PHILANTHROPY AND RACE RELATIONS IN 1920S CHICAGO

BY

PIRL ATABAY

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE INSTITUTE
FOR GRADUATE STUDIES IN ECONOMIC
AND SOCIAL SCIENCES IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS IN HISTORY

BILKENT UNIVERSITY

THESIS SUPERVISOR
RUSSELL JOHNSON

SEPTEMBER, 1989
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I certify that I have read this thesis and that in my opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for a degree of Masters in History.

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This thesis is a study on the nature of philanthropy and its reflection on improving relations between races in 1920s Chicago. Julius Rosenwald played a pivotal role in helping create links between white philanthropists and a black elite. Chicago’s African American elite consisted of self-appointed leaders whose first and foremost aim was to improve persisting perceptions of blacks by whites. This study aims to bring out the attitudes of leading blacks and whites in working together to improve race relations.
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The following project looks at relations between a group of wealthy white Chicago philanthropists, led by Julius Rosenwald, and middle-class and elite African American self-appointed leaders in 1920s Chicago. Julius Rosenwald played a pivotal role in establishing links between white philanthropists and a black elite. These links served to enhance racial understanding as well as to channel philanthropic contributions towards bettering living conditions for African Americans and improving their institutions. Meanwhile, the middle-class and elite African Americans like Carter G. Woodson, Emmett J. Scott, Arnold T. Hill, A. L. Jackson actively sought to redefine the image of the African Americans in the minds of prominent white Chicagoans. Together this group of black and white Chicagoans worked to better living conditions and quality of life for the African American community. They had little direct relationship with the working-class which they hoped to help, but the argument will show their efforts led to a gradual improvement in relations between whites and blacks. The interaction of these two groups was essential for the creation and progress of African American institutions aiming to help Chicago’s African American community which could not yet financially stand on its own feet. The relations among these community leaders laid the groundwork for changing the manners of both races. White leaders approached blacks with the conviction that blacks had something worthwhile to prove to them. Blacks began to assert their views, needs and wants while they learned to work with these white leaders.

By 1920, race relations in Chicago had reached an all-time low. Chicago’s African-American population reached 110,000, making up almost one fourth of the 450,000 African Americans.

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1 These middle-class and elite African Americans were self-appointed and their relations to the masses of Chicago’s African Americans cannot be defined through the correspondence in the Julius Rosenwald Collection.
Americans who migrated to the North during the same period. After the end of the war, as was common in the rest of the nation where large populations of blacks lived, Chicago race relations fell under a strain. Chicago’s immigrants and blacks had been competing for jobs and living spaces, so some form of conflict among the working-class had already existed. The black migrants from the South came to Chicago to better their living conditions, to have higher paying jobs, and to supply their children with better education. Even though black housing, jobs and educational opportunities in Chicago compared poorly with those the migrants had in the South, blacks’ new standard of living compared favorably with what they had in the South. However, the unexpected influx of the African Americans from the South, coupled with Chicago’s insufficiency in housing for blacks and rising tensions after the end of World War I, led to the riot of 1919.

The riot started on July 17 over three black youth use of an area between two beaches; one patronized by blacks and the other by whites. What started out as a game turned out to be the beginning of a race riot, when a rock hit one of the youth, Eugene Williams, and caused his death by drowning. The riot did not end until July 27, taking thirty-eight lives and wounding 537. In the aftermath of the riot relations between the white and black communities in Chicago began to receive serious attention and the Chicago Commission on Race Relations (CCRR) was formed.

The Commission consisted of prominent whites and blacks who investigated the causes of the riot and looked for ways to improve race relations. Among the African Americans who migrated to the North during the same period. After the end of the war, as was common in the rest of the nation where large populations of blacks lived, Chicago race relations fell under a strain. Chicago’s immigrants and blacks had been competing for jobs and living spaces, so some form of conflict among the working-class had already existed. The black migrants from the South came to Chicago to better their living conditions, to have higher paying jobs, and to supply their children with better education. Even though black housing, jobs and educational opportunities in Chicago compared poorly with those the migrants had in the South, blacks’ new standard of living compared favorably with what they had in the South. However, the unexpected influx of the African Americans from the South, coupled with Chicago’s insufficiency in housing for blacks and rising tensions after the end of World War I, led to the riot of 1919.

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However, they had a common but undefined role that served to uplift the nature of African Americans in the white minds first and foremost.


Tuttle, Race Riot. p. 64
American executive members were community leaders like Robert S. Abbott, owner of the *Chicago Defender*; George C. Hall, medical doctor; George H. Jackson, prominent black realtor; Edward H. Morris, corporation lawyer and attorney for Cook County; Adelbert H. Roberts, state senator; and Lacey Kirk Williams, pastor of the Olivet Baptist Church. African American sociologist Charles S. Johnson served as the Associate Executive Secretary to Graham Romeyn Taylor. Prominent white members of the Commission included Graham Romeyn Taylor, journalist and sociologist; Victor F. Lawson, editor of the *Chicago Daily News*; Edward Osgood Brown, and Edgar Addison Bancroft, lawyers; William Scott Bond, realtor, and trustee of the University of Chicago; F. W. Shephardson, former professor of history at the University of Chicago; and Julius Rosenwald; president of Sears and Roebuck and Jewish philanthropist.

The biracial Commission was appointed to study the riot and its causes and find ways for the Chicagoans to live together. In their report they concentrated on housing problems and suggested protection of blacks using public accommodations. Historian William M. Tuttle studied the 1919 riot and concluded that tensions over living, working, and recreational quarters strained race relations which led to the riot. He criticized Chicago’s Mayor William H. Thompson and Governor Frank O. Lowden for not acting immediately. Tuttle also links the riot of 1919 with the national climate of violence in 1919. Historians agree that where working class Chicagoans were forced to live together or work side by side, perceptions of races toward one another caused problems in housing and recreational areas.

