

CHAPTER FOUR

TOMS AND BOMBS

THE CIVIL RIGHTS STRUGGLE IN DAYTONA BEACH

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By the time my wife and I moved to Daytona Beach in 1980, gone were the “white” and “colored” signs and other vestiges of enforced segregation that defined Florida’s race relations during the Jim Crow era. Blacks and whites now attended the same public schools, shared the same restaurants, movie theaters, bathing beaches, and played together in the same municipal parks, playgrounds, and golf courses. Even some residential areas were integrated, and several white students attended the historically black Bethune-Cookman College (now Bethune-Cookman University), where I joined the history faculty.

Yet beyond these tangible signs of racial progress lay continued racial inequality, discrimination, and separation. It did not take long for me to realize that my new home’s Old South past was not entirely dead. In Daytona Beach in 1980, the per capita income of African Americans was only 45 percent of whites’, and the black poverty rate stood at nearly 39 percent while that of whites was 15 percent. The black business district adjacent to the college, which had thrived during the Jim Crow era, lay decimated.¹ A few days after my arrival, I entered the local hardware store seeking a household item and was told by the white attendant that the store did not carry it, but that I might be able to find the item “over in niggertown.”

In 1981, my wife and I moved into Fairway Estates, a quiet, mostly white, middle-class development that bordered on Daytona’s municipal golf course.² Adjacent to Fairway Estates was the black residential community formerly known as Waycross, one of three African American neighborhoods in Daytona that dated back to the early twentieth century.

Since our property bordered the golf course, my neighbors and I could walk directly onto the course, but the residents of old Waycross could not. A chain link fence, topped with barbed wire, stood between the course and Waycross residents. Furthermore, there were no through streets connecting old Waycross and Fairway Estates. In essence, these two adjacent neighborhoods symbolized Daytona's racial divide in 1981. Much of Daytona's segregationist lifestyle remained intact during the post-civil rights era.

A quarter century later, many of these Old South patterns remain in place. My wife and I yet live in Fairway Estates, and still no roads connect our development with old Waycross; the chain linked fence remains, topped with barbed wire in sections. And while Fairway Estates today is more integrated than in 1981, overall, Daytona Beach neighborhoods remain racially segregated. Out of the seventy-six Florida cities with populations of over 25,000, Daytona Beach ranks as the sixteenth most residentially segregated. Equally telling, the poverty rate for Daytona's blacks, who comprise almost one-third of the city's population, is over twice that of whites.³

The continued divisions along the conventional Old South fault lines demonstrate the limitations of change wrought by the struggle for civil rights in Daytona Beach. The following pages will explore that struggle by examining its evolution and impact, thereby providing clues as to the origins of Daytona's contemporary pattern of race relations. Arguably, Daytona Beach shares many Old South, New South, and Down South attributes with other communities in Florida. Therefore, an analysis of its civil rights struggles will help place into context the evolution of race relations elsewhere in the Sunshine State.

Compared to other communities in the South, Daytona Beach enjoyed a reputation for racial moderation, and its black community possessed a relatively high level of self-confidence and political activism during the decades preceding the modern civil rights movement. This reputation originated during the Reconstruction era, when Daytona was founded. Most pioneering white residents came from former abolitionist strongholds of the North, including Ohio, New York, Michigan, and Massachusetts. White abolitionist John Milton Hawks, a New Hampshire native who spearheaded a colony of several hundred freedmen just south of Daytona after the Civil War, remarked in 1887 that "the spirit of the white citizens of East Florida toward colored people in general, is so much more just and fair, that for such citizens to emigrate from South Carolina to this region is like escaping from slavery to a land of freedom."⁴ Well into the 1890s, several of Daytona's more prominent African Americans owned homes and shops alongside whites in the center of town.⁵

African Americans played an integral part in developing this frontier community from its inception in 1870. Two black men, John Tolliver and Thaddeus Gooden, were

among Daytona's twenty-six electors who voted to incorporate the town in 1876. Tolliver played an important role in Daytona's early development, receiving several contracts from the town council to build roads, including a large section of Ridgewood Avenue, which later became the Dixie Highway (U.S. Route 1). Gooden worked at the Palmetto House, Daytona's first tourist hotel, and was one of two black delegates elected to the Republican Party's county convention in 1884. Northern influence in Daytona continued with the arrival of Flagler's East Coast Railroad in 1888, which made the town accessible to affluent winter visitors. Howard Thurman, the renowned black theologian who was raised in Waycross during the early twentieth century, concluded that the moderating influence of these turn-of-the-century snowbirds "made contact between the races less abrasive than it might have been otherwise."⁶

The presence of Mary McLeod Bethune and her school also helped temper racial discord. In 1904, Bethune founded the Daytona Educational and Industrial Training School for Negro Girls in Midway, the most business-oriented and progressive of Daytona's three black neighborhoods. The school appealed to moderate elements in the white community by stressing domestic and industrial training and "Negro uplift," a formula successfully employed at Booker T. Washington's Tuskegee Institute. Bethune won over many whites who were suspicious of black education by inviting them to come to her school and see "The Booker T. Washington Idea of Education Demonstrated." She even procured the blessings of the city council. After receiving a letter from Bethune in 1905, the council unanimously approved a resolution endorsing Midway's new educational institution.⁷

In 1923 the school merged with Cookman Institute of Jacksonville to form the co-educational Bethune-Cookman College (B-CC). The college became "an oasis in the desert of segregation" during the first half of the twentieth century. In addition to acquiring support from Daytona's white moderates, Bethune provided leadership and inspiration to the town's black community. Howard Thurman noted that, "the very presence of the school, and the inner strength and authority of Mrs. Bethune, gave boys like me a view of the possibilities to be realized in some distant future."⁸

Although continued northern influence and the positive impact of Bethune and her school caused Daytona's racial climate to remain milder than most Florida cities during the early twentieth century, its color line nevertheless hardened during those years. Almost all African Americans were relegated to three adjacent neighborhoods, all located west of the Florida East Coast Railroad and running south to north: Waycross, Newtown, and Midway. Also, blacks were limited to minor roles in town politics, and spasms of violence occasionally pierced the city's veneer of racial civility. In 1907, a black man was lynched in Daytona and his body paraded through the streets as a warning to "uppity darkies."

