the next day, the night watchman found her body in the basement. Her brutal murder led to the arrest, trial, and conviction of Frank, the northern educated Jewish superintendent who was an active member of Atlanta's Jewish community. Despite lack of evidence and Frank's obvious innocence, the case aroused enormous passions and unleashed such vitriolic antisemitism in Georgia and throughout the South, that when the governor commuted his death sentence, Frank was taken out of prison, brought back to Mary Phagan's home town of Marietta, and lynched. Frank's lynching in 1915, the only lynching of a Jew in America, stimulated the establishment of the second Ku Klux Klan. White Southerners vilified Frank as a Yankee, a Jew, a capitalist, a sexual pervert—in short, someone seeking to destroy the South and its way of life. Jews saw the Frank case as a horrible example of antisemitism, analogous not only to the recent Mendel Beiliss ritual murder trial in Russia but to the famous Dreyfus Affair in France. It was impossible to ignore the vociferous antisemitism. "There were mobs outside of the courthouse. It was hot, it was the summertime. And the mobs outside were hollering, 'Kill the Jew!' and 'Lynch the Jew!'..." Clarence Feibelman recalled. "I'd be on the streetcar and sometimes I'd get off and walk past there, and it was just harrowing to hear those people. It made your blood run cold."<sup>43</sup> The crowd even threatened to lynch the jury if it failed to convict.

Southern Jews, especially those in Atlanta, convinced of Frank's innocence (the conviction was overturned many years later), made common cause with the white Christian business elite in their efforts to obtain clemency for Frank and used racial stereotypes to defend Frank and to blame the Black factory sweeper, Jim Conley, upon whose testimony Frank was convicted. African Americans responded with virtually the same unanimity that gripped Jews: the former rallied around

Conley as the latter did around Frank. "For several decades the Frank case hung like a threatening cloud over the Jewish community, confirmation that economic success was no protection against bigotry," concluded Steven Hertzberg, historian of Atlanta Jews. It stimulated a momentary unity among native-born and immigrant Atlanta Jews and gave southern Jews a bitter taste of the experience of seeing one of their own lynched. "Two years later in the spring of 1917, Irving Engel and a group of U.S. Army officer candidates entered a Marietta drug store where they were still selling photographs...of Leo Frank in his nightshirt hanging by the neck from a tree with his feet crossed at the ankles."<sup>44</sup> The lynching of Leo Frank intimidated Jews, especially native-born Jews who had assumed that their white skin gave them immunity from persecution in the South.<sup>45</sup>

The antisemitic environment surrounding the case reached African Americans as well. The Black scholar, Horace Mann Bond, remembered an incident shortly after moving to Atlanta in 1916 that captured the antagonism even between children.

I was walking along a street near my house, and had to pass a small grocery store located in our neighborhood. There was a small boy—perhaps six years old—looking through the picket fence that surrounded the store. As I passed he began to chant: "Nigger, Nigger, Nigger, Nigger." You may not believe it, but this was the first time I could remember anyone calling me a "Nigger." And my response still surprises me; I retorted to the boy, "You Christ-killer!" And the little boy burst into tears, and I have felt badly about it ever since.

In retrospect, Bond concluded that "the word I used hung immanent in the Atlanta air" during a time "when the Leo Frank lynching was front-page news and back-fence gossip." "Somehow," Bond recalled, the epithet "had entered my mind, and remained like a knife, waiting only for opportunity for release."<sup>46</sup> The Leo Frank case provided that moment by pitting the testimony of an African American against the testimony of a Jew and led to conflict between the two groups. It also demonstrated Jewish vulnerability to antisemitism in league with a reactionary populism that usually targeted Blacks. Though less often manipulated as anti-Black racism, antisemitism remained a potentially powerful force to mobilize whites against big business and working class radicalism.

Similar political forces appeared almost two decades later when nine African American teenagers were pulled from a freight train in Paint Rock, Alabama, and falsely accused of rape by two white women also riding the train. The trials of the nine "Scottsboro boys," as they came to be known, attracted nationwide attention largely due to publicity efforts by the Communist Party and the NAACP that focused on the "legal lynching" taking place in Alabama. In the case of Scottsboro, however, African Americans made common cause with northern Jews, suggesting that working class radicalism could overcome racism, antisemitism,