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Rosenwald’s involvement with the Commission signifies the degree to which he was recognized as a friend of blacks. Julius Rosenwald was the single most prominent contributor to improving living conditions for African Americans. He was a Jewish American merchant, president of Sears and Roebuck, and made millions through the Sears and Roebuck mailing catalogues. Being a Jewish American gave him an insight into race prejudice and to the needs of African Americans. Time and time again he pointed out that he thought the African American people needed help more than any other group of people, and he often praised Booker T. Washington for supporting self-help and contributed large sums to Washington’s Tuskegee Institute serving as a trustee. Throughout his life Rosenwald donated $3,004,485 to race relations improving efforts and he helped build 5,000 schools for African Americans in the South. More important than the financial contributions he and his Fund made towards African American work in 1920s Chicago is the fact that he personally served on the directing boards, encouraged other wealthy Jews and gentile Chicagoans to make contributions, and dealt with management problems of African American agencies in which he helped.

Rosenwald’s donations to African American Chicagoans and their institutions started in the 1910s when he pledged to contribute to Young Men’s Christian Association buildings for African Americans. By the 1920s Rosenwald became a trusted friend of African American

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9 Throughout this project the term “race relations” will be used interchangeably with relations between blacks and whites to define a set of attitudes, actions and perceptions prevalent in the society in Chicago throughout the 1920s. Historians generally applied the term race relations to a framework which emphasized “the discriminatory attitudes and behavior of white workers, employers, and the state.” See Joe William Trotter, Jr. “African American Workers: New Directions in U. S Labor Historiography,” in Labor History 35 (Fall 1995) pp. 495-523. The use of the term race relations in this project will the attitudes of black and white leaders who worked together to lay the foundations of better living conditions for blacks.
10 Edwin R. Embree and Julia Waxman, Investment in People: The Story of the Julius Rosenwald Fund. (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1949) p. 18 Jewish philanthropists were the most prominent contributors to improving living standards for blacks in the early 20th century along with Rockefeller, and Carnegie. They
Chicagoans. African American community organizers in Chicago, like Carter G. Woodson, Emmett J. Scott, Arnold T. Hill, A. L. Jackson all had some form of direct relation to Rosenwald. Carter J. Woodson was the second African American who received his doctorate degree from Harvard University. He founded and organized the Association for Negro Life and History in 1915. Even though he did not reside in Chicago, Woodson notified Rosenwald about the Association matters, and Rosenwald contributed to Association work. Emmett J. Scott, the African American secretary-treasurer of Howard University in 1922, served as a private consultant to Rosenwald when Rosenwald needed information on Carter J. Woodson’s character. Arnold T. Hill, organizer of the Chicago branch of National League on Urban Conditions Among Blacks in 1917, reported to Rosenwald about the branch’s work and asked for financial assistance. A. L. Jackson, an African American columnist for the Chicago Defender mentioned Rosenwald in his columns when Rosenwald declared his interest in African American YMCA buildings, and when Rosenwald became a member of the Chicago Commission on Race Relations. Julius Rosenwald or his secretary W. C. Graves actively corresponded with these African American leaders and helped them in financial matters or guided their organizing efforts.¹¹

Following the Chicago Riot of 1919 Rosenwald’s contributions to African American work in Chicago and in the South gained momentum. He became increasingly sought by African American leaders who needed financial assistance for their organizations. Rosenwald’s philanthropic efforts differed from William Chafe’s understanding of the relations between philanthropists and their African American petitioners. Chafe has observed that historically “an attitude of community responsibility toward the Negro” resulted in a

¹¹ Miscallenous letters in the Julius Rosenwald Papers, Regenstein Special Collections, University of Chicago.
"patron-client relationship between white benefactors and black petitioners" and that this relationship posed a pseudo civility on blacks, victimizing them. Chafe concluded that after consenting to meet petitioners' needs, philanthropists usually believed their contributions testified to how well relations were between races. Rosenwald's philanthropic efforts were more businesslike, and far from victimizing his petitioners, his philanthropy helped Chicago's African Americans assert themselves more clearly. Chicago's African American leaders believed that improving relations between races would start by changing the persisting perceptions of blacks by whites, and Rosenwald channeled his contributions toward strengthening elite African American institutions.

Moreover, Rosenwald and his wealthy white aids who wanted to end white prejudice toward African Americans created a web for contributors to come together and help African Americans better their living conditions. Cyrus McCormick, the industrialist who made millions from the mechanical grain reaper, was consulted when the Negro Folk Theater needed financial assistance to begin. William C. Graves, Rosenwald's secretary, discussed the qualities needed to become the secretary for the (CCRR) with Paul U. Kellogg. Grover B. Simpson, board manager of the YMCA of Chicago, and N. W. Harris, a prominent banker and contributor to Chicago YMCA work, stated their belief that Rosenwald's offer to contribute to building African American YMCAs would supply the African American community with the means to start conducting their own community affairs. White cooperation dealing with contributions to African American community work in Chicago highlighted an essential link

in bettering attitudes and perceptions of races toward one another. It was a top to bottom effort, but relations between races would only gradually improve.  