During the early 1920s, the Ku Klux Klan routinely strove to intimidate potential black voters in Daytona, marching on Bethune's school the night before the 1920 elections after discovering that she was instructing her students on how to vote. On March 3, 1922, just four days before municipal elections, 106 Klansmen in full regalia paraded down Daytona's main thoroughfare as thousands lined the route. In testimony to the bravery of Daytona's African American community and to the influence of the city's more moderate white element, Bethune's students and substantial numbers of blacks continued to vote in spite of the Klan intimidation. Apparently, the ongoing influx of northerners imparted a measure of racial toleration in Daytona. Thus, contrary to what transpired in most Florida communities during the Jim Crow era, Daytona's politicians continued to solicit black voters, especially in close elections.⁹

The political clout of Daytona Beach's African American community burgeoned with the election of Mayor Edward Armstrong in 1927. A white grocer originally from St. Louis, Armstrong was elected mayor of the newly consolidated Daytona Beach by establishing a biracial coalition of voters. In all but two of the years between 1927 and 1937, Armstrong and his allies on the city commission controlled the municipal government with the aid of black voters. To boost turnout in elections, Armstrong employed black ward heelers who canvassed and distributed literature in the three African American neighborhoods. His principal contact in the black community was businessman Joe Harris. Nicknamed "Daytona's black Mayor," Harris was the most powerful of several black politicians assisting Armstrong in African American districts. Armstrong rewarded his black supporters by building playgrounds and swimming pools in their neighborhoods, paying the funeral expenses of indigent families, and most significantly, by providing patronage in the form of city jobs.¹⁰

Armstrong had left a lasting legacy of empowerment and high self-esteem among black Daytonans that few African American communities in the Old South experienced prior to World War II. Yvonne Scarlett-Golden, a two-term mayor of Daytona Beach (and the city's first black mayor) whose father chauffeured for Armstrong, recalled that "very few blacks feared whites in Daytona Beach. There used to be a saying among [white] people: 'We don't want to deal with those blacks in Daytona. They have too much power.'"¹¹

The strength of Daytona Beach's political machine and the benefits blacks derived from it diminished with Armstrong's death in 1938. The late mayor's fearsome political juggernaut became fragmented after his passing, and the city commissioners who had allied with him soon faced formidable challenges from reform candidates. As Daytona's political machine weakened, the benefits that blacks had derived from it, which included jobs and improved community services, also diminished. Furthermore, as reformers began

to challenge the machine for control of city hall, it became apparent that black Daytonans would now pay a heavy price for their long-term loyalty to the machine. Most reformers viewed Daytona's black community as the machine's most loyal block and therefore sought to marginalize its influence.

It was not only city reformers who thwarted black aspirations. The machine bosses upheld Old South traditions of racial segregation and the exclusion of blacks from public office. Before the war, given the unquestioned pervasiveness of segregation and white political dominance, blacks Daytonans tolerated its subordinate status within the political machine. However, this arrangement no longer proved satisfactory after the war as blacks voiced new demands for equal status. Once black Daytonans began seeking public office and racial integration, they met with unbending resistance from reactionary political bosses steeped in the racial notions so characteristic of Dixie. Thus, as Daytona Beach entered the modern civil rights era, its black citizens could rely on neither white reformers nor machine bosses for assistance in their struggle for equality.

Discontent among African Americans with the racial status quo quickened during and after World War II. Wartime jobs provided blacks with greater economic security, and service to their country gave them an undeniable claim to equal citizenship. Returning to a South determined to uphold white supremacy, blacks resolved to assert their newfound pride and establish a New South free of racial barriers.¹² While black Daytonans joined African Americans elsewhere in realizing economic gains during the World War II and postwar years, the economic disparity between blacks and whites remained enormous. In Daytona Beach the percentage of blacks holding skilled or professional jobs increased from 11 to 15 percent between 1940 and 1950. However, by 1950 white Daytonans were more than three times as likely to hold such jobs as blacks. In 1949 the median income of black families and unrelated individuals stood below \$900, compared to over \$2,000 for whites. Low wages for black males meant that black women often had to work to support their families. From 1940 through the 1950s, approximately half of the black women in Daytona Beach worked for wages. In contrast, only about one-quarter of white women earned incomes during those years. Similar to Florida at large, fully three-fourths of the African American women working in Daytona Beach at mid-century toiled in low-end service jobs, mostly as domestics.¹³

Pride among black Daytonans soared on March 17, 1946, when Jackie Robinson took the field at City Island Ball Park for the Montreal Royals, a minor-league team affiliated with the Brooklyn Dodgers. This marked the first integrated professional baseball game in the United States in more than fifty years. Dodger owner Branch Rickey had chosen Daytona Beach as the spring training site for the Royals because of the city's reputation

for racial moderation, and because he had received assurances from the mayor and city manager that Robinson would be welcomed at City Island Ball Park as long as the municipal segregation ordinances and customs were obeyed. Thus, black baseball fans had to cheer Robinson from the Jim Crow stands, and while his white teammates roomed in a whites-only hotel, the Robinsons stayed at the home of Duffrin and Joe Harris, an influential couple in Daytona's African American community (as noted earlier in this study, Joe Harris, dubbed Daytona's "black Mayor," had been the leading black politico in the Armstrong machine). The following spring Robinson integrated major-league baseball after being called up by the Brooklyn Dodgers.¹⁴

Jackie Robinson's appearance proved inspirational to blacks in Florida's most famous beach town. As thousands filled the "Negro section" of City Island Ball Park and other black spectators crowded behind the right field foul line to cheer their hero, many in the crowd must have wondered whether integration could be moved from the playing field to everyday life.¹⁵ Daytona Beach now seemed poised for meaningful racial uplift, but would it occur? Would the city embrace a bona fide New South posture or adopt Down South delaying tactics meant to preserve white privilege?

