

The Intersection between Civil Rights organizations in South Carolina and the support of the American Friends Service Committee.

On July 16, 1955, the Orangeburg Freedom Movement, called for the desegregation of the public school system in many South Carolina cities and towns. White Citizens Councils grew as a result of the efforts of organizations like the Orangeburg Freedom Movement, to compel the state of South Carolina to enforce desegregation laws. The White Citizens Councils, dedicated in keeping the status quo, vowed to keep all institutions separate but unequal throughout the nation's South.¹ Peaceful assemblies of well-dressed African Americans in the city of Orangeburg challenged businesses owned by White Citizens Council members as well as whites who had generally been indifferent or antagonistic to the plight of its colored citizenry.²

Nearly six months before the famous Montgomery Boycott, many counties in South Carolina had been ground zero in the fight for school desegregation. The city of Orangeburg became one of the first major battle ground for social change. Many black citizens freely signed petitions requesting that the white leaders comply with their demands for social progress among the races. When the names of African Americans who signed a petition to end segregation were published in several newspapers, the White Citizens Council leaders reacted by punishing

¹James L. Felder, *Civil Rights in South Carolina*, (Charleston & London: History Press, 2012), 91; Robert Cook, *Sweet Land of Liberty? —The African-American Struggle for Civil Rights in the Twentieth Century*, (London & New York: Longman, 1998) 88, 91; Cecil J. Williams, *Out-of-the-box in Dixie: Cecil Williams' photography of the South Carolina events that changed America* (Orangeburg, SC: Cecil J. Williams Photography/Publishing, 2010), 12, 119.

²Felder, *Civil Rights in South Carolina*, 91-92; "Human Relations council faces Integration Task," *Progress-Index*, Sun, Nov. 27, 1955.

African Americans in the South Carolina cities of Elloree, Orangeburg, and Summerton, and Sumter.³

In Elloree, a town in Orangeburg County, many African Americans, who supported the petition for social change, either voluntarily left their homes or were forced out of them by white landlords who advocated racial segregation. Burgess Butler and James Shivers, local residents of Elloree, had to vacate their homes with less than a week's notice. John A. Haigler faced foreclosure on his property unless he paid his mortgage in ten days after receiving notification. Haigler was spared foreclosure, because Victory Savings Bank, a black owned financial institution, came to his rescue and paid his mortgage.⁴ Victory Savings Bank had additional financial backing from the NAACP, and predominately white organizations from the North, which allowed the lending institution to extend credit to numerous African Americans.⁵

In spite of such economic support, the White Citizens Council hoped to subdue the African American's resolve to be treated as equal citizens by firing the relatives of signers of the petition. The white supremacist group fired African American teachers like Grace Richburg, a native of Clarendon County, after her father-in-law J. Haskell Richburg supported the petition. The September 17, 1955 edition of the *Pittsburgh Courier* quoted Mrs. Richburg as saying, "I don't know what I will do...My husband Joe, is a teacher, too, and he also signed the petition...we are afraid he will lose his job."⁶ At a city owned public utilities department,

³"S.C. Teacher Loses Post," *Pittsburgh Courier*, Sat, Sep 17, 1955.

⁴*Ibid.*

⁵American Friends Service Committee Incorporated, Minutes, Board of Directors (Philadelphia, PA.: American Friends Service Committee, May 2, 1956), 6.

⁶"S.C. Teacher Loses Post," *Pittsburgh Courier*, Sat, Sep 17, 1955.

Bennie Brown, another supporter of the movement who had five children, lose his job at the store where he worked because “fifty cents was missing and a wall was not clean.”⁷ This rationale for his layoff implied that he was incompetent in the exercise of his duties.

Petitioners who were engaged in commerce, were also refused loans or products that they needed continue day to day affairs of their businesses. The international corporations that used economic pressure to maintain the status quo of racial segregation included such well-known companies as Coca Cola, Globe Dairies, Sunbeam Bread and the Taylor Biscuit Company. When local businessmen and civil rights leaders of Orangeburg, James and Roy Sulton signed a petition calling for the desegregation of the city, the White Citizens Council caused the suspension of the two brother’s credit, which had enabled them to buy auto parts. James and his brother Roy owned Sulton’s Esso Gas Station in Orangeburg, South Carolina and depended heavily on conducting commerce with white businesses. They were later told by an agent of Standard Oil Esso, the company that supplied them with gas, to take their names off the school petition.

James Sulton, however, as one of the leaders of the Steering Committee of the Orangeburg Freedom Movement and president of Orangeburg’s NAACP, never wavered in his resolve to fight injustice. In a 1957 newspaper interview, James Sulton, the former World War II veteran, who performed duties in the Artillery and Quartermaster Corps for the United States of America in the European theatre, was reported to have responded to this request with the following statement: “I knew what I was signing and all the others did too.” Refusing to remove their names from the petition, the two brothers instead transferred their business account to

⁷Ibid.

Victory Savings Bank. Members in the movement to end the practice of segregation, stopped making purchases at local stores in Orangeburg County. Black teachers and well to do women of color boycotted Beckers Department Store, a prominent white Jewish place of business, when they learned that the store cancelled the account of an African American customer who had signed the petition.⁸

In Ellore, African Americans continued to join the NAACP in spite of the fact that the threats and actions of the White Citizens Council affected their own livelihoods. The September 17, 1955 edition of the Pittsburgh Courier reported that “already the pressure of the Councils is backfiring. In Ellore, most of the Negroes are buying their groceries from three Negro Stores. The action places the NAACP, the very organization which the Councils contend doesn’t have the interest of the Negro at heart, in the role of Savior.”⁹ A letter written by, Hassie Mack, the secretary and president of the Ellore branch of the NAACP stated that “At our Sunday meeting about 200 members are determined not to bow to the W.C.C. or sign any Statement to get any help.” Being very organized, African Americans in Ellore were able to order carloads of fertilizers and distribute the farm resources amongst themselves.¹⁰ Some African Americans, who did comply with the demands of the White Citizens Council, had their names removed from the petition, but loss respect from many African Americans and whites alike.¹¹

⁸“S.C. Teacher Loses Post,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, Sat, Sep 17, 1955; Cecil J. Williams, *Out-of-the-box in Dixie: Cecil Williams' photography of the South Carolina events that changed America* (Orangeburg, SC: Cecil J. Williams Photography/Publishing, 2010), 119, 122, 124.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰ Lucile black to Hassie Mack, 19 February 1957, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Part II Box c142, Washington, DC.