The beginning of the 1920s was tumultuous no less for historians than for participants. The Great Migration, World War I and its aftermath, the riot in 1919 have generated lively discussion among historians of various interests. Race, ethnicity, culture, urbanization, industrialism and gender are topics that draw historians to 1920s Chicago. Chicago is also “the best documented city in the United States during the 1920s and 1930s.” Chicago’s multiethnic and interracial work force drew labor historian Lizabeth Cohen to investigate working-class lives in 1920s Chicago. She pointed out that workers who shared the work floors went back to their own ethnic and racial enclaves once working hours ended. Mass consumption devices like the radio helped different groups like the Poles, Irish, Italians experience “ethnic, religious, and working-class affiliations,” which drastically separated the working-class while making it possible for members to strengthen their community ties. Black and white workers were forced to share living and working areas, but without a working understanding of one another they faced many problems. James R. Grossman studied the nature of the African American migrants from the South and concluded that most of the

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13 The Julius Rosenwald Collection is the common manuscript collection that historians of 1920s Chicago have used. Nevertheless, the Rosenwald Collection also reveals a different way of looking at 1920s Chicago. The collection has an abundance of correspondence between middle and upper-middle class African American leaders, white philanthropists, and white Chicagoans. Other manuscript collections and papers consulted for this project are the Barnett Papers, Young Men’s Christian Association and Young Women’s Christian Association Papers. Correspondence between African American community leaders and white workers dealing with the building of a park, and the correspondence covering discussions about the voting strength of the African American community, from the Barnett Papers take up a significant amount of space in this project. The sections dealing with these issues aim to bring out the attitudes of white officials who experienced a change in the way they perceived the African American community. The YMCA and YWCA Papers also help to show how much cooperation was taking place between the leaders of institutions based on attitudes.


16 Ibid., p. 135.
migrants came to Chicago to improve their living standards, get a better education for their children and practice their political rights more freely.\textsuperscript{17} Historian Thomas L. Philpott made valuable contributions in writing about the living conditions of migrants to Chicago and explained that African Americans were confined to the slums which increasingly became more congested and dilapidated.\textsuperscript{18} Historians of the Black Metropolis in Chicago Horace Clayton and St. Clair Drake wrote about the city within a city in Chicago’s Black Belt where African American migrants and old settlers were forced to live and set up their own institutions because they were excluded from the existing white ones.\textsuperscript{19} In looking at the club movement among African American women in Chicago at the turn of the century historian Anne Meis Knupfer emphasized the role African American women played in shaping their society and argued that they were instrumental in organizing community self-help institutions.\textsuperscript{20}

In documenting the formation of a northern black ghetto Allan Spear discussed the differences over the years between Chicago’s African American elite in the years 1865-1900 and the new leadership through 1900-1915. He concluded that the old elite consisted of “a small group of upper-class Negroes, usually descendants of free Negroes and often of mixed stock, who had direct links with the abolitionist movement” had been dedicated to secure equal rights for African American Chicagoans. The latter group, the one that made up new leadership between 1900-1915 were on the other hand “South Side businessmen, professional men with business interests, and a new breed of professional politician. All of these leaders

\textsuperscript{18}Philpott, \textit{The Slum and The Ghetto}.
were dependent upon the Negro community for support." This project deals with the end of the 1910s and the decade that followed. The 1920s leaders were publishers, columnists, community organizers, who like the leaders until 1900 wanted equal rights for African American Chicagoans but who like the leaders of 1900-1915 worked with wealthy white associates.

World War I gave blacks a new hope about democracy and justice in the United States. Literature on this subject argues that by fighting in the war African Americans gained a new political consciousness and upon their return home they became more assertive. One historian argues that the so-called "New Negro" signified a change in demographics. According to this view as African Americans moved from the Southern rural centers to Northern urban ones their economic conditions, political position, and educational and occupational opportunities improved. Gradually the concept of the New Negro gained acceptance. Other historians bring out the purely intellectual aspects of the New Negro. While doing so they emphasize the rising interest in African American history and folk culture. Gunnar Myrdal calls the emergence of the "New Negro" a movement which covers "the outburst of intellectual and artistic activity and a tendency to glorify things Negro in a creative way." Still others discuss the concept as African Americans' growing militancy and an inclination to fight back. All of the aspects of the "New Negro" are open to observation in African American leaders in Chicago in the 1920s. For example: Carter G. Woodson founded and organized the Association for Negro Life and History in 1915.

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25 Tuttle, Jr. Race Riot. p. 106
Norvell, an African American World War I veteran from Chicago gave authorities a report on what he thought were the needs of the "New Negro."²⁶

It is the differences and relations between the upper classes of both races that this project will investigate, keeping in mind that blacks were becoming increasingly more assertive and that they were less and less deferential. Historians have dealt extensively with the conditions, living standards, and institutions of 1920s Chicago. Nevertheless they have not expanded on the relations between white and black leaders of the period. Middle and upper-middle class African Americans believed that African American Chicagoans deserved a fair chance to improve their living standards. African American leaders tried to establish a connection with white philanthropists and wealthy white Chicagoans and search for ways in which the races could live and work together in peace. Wealthy white Chicagoans and philanthropists responded by directing their resources toward African American leaders' attempts to better living conditions for working class African Americans.²⁷

Chapter one will analyze the letters, published sources, and organizational information and requests composed by African Americans. The first two sections of the first chapter will examine materials originated by individual African Americans. These two sections will deal with individual material reflecting personal experiences as well as individual material addressing public issues. Individual materials show that individual experiences were part of

²⁶ Letter from Stanley B. Norvell to Victor F. Lawson, August 22, 1919, Folder 3, Box 6, Julius Rosenwald Papers, Regenstein Special Collections, University of Chicago. The term New Negro has come up throughout American history whenever African Americans asserted themselves. There were free or runaway slaves before the Civil War who were termed the New Negro. There were black leaders during the Reconstruction who were termed the New Negro. So actually the New Negro did not emerge in the 1920s. New Negro became synonymous with black efforts to gain recognition. It forced a new understanding of the African American race in the white mind. So when references to the New Negro will be made in this project it will be used specifically to define African American leaders' attempts to do something towards improving the understanding between races in Chicago.

²⁷ Unfortunately the lack of working-class African American letters to Julius Rosenwald limited the project in a way that the efforts of the leaders cannot be checked against the improvement of relations between races or
the African American group experience. The third section will look at letters drafted by
different African American agencies and organizations. These letters show that African
Americans actively sought white financial assistance and felt at ease addressing whites when
they were doing something toward the betterment of their community.