Imbued with a new sense of pride and a determination to challenge generations of white supremacy, black Daytonans stepped up their political activities after the war. As noted, African Americans had comprised as much as one-third of Daytona Beach's registered voters in the halcyon days of the Armstrong machine, but their numbers dwindled following the mayor's death in 1938. In 1944 only about 18 percent of Daytona's registered voters were black, but then the percentage rose, so that by the end of 1946 blacks comprised 20 percent of the city's electorate, and one-third by 1948.¹⁶

Much of the surge in postwar voter registration stemmed from the Supreme Court's groundbreaking decision in *Smith v. Allwright* (1944), which mandated that the Democratic parties in the southern states admit blacks. In Florida the Court's ruling stimulated black voter registration, primarily on the peninsula where the influx of white northerners had tempered traditional Deep South opposition to enfranchising African Americans—a complex story in itself and one not yet fully contextualized in the literature.¹⁷ Also, the ruling precipitated a massive realignment in political party registration among blacks—a realignment that accelerated when President Truman ran for election in 1948. Truman had introduced anti-lynching and anti-poll tax legislation in Congress, and had issued executive orders desegregating the armed forces and banning discrimination in federal employment. Now able to register as Democrats, black Floridians switched party allegiance in droves. All of the estimated 20,000 black Floridians registered in the two major political parties in 1944 were Republicans. By November 1948, approximately 90 percent of the

more than 85,000 registered black Floridians were Democrats, up from 67 percent just 30 months earlier. An even more dramatic realignment occurred in Daytona Beach, where over 98 percent of the more than 3,700 registered blacks were Democrats by November 1948, up from 77 percent the previous year.¹⁸

The *Allwright* decision and Truman's election bid gave impetus to the massive voter-registration drive organized by the Florida Progressive Voters League (FPVL), a state-wide black political association. Organized after World War II, the FPVL was the brainchild of Harry T. Moore, president of the Florida Conference of the NAACP from 1941 to 1946, and NAACP coordinator for Florida after 1946, until his assassination by Klansmen on Christmas night, 1951. Major partners of the FPVL voter registration drive included the Florida conference of NAACP branches and the Florida Negro Elks Association. The latter was headed by Albert Bethune Sr., son of Mary McLeod Bethune and coordinator of Bethune-Cookman College's vocational school in Daytona. About 10,000 African American men belonged to the Elks, and almost as many African American women joined the Elks auxiliary in Florida. The organization's bylaws required members to register to vote, and the club urged them to register as Democrats in 1948 because "only in this way can we [blacks] have any voice in electing public officials." Albert Bethune's involvement in the Democratic voter registration drive, together with Moore's close attachment to Daytona Beach (he and his two daughters had graduated from Bethune-Cookman College, and the Moores frequently visited the city) help to explain the nearly total conversion of Daytona's black electorate to the Democrats by 1948.¹⁹

The voter registration drive also revitalized African American political activity in the city. About 1,000 city blacks registered as Democrats in the months preceding the May 4, 1948 primary election, and over 70 percent of them voted in the primary. In early October several of Daytona Beach's African American leaders organized the Daytona Beach Citizens League (DBCL), which sought to enhance the influence of blacks in local politics and upgrade community services. Most DBCL organizers were progressive, middle-class blacks, such as church officials, school administrators and teachers, and assorted professionals, including a doctor and an insurance company manager. They chose as their leader Dr. Richard V. Moore, president of Bethune-Cookman College. At one of DBCL's early meetings the organizers addressed approximately one hundred concerned citizens and lamented about the inadequate sewage system, unpaved and unlighted streets, and suspected vote-buying attempts of city officials. The speakers implored their audience to work together and use the ballot to improve community conditions, and to "show them [elected officials] that you can't be bought."²⁰

Following the 1948 presidential election, the DBCL turned its attention to electing

George Engram as the city's first black commissioner. After graduating from Tuskegee Institute, Engram moved to Daytona Beach in 1933, planning to operate a black theater in town. Instead, he found himself barred from the all-white projectionist union. Undaunted, Engram became a certified electrician. After being excluded from the white-only electrical union, he established his own electrical contracting company. The union tried to restrict Engram to black neighborhoods west of the railroad tracks; when he crossed the tracks, union members threw bricks and scrawled "KKK" on his truck.²¹

Like the DBCL, Engram rejected machine rule. As discussed earlier, though the machine had provided considerable patronage and other favors in exchange for black votes, it strictly enforced racial segregation and white political rule, and condoned vote-buying and other corrupt practices. Moreover, the machine's patronage system devolved into a form of debt peonage. Many blacks worked at the city yards, where most non-civil service positions fell to machine loyalists. At the start of each workday, men lined up and white officials selected them for work assignments. It was common practice in Daytona, though of questionable legality, to give paychecks directly to employee creditors rather than to the employees. Former city manager LeRoy Harlow explained the system as it had existed at mid-century: "When payday arrived, the storekeeper came in, got the check, cashed it, took his share, and gave the rest to the employee. In some instances the payroll office made out the check directly to the creditor. . . . In most instances, the creditor got the check without the employee's formal consent by merely presenting evidence that the employee was indebted to him."²² Engram and the DBCL represented a new generation of black Floridians unwilling to tolerate Old South-style corruption and Jim Crow belittlement.

Candidate Engram condemned corruption and promised several improvements for his district if elected, including paved streets, new sidewalks, lights for the Negro baseball field, improved garbage collection, and sewer lines for all residences. Despite these modest objectives, his candidacy generated considerable racist opposition. Pre-election forums traditionally open to all candidates excluded Engram; he also suffered continued harassment. Engram's truck remained a target of abuse and on election eve five high school students tried to burn a cross near his home. Bethune-Cookman president Richard V. Moore received anonymous letters that threatened violence if the college's students actively supported Engram's candidacy. Unfazed, Moore led thirty students to the polls on election day.²³

Engram forced a runoff by finishing a close second in a five-candidate primary election, but lost to the machine favorite in the runoff. In black precincts, white election officials slowed voting by meticulously checking voters' qualifications. Lines were so long that many blacks gave up in disgust and went home. Engram later claimed that many

voted illegally for the machine candidate. Forty years later he remained bitter about the election: "I won the election [but] . . . the political machine controlled things in Daytona Beach. In the runoff they really took me for a ride." After Engram's crushing defeat, no African American would seek public office in Daytona Beach until 1960, and none would be elected until 1965, a full decade after *Brown*.²⁴