¹¹“S.C. Teacher Loses Post,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, Sat, Sep 17, 1955.

Perhaps one of the most heinous acts, perpetuated by the White Citizens Council in order to weaken the Orangeburg Movement leader's resolve for equality, occurred when milk deliveries were discontinued to Mr. and Mrs. Alex Lewis, who had a hemophilic son. Protein contained in milk, was critical for the survival of the Lewis child, who could easily bleed to death without its nutrient saving quality. However, the actions of the Citizens Council did not operate as well as the white supremacist had hoped, because some whites all agree with the actions of the White Citizens Council. A Specialist that treated Mr. and Mrs. Lewis' son, explained: "my first obligation is to my God and my second is to my profession." The specialist continued to treat Lewis even in the face of the segregationist practices against African Americans.¹²

The September 17, 1955 edition of the Pittsburgh Courier, noted, in regard to the African American's involved in the struggle for racial equality, that it was ironic that "a government which will spend millions of dollars to prosecute someone because he read the Daily worker in 1946," which was a news publication associated with communism, "but shows no inclination to investigate a 1955 neo-fascist organization whose stated purpose is to negate the laws of this country by force if necessary." However, the leaders of the Orangeburg Movement's lack of understanding of as to why the United States government's non-involvement in ending racial oppression, did not deter them from continuing grassroots efforts to fight against what they perceived to be America's home grown fascist elements.¹³

The Orangeburg Movement operated on various fronts in African American and white society. The black youth of South Carolina supplied the movement with a robust source of

¹²Ibid.

¹³Ibid.

followers as well as leaders. The older leaders of the Orangeburg Freedom Movement, often helped to mentor young men and women, many of whom would later emerge as civil rights icons, in their own right. South Carolina State College and Claflin University, two historically African American institutions, attracted young people from all over the United States, who eventually came to protest laws that supported segregation. Willis T. Goodwin, president of the Claflin College Chapter of the NAACP, acknowledged how even before the famous Brown decision that ended legal segregation, “Claflin students went into the community in groups and into the community as individuals and made speeches before civic groups, church congregations, parent teacher groups and even used the newspaper boy to distribute mimeographed (sic) materials concerning their right to vote and participate in government.”¹⁴ When twenty-three white firms brought forth economic pressure on African Americans store owners, Orangeburg civil rights leaders, high school students, and college students boycotted the bread and dairy products produced by those white businesses.

In April of 1956, students entered Floyd Hall, South Carolina State Colleges’ dining hall and demonstrated their opposition to the white food companies when they “poured water on their food, trashed it, and left without eating” to support the boycott and to protest food the college purchased from a member of the White Citizens Council.¹⁵ In April 1956, South Carolina State, more than 1,000 students refused to attend classes, after state authorities investigated and questioned the legitimacy of the NAACP on the campus. In the coming years, many of these

¹⁴Willis T. Goodwin to Mr. Herbert L. Wright, 9 April, 1956, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Part II Box c142, Washington DC.

¹⁵“Students Strike at So. Carolina State,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, Sat, April 14, 1956; Cecil J. Williams, *Out-of-the-box in Dixie: Cecil Williams' photography of the South Carolina events that changed America* (Orangeburg, SC: Cecil J. Williams Photography/Publishing, 2010), 129.

young people picketed white stores that they knew supported the White Citizen's Council's racist policies. Willis T. Goodwin observed that "Claflin students have refused to even go into town to buy anything...even the Negro Public school students have refused to eat and drink these products that is furnished them through their Lunch Program."¹⁶ Students of the two educational institutions also were asked by leaders of the movement to have their parents send them clothing so that they would not have to cross the picket lines.¹⁷ Many more African Americans, who were beyond college age, were implored to purchase their clothing through mail order catalogues and not to shop in white own stores.¹⁸ Still, many other students even demanded an end to all oppressive racial practices.¹⁹

African Americans were not alone in their efforts to end the unequal practices associated with racial segregation. Many white organizations in the North supported the struggle for freedom and liberty. Perhaps one of the most significant organizations to support the fight for equal rights in South Carolina was the American Friends Service Committee or AFSC as it was commonly called. The AFSC, composed primarily of white men and women, was founded in 1917. The committee was a Quaker organization that tried to "relieve human suffering and resolve conflicts among individuals, groups, and nations."²⁰ The Rights of Conscience branch of

¹⁶ Willis T. Goodwin to Mr. Herbert L. Wright, 9 April, 1956, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Part II Box c142, Washington DC.

¹⁷"Students Strike at So. Carolina State," *Pittsburgh Courier*, Sat, April 14, 1956.

¹⁸"S.C. Teacher Loses Post," *Pittsburgh Courier*, Sat, Sep 17, 1955.

¹⁹"Negro Students Boycott Classes to Protest probe," *Valley morning Star*, Tues, April 10, 1956.