Chapter two will explore correspondence between whites concerning blacks. The first
part of the chapter will seek to understand how whites evaluated African American artistic
talents, and their growing political strength. What this section aims to do is to underline the
fact that whites became increasingly aware of individual African American talent and African
American community strength, and that they looked for ways by which they could help
blacks. The second part of the chapter will give examples of how whites observed one
another’s contributions to race relations. This part goes to show that whites wanted to involve
other whites to participate in bettering race relations. The third part of the second chapter will
reveal what white women thought about working with African American women. Up until
this part relations between male leadership is emphasized. This section exposes working
relations between white and African American women.

The third chapter will investigate the conditions and results of goodwill, and the
limited accomplishments of interracial cooperation. In the first part of the chapter housing and
recreational centers for African Americans will form the center of discussion. Restrictions on
housing areas and recreational facilities were a sore point in race relations. The second part
will indicate that interracial cooperation had room for improvement, but were getting better.
Cooperation among races resulted in better care for African American children and the
African American community proved that they were capable of taking on responsibility for

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living standards for the African American community in the 1920s. For this information this project will depend
on secondary sources.
improving their own community. The last part will demonstrate how Rosenwald brought races together and encouraged interracial cooperation.

The outcome of this study is an assessment of the way leaders worked together to improve the understanding between white and African American races in 1920s Chicago. Seeing these relations through interracial cooperation efforts will fill the gap of historians who view 1920s Chicago from the point of industrial workers, and those who detect little improvement in race relations in Chicago throughout the decade. Questions like how much bearing the Commission on Race Relations, its findings, and its suggestions had on changing attitudes and what effects cooperation between races had on growth of African American institutions will be answered.
CHAPTER 1

EARNING RESPECT AND SECURING FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS:
A Rhetoric of Race and Philanthropy

African Americans from the South migrated to Chicago during the war years 1914-1918 hoping for a better education for their children, better paying jobs for themselves, and a safer environment. However, upon arriving in Chicago they found that there were limits on where they could live, work and educate their children. Chicago was not ready for such an influx of Southern migrants. Almost as soon as African Americans began pouring in from the South, Chicago officials, both black and white, gave them warnings about life in Chicago covering everything from public attire to manners in public spaces. It would take some time for the Southern rural migrants to adjust to the Northern urban setting.

After World War I ended, African American veterans, African Americans who supported the troops from the home front through various activities, and those who took jobs in war-time industries, felt that they deserved a portion of the democracy they had contributed to defend. After coming back from defending their country, being reduced to menial workers offended African American soldiers. The competition for the lowest paying jobs increased, black neighborhoods became more congested, and tensions between races resulted in the riot of 1919.¹

Among the higher ranks of society there was a group of leaders who cared to find an answer to bettering race relations. Appointed by the Governor of Illinois, Frank O. Lowden, the Chicago Commission on Race Relations was formed to investigate the reasons for the riot

¹ William M. Tuttle, Jr., Race Riot: Chicago in the Red Summer of 1919 (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1970). Tuttle concluded that after the riot of 1919 race relations did not show any improvement. He pointed out that Chicago lived in the shadow of a continuous fear that the riot might recur and he could not put his finger on what kept it at bay. However, one cannot accept Tuttle’s view without overlooking a series of
and suggest some ways to improve race relations. A biracial committee of prominent Chicagoans worked for a year and a half to write the report which was published in 1922. While authorities may have disregarded the report of the Commission, it sparked discussion among and between interested individuals both white and black. After the report was published, it became a source for private correspondence between blacks and whites, certain articles written by blacks, and columns in the *Chicago Defender*. The beginning and progression of the Committee signified an increasing interest in race relations after Chicago's Race Riot in 1919. The riot had scared both races, and although some radicals on both sides felt ready to resume hostilities if things persisted, neither side really wanted a recurrence.


The report of the Commission covered a wide range of subjects about Chicago and its population. The investigations attempted to shed light on race relations and tensions, their causes and possible solutions to improve understanding between races. The report provided information on the background of the riot, its story, how rumors both by word of mouth and in the press provoked fear and clashes; it discussed the inability of the police to curb the rioters and the confusion experienced within the ranks of Chicago officials concerning the use of the militia to end the riot. After outlining the migration of African Americans to Chicago, their residential patterns, neighborhoods, and communities, the investigators then gathered

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3 Thomas L. Philpott, *The Slum and The Ghetto*. 

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findings on contacts in public schools, recreation, transportation, and crime under the heading “racial contacts.” A reflection of African Americans’ place in Chicago industries followed findings on racial contacts. Finally, the report summarized public opinion in race relations, ending with the Commission’s recommendations.4

One of the findings of the investigators was that increasing competition between laborers of different races had long been the cause of disputes. However, historians disagree on how important a role friction in the interracial labor market played in the riot. William M. Tuttle, Jr., argues that housing and politics helped cause the 1919 riot, and acknowledges that discord in the labor market was one of the reasons.5 On the other hand, Allan H. Spear argues that the riot had nothing to do with labor conditions.6 Horace R. Clayton and St. Clair Drake assert that the “tensions of postwar readjustment” ended in open violence, while drawing attention to the fact that resentment existed among the African Americans who lived in Chicago prior to the Great Migration and the newcomers.7

Some African American Chicagoans thought that the misperception of blacks by whites was the most important cause of the riot. Stanley B. Norvell, an African American World War I veteran from Chicago, composed an eight page letter to Victor F. Lawson, the editor and publisher of the Chicago Daily News and a member of the CCRR, less than a month after the 1919 riot. Norvell wanted to inform Lawson of the state of matters between the races from the African American point of view. Norvell composed his letter professionally. Noting that Lawson was a publisher and as such was “perhaps more

accustomed to amateur scribblers and would therefore have more patience with this feeble attempt,“ Norvell introduced himself as an amateur, surrendering to Lawson as editor and publisher. Historians have said a lot about the subordinate social position that blacks were forced to adopt regarding themselves when dealing with whites. Norvell began his letter to Lawson in this way to catch Lawson’s attention, because what Norvell had to say in the following pages contradicted his opening manner.