Although the city's more progressive black leaders rejected machine rule, they received little support from the white political reformers who viewed the city's black electorate as corrupt supporters and dupes of the political machine. Reform leader Ollie Lancaster Jr., who briefly served as mayor after his election to the city commission in 1950, voiced the concerns of many reformers when he publicly opposed the city-wide election of commissioners "as long as Negro votes could be bought." When a reform majority swept the city commission in 1950, blacks found little cause to rejoice. The new office-holders maintained the city's color line and gerrymandered commission zones to ensure that no precinct contained a black majority. The reformers also instituted new voter registration procedures that required illiterates to be fingerprinted before being allowed to register. Touted as a mechanism to reduce fraud, the fingerprint requirement, in reality, diminished Daytona Beach's black electorate since illiteracy was more prevalent among blacks than whites. Not surprisingly, most African Americans rejected reform candidates. In 1954 machine candidates regained control of the city commission with the aid of 70 percent of the black vote.²⁵ Despite its tradition of racial moderation, Daytona Beach offered little in the way of meaningful uplift for its African American citizens.

Thus, at a time when the 1954 *Brown* decision held out hope that Jim Crow's demise was at hand, black Daytonans were marginalized by a die-hard racial caste system, with neither the machine politicians nor the self-styled reformers supporting their aspirations. While the machine thwarted efforts to elect blacks to political office and loosen the city's rigid color line, white reformers—those who presumably could have transformed Daytona Beach into an enlightened, New South berg—viewed most black Daytonans as vice-ridden and corrupt allies of the city's old-line political bosses. Consequently, attempts by Daytona Beach's African American community to improve its status met with stiff resistance from white machine politicians and reformers alike. Only after considerable grassroots organization, protests, and perseverance would black Daytonans be able to make headway against the city's exclusionary beliefs and practices.

One of the first victories over blatantly racist city policies was achieved by the West Side Business and Professional Men's Association (BPMA). Organized in 1948 by several of Daytona's progressive-oriented black business leaders, the BPMA promoted the interests of African American businessmen and professionals. The next year, however, it became

embroiled with the city over the newly constructed Peabody Auditorium. This impressive facility, built for whites only, stood in stark contrast to the Spartan auditorium the city constructed for blacks, which contained half the number of seats and cost less than one-tenth as much to build as the Peabody. Shortly after the Peabody opened, the BPMA brought suit against Daytona Beach in federal court, claiming that since the auditorium was built with public funds, blacks had the same right to be admitted as other citizens under the Fourteenth Amendment's equal protection clause. Contesting the suit, the city argued that because African Americans had their own auditorium, Daytona Beach had no legal obligation to admit them into the Peabody. Ultimately, the BPMA stunned the city by winning the suit. In June of 1952, the Federal District Court in Jacksonville ordered that blacks be allowed to attend public performances, with separate but equal accommodations provided for both races.²⁶

Grudgingly, city and auditorium officials admitted blacks to the Peabody, but the facility remained strictly segregated. Even more galling to African Americans than the Jim Crow arrangement was their admission being limited to city-sponsored events. Most programs at the auditorium were private, and with its manager openly discouraging the contracting parties from admitting blacks, they were allowed into only one performance during the Peabody's first nine months of operation following the court's ruling. Mary McLeod Bethune then interceded, informing the commissioners that "Negroes have gone a long way when they accept a segregated section, but it is unfair for the auditorium to be rented to people when Negroes cannot attend." The protests of the nationally acclaimed leader, now close to eighty years old, produced the desired result. City manager LeRoy Harlow instructed the Peabody's manager not to discourage contracting parties from allowing blacks to attend events at the auditorium.²⁷

Despite this small step forward, other challenges to racial bias proved more problematic. In 1950, the BPMA and a newly formed organization, the South Side Voters League, petitioned the county commission to set aside a section of the beach for black bathers. The commission refused the request. The year prior to *Brown*, Daytona's Negro PTA delivered a petition to the School Board, signed by 600 residents, protesting inferior facilities as well as double and triple sessions at the city's black schools. Although the School Board indicated it would correct the matters, it adopted a classic Down South delay attitude, and by 1960 African American organizations still were protesting the "deplorable" conditions at several black schools, with one having "only one toilet, no electricity, and no drinking water."²⁸ Thus, as Daytona entered the 1960s, the city's heritage of racial moderation had done little to enhance its prospects for a smooth and rapid transition to New South racial behavior.

Grassroots efforts against entrenched racial exclusion and segregation in Daytona gained momentum following the *Brown* decision, as everyday citizens of the city's long-suffering black community rose up anew to protest Florida's traditional caste system. As John Dittmer has documented in *Local People: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi*, many important civil rights battles were primarily fought at the grassroots level, and this certainly proved to be the case in Daytona Beach. During the summer of 1955, 125 blacks petitioned the city commission to clarify the municipality's policy on the use of the beach by people of color. After the commission failed to respond, several African Americans approached the beach, only to be ordered away by police proclaiming that "the city would lose revenue by letting them swim." In June 1956, as the Montgomery, Alabama, and Tallahassee, Florida, bus boycotts energized African American communities nationwide, seventeen black Daytonans petitioned the city commission to integrate the municipal golf course. And in December the Citizens Welfare League (CWL), one of more than twenty civil rights-oriented organizations to form in Daytona Beach between 1945 and 1970, met to discuss the case of Louise Wade, a black laundry worker who was verbally abused, kicked, beaten, and fired by her white employer. This incident induced twenty-one laundry workers to quit their jobs in protest against "inhumane treatment and low wages." A month later, several black community leaders objected to the creation of segregated junior colleges in the city, an outgrowth of Governor LeRoy Collins's vision of an expansive statewide network of two-year colleges, albeit on a segregated basis.²⁹ Clearly, in these initial post-*Brown* years, the old order of segregation in Daytona came under increasing attack. The combination of federal actions, a tourist-conscious civic leadership eager to avoid racial discord, and most importantly, an aroused black community, now ensured that interaction between the city's blacks and whites was destined to enter a new phase.