and sexual conservatism. The prominence of Jewish lawyers, Joseph Brodsky and especially Samuel Leibowitz who served as defense attorney for several trials, implicated southern Jews in the case. Furthermore, the prosecutor's explicitly antisemitic charge to the jury—"Show them, show them that Alabama justice cannot be bought and sold with Jew money from New York"<sup>47</sup>—with its echoes of accusations hurled at Leo Frank, forced southern Jews to confront several difficult choices: they could support the African American defendants and join not only their northern coreligionists but also a small number of concerned white Christians willing to speak out against popular sentiment; or they could remain silent in the hope that their neighbors would not confuse them with their northern coreligionists, especially Jewish communists; or they could join the majority white Christian community that condemned the Black defendants and championed their conviction for the heinous crime of raping a white woman. Rabbi Benjamin Goldstein of Montgomery's Temple Beth Or chose the first alternative. Beginning in 1931 he told his congregation "and all who would listen" that he thought the Scottsboro boys were innocent. Two years later, he presided at a meeting in the Black Congregational Church in Birmingham to form a coalition of local support, even though he recognized that all of the white speakers risked losing their jobs. He was right. Two months later the temple board gave him an ultimatum: "Sever all connection with the Scottsboro Case or resign. He agreed to resign."<sup>48</sup> Most other southern Jews appeared to have chosen to keep a low profile. However, they were aware that they risked attack as communists if they did not actively vilify the Scottsboro Boys.

The charge of being communists acquired even greater salience in the postwar era of anti-communist investigations and hysteria. White southerners leveled the charge against African Americans seeking to end desegregation and against civil rights organizations like the NAACP, forcing the latter to make public its membership lists and then attacking individuals for having joined as members. In some states, like Alabama, the campaign against the NAACP succeeded, forcing Black activists to create alternative organizations. However, relatively few African Americans in the South were attracted to communism or to socialism. Neither tradition nor structure existed upon which these ideologies could be built. Many more found in Christian radicalism a vision that inspired them to act and also resonated with some white Christians. Others preferred the nationalist dimensions of separatism, albeit not its accommodationist aspects, and recognized with Washington the need for African Americans to run their own organizations and build up their own independent communal life. Thus the debate over ends and means that divided African Americans in the South at the turn of the century returned with the civil rights era. This time southern Jews paid more attention, listening for those Black voices with which they agreed as well as those they opposed. The end of colonialism in Africa inspired many African Americans, much as the establishment of the State of Israel—and especially Israel's military victory in 1967—inspired many southern Jews. Yet few found the parallels

sufficient to lead to cooperation. Despite efforts to exclude communists from participation in civil rights organizations, left wing radicals often were the whites most willing to champion an egalitarian society and to oppose racism. Those Jews most drawn to the southern struggle to create an egalitarian society usually were alienated from their religion. They were eager to erase ethnic, religious, and racial differences among Americans. In making common cause with African Americans, most Jewish activists in the South discarded their Jewish identity, seeing it as largely irrelevant to their struggle for social justice. Thus these marginal Jews rarely served as a bridge between southern Jews and southern Blacks.

Economic, political, and social changes altered the character of both the Jewish and African American experience in the post-civil rights South. Racial tensions diminished after 1975. Segregation ended in its legal and state-supported forms. Black political power materialized. Population grew due to migration from other states. Urbanization and a booming economy created a growing pie of opportunity. Certainly, it is easier to be an African American or Jew in the South at the end of the century than it was at the beginning. Opportunities once closed to Blacks due to their skin color and to Jews due to their religion are now available. Both Jews and Blacks can appreciate some of the region's virtues. Remigration rates of educated northern Blacks to the South indicate the powerful draw of a strong economy and a pleasant way of life, not marred by state-sponsored oppression. "I'm moving South for the same reasons my father came here from Mississippi," Taylor Wilson, a Black electrician from Chicago explained. "He was looking for a better way of life."<sup>49</sup> Often college-educated, the new Black migrants achieve higher incomes than native-born residents and are virtually at a par with southern whites in similar occupations.<sup>50</sup> Jews, too, have settled in the region in such numbers that the South now exceeds the Midwest in its percentage of American Jewish population.<sup>51</sup> Among the thousands of Jewish newcomers to Atlanta in the 1980s, few probably had ever heard of Leo Frank, and some settled in Marietta, now a suburb of Atlanta, unaware of its bitter history. Local grocery stores now stock Passover supplies in the spring instead of photographs of Frank's lynching.<sup>52</sup> Some Jews have even discovered the South to be their new promised land and are putting down roots, giving up the wandering spirit for a blessed sense of security.<sup>53</sup> Others carry a bit of soil of the homeland with them when they are forced to live up north, symbolic of the southern ways they cherish and hope to impart to their children.<sup>54</sup>