²⁰Quakers Help Meet Economic Needs in South, handout for immediate release, from the American Friends Service Committee, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Feb, 19, 1957.

the AFSC sought to protect the constitutional and moral rights of all human beings. The Rights of Conscience supported individuals and groups that championed social justice. It was also known to provide “financial aid available to a person, or person, involved in litigation because they refuse to comply with measures which violate their conscientious principles.”²¹ From 1956 to 1957, The Rights of Conscience coordinated its economic and political efforts in the state of South Carolina with the several African American organizations.

Frederick Fuges, a farmer and lawyer from Buck County, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, volunteered his services to work with the American Friends Service Committee’s Rights of Conscience program. Fuges’ job, in the 1950s, was to protect and support minorities as well as whites who took on liberal positions for social change.²² Frederick Fuges frequently worked with African American leaders in South Carolina, which included James T. McCain of Sumter and Walker E. Solomon, who also resided in Columbia. James T. McCain had worked to improve the condition of African Americans in South Carolina long before he began his work with the American Friends Service Committee. From 1946 to 1948, McCain had been president and treasurer of the Palmetto State Teachers Association. In the early 1950s, this predominately black teacher association changed its name to the Palmetto Education Association. The PEA, as it was commonly, called championed racial and gender equality for all teachers, while also developing educational programs for African American teachers and their students.²³

²¹W.E. Solomon to Fred Fuges, 29 May 1956, letter in the hand of the South Carolina Education Association, University of South Carolina, Columbia, South Carolina.

²² “Frederick Fuges,” *Philly-Archives*, March 03, 2000.

²³ John F Potts, Sr., *A History of the Palmetto Education Association* (Washington DC: National Education Association, 1978), 75.

While James T. McCain, a black man, had worked to end racial discrimination in the teaching profession, he eventually lost his position as the principal of Palmetto High School in Mullins, South Carolina as a result of his affiliation with the NAACP.²⁴ In the 1950s, McCain went to work as executive director of the South Carolina Council of Human relations, which tried to promote racial harmony, by “working with about half a dozen local interracial groups across the state.” These groups were composed of “educators, attorneys, churchmen and business leaders.”²⁵ McCain specialized in gaining useful information in racially divided areas across South Carolina and creating cooperation among interracial and interfaith groups.²⁶ Writing to Dr. Helen Amermen, Assistant Director Council for Civic Unity of San Francisco, in a letter dated July 12, 1957, executive secretary of the Palmetto Education Association, Walker E. Solomon noted that McCain, “conducted surveys on the voting strength of Negroes in South Carolina and the attitude of lay persons toward their school programs, the latter survey resulting in the organization of a lay-professional committee in our Association.”²⁷

When McCain became a member of the American Friends Service Committee, he served as liaison between African American farmers in South Carolina and members of the Rights of Conscience Committee program in Philadelphia. By 1957, McCain’s activism had extended

²⁴Ibid, 67.

²⁵“Human Relations Council Faces Integration Task,” *Progress-Index*, Sun, Nov 27, 1955.

²⁶W.E. Solomon to Dr. Helen E. Amerman, 12 July 1957, letter in the hand of the South Carolina Education Association, University of South Carolina, Columbia, South Carolina; Unknown Author, 6 December 1955, letter in the hand of the South Carolina Education Association, University of South Carolina, Columbia, South Carolina.

²⁷Ibid.

beyond the field of education, so much so, that Fred Fuges could write to his American Friends Service Committee associates that, “Jim is known to the Service Committee and a member of the AFSC working party to consider the drafting of a statement on race relations. In addition, the Rights of Conscience program has used Jim to distribute material aids in South Carolina. As a result of our association with Jim we have every confidence in him and in the information which he supplies.”²⁸

In another correspondence, McCain acknowledged the fact that Fred Fuges and the American Friends Service Committee made several shipments of “dungrees and shoes” to African Americans in Orangeburg County. It is evident that the AFSC supplied numerous articles of clothing to African Americans who either boycotted white stores in South Carolina or were too economically impoverished to afford their own clothing. For example, in one of his correspondences, McCain made it known to Fuges that girl shoe sizes 5-6-7-8 were still needed in his community.²⁹ The efforts by which men like James T. McCain and organizations like the American Friends Service Committee to secure badly needed home supplies to African Americans in South Carolina, represented a larger network of concerned American citizens across the country, dedicated to ending racial oppression. As early as December 6, 1955, a letter from an anonymous author, found among the Palmetto Education Association’s records, noted that “At the office of the South Carolina Branch of NAACP, clothing, food, candy, Toys, etc., are arriving daily to help those individuals in Clarendon and Orangeburg counties who are suffering from the economic squeeze that has been brought against them because of the position

²⁸Fred Fuges to Hurford Crossman, 13 March, 1957, AFSC archives, Philadelphia, PA.

²⁹James T. Farmer to Fred Fuges, 6 March, 1957, AFSC archives, Philadelphia, PA.

they have taken on desegregation.” The anonymous author went on to add that “Organizations in Philadelphia Pa., have sent at least 3 tons of food of all description.”³⁰

From the early 1950s to 1959, African Americans farmers in South Carolina declined to about sixty-one thousand to thirty thousand. African American farmers during this period represented a vanishing breed of men and women who produced food, but made up roughly ten percent of the agriculturalist population. James T. McCain played a pivotal role in finding support outside of South Carolina for African American farmers affected by threats to their economic security. Through a correspondence with Fred Fuges, Richard B. Gamble, a member of the Rights of Conscience program, learned of McCain’s effort to create the Sumter Loan and Investment Association. Fuges then attempted to aid the farmers supported by the association through what he termed “Individual sources,” while also supplying an attorney to provide the proper papers for all loans.³¹ In a letter dated February 20, 1957, McCain wrote Fred Fuges stating, “I have received several letters from farmers in the Orangeburg and Clarendon communities asking for help in the way of loans for their crops. Many of these farmers are land owners and will put up their land as securities until all loans are repaid.”