As similar desegregation efforts in the South intensified, white efforts to preserve the old order increased as well. In the wake of *Brown*, most southern officials adopted a "massive resistance," approach to integration. Subsequently, White Citizens Councils, dedicated to maintaining racial segregation, formed throughout the South, and in 1956 seventy-seven of 105 Southern Congressmen and nineteen of twenty-two southern Senators signed the "Southern Manifesto," which vowed allegiance to upholding Jim Crow. Both Florida Senators and six of Florida's eight Congressmen signed the declaration, including Albert S. Herlong Jr., who represented Daytona Beach. In June 1956, militant segregationists in Florida formed a statewide Citizens Council based in Tallahassee, and issued a Florida version of the Southern Manifesto. The following month a Daytona Beach chapter of the Citizens Council formed, drawing about 200 people to its initial meetings.

Three years later massive resistance still engendered strong support, as demonstrated when twenty-four state legislators signed the “Florida Manifesto” while attending the first Daytona 500 car race in February 1959.³⁰

Despite their efforts, integrationists had barely dented Daytona’s color bar by 1960—the beaches, golf courses, schools, and every public facility, with the exception of the buses, remained segregated. The buses had integrated in 1956, probably in response to the successful Montgomery and Tallahassee bus boycotts of that year.³¹ In 1960 Daytona Beach, blacks and whites were born in separate wings of Halifax hospital, grew up in separate residential areas, attended separate schools and churches, played in separate parks and playgrounds, dined in separate restaurants, and were even interred in separate cemeteries. Blacks could neither set foot unmolested on “The World’s Most Famous Beach,” nor check into the hotels that catered to the throngs of northern tourists visiting the famed resort. No blacks lived on the peninsula, or “beachside,” where they were only welcomed as laborers and maids. Whites were two and a half times more likely than blacks to have skilled or professional jobs, and almost three-quarters of all black women employed were “service workers,” mostly maids. Twice as many whites as blacks owned their own home or automobile, and fewer than half of black households possessed a telephone compared to more than 85 percent of whites. An extensive academic survey conducted during the early 1960s concluded that although the city’s blacks were “better off” than those in many other communities, “their position relative to white people was the same. They were socially and culturally inferior. Their problems were those that faced Negroes all over the nation—under education, low income, occupational inferiority, inadequate housing, and pervasive segregation.”³² Almost a decade after *Brown*, the day when Daytona Beach could be deemed a New South metropolis still appeared distant.

Although socioeconomic disparities between blacks and whites would persist during the 1960s, there were momentous federal and local efforts—against enormous obstacles—to dismantle Florida’s Jim Crow edifice. By the end of the decade much of that edifice had, indeed, crumbled. The rising tide of protest against segregated public facilities that began with the Greensboro, North Carolina, lunch counter sit-ins in February 1960 quickly spread to other southern cities, including those in central Florida. Within days of the Greensboro sit-ins, nearly identical demonstrations broke out in DeLand, Volusia’s county seat, located only twenty miles west of Daytona Beach. Calls abounded for similar protests in Daytona Beach, and on March 2, twelve Bethune-Cookman College students staged a lunch counter sit-in at the downtown Woolworth’s.³³

However, Daytona Beach’s black elite, consisting of educators, businessmen, church leaders, and political operatives, preferred less confrontational tactics to achieve integra-

tion. The local NAACP chapter opted to organize an economic boycott of downtown department store lunch counters rather than support sit-ins as advocated by aroused Bethune-Cookman students. Meanwhile, the college's president, Richard V. Moore, negotiated behind-the-scenes with the mayor, chief of police, and other city officials to integrate the lunch counters quietly. President Moore convinced these officials that the spectacle of police dragging students out of department stores would damage Daytona's tourist image. Moore and the city leaders reached an agreement in early August of 1960 to conduct peaceful demonstrations whereby small groups of black students would enter four major downtown department stores, sit at the lunch counters and order, be served, and then leave. After five consecutive days of such demonstrations, the *Daytona Beach Morning Journal* reported that the nonviolent "experiment" had been "successful" and that the lunch counters in these stores now catered "to persons of all races."³⁴

Also in 1960, there were renewed attempts to integrate the municipal golf course, where blacks were forbidden from playing until evening. In June 1956, after three blacks had unsuccessfully attempted to play during the daytime, seventeen African Americans petitioned the city commission to clarify its policy. A city spokesman claimed that "there was no set policy regarding the course's use by Negroes, but it's customary on most courses to let caddies play free of charge after 5 p.m." The 1956 protest had failed to alter this practice, but in August of 1960 a local civil rights group, the Social Engineers, sent letters to municipal leaders requesting meetings on the issue. When no response was received, three black leaders attempted to play the course, but were rebuffed by the starter. After appeals by the three at a city commission meeting, the commissioners voted unanimously in early January 1961 to integrate the Municipal Golf and Country Club. The decision irked many white golfers, but it demonstrated nevertheless how city officials would yield to protests that might draw unfavorable state and national attention to their vacation Mecca.³⁵

Despite the integration of the golf course and the four lunch counters, the vast majority of Daytona's public establishments remained segregated. By the late spring of 1963, while the Birmingham, Alabama, confrontation dominated the television news, many black Daytonans lost patience with their community leaders' often-unsuccessful efforts to desegregate facilities through behind-the-scenes maneuvering. After several Bethune-Cookman and Daytona Beach Junior College students were arrested for staging demonstrations at a segregated downtown theater and diner, about one hundred representatives of several religious and community organizations met in May to urge nonviolent protests. They also passed a resolution denouncing the city's failure to immediately desegregate public facilities and end job discrimination.³⁶