Continuities with the old days also remain. Inequalities between Blacks and whites endure, perpetuated by social and economic patterns as resistant to change as the old segregated society. "Ownership of property, land, and private businesses remains a central part of the American Dream of success, a dream that has eluded millions of Blacks," Robert Bullard observed.<sup>55</sup> Segregation itself, no longer legal but still present in fact, continues to nurture two separate societies divided by race. The Black church is still one of the most powerful institutions within the community and ministers are influential leaders, despite modest inroads made

by Islam. African Americans retain an independent communal structure and a diverse and variegated community that includes many types of organizations ranging from modest rural cooperatives to well-established colleges and universities. However, these now coexist with Black participation in civic endeavors, especially in the larger cities, so that the Black community divides some of its energies between its own internal world and white society, as the Jewish community had done earlier in the century.

Southern Jews are still more likely to join a congregation than northern Jews and they often retain a deep identification with romanticized white southern history and society. Although assimilation, intermarriage, and conversion have affected more of them than northern Jews, most southern Jews will admit or assert that they never personally experienced antisemitism. Reflecting on his youth in Newport News, Virginia, growing up during the civil rights era in "a home where the Sabbaths and holidays were marked with festive meals and observances, and where the State of Israel was placed at the very center of our consciousness," David Ellenson described the South he experienced as "far removed from that of the Ku Klux Klan and the nightmares and fears Northern Jews have of the South. Indeed, I do not recall encountering even one overt incident of antisemitism." He loved history and the heritage of Virginia: "George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson—all of them were figures actively present in my life...." Yet there was another side to his experience:

For me, as a Jewish boy in the South, the lonely days were not confined to Sundays. I was in the South and I partook of and was informed by its heritage and manners—but as a Jew I was not of it. As I look back upon my childhood and think of my many Jewish friends from that time, I am amazed how many of them do not seem to have experienced it as I did. For them, Virginia is home. For me, it is also a place of intimacy. More profoundly, it is a place of alienation. Part of me felt I never really belonged.<sup>56</sup>

Despite many changes, there lingers a sense of marginality to Jewish experience in the South. Jews live in a world they did not make.

African Americans are helping to change the South in the late twentieth century in ways that both Washington and Du Bois would have welcomed. Although it is rare to encounter among African Americans the kind of romantic attachment to white southern myths that exists among Jews, many southern Blacks recognize the South as their home even with its bitter history of racism. Despite identification with very different southern traditions, Blacks and Jews have drawn closer together in recent years through shared visions of a future that might preserve the best attributes of southern society—its "lack of pretension, honesty in relations to others, loyalty to one's family and friends, and self-confidence in one's worth and one's values."<sup>57</sup> The separate paths remain separate, but they converge more often than in the past and there is less ambivalence on such occasions.



## Notes

I am grateful to Mark Wagner for his diligent research assistance.

1. August Meier and Francis Broderick, "Introduction," *Negro Protest Thought in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Francis L. Broderick and August Meier, American Heritage Series (Indianapolis, 1965), xix-xxi.
2. Booker T. Washington, "Atlanta Exposition Address" in *Negro Protest Thought in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Francis L. Broderick and August Meier, American Heritage Series (Indianapolis, 1965), 4-5.
3. W. E. Burghardt Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903, repr.; Greenwich, CT, 1961), 48, 51.
4. Georgia's *Atlanta Constitution* criticized it as "the thought of a negro of northern education who has lived among his brethren of the South, yet who cannot fully feel the meaning of some things which these brethren know by instinct—and which the southern-bred white knows by a similar instinct—certain things which are by both accepted as facts." Quoted in Saunders Redding, "Introduction," in *The Souls of Black Folk*, x.
5. George A. Davis and O. Fred Donaldson, ed., *Blacks in the United States: A Geographic Perspective* (Boston, 1975), 65.
6. Quoted in Mark H. Elovitz, *A Century of Jewish Life in Dixie: The Birmingham Experience* (University, AL, 1974), 85-86.
7. Deborah Dash Moore, *To the Golden Cities: Pursuing the American Jewish Dream in Miami and L.A.* (New York, 1994), 32; Stephen J. Whitfield, "Blood and Sand: The Jewish Community of South Florida," *American Jewish History*, 82 (1994), 73-96.
8. Sarah S. Hughes, "The Twentieth Century," "Don't Grieve After Me," in *The Black Experience in Virginia 1916-1986*, ed. Philip Morgan (Hampton, VA: Hampton Institute, 1986), 66.
9. William Cohen, *Black Mobility and the Southern White Quest for Racial Control 1861-1915* (Baton Rouge, LA, 1991), 298.
10. Davis and Donaldson, *Blacks in the United States*, 30-37.
11. Robert D. Bullard, "The Lure of the New South," in *In Search of the New South: The Black Urban Experience in the 1970s and 1980s*, ed. Robert D. Bullard (Tuscaloosa, AL, 1989), 7.
12. David R. Goldfield, *The Promised Land: The South since 1945* (Arlington Heights, IL, 1987), 23-24, 40, 133.
13. Bullard, "The Lure of the New South," 5.