Norvell’s apologetic opening makes one wonder who was doing who a favor. He aimed to give Lawson first-hand information on the subject of racial attitudes from the African American perspective, which the latter would undoubtedly benefit from in his work. On the other hand, Norvell made it sound like Lawson would be doing him a favor by reading his letter. Seen in a different light, Norvell’s intention becomes a deliberate effort to write a letter of protest in a manner which will not disturb the addressee from the onset. Keeping in mind that the Commission and its members meant well, Norvell attempted to make some suggestions on how the Commission should conduct its business. He remarked that World War I had awakened a new sense of worth in the individual African American, who “came to know that he counts as a part of his government.” In the beginning paragraphs of his letter, Norvell tried to suppress his personal anger and criticism by keeping his personal opinions out of the picture. He talked about the beginning of the CCRR, and stated that he appreciated the effort of whites who wanted to understand the existing problems between the races. He observed that the persisting attitudes of whites toward African Americans centered around

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8 Letter from Stanley B. Norvell to Victor F. Lawson, August 22, 1919, Folder 3, Box 6, Julius Rosenwald Papers, Regenstein Special Collections, University of Chicago.
9 Lawrence W. Levine, The Unpredictable Past: Explorations in American Cultural History (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993) and William M. Tuttle, Jr., Race Riot. This reflection of a subordinate social position when dealing with a white benefactor is what William Chafe calls civility. Chafe points out that as victims of civility blacks had to strike deferential poses in order to keep jobs. See Chafe, Civilities and Civil Rights, introduction. This is exactly what Norvell is criticizing in his letter.
generalizing African Americans as a race. Norvell believed that this attitude was the number one reason that caused the riot.

Norvell pointed out that living in whites' world, African Americans knew whites both individually and as a group. He doubted that many whites would say the same. For whites to get to know and understand African Americans individually, it would take a lot of changes in their attitudes, ways of thinking and in the general social structure. Whites found it easier to believe general assumptions about African Americans; moreover, African Americans often acted in accordance with how whites expected them to act so as not to cause suspicion. As the letter progressed, Norvell jettisoned the air of apology, ardently discussing the mistakes of white society in trying to define African Americans. He drew Lawson's attention to the fact that "the white man of America knows just about as much about the mental and moral caliber, the home life and social activities of this class of colored citizens as he does about the same things concerning the inhabitants of the thus far unexplored planet of Mars." Norvell believed that in order for races to commence living together peacefully whites should concentrate on getting know more about blacks individually.

Norvell criticized the failure of whites to know African Americans individually on two levels. He pointed to the fact that "Negroes who has [sic] been and is now largely a menial dependent upon the white man's generosity and charity for his livelihood," have become an "expert cajoler of the white man." African Americans learned how to differentiate between individual white patrons be it on trains, shining boots or serving food. He expanded on the fact that through their long years of service to whites African Americans had insight into the

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10 Ibid.
11 Ibid. Norvell echoed the sentiments of some of the African American leaders of his time when he drew Lawson's attention to the fact that African Americans thought one way and acted another. W. E. B. Du Bois based this behavior on the fact that there was a "veil" between the races and that whites could not see the true
nature of patronage. For example if a white gentleman went to the dining car on the train and did not receive the same kind of service as the next white gentleman it was because the African American waiter "sized [him] up the instant he saw [him] come into the dining room and made his own deductions." On the other hand, whites never felt the need to observe the differences in the personalities of African Americans except on the superficial bases of laziness and stupidity. Norvell's assessment was well-founded. Recognizing whites' neglect in viewing blacks individually, historian Tuttle found the reasons for this in residential segregation, and in the fact that it was easier for whites to accept the present stereotypes of African Americans. Similarly, the report of the CCRR had highlighted the same patterns in the acceptance and practice of racial stereotyping. Contacts between the races occurred mostly in the impersonal and temporary environment of public transportation, where people crossed paths who might otherwise never meet. Often one or two observations of African American passengers left its imprint on the white passengers, leading into generalizations about the entire African American group. African American passengers, however, usually consisted of laboring class migrants who had not yet adjusted to Chicago life and hence gave white observers a distorted view of Chicago's African American population.

Contemplating extensively on the lack of interracial understanding, Norvell commented that the CCRR came about at the right time. Cognizant that generalizations of whites centered on working class African Americans, Norvell suggested that "the white members of this commission make it their business to try to obtain an opportunity through some of the colored members of the commission to visit the homes of some of our better class nature of blacks through it. The poet Paul Lawrence Dunbar called it a "mask" that blacks had to put on while dealing with whites. See Levine, Unpredictable Past pp. 92-93

12 Tuttle Jr., Race Riot. pp. 103-107
13 CCRR, The Negro in Chicago. p. 619
people." In this way whites would discover that "Sam, the waiter, is widely known on State Street or on Lenox Avenue as Mr. Charles Creighton Fielding." Norvell saw learning to see past the color prejudice and to view African Americans as individuals as the beginning point for bettering the understanding between races.

Subsequently, Norvell became more provocative. He no longer abstained from making striking statements; rather he transformed into an outspoken leader echoing Du Boisian talented tenth tendencies. Norvell mentioned his ability to speak French and German fluently, and went on to claim that he was "only an ordinary average Negro, and the white man is constantly making the mistake of discounting us and rating us too cheaply." What was "an average Negro?" By classifying himself as the average Negro, Norvell first judged his character by white man's standards. Second, he was not an "average Negro" and his saying so tended to try to uplift the characteristics of his race in the eyes of the white addressee. The "average Negro" did not compose a letter of such length, and perhaps depth, advising the white man openly. The letters which the editors and directors associated with the migrant or would be migrant African American often asked officials to place them in jobs, or send them transportation fees to be deducted from wages later and were never composed with the same fluency Norvell's letter demonstrated. Furthermore, 95 percent of registrants in the heart of Chicago's ghetto were almost illiterate in 1919.