Following the meeting a rash of protests broke out in early June, with demonstrators

picketing the segregated lunch counter of a downtown drug store, an all-white movie theater, and a cafeteria. Several black youths were arrested in the demonstrations, which was sensational enough to reach the pages of the *New York Times*. After one week of protests, black leaders agreed to suspend them after Mayor J. Owen Eubank reactivated the city's long-dormant biracial committee, and the president of the Volusia County chapter of the NAACP, Horace Reed, received an invitation to meet with a city commissioner. Little was accomplished during this hiatus, and sporadic demonstrations soon resumed and continued through the fall. At the end of September 1963, the Social Engineer's president and Bethune-Cookman College chaplain, Rogers P. Fair, lamented that only seventeen restaurants and two hotels and motels out of 400 had desegregated, and that "in the area of desegregation Daytona Beach falls far below . . . Cocoa, Orlando, Gainesville, Miami, and falls in the category of Tallahassee, St. Augustine, and similar cities" so indicative of the Deep South. A native of Greenwood, South Carolina, Fair came to Daytona Beach in 1946 at the behest of Mary McLeod Bethune. In 1956 he helped found, and served as president of, the Daytona based Halifax Area Ministerial Association, the first interracial ministerial association in the South. During the early 1960s Rev. Fair led demonstrations that integrated movie theaters and the municipal golf course in Daytona Beach, and his two children were among the plaintiffs in a 1960 federal law suit seeking to integrate Volusia County's public schools.³⁷

Desegregation languished partly because the state laws and directives emanating from Tallahassee assisted local jurisdictions in their efforts to delay or thwart federal integration measures. Rabid segregationists from the panhandle, known as the "Pork Chop Gang," dominated the Florida legislature during the 1950s and early 1960s. Florida's governors during this era proved virtually powerless to challenge segregation with the Pork Chop Gang in control, even if they had been inclined to do so. And only one governor, LeRoy Collins, even hinted that some limited and gradual desegregation should be pursued as a strategy to remake Florida into a New South state. Collins, governor from 1955-1961, and often characterized as a racial moderate, quashed efforts by the legislature to enact extreme anti-integration laws in the wake of the *Brown* decision, but he refused to move aggressively to dismantle Florida's Jim Crow institutions. In contrast, the next three governors, Farris Bryant, Haydon Burns, and Claude Kirk, vehemently opposed integration.³⁸

Fear by Daytona's elected officials and business leaders that integrating the beach and beachside hotels would drive away white tourist dollars also prolonged segregation. One beach hotel in the early 1960s lost customers after admitting blacks, and subsequently closed. As was the case with so many other Florida cities, it took decisive federal action to foil the efforts of die-hard segregationists to preserve the color line. Not until after the

enactment of the landmark Civil Rights Act of 1964 could blacks enjoy the beach, eat in most restaurants, and stay at most hotels and motels.³⁹

Meaningful school integration took even longer to achieve. For years after the *Brown* decision, Volusia County schools remained totally segregated. The Court itself muddied the waters in its 1955 *Brown II* ruling which, instead of setting deadlines, declared that desegregation should proceed at “all deliberate speed.” Tired of a half-decade of Down South delay, forty-five black and white parents, many from Daytona Beach, petitioned the Volusia County School Board in 1960 to obey the Court’s rulings and come up with a desegregation plan immediately; that same year the parents of several black children sued the School Board for failing to develop one. The suit forced the board to institute a program over the next few years that allowed blacks to transfer to white schools under Florida’s Pupil Assignment law. But the law required the child’s parents to appear in person at the school and file a written request for transfer. If admission was denied, the parents could appeal by petitioning the School Board for a hearing. Only if they attended and prevailed at the hearing would black parents be assured that their children could attend white schools.⁴⁰

Implementation of the pupil assignment program resulted in only token desegregation of Volusia’s schools. As of September 1964, just seventy-four black students were enrolled in predominantly white schools in the county. That number rose to 157 in the fall of 1965, but as late as 1969, ten of Daytona Beach’s twenty-four schools remained completely segregated or consisted of more than 90 percent of one race. Widespread school integration did not occur until 1970, and only then after the federal courts had ordered immediate integration in late 1969.⁴¹

In contrast to the gradual and limited integration that occurred in Daytona’s public schools during the 1960s, Daytona Beach Junior College (DBJC) integrated suddenly. Consistent with the dual junior college system established by Governor Collins and the state in 1957, Daytona Beach built all-white DBJC and all-black Volusia County Community College (VCCC). The Civil Rights Act of 1964, as well as growing agitation for racial integration throughout the South that year, prompted the State Division of Community-Junior Colleges to request that counties end the dual two-year college system. The Volusia County School Board responded in May 1965 by ordering VCCC to close, and for all its students to transfer to DBJC. VCCC remained open during the 1965-66 school year so that matriculating students could finish; by the fall of 1966 the black community college had ceased operating.⁴²

Most VCCC administrators and faculty and many black community leaders objected to the terms of consolidation. The college’s president, J. Griffin Greene, warned that the

hasty merger would prove detrimental to many black students who had received inferior instruction “under an unequal dual public school system.”⁴³ Another complaint involved the loss of jobs and the demotion of black professionals that resulted from the merger. Despite the school superintendent’s assertion that 95 percent of VCCC’s personnel would work at DBJC, the Junior College hired only ten of the sixteen black full-time faculty. The remaining instructors were offered positions in Volusia County’s K-12 schools. President Greene, a highly respected educator and leader, was unceremoniously demoted. Given a minor administrative position at DBJC following the black college’s closure, Greene soon retired. Interviewed in 1974, one year after leaving Daytona Beach Community College (formerly DBJC), Greene lamented, “I would have stayed if I had been offered a meaningful vice presidency. However, I could not in good conscience continue to be treated like a ‘Field Hand.’”⁴⁴

The slow pace of integration and its often one-sided implementation were among several disappointments black Daytonans experienced during the 1960s. In 1965, the same year that the federal Voting Rights Act became law, the city commissioners schemed to keep the commission lily white. Obligated by a federal circuit court ruling to dismantle gerrymandered city zones, the commissioners had little choice but to accept a plan that would leave two zones with black majorities. Then, in a blatant move to block the election of black commissioners, the commission voted to switch from single member district to citywide elections. Economic inequality remained a barrier for black Daytonans as well. In 1970 almost 44 percent of Daytona’s African Americans were classified as poverty stricken compared to just 15 percent of whites, and while 64 percent of the city’s white adults possessed a high school degree, only 34 percent of black adults held one.⁴⁵ The racial inequalities that existed reflected both nationwide disparities and the persistence of a Down South delay mentality in Daytona. The unfulfilled promises of the civil rights movement fomented increasing militancy by the late 1960s. National advocates of Black Power issued strident calls for a prompt end to all vestiges of racial injustice.