Like the teachers and students in many of the counties, black farmers were also involved in the struggle to end segregation in South Carolina. White owned banks refused to give farmers loans unless the African American farmers put in writing their commitment to denounce school desegregation and the NAACP.³² Fred Fuges learned from James T. McCain that some farmers,

³⁰Unknown Author, 6 December 1955, letter in the hand of the South Carolina Education Association, University of South Carolina, Columbia, South Carolina.

³¹Vera J. Banks, *Black Farmers and Their Farms*, 59th ed. (Washington DC: United States Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, 1986), 2 & 18; Fred Fuges to Dear Friend, 15 March 1957, AFSC archives, Philadelphia, PA.

³² James T. McCain to Dear Fred, 6 March 1957, AFSC archives, Philadelphia, PA.

who refused to sign any statements denouncing segregation or the NAACP, owned their own farms but required funds for fertilizer and seeds. He further informed Fuges that the farmers required about \$4,500.00 to maintain their farms.³³ Because the Rights of Conscience program had not been designed to provide economic assistance, the American Friends Service Committee first sought support from individuals and other organizations interested in the plight of African American farmers in the region.

Other members of the Rights of Conscience program, such as Richard B. Gamble, greatly contributed to networking with other organizations to aid the farmers in their efforts to maintain their farms. Gamble informed the American Friends Service Committee that he would be glad to put some of his savings in Victory Savings bank in South Carolina in order to aid in solving “other problems in the South.”³⁴ The American Friends Service Committee leaders also suggested that the Little River Farm Committee might be able to assist the black South Carolina farmers, using Christian based principals of cooperation instead of the prevalent capitalist practices of the period. In the past, the Little River Farm Committee sponsored efforts to improve the condition of tenant farmers in the southern portion of the United States. This committee had created cooperatives and eventually helped tenant farmers in South Carolina own the land that they cultivated.

In regard to African American farmers, the American Friends Service Committee also suggested that if the Little River Farm Committee took up the task of supporting them

³³ Ibid; K'Meyer, Tracy Elaine, *Interracialism and Christian Community in the Postwar South-The Story of Loinonia Farm* (Charlottesville, University Press of Virginia, 2000), 39, 79.

³⁴ Richard B. Gamble to Rights of Conscience Program, 11 March 1957, AFSC archives, Philadelphia, PA.

economically, the Rights of Conscience program could provide legal services needed to secure loans. Time was of the essence, due to the fact that the farmers needed to purchase their supplies and plant their seeds in 1957 during the months of spring.³⁵ In a March 22, 1957 correspondence, James T. McCain was informed by Fred Fuges that the Little River Farm Committee would provide the farmers with a loan of \$4,500 along with funds for a lawyer.³⁶

Fuges asked McCain to locate a white lawyer who was not part of the White Citizens Council and who also had a history of providing his services to African American clients.³⁷ Taking on this task, McCain contacted attorney Ira Kay, of Sumter, who would later serve as one of many consultants in cases involving African American teachers. Kay, born and raised in New York, who relocated to Sumter, had views that were uncharacteristic of the racial politics associated with most southern whites. In an interview regarding civil rights, Kay admitted: “I wasn’t a fanatic, I didn’t think, but I did have a fairly strong sense of what was right and what was wrong, and what could be defended and what was indefensible.” The New York born Jewish lawyer found civil rights to be a very necessary cause. Kay’s major contribution to the efforts of

³⁵ *1943 Annual Report, American Friends Service Committee* (Philadelphia: American Friends Service Committee, 1943), 17; *1945 Annual Report, American Friends Service Committee* (Philadelphia: American Friends Service Committee, 1945), 16; Hurford Crossman, Fred Fuges, Little River Farm Committee—Assistance to South Carolina, 13 March 1957, AFSC archives, Philadelphia, PA.

³⁶ Fred Fuges, Alan Howe to James T. McCain, 22 March, 1957, AFSC archives, Philadelphia, PA.

³⁷ Fred Fuges to James McCain, 15 June 1956, AFSC archives, Philadelphia, PA.

the American Friends Service Committee lay in his assistance in disbursing loans to black Ellore farmers in an attempt to help them pay off mortgages on their properties.³⁸

After McCain and Kay received \$2500 for the farmers who owned their lands, James T. McCain informed Fred Fuges that “there is still need for those farmers who are renting land to farm with but who do not have the necessary real estate to put up. If these farmers can be helped, they will give a mortgage on their crops and what-ever form equipment they have.”³⁹ With the support of men like Fred Fuges, Ira Kay, and James T. McCain, many African American farmers in South Carolina were able to keep their farms. Besides farms, educational institutions also served as the means by which the White Citizens Council used threats and firing practices in order to maintain racial segregation.

Walker E. Solomon an African American leader, living in Columbia, South Carolina, worked tirelessly to protect African American teachers from various job inequalities as well as the growth of rampant racial discrimination. Solomon assumed the role of executive secretary of the Palmetto Education Association on November 11, 1950. As executive secretary of the Palmetto Education Association, he often met with his executive committee to discuss strategies for aiding black teachers that had lost their jobs as well as programs that might help African American students improve their leadership skills.⁴⁰ Solomon worked as executive secretary of a

³⁸ Ira Kaye to Fred Fuges, 15 April 1957, AFSC archives, Philadelphia, PA.; Fred Fuges, to Mike Yarrow & Tartt Bell, 19 April 1957, AFSC archives, Philadelphia, PA.; Oral history interview with Ira Kaye and Ruth Barnett Kaye. Interview with Dale Rosengarten. Jewish Heritage Collection, College of Charleston, June 15, 1996.