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14 Letter Norvell to Lawson, op. cit.
16 Letter from Stanley B. Norvell to Victor F. Lawson, August 22, 1919, Folder 3, Box 6, Julius Rosenwald Papers.
Norvell’s letter to Lawson preceded the report of the Commission by two years and his suggestions and the results of the committee appear almost identical. Perhaps, therefore, Norvell’s “feeble” attempt went beyond just being read by the members of the committee on public opinion. It would be stretching a similarity too far to assume that the Report of the CCRR based its research on Norvell’s deductions, nevertheless the similarities are striking. In sending a copy of his Lawson letter to Julius Rosenwald, Norvell added that it was his “earnest desire and my [his] fond hope to be able to someday command the attention of the broad-minded, one hundred percent American citizens, who are endowed with perspicacity and the spirit of fair play.”\(^{19}\) The wording of the letter reflects one of the best examples of the cajoling and conning which the African American generally taught himself to practice when dealing with whites. Norvell first criticized whites for making African Americans “cajole” them in their daily encounters in one letter, and then sent a second letter to a white person with the first letter attached. Furthermore, he used the sort of language which would best exemplify his criticism of cajoling; a point that raises curiosity. Perhaps in doing so Norvell consciously but not very conspicuously, was complaining about the fact that African Americans were forced to do this, otherwise they did not see the result of their attempts at being heard.

After failing to get a response from Lawson, Norvell, as noted, sent a copy of the same letter to Rosenwald. In an accompanying note to Rosenwald, composed with apparent calculations, Norvell used a more cautious language. There could be two reasons for his seemingly contained anger. First, his enclosure of the letter to Lawson meant that Rosenwald could read his angry lines in that source. Second, knowledgeable about matters concerning his race it is also probable that Norvell considered Rosenwald an ally rather than an antagonist.

\(^{19}\) Letter from Stanley B. Norvell to Julius Rosenwald, November 7, 1919, Folder 3, Box 6, Julius Rosenwald
When The Negro in Chicago: A Study of Race Relations and A Race Riot in 1919 appeared as the outcome of the work of the CCRR some of its conclusions and suggestions must not have surprised Norvell. The conclusions of the Commission almost echoed the sentiments that Norvell expressed in his letter to Lawson. The report concluded:

That Negroes as a group are often judged by the manners, conduct, and opinions of servants in families, or other Negroes whose general standing and training do not qualify them to be spokesmen of the group... Most of the current beliefs concerning Negroes are traditional, and were acquired during an earlier period when Negroes were considerably less intelligent and responsible than now...That the common disposition to regard all Negroes as belonging to one homogenous group is as great a mistake as to assume that all white persons are of the same class and kind.\(^\text{20}\)

It might be a stretch to argue that the Commission paid attention to Norvell’s observations, but the closeness of the Norvell’s arguments with those of the findings of the Commission cannot be easily dismissed. It becomes apparent in the concluding lines of the report that Norvell really had insight as to the feelings and objections of his race, or that there was already a consensus among African Americans as to being misunderstood by whites. The conclusions in the report paralleled Norvell’s concluding lines in his letter. Norvell argued that:

Unfortunately it is always by the larger class—the menial, servitor and flunkey class—that the race is judged...Today we have with us a new Negro, if you please. You will find that ‘Uncle Tom’ that charming old figure of literature with the war of the rebellion is quite dead now...Even at that, we would not object to being judged by this class of our race, if those who did the judging had a thorough knowledge of the individuals who make up this class.\(^\text{21}\)


\(^{21}\) Letter from Stanley B. Norvell to Julius Rosenwald, November 7, 1919, Folder 3, Box 6, Julius Rosenwald Papers.
Norvell wrote the letter in 1919 and the report was not published until the fall of 1922. The resemblance of the issues cannot be easily dismissed as a coincidence. Norvell did not play a large or important leadership role in the Chicago scene that his name appears on the pages of history books. On the other hand, his awareness of African American complaints and his reflection of them in two letters to white prominent Chicagoans shows that the African American thinkers knew the problem before the biracial committee put their finger on it and that now the African American individuals felt assertive enough to address whites. Likewise in 1919 A. L. Jackson, whose column “The Onlooker” appeared in the issues of the Chicago Defender, warned white Chicagoans that “if we are to avoid the dynamite that there is in this interracial problem, white people must get a better understanding of the negroes.” The Report of the Commission gained popularity among the leaders of the African American community.

The popularity of the Report of the CCRR can be confirmed by the wide publicity it received within the African American community. Jackson commented upon the publication of the report by the commission:

A casual glance at the recommendations will convince the most skeptical that these men went after their job to study a situation and not to build a case to support existing prejudices. The colored members of the commission deserve great credit for selling their case to the white members of the commission so thoroughly. In some respects it seems as though the report was written by them and signed by the white members on the dotted-line.\(^{22}\)

On the surface Jackson’s words applauded the commission members for doing an objective job. First the members had to go after their job to negate the existing prejudices, and to accomplish a degree of objectiveness, something which Jackson believed white members initially lacked. Second, the African American members of the commission had to sell their

\(^{22}\) Tuttle, Jr., Race Riot, p. 105
case to the white members, which points toward the fact that there had been a lot of convincing involved. Third, Jackson makes it sound like the signatures of the white members played the major role in ratifying the report, undermining black members’ efforts. Jackson’s deductions reflect the fragility of the issue. He praises the black members for adequately making their case understood and accepted by white members. Jackson might also be questioning the force of white authority: If black members did all the work why did they need white members’ signatures? Underlying Jackson’s analysis one finds the awareness that there were two sides involved in the Commission, even when working towards the same goal. The one side making a case, and the other one approving it. Historians agree with Jackson that instead of a collaborative effort the Report reflected black efforts because it was so “free of anti-Negro bias,” but given the nature of the white members of the Commission, who manifested the most sympathetic attitudes toward blacks, it can be suggested that the Commission worked together.