Black militancy in Daytona Beach found expression with the formation of the Citizens Coordinating Committee (CCC) in 1969. Ostensibly an umbrella organization for Daytona’s disparate civil rights groups, in reality militants dominated the CCC. Local black activist Charles Cherry set the agenda of the CCC. Cherry, who worked as Bethune-Cookman College’s chief accountant and as Volusia County Community College’s business manager during the 1950s and early 1960s, ran for a city commission seat in 1960 (after several attempts he was finally elected to the city commission in 1995). Dissatisfied with the conservative leadership and tactics of the NAACP’s adult branch, Cherry sponsored a Youth Council branch in Daytona in 1963. Organizing students at B-CC and VCCC,

he led several demonstrations against segregated facilities in the city during the early and mid-1960s.⁴⁶

In 1969 and 1970, Cherry utilized the resources of the CCC to his new cause, organizing Daytona's large contingent of poor black workers. When ten black bus drivers, tired of operating old and unsafe vehicles, walked off the job in 1969, Cherry took the lead in forming the Committee for Better Buses, and raised enough money from the community in one day to pay the salaries of the striking drivers for two weeks. Following a citywide bus boycott, the strikers returned to work in January 1970 after improvements to the busses were made. Next, the CCC took up the cause of striking black garbage workers in early 1970. As a consequence of Cherry's appeals, Local 385 of the Teamsters Union intervened in the strike, resulting in Daytona's garbage contractor recognizing the union and signing a contract that provided the garbage men with job security, substantially higher wages, and improved working conditions.⁴⁷

Also in 1970 Cherry and the CCC addressed the plight of Daytona's black maids, arguably the most oppressed of the city's working poor. After conducting a series of interviews, the CCC's *West Side Rapper* (initially called *West Side of the Track*), concluded that the average maid earned \$1.30 per hour and took home \$35 per week. As one maid bluntly retorted, "That's not enough money to pay for bare necessities." One mother of seven children lamented that, "I was laid off last week without any way to feed my kids. . . . Sometimes [my oldest children] have to stay out of school to work. . . . I don't want my kids to stay out of school, but we have to live some way. We have to eat." Cherry's efforts to unionize the maids ultimately failed, and almost twenty years later he reflected on the lack of progress in narrowing the income gap between the races. Speaking on behalf of the large black underclass, he noted that by 1969, "we could go and eat anywhere, go to any hotels. . . . Now we wanted better jobs, improvement in the quality of life. . . .but we don't have any money, so we can't take advantage of these things."⁴⁸

Mimicking the pronouncements of such national Black Power advocates as Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton, Daytona's militants, including Cherry and his mostly young followers, were particularly disparaging of the traditional black leaders who urged gradual legal change and cooperation with the city's white elites. These conservative leaders were soon dubbed "Uncle Toms" by young, more militant blacks who favored confronting racism head-on. As one African American observed, Daytona's black community had divided between "Toms and bombs"—"Uncle Toms" and Black Power militants.⁴⁹

The proliferation of local civil rights organizations during the 1950s and 1960s reflected the intensifying activity of the movement in Daytona Beach, but it also demonstrated that the movement spoke with many voices. Conflicting personalities and egos

among the African American leadership proved divisive, as did opposing stances on key community issues. While city officials and some black leaders praised urban renewal for dramatically improving housing in the black community, critics, including Charles Cherry and the staff of the *West Side Rapper*, charged that thousands of African Americans had been uprooted, with their property falling into the hands of white developers. James “Jimmy” Huger, Daytona’s lone black commissioner and a leading proponent of urban renewal, came under particularly harsh attack from grassroots militants who viewed urban renewal as “Negro removal.” Ironically, Huger was elected in 1965, the same year that citywide elections were instituted in a bid to keep the city commission lily white. But citywide elections meant that Huger needed approval from Daytona’s predominantly white constituency, and his reaching out to them prompted black militants to label him an “Uncle Tom.” School integration also polarized the black community. Although many African Americans viewed segregation’s demise as a momentous victory following a long-fought struggle, many others equated the closure of black schools with the loss of jobs and traditions. School desegregation plans called for African Americans to shoulder most of the burden—black students rather than white students would have to adjust to new, often-inhospitable schools.⁵⁰

The racial violence that had mostly eluded Daytona Beach throughout the 1960s finally erupted in the fall of 1970 with such intensity that it received national media attention. A dispute between black and white students at the newly integrated Mainland High School sparked the unrest. Racial tensions rose at the school after several rock- and bottle-throwing incidents occurred following football games. At the end of October, fights between black and white students broke out on campus, and in early November approximately two hundred blacks walked out of classes. For a few days the situation seemed to improve as students, parents, school officials, and community leaders from CCC, the interracial Advisory Board, and the Halifax Area Council on Human Relations met and discussed grievances. However, violence resumed on November 5 when black youths threw rocks at a gas station and the attendant shot one of them. Crowds then gathered in the neighborhood and began attacking passing cars and police. Over the next few days, racial violence spread to various locations throughout the city, with the police reporting 150 incidents of fire bombings and sniper fire. Believing that the CCC incited much of the violence, heavily armed police surrounded its office and ordered the surrender of its twenty-five to thirty occupants. The police later broke up a protest march on one of Daytona’s main thoroughfares; as reported in the *New York Times*, they arrested nineteen of the approximately 150 marchers, including several CCC activists.⁵¹

A study conducted by the Southern Regional Council (SRC) blamed Daytona’s Old

South-style power structure for much of the racial violence, accusing it of being largely insensitive to the city's racial and economic divisions. The SRC was especially critical of those officials who believed that the city's racial strife could be solved with greater law enforcement, and warned that Daytona's difficulties "are social and political. Solving them by adding more policemen and riot equipment . . . could be disastrous." The council articulated the grievances of many black Daytonans: student dissatisfaction over the closure of black schools and the racism displayed at "integrated" schools, high unemployment, incidents of police brutality, the paucity of blacks in city departments, and the preponderance of blacks in menial jobs. In the wake of the riots, the council urged city leaders to "drop its cocksure attitude and reach out in a genuine effort to improve the lot of Daytona Beach blacks."⁵² But city officials paid little attention to the council's recommendations. As the 1970s progressed, *Brown* retreated from memory, civil rights agitation waned, and Daytona Beach failed to remake itself into an enlightened New South metropolis.