14. "Over the half-century since World War II, ... defense contracting has produced a new economic map of the United States," that resembles a gunbelt. "The southwestern states, Texas, and the Great Plains make up the holster; Florida represents the handcuffs ready to be slipped on the wrists of the villains; New England is the bullet clip." Ann Markusen, Peter Hall, Scott Campbell and Sabina Deitrick, *The Rise of the Gunbelt: The Military Remapping of Industrial America* (New York, 1991), 3-4.
15. Goldfield, *The Promised Land*, 40, 133; Davis and Donaldson, *Blacks in the United States*, 54-61.
16. Bullard, "The Lure of the New South," 7.
17. Ira M. Sheskin, "The Migration of Jews to Sunbelt Cities," paper presented at Sunbelt Conference, Miami, 1986, 1, Table 12; "Metropolitan Atlanta Jewish Population Study: Summary of Major Findings" (February 1985), 2-3.
18. Eli Evans, *The Lonely Days Were Sundays* (Jackson, MS, 1993), xxii.
19. For a brief description of the socioeconomic structure of the Jewish community in Miami, see Moore, *To the Golden Cities*, 64-67.
20. Hughes, "The Twentieth Century," 75.
21. Clifford M. Kuhn, Harlon E. Joye, and E. Bernard West, *Living Atlanta: An Oral History of the City, 1914-1948* (Athens, GA, 1990), 10.
22. Hortense Powdermaker, *After Freedom: A Cultural Study in the Deep South* (1939, repr.; Boston: Atheneum, 1968), xix.
23. Chalmers Archer, Jr., *Growing Up Black in Rural Mississippi: Memories of a Family, Heritage of a Place* (New York, 1992), 65.
24. Alfred O. Hero, Jr. "Southern Jews," in *Jews in the South*, ed. Leonard Dinnerstein and Mary Dale Palsson (Baton Rouge, LA, 1973), 231.
25. David and Adele Bernstein, "Slow Revolution in Richmond, Va.: A New Pattern in the Making," in *Jews in the South*, ed. Dinnerstein and Palsson, 254.
26. Theodore Lowi, "Southern Jews: The Two Communities," in *A Coat of Many Colors: Jewish Subcommunities in the United States*, ed. Abraham D. Lavender (Westport, CT, 1977), 100-107, quote on 100.
27. Marvin Braiterman, "Mississippi Marranos," in *Jews in the South*, ed. Dinnerstein and Palsson, 355, 357. For a recent example of such attitudes, see Marshall Goldberg and Jeremy Mindich, "Letter from Mississippi," *Forward*, 2 (December 1994), 1, 5.
28. E. Franklin Frazier, *Black Bourgeoisie* (New York, 1957), 195-238.