Not everyone applauded the creation of the Commission or believed in its good intentions. To W. H. Moore, who wrote the article “Current and Otherwise” for the Associated Negro Press, the creation of the CCRR made little sense, “except as a basis of information for whites to provide adequate safeguards for the city’s welfare and prosperity,” and he could see “no reason for the organization of the Commission on Race Relations.” Although seemingly directed at an African American audience, this article could only reach its aim when also, and perhaps especially, read by whites. In Moore’s eyes the creation of the Committee only benefited the whites, hence the criticism. However, Moore vehemently believed that “the burden for improving race relations between that black and white elements of the population in the United States of America rests almost entirely on the shoulders of the

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white peoples.” He argued that “when the average American realizes that the Negro constitutes a reliable and brave contingent in the exigency of war; that the Negro is commendably ambitious, thrifty, and industrious wherever he is kindly and disinterestedly directed,” then and only then “race riots will not occur and whatever slight reasons may exist for the organization of Commissions on Race Relations will disappear finally.”

These individual African American responses to the Commission indicate that prejudices attributed to blacks generally consumed their creative efforts, and caused a big chasm in the way whites perceived blacks. Eradication of prejudices attributed to blacks by whites laid at the base of improving living conditions for blacks, hence the creation of better relations between races.

1.2 An Individual Reaction In Trying To Defend One’s Own

Individual black Chicagoans’ most persistent complaint was the prevailing prejudices which were carved into white minds. However, to improve living conditions African American organizations depended on white support. Chicago’s African American leaders readily accepted and looked forward to financial favors from wealthy whites, but they did not want to allow room for white leadership over their civic institutions. Carter G. Woodson, the second African American to receive his doctorate degree from Harvard University, explained to W. S. Graves, secretary to Julius Rosenwald, that he founded and organized the Association for Negro Life and History in 1915. Dr. Thomas Jesse Jones, a white believer in

24 Philpott, The Slum and The Ghetto, p. 211
25 “Current or Otherwise”, Folder 5, Box 6, Julius Rosenwald Papers, Regenstein Special Collections, University of Chicago.
Washingtonian means for African American progress, was a member of the governing body of the organization. His views on African American education, which stressed that funds should be directed more toward vocational education, angered Woodson and other African Americans who placed the need for better treatment and equal chances before the validity of vocational education for blacks. Woodson justified removing Jones from the Executive Council of the Association because Jones was “detested by ninety-five per cent of all Negroes who are seriously concerned with the uplift of their race.” Woodson explained that they disliked him “because he is the self-made white leader of the Negro race, meddling in all affairs affecting Negroes, exercising the exclusive privilege of informing the white people as to who is a good Negro and who is a bad one, what school is worthy of support and what not, and how the Negroes should be helped and how not.” Woodson’s antagonism toward Jones needs further analysis because it was more personal than organizational.

It would be wrong to assume that Woodson’s comments reflect the attitude of all African Americans toward white leadership, because often African Americans and whites worked together in interracial associations designed to help African Americans. However, in this case Woodson believed Jones’s views scared African Americans from making donations to the Association. Jones publicly accused Woodson of having radical inclinations. Jones wrote letters to philanthropists complaining about the way Woodson handled the budget and criticizing the areas of research in the Association. In return Woodson reacted to Jones’s letters to philanthropists by explicitly relating to Graves his side of the story. Woodson’s

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26 Booker T. Washington advocated self-help by emphasizing vocational training for African Americans. His accommodationist ideals argued that if African Americans could gain the economical means by which they would no longer be dependent on white society, improvement of African Americans conditions would follow.


28 Letter from C. G. Woodson to W. S. Graves, May 4, 1922, Folder 25, Box2, Julius Rosenwald Papers.
defiance is grounded on the fact that he was trying to defend his Association, the continuance of which depended on contributions from white philanthropy.

In addition to defending his name Woodson further discussed the internal events in the selection of the Executive Council of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History. In doing so, Woodson meant to leave no questions unanswered because the continuation of the support from Julius Rosenwald was necessary for the Association's progress. He signed off apologizing that he "may have unnecessarily burdened you [Graves] with this long letter, but knowing how carefully you go into matters of this sort I [Woodson] felt that I should adequately cover the ground."29

Before Graves received the explanatory letter from Woodson, he wrote to Emmett J. Scott, then the African American secretary-treasurer of Howard University, to inquire about Woodson's character. Given Woodson's credentials it is interesting that Graves did so. The Journal of Negro History became the official publication of the Association in 1916, with Woodson as its editor. In 1922, when he wrote the letter above, he had already published The Education of the Negro Prior to 1861, The History of the Negro Church, and The Negro in Our History. Woodson was a very famous public figure by then and furthermore Julius Rosenwald had been making contributions to Woodson's Journal regularly for six years. In replying to Graves' request, Scott described Woodson as a man "of eccentric mood. Mr. Woodson is an outspoken defender of the faith. He has unsparingly denounced injustice and hypocrisy." Perhaps afraid that his previous words were too grating, Scott added that "he is not however a follower of that cult which seeks the overthrow of the established order, nor has he, so far as I know, in any of his writings counseled his brethren to violence."30 Emmett J.