In sum, Daytona's civil rights struggle proved to be unexpectedly arduous and fostered a mixed legacy. In the afterglow of the *Brown* decision, enlightened Daytonans believed their city would forsake Jim Crow and rapidly transform itself into a New South municipality. Daytona's long tradition of relatively harmonious race relations and black political activity, the positive influence of Bethune-Cookman College, a progressive newspaper that supported desegregation, a steady influx of new residents and tourists from the North, and a city leadership determined to preserve the lucrative tourist trade all suggested swift progress. But for several reasons many of Daytona's racially divisive tendencies stubbornly persisted. Reactionary state leadership conspired to delay desegregation, and many local officials, steeped in the Old South mores and folkways, often hindered meaningful change through overt and covert Down South delays. Northern liberal influence was often negated by the concerns of the city's business community that integration would drive away white tourist dollars. Furthermore, traditional black allegiance to the corrupt political machine and long-held beliefs that the black vote was "for sale" hampered the formation of a meaningful alliance between blacks and progressive whites. The actions of civil rights militants during the late 1960s also alienated many whites, including those city officials who "tuned out" legitimate black grievances and relied on the police force to crush perceived violent militants.⁵³

Bethune-Cookman College's role in promoting the goals of the civil rights movement engendered mixed results as well. The college's students, professors, and administrators certainly played important roles in fostering change, ranging from the constructive, often behind-the-scenes desegregation efforts of President Moore and other top officials, to the street protests led by students and faculty. However, as some students and faculty embraced

militancy during the late 1960s, the campus came to be seen by many in the white community as a hotbed of subversive ideas and violent demonstrations. Ironically, black militants viewed Bethune-Cookman as a “bastion of Tomism” because of its moderate leadership and largely conservative, middle class faculty and student body. Thus, the college came under criticism from white conservatives and black radicals alike by late 1969.⁵⁴

In the final analysis, the struggle for racial justice in Daytona Beach proved to be long and, at times, violent, and by the 1970s had achieved only limited success. By the time my wife and I arrived in 1980, the rigid segregation of the Old South had vanished from Daytona Beach, only to be replaced with a less visible but still discernable color line of the Down South variety that has stubbornly persisted into the twenty-first century.

NOTES

TOMS AND BOMBS: THE CIVIL RIGHTS STRUGGLE IN DAYTONA BEACH

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9. Lempel, "The Mayor's Henchmen and Henchwomen," 292-93, 274, 278-79; Leon Litwack, *Trouble in Mind: Black Southerners in the Age of Jim Crow* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998), 13.

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37. "Demonstrations, Negotiations" (editorial), *Daytona Beach Evening News*, June 4, 1963, p. 4; "White, Negro Leaders Call For Truce," *Daytona Beach Evening News*, June 7, 1963, pp. 1, 2; "Negroes Push Drive in Daytona Beach," *New York Times*, June 7, 1963, p. 17; "Negroes in Fla. Suspend Protest," *New York Times*, June 8, 1963, p. 10; "Integration Negotiations Continue," *Daytona Beach Evening News*, June 10, 1963, p. 1; quotation from "Mayor Praised, Racism Hit By Negro Group," *Daytona Beach Evening News*, September 30, 1963, p. 13; "2 Cafeterias Picketed," *Daytona Beach Sunday News-Journal*, October 27, 1963, p. 2A; Leonard Lempel, "Reverend Rogers P. Fair: Champion of Black Equality and Interracial Harmony," *Halifax Herald* 24 (Summer 2006): 2-5.

38. See Dyckman, *Floridian of His Century*, 93-189; David R. Colburn and Richard K. Scher, *Florida's Gubernatorial Politics in the 20th Century* (Tallahassee: University Presses of Florida, 1980), 175-79, 224-28.

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43. Greene quoted in Smith, *Florida's Black Junior Colleges*, 44.

44. "Negro Group Hits Poverty Plan In Schools," *Daytona Beach Evening News*, April 26, 1966, p. 9; Arthur O. White, "The Desegregation of Florida's Public Junior Colleges, 1954-1977," *Integrated Education* 16 (May-June 1978): 35; Smith, *The Magnificent Twelve*, 146-47, Greene quoted on 147.

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49. Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton, *Black Power: The Politics of Black Liberation in America* (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), especially vii-xii; Quotation from Mike Bowler, "Southern Regional Council Report on Daytona Beach," *Daytona Beach Sunday News-Journal*, December 13, 1970, pp. 2-3C.

50. James Huger interview; Bowler, "Southern Regional Council Report."

51. "Game At Memorial Stadium Followed By Rock Throwing," *Daytona Beach Evening News*, October 7, 1970, p. 11; "Rocks Thrown Again," *Daytona Beach Evening News*, October 16, 1970, p. 11; "Police Probe 'Incident' At MHS," *Daytona Beach Evening News*, November 2, 1970, p. 9; "Mainland Classes Suspended For Day," *Daytona Beach Evening News*, November 3, 1970, p. 1; "MHS Pupils In Walkout For 3rd Day," *Daytona Beach Evening News*, November 4, 1970, pp. 1, 12; "MHS Issue In Talk Phase," *Daytona Beach Evening News*, November 5, 1970, p. 9; "Police Ask Cooperation To Ease Race Tensions," *Daytona Beach Evening News*, November 6, 1970, pp. 1, 2; "City Police Close CCC Office," *Daytona Beach Morning Journal*, November 9, 1970, pp. 1, 2; "Police Praised For Keeping Racial Unrest 'Well In Hand,'" *Daytona Beach Evening News*, November 9, 1970, p. 11; "Calm Restored in Fla. City After Weekend Of Racial Strife," *New York Times*, November 10, 1970, p. 51; Button, *Blacks and Social Change*, 90.

52. Quotations from Bowler, "Southern Regional Council Report."

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54. Bowler, "Southern Regional Council Report."