³⁹ James T. McCain to Dear Fred, 6, April 1957, AFSC archives, Philadelphia, PA.

⁴⁰ John F Potts, Sr., *A History of the Palmetto Education Association* (Washington DC: National Education Association, 1978), 83-84.

segregated teacher association, at a time when African American educators faced powerful white educators who sought to undermine their ability to continue to earn a living if those teachers participated in any collective efforts to dismantle the institution of racial segregation.

In 1951, aware of the possible negative impact of desegregation on the employment of African Americans teachers, the Palmetto Education Association (PEA), under Solomon's recommendation adopted a plan to protect teachers from all sorts of intimidation and dismissals. Consequently, the Teacher Welfare Fund was created to protect teacher rights and provide job security by providing black educators with financial support as well as legal representation. Solomon, quite early, realized that African Americans educators needed competent lawyers who would work for the interest of their collective group. He, the PEA, and the NAACP leaders also understood that gains in the African American community in education would sometimes signal great opposition from many white elites in the South.⁴¹ The year 1956 witnessed the dismissal of numerous black teachers in the South Carolina cities of Elloree, Charleston, Orangeburg, and McClellanville. Solomon was determined to do all that he could to protect those teachers from unjust employment policies that dismissed teachers in the words of some segregationist "for their own good."⁴² One of the Palmetto Education Association's greatest test case for teacher rights came from the town of Elloree, South Carolina.

In 1956, twenty four African American teachers at Elloree Training School lost their jobs because they refused to complete a questioner that tested their loyalty as American citizens. Six

⁴¹Ibid. 48.

⁴²W.E. Solomon, to Executive Committee, 16 June 1956, letter in the hand of the South Carolina Education Association, University of South Carolina, Columbia, South Carolina.

of the teachers who refused to resign were fired and eighteen signed resignation forms.⁴³ Legislative act number 741, or the loyalty oath law as it was called, developed as a result of a desire by some white law makers to outlaw all membership in the NAACP. This new South Carolina statute stated that the NAACP through its efforts to equalize American society for all races “disturbed the peace and tranquility which has long existed between the white and Negro races, and has threatened the progress and increased understanding between Negroes and whites...A teacher who is suspected of being a member of the NAACP, must provide a written statement must sign a written oath setting forth their status in that organization. Any person refusing to submit a statement as provided herein, shall be summarily dismissed.” What got the teachers from Ellore Training School in trouble was their refusal to answer questions that went against the NAACP’s desire to desegregate the public schools.⁴⁴ The twenty four African American teachers refused to answer questions that included the following: “Do you think that you qualified to teach an integrated class in a satisfactory manner?.....Do you feel that an integrated school system would better fit the colored race for their life’s work?....Do you feel that you would be happy in any integrated school knowing that parents and students do not favor this system?”⁴⁵

Fred Fuges, who learned about the Ellore case from an article in the New York Times, contacted Frank S. Loescher who was associated with the Fund for the Republic Inc., an

⁴³James L. Felder, *Civil Rights in South Carolina-From Peaceful Protests to Groundbreaking Rulings* (Charleston and London: The History Press, 2012), 56-57.

⁴⁴W.E. Solomon to Mr. Fred Fuges, 29 May 1956, AFSC archives, Philadelphia, PA.

⁴⁵ Tarrt Bell, Fred Fuges, & South Carolina Teachers, 31 May 1956, AFSC archives, Philadelphia, PA.

organization that sought to clarify problems that democracy faced in solving the ills of society. Loescher, who also served as an American Friends Service Committee board of directors, became very aware of the case.⁴⁶ Allan Howe, an assistant to the Rights of Conscience program received from Charleston, South Carolina's Clerk of the Courts, a copy of the Ellore case known as *Bryan v. Austin* No. 5792, which was filed in the U.S. District Courts by Thurgood Marshall and Lincoln C. Jenkins Jr., a lawyer based in Columbia, South Carolina, on behalf of the Ellore teachers.⁴⁷ Fuges directed a letter about the case to George Mitchell of the Southern Regional Council, Inc. The Southern Regional Council had been created to help people avoid racial violence, while steering people toward a path to racial healing. It was George Mitchell who informed James T. McCain about the plight of the African American teachers.⁴⁸ Palmetto Education Association executive secretary Walker E. Solomon learned from James T. McCain of the Ellore teacher's plight. Solomon also learned about the A.F.S.C.'s Rights of conscience program. Writing Fred Fuges, Solomon wondered if a suit that resulted on behalf of the Ellore Teachers, would receive from the A.F.S.C. the much needed financial assistance.⁴⁹

Fred Fuges, eventually, contacted Harold Fleming of the Southern Regional Council, Inc. The Southern Regional Council was an organization that was formed by African Americans and

⁴⁶Fred Fuges to Frank S. Loescher, 31 May 1956, AFSC archives, Philadelphia, PA.

⁴⁷Alan Howe to the Clerk of the Court, 25 January 1956, AFSC archives, Philadelphia, PA.

⁴⁸Fred Fuges to Frank S. Loescher, 31 May 1956, AFSC archives, Philadelphia, PA.