29. Melvin I. Urofsky, "Preface," in *"Turn to the South": Essays on Southern Jewry*, ed. Nathan M. Kaganoff and Melvin I. Urofsky (Charlottesville, VA, 1979), xii.
30. Ronald L. Bern, "Utilizing the Southern Jewish Experience in Literature," in *"Turn to the South": Essays on Southern Jewry*, ed. Kaganoff and Urofsky, 155.
31. Raymond Arsenault, "Charles Jacobson of Arkansas: A Jewish Politician in the Land of the Razorbacks, 1891-1915," in *"Turn to the South": Essays on Southern Jewry*, ed. Kaganoff and Urofsky, 56, 70.
32. Archer, *Growing Up Black in Rural Mississippi*, 26.
33. Harvard Sitkoff, *A New Deal for Blacks: The Emergence of Civil Rights as a National Issue*, volume 1: The Depression Decade (New York, 1978), 133-36, 249-63, 269-95, quote on 330-31.
34. Sit-ins sponsored by CORE in Miami in 1959 in which Jews participated to desegregate lunch counters in downtown department stores neither set a precedent for the Greensboro student sit-ins that stimulated hundreds of such actions in the spring of 1960 nor inspired the students to adopt the tactic. Jews actually appeared on both sides of the Miami struggle: as CORE activists and as the owner and managers of the department store. Moore, *To the Golden Cities*, 171-72. On their lack of influence, see Goldfield, *The Promised Land*, 95.
35. The bombs occurred in Miami, Nashville, Jacksonville, Birmingham, and Atlanta. Robert G. Weisbord and Arthur Stein, *Bittersweet Encounter: The Afro-American and the American Jew* (Westport, CT, 1970), 137. Another set of synagogue bombings took place in 1967 in Atlanta, Charlotte, and Gastonia, North Carolina, and Gadsden, Alabama; a bomb also exploded at the house of Rabbi Perry Nussbaum of Jackson, Mississippi. Nussbaum supported integration. Leonard Dinnerstein, *Antisemitism in America* (New York, 1994), 190.
36. Lenora E. Berson, *The Negroes and the Jews* (New York, 1971), 121.
37. Martin Luther King, Jr., "Letter from a Birmingham Jail," quoted in Goldfield, *The Promised Land*, 107.
38. Steven Hertzberg, *Strangers Within the Gate City: The Jews of Atlanta, 1845-1915* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1978), 217, 221.
39. Ronald H. Bayor, "Race, Ethnicity and Political Change in the Urban Sunbelt South," in *Shades of the Sunbelt: Essays on Ethnicity, Race, and the Urban South*, ed. Randall M. Miller and George E. Pozzetta (New York, 1988), 129-32; Beverly Hendrix Wright, "New Orleans: A City That Care Forgot," in *In Search of the New South*, ed. Bullard, 67-73.
40. Robert G. Weisbord and Arthur Stein, *Bittersweet Encounter*, 32.
41. Quoted in Dinnerstein, *Antisemitism in America*, 198.

42. Powdermaker inquired "into possible differences in attitudes between the Christian and Jewish people in the vicinity. Neither observation nor the results of the questionnaire [administered to the sisterhood of an area synagogue] gave evidence that there was any difference." *After Freedom*, xx.
43. Kuhn, Joye and West, *Living Atlanta*, 12.
44. Quoted in Elovitz, *A Century of Jewish Life in Dixie*, 84.
45. The Leo Frank case has attracted a lot of scholarly attention because "in it the central conflicts of early twentieth-century southern history erupted," as Nancy MacLean has argued. See her essay, "The Leo Frank Case Reconsidered: Gender and Sexual Politics in the Making of Reactionary Populism," *Journal of American History* (December 1991), 917-48, quote on 918. I have quoted from Steven Hertzberg, *Strangers Within the Gate City* 202-15, quotes on 205, 215. See also Leonard Dinnerstein, *The Leo Frank Case* (New York, 1968).
46. Quoted in Weisbord and Stein, *Bittersweet Encounter*, 72.
47. Quoted in Dan T. Carter, *Scottsboro: A Tragedy of the American South* (New York, 1969), 235.
48. Carter, *Scottsboro*, 254-59, quotes on 258-59; see also James Goodman, *Stories of Scottsboro* (New York, 1994).
49. Quoted in Goldfield, *The Promised Land*, 216.
50. Bullard, "The Lure of the New South," 6.
51. Barry A. Kosmin, Sidney Goldstein, Joseph Waksberg, Nava Lerer, Ariella Keysar, Jeffrey Scheckner, *Highlights of the CJF 1990 National Jewish Population Survey* (New York: Council of Jewish Federations, 1991), 21-26.
52. Hertzberg, *Strangers Within the Gate City*, 222.
53. Goldfield, *The Promised Land*, xi.
54. Evans, *The Lonely Days Were Sundays*, 332-33.
55. Robert D. Bullard, "Conclusion: Problems and Prospects," in *In Search of the New South*, p. 164.
56. David Ellenson, "A Separate Life," paper forthcoming in *Jewish Spiritual Journeys*, ed. Lawrence Hoffman and Arnold Jacob Wolf (New York, 1996), 2-3, 5.
57. Abraham D. Lavender, "Shalom Y'All: Accent on Southern Jewry," *Contemporary Jewry*, 3:2 (Spring/Summer), 41.