⁴⁹W.E. Solomon to Mr. Fred Fuges, 29 May 1956, letter in the hand of the South Carolina Education Association, University of South Carolina, Columbia, South Carolina.

whites in 1944 to foster racial equality. Harold Fleming, was a white Southerner, who spent most of his adult life promoting the highest aim of democracy and was interested in improving the social condition of all Americans.⁵⁰ Fuges conferred with Fleming regarding the case of the Elloree Teachers.⁵¹ After contacting both African American and white leaders, Fuges informed Solomon that “I should appreciate it if you would let me have detailed information on these six individuals. Their individual reasons for refusing to complete the application form, their financial resources, the possibilities of other employment for them and their plans concerning legal action against the school board, are important. You will, of course, want to include the personal backgrounds and professional qualifications of each applicant.”⁵²

In a letter dated May 31, 1956, Fred Fuges wrote Walker E. Solomon informing him that “The Rights of Conscience program of the American Friends Service Committee has at its principal objective the rendering of financial assistance to meet legal fees and court costs in those cases in which the individual has been disadvantaged as a result of taking a position based on conscience.”⁵³ After more information about the specific economic condition of each teacher had been received, Fuges asked James T. McCain to consult a South Carolina attorney who had knowledge of South Carolina law in regard to legal options open to the teachers who had once taught at Elloree Training School.⁵⁴ Meanwhile, Fred Fuges informed his committee,

⁵⁰“Harold Fleming Dies,” *Washington Post*, September 1992; “Harold Curtis Fleming Dies at 70; Tirelessly Fought for Civil Rights,” *New York Times*, September 6, 1992.

⁵¹Fred Fuges to Harold Fleming, 31 May 1956, AFSC archives, Philadelphia, PA.

⁵² Fred Fuges to W.E.Solomon, 31 May 1956, AFSC archives, Philadelphia, PA; W.E. Solomon to Mr. Fred Fuges, 13 June 1956, AFSC archives, Philadelphia, PA.

⁵³ Fred Fuges to W.E.Solomon, 31 May 1956, AFSC archives, Philadelphia, PA.

⁵⁴ Fred Fuges to James T. McCain, 15 June 1956, AFSC archives, Philadelphia, PA.

consultants, and staff that he felt that the A.F.S.C could help the teachers because they appeared to have acted on issues associated with their conscience. Fuges further stated that “The right of free association is one virtually related to efforts to attain equal opportunity for all regardless of race, religion or national origin. This case would therefore appear to be in an area with which Friends ought to be concerned.”⁵⁵

In a correspondence dated June 16, 1956, Walker E. Solomon informed his executive committee that the Ellore case was being studied by the National Education Association Defense Commission, the Department of Teacher Information and Job security, and the Rights of Conscious Committee of the American Friends Service Committee.⁵⁶ The Palmetto Education Association hired attorney Lincoln c. Jenkins, Jr., to support the Ellore teachers in court as well as to confer with the NAACP’s legal staff. It was Jenkins, who had been first sought after by the former teachers, who sent Fuges the information requested regarding the legal operations of the South Carolina courts.⁵⁷ Thurgood Marshall, one of the lawyers who in 1954, successfully argued and won the Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka Kansas case, also got involved in the Ellore case. His office also furnished lawyers to work on a case for the six teachers who had refused to resign from their teaching positions. Marshall was aware of the fact that the PEA with Solomon at the helm, would “bear the expenses of court costs and whatever fee will be

⁵⁵Fred Fuges to Committee, Consultants and Staff, 12 June 1956, AFSC archives, Philadelphia, PA.

⁵⁶W.E. Solomon to Executive Committee, 6 June 1956, letter in the hand of the South Carolina Education Association, University of South Carolina, Columbia, South Carolina.

⁵⁷Mrs. B. F. Bailey to Mr. Fred Fuges, 2 July 1956, letter in the hand of the South Carolina Education Association, University of South Carolina, Columbia, South Carolina.

necessary for a local attorney who will work with our attorneys.”⁵⁸ Marshall later inquired as to the possibility that Fuges’ organization might be able to provide financial assistance to the teachers who no longer had jobs.⁵⁹

In a later correspondence, Fuges explained to Marshall that he required a statement from the national chapter of the NAACP about the support of the six teachers by other agencies. He also informed Marshall that more detailed information about their individual financial situation was required before monies could be dispensed.⁶⁰ Fuges also explained to Solomon that the American Friends Service Committee refrained from providing legal assistance at the appellate stage of a case, and that they did not want to duplicate the efforts of other organizations.⁶¹ Eventually, Solomon went personally to confer with Roy Wilkens, the then acting executive secretary of the national chapter of the NAACP. The national chapter of the NAACP could offer only \$600 to help two of the Elloree teachers who “were unable to get teaching jobs elsewhere this year” to get scholarships for advanced study in college.”⁶²

In a letter dated October 1956, Fred Fuges explained to NAACP executive the secretary that “the amount of funds that we have available for economic assistance is much smaller than

⁵⁸ Thurgood Marshall to Mr. Fred Fuges, 17 July 1956, AFSC archives, Philadelphia, PA.

⁵⁹Thurgood Marshall to Mr. Fred Fuges, 23 July 1956; Fred Fuges to W.E. Solomon, 24 July 1956, AFSC archives, Philadelphia, PA.

⁶⁰Fred Fuges to Thurgood Marshall, 26 July 1956, AFSC archives, Philadelphia, PA; W.E. Solomon to Mr. Fred Fuges, 27 July 1958, letter in the hand of the South Carolina Education Association, University of South Carolina, Columbia, South Carolina.

⁶¹ Fred Fuges to Files, 7 August 1956, AFSC archives, Philadelphia, PA.

⁶²John a. Morsell to Miss Barbara Moffatt, 9 January 1957, AFSC archives, Philadelphia, PA

our legal counseling fund. As a result we look pretty carefully at the economic situation of applicants for assistance.” Consequently, Roy Wilkins and Walker E. Solomon were required to grant Fuges additional information that might influence his decision regarding financial aid for the teachers.⁶³ After the NAACP provided some funding for the teachers, civil rights activists Ella J. Baker and Bayard Rustin, implored George Willoughby, a member of the Committee for the Rights of Conscience, to help raise \$1,600 to assist these teachers in retooling their academic skills.⁶⁴ George Willoughby wrote to Fred Fuges and attached Ella J. Baker and Bayard Rustin’s letter with his correspondence. Willoughby’s letter in part stated that “this might well be a valid call upon the committee’s suffering fund.”⁶⁵ Walker Solomon again wrote Fred Fuges informing him of the specific financial problems that Ellore teachers were experiencing. Additionally, Solomon enclosed actual letters from some of the teachers involved in the non-reelection at the Ellore Training School.⁶⁶ Solomon, known and well respected for his ability to organize large groups and win support from large donors, sent Mrs. Keitt’s brief letter to Fred Fuges. Frazier H. Keitt, one of the teachers that refused to resign her position at the Ellore Training School and was fired by her superintendent, had explained her dire situation to Walker E. Solomon and Fred Fuges.

Fuges learned from Mrs. Keitt’s letter that she had no other sources of income and had, “no other employment in sight.” She went on to state in her letter: “I am married, one

⁶³Fred Fuges to Mr. Roy Wilkins, 2 October 1956, AFSC archives, Philadelphia, PA.

⁶⁴Ella J. Baker & Bayard Rustin to Mr. George Willoughby, 6 November 1956, AFSC archives, Philadelphia, PA.

⁶⁵George Willoughby to Fred Fuges, 12 November 1956, AFSC archives, Philadelphia, PA.

⁶⁶W.E. Solomon to Mr. Fred Fuges, 13 December 1956, letter in the hand of the South Carolina Education Association, University of South Carolina, Columbia, South Carolina.

dependent. Helped support my mother and my father. My father is an invalid. Also sending a niece to college.” She also explained to Solomon and Fuges about her defiance against the wishes of her supervisor when she added the following statement: “I did not fill the application form because my answers would not have been favorable toward the trustee board. To answer such questions would be against professional ethics. I feel that it would most certainly have some moral affect between the community and other members of the profession. Since the Statement Department issued certificates without designating children to be taught, it would discredit what they are doing designating children to be taught, it would discredit what they are doing, if I should say I am not qualified to teach in an integrated school. The beginning of the past school term we were told that unless we thought as they (the trustee board) did we would not be employed the coming year. To answer said questions would infringe upon one’s citizenship.”⁶⁷

Testimonies such as Keitt’s convinced Fuges and the American Friends Service Committee to provide the teachers with funds that would help them to pay their bills until they either found employment or until they reentered college to pursue higher degrees.⁶⁸ Frazier H. Keitt, for example, received two hundred and twenty-five dollars from the committee that was dispersed to her and the other ex-teachers from the American Friends Service Committee by Walker E. Solomon. In February 11, 1957, Keitt wrote to Solomon and stated that, “I wish to express my deep appreciation to the American Friends Service Committee for the check

⁶⁷Statement from Mrs. Frazier H. Keitt, No Date, AFSC archives, Philadelphia, PA.

⁶⁸John A. Morsell to Miss Barbara Moffatt, 9 January 1957, AFSC archives, Philadelphia, PA.

received. I am very grateful to you also for your kindness. Yesterday was spent paying bills. Thank you and the American Friends Service Committee.”⁶⁹

Solomon eventually received more monies from the American Friends Service Committee in the spring of 1957 in the amount of \$1,050 to benefit the six ex-teachers. Solomon also secured \$3,600 from the committee for two Ellore teachers who wanted to do graduate work. Robert Carmichael, one of the teachers in graduate school eventually received a Master’s degree in Biology from Columbia University. That same teacher later was employed at Benedict College, a historically African American institution, located in Columbia, South Carolina.⁷⁰ Charles Davis, the principal of Ellore Training School, who supported the teachers in their quest for justice, and who had also been fired, was hired to be a representative of the American Friends Service Committee in High Point, North Carolina. Davis was also compensated with \$750 for the suffering that he endured after been dismissed from his job as principal.⁷¹

As a result of numerous correspondences, Palmetto Education Association executive secretary, Walker E. Solomon, got the impression that the American Service Committee would pay the entire cost of the case.⁷² The American Friends Service Committee had specific rules when it came to providing money for potential civil liberties cases. However, Fred Fugues

⁶⁹Mrs. Frazier H. Keitt to Mr. W.E. Solomon, 11 February 1957, letter in the hand of the South Carolina Education Association, University of South Carolina, Columbia, South Carolina.

⁷⁰Fred Fuges to W.E. Solomon, 12 March 1957, AFSC archives, Philadelphia, PA.

⁷¹Fred Fuges to Charles Davis, 12 March, 1957, AFSC archives, Philadelphia, PA.

⁷²W.E. Solomon to Mr. Fred Fuges, 19 March 1957, letter in the hand of the South Carolina Education Association, University of South Carolina, Columbia, South Carolina.

clarified the position of his organization by stating in a letter that, “I would suggest that you frame a request on behalf of the Ellorete teachers for funds to cover the legal expenses in connection with the pending appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court. I would suggest further that a specific dollar amount be broken down to show what portion of the total will be allocated to attorney’s fees and what will be required for printing and other miscellaneous court costs. If you are able to submit this at least several days in advance of May 20th I shall present it to the full Committee on that date.”⁷³ Alan Howe, assistant director of the Rights of Conscience program, learned from a personal visit from Solomon that “the primary responsibility on the direction of the legal case at this point and is providing the necessary counsel without charge to Palmetto. NAACP is not, however, making any funds available.”⁷⁴ In other words, it was expected that the Palmetto Education Association would pay for the court case. After careful consideration, Walker E. Solomon was informed by Alan Howe that, “the Rights of Conscience Committee decided at its June 17, 1957, meeting to make a grant in the amount of \$1,000 for fees and costs in connection with the above case.”⁷⁵ The Rights of Conscience Committee, under the auspices of the American Friends Service Committee, agreed to cover the cost for the case being fought in the United States Supreme Court. By July 9, 1957, the American Friends Service Committee had contributed to several thousands of dollars to support six of the former teachers from the Ellorete Training School, in the capacity of either economic or legal aid.⁷⁶

⁷³Fred Fuges, to Walker E. Solomon, 18, April 1957, AFSC archives, Philadelphia, PA.

⁷⁴Alan Howe, to Committee, Consultants and Staff, 14 May, 1957.

⁷⁵Alan Howe, to W.E. Solomon, 19 June, 1957, AFSC archives, Philadelphia, PA.

⁷⁶W.E. Solomon to Mr. Fred Fuges, 9 July 1957, letter in the hand of the South Carolina Education Association, University of South Carolina, Columbia, South Carolina.

The case of the Elloree teachers went through the low courts in South Carolina, until reaching the Supreme Court with Attorney Lincoln C. Jenkins, Jr and NAACP lawyers Jack Greenberg and Thurgood Marshall defending the teachers.⁷⁷ Before the United States Supreme Court made its ruling, the South Carolina General Assembly repealed the loyalty ban (legislative act number 741), which had been tested in the lower courts by the Elloree teachers.⁷⁸

The new law required “That all applicants for public employment shall list the organizations to which they belong” but no longer states that to belong to a given organization warrants dismissal from one’s employment. In spite of the change in the law passed by the South Carolina legislatures and approved by the governor, the Palmetto Education Association, the NAACP, and their supporters decided to appeal their case to the U.S. Supreme Court. The highest court in America ruled that the case was moot, given the fact that the statute had been taken off the books. The case was returned to the special U.S. District Court in -Charleston. In place of the old law came a new law. The new law, or act number 324 as it was called, stated that employees had to list all associations that they had joined. The new law, however, did not make it illegal to join the NAACP.⁷⁹ However, the fear of reprisals by the leadership in the

⁷⁷James L. Felder, *Civil Rights in South Carolina*, (Charleston & London: History Press, 2012), 91; Robert Cook, *Sweet Land of Liberty?*, —*The African-American Struggle for Civil Rights in the Twentieth Century*, (London & New York: Longman, 1998), 57.; W.E. Solomon, to C.H. Yarrow, 26 July 1957, letter in the hand of the South Carolina Education Association, University of South Carolina, Columbia, South Carolina.

⁷⁸James L. Felder, *Civil Rights in South Carolina*, 57.

⁷⁹James T. McCain, “Power Structure Jubilant Over The Outcome of the Elloree Teachers Case (Columbia, South Carolina: S.C. Council on Human Relations, Excerpt from Report For June 1957) ; Jane D. Samon, interviewed by Terence Johnson, Columbia, SC, United States, June 10, 2008. Jasper Salmond, interviewed by Terence Johnson, Columbia, SC, United States, May 27, 2008; Doris Mack Ruff, interviewed by Terence Johnson, Columbia, SC, United States, May 21, 2008

public school system continued to keep African American teachers from disclosing the fact that many of them were members of the NAACP.⁸⁰

Many of the Ellore Training School teachers who went to court, later found it rather difficult to find employment. In fact, so many of the twenty-one teachers out of twenty-four teachers experienced hardships and even emotional stress due to the fact that school leaders were so afraid of hiring men and women who had fought the white dominated legal system and won.⁸¹

Conclusion:

The Orangeburg movement was a grass roots effort that lasted for more than fifteen years and arose out of a genuine need to enforce the famous 1954 Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas decision. When the Federal Government hesitated to make states like South Carolina tear down its wall of segregation, African American businessmen, farmers, ministers, merchants, students, and teachers organized themselves around one major goal. The leaders of the Orangeburg movement used their First Amendment's right to assemble and make it known to the white public that people of African descent would no longer accept racial apartheid in their public schools. African American activists in Orangeburg counties, which included the city of Orangeburg and the town of Ellore, used their economic power to make white business owners

⁸⁰Milton Kimpson, interviewed by Terence Johnson, Columbia, SC, United States, 2007; Jane D. Samon, interviewed by Terence Johnson, Columbia, SC, United States, June 10, 2008; Doris Mack Ruff, interviewed by Terence Johnson, Columbia, SC, United States, May 21, 2008

⁸¹Mary Solomon, interviewed by Terence Johnson, Columbia, SC, United States, 2007; Agnes H. W. Burgess, interviewed by Terence Johnson, Columbia, SC, United States, June 2007; Doris Mack Ruff, interviewed by Terence Johnson, Columbia, SC, United States, May 21, 2008.

change their racist politics to support the desegregation of schools. In time, the movement spread to such South Carolina counties as Summerton and Sumter.

African Americans in South Carolina suffered a host of economic reprisals at the hands of white businessmen and white employers who desired to keep the status quo associated with segregation. Perhaps the two groups that fought the hardest and had more to lose in terms of their own economic stability, were African American farmers and teachers. These members of the work force did not struggle against the agents of segregation alone. African American educators, like executive director of the South Carolina Council of Human relations James T. McCain and Palmetto Education Association executive secretary Walker E. Solomon, coordinated their efforts with NAACP lawyer Thurgood Marshall and NAACP executive secretary Roy Wilkins to get financial assistance and legal backing for civil cases that might be brought into court. These men also consulted with white leaders in the North, such as American Friends Service Committee director Fred Fuges and staff member Frank Loescher.

From 1955 to 1957, African American leaders coordinated their efforts with the American Friends Service Committee to aid the grass roots movement that spread out all over South Carolina's racially divided landscape. The collective struggles of African American and white organizations for racial equality succeeded in weakening entrenched segregation laws that had fostered an unequal cultural landscape in America.

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