29 Ibid.
30 Letter from Emmett Scott, to William C. Graves, April 25, 1922, Folder 25, Box2, Julius Rosenwald Papers.
Scott seems to have been comfortable in reporting to Graves about Woodson's character, if Graves was not the more comfortable in searching for Scott's guidance. The relationship between Graves and Scott underlines the fact that whites trusted certain African Americans over others for information. In this case, Graves obtained information on an African American indirectly through Scott. Thus, Scott had no reason to display some of the characteristics observed in other letters because Graves initiated the correspondence. This example suggests that only in writing to whites without proper introduction, or when asking for financial favors did African Americans make a timid opening. When consulted by whites first they did not feel the compulsion to write hesitantly because they were not asking for any favors; instead they were answering particular questions of the whites.

In this series of letters and articles involving Norvell, Moore, Jackson and Woodson's views, a lack of unity among African Americans strikes one from between the lines. The letters and articles reflect the personal views of individual African Americans, who have taken on the role as race leaders. Norvell and Moore agree on the importance of ridding the white society of its prejudices of blacks, but there was no unifying movement which would enforce it. Prominent Chicago African Americans depended on the financial favors of whites. Furthermore, the network of letters points to the fact that chosen African Americans stayed in contact with chosen whites, and vice versa, in trying to solve racial problems and in the working of institutions that dealt with the improvement of race relations.

When individual African Americans wrote personal letters addressed to potential white benefactors, their letters often shed light on a variety of matters. Even though African Americans connected to organizations did not write primarily to expose such issues, racial

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Howard University was a black University which offered a "traditional intellectual curriculum and maintained programs in law, medicine, and social work." For Rosenwald's contributions to Howard see Diner, In the Almost Promised Land, pp. 172-173
relations between African Americans and whites, how African Americans saw certain elements of white society, and differences in races often came to the fore. Sometimes as in Norvell’s letter, even when written in protest of the injustices African Americans suffered as a race, these letters were initially composed timidly. At such times African Americans wrote to whites as if they were appealing to a higher power, in search of justice or in need of a favor. While these facts can be observed mostly in the private letters, other written materials such as newspaper articles displayed some of the same characteristics.

1. 3 African American Organizational Attitudes Toward Whites

When African Americans wrote to whites as a part of their organizational agenda, their letters often contained a short summary of accomplished tasks, financial reports, and requests for renewal of financial pledges. This could have been the standard procedure for any agency trying to secure contributions, but African American organizations had to perform especially well because they already had limited resources for funding. First of all the African American community lacked the sources with which to support their own secular institutions. Secondly, they had little outside assistance from individuals of other races. There were different types of organizations, committees, associations which worked for the betterment of African American urban life and general conditions. Some of these had been initially begun by African Americans themselves, and others were initiated by whites who were interested in helping African Americans. One thing remained constant; even though these organizations aimed at self-sufficiency they often needed outside assistance. They received limited financial input from African Americans and then only after they succeeded in gaining their moral acceptance, trust and support. Chicago’s African American organizations depended on a small group of wealthy blacks for financial contributions. Furthermore, they needed moral
acceptance and approval from white benefactors in order to receive financial contributions. Julius Rosenwald can serve as a symbol of concerned whites who by actively taking part in their organizations demonstrated his desire to help African Americans better their conditions. Under the aegis of Rosenwald, Chicago’s African Americans acquired the means by which they improved their chances of easing the race relations.

Critics have discussed the philanthropic interests of Julius Rosenwald in many different dimensions. Rosenwald’s Jewish background gave him an essential understanding of how racial attitudes shaped the living standards for the oppressed. Chicago Jews have been attributed with showing extended concern with the plight of the migrant African Americans in Chicago. Beyond merely making financial contributions to African Americans, Rosenwald became instrumental in helping African Americans help themselves.31

Rosenwald did not merely give financial support to organizations or projects which would serve African Americans. He personally served on the Boards of Trustees, or followed the accomplishments of the organizations he assisted financially. Rosenwald’s philanthropy rested on the mutual understanding that he would give on the condition that he was convinced the society which would benefit from his contributions was doing its part. His secretary reminded correspondents that Rosenwald often consented to give financial assistance only after shown that African Americans were doing their best to raise certain amounts among themselves.

Rosenwald intended to make sure his efforts would not just be temporary relief, but that they would help place African Americans in charge of their own affairs. The schools for African Americans which he helped found in the South symbolize this aspect. Likewise,

Rosenwald decided to support the Young Men’s Christian Association because African Americans would benefit from such opportunities like self-help and personal improvement and because YMCAs did not hand out charity. His being a Jew did not stop him from pledging to contribute to Christian work for the African Americans. As a matter of fact, when notified by L. Wilbur Messer that only Protestants could actively manage YMCAs Rosenwald explained that he was not interested in managing the YMCA but that he believed “the YMCA is the best medium I know for accomplishing what I would like to see done for colored men, and this does not mean that I am any less a Jew.”

Like any businessman, Rosenwald viewed helping certain institutions as an investment. Operating thus, he needed to be sure that his investments would not go to waste. However, whatever the reasons which spurred his energies toward African Americans, without his help a lot of the projects would not have been realized. Moreover, the amount of financial requests were not only limited to large sums. African Americans in large organizations with considerable expenses and in small organizations with small expenses both felt comfortable enough to seek his assistance when the need arose. Most importantly Rosenwald had come to African American aid beginning in the 1910s. He was the single most prominent contributor to African American work for progress. His belief that helping African Americans in certain ways would give them the opportunity to better their living conditions spurred other wealthy whites to make contributions. Rosenwald played a very significant role in interesting these wealthy white Chicagoans to make donations towards black Chicago’s progress.

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2. Mijagkij, “A Peculiar Alliance”
As far as the organizational correspondence goes, a basic formula seems to have been followed: Remind the benefactor of prior acquaintance and accomplishments of the organization, make a list of upcoming plans and projects, and give a detailed financial statement of expenditures and amounts received, followed by a new request or a renewal of previous pledges.\(^{34}\) In letters composed by African Americans one feels the urgency in tone.

One of the agencies to which Rosenwald made controlled but lasting contributions was the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History. In 1927 Carter G. Woodson proudly observed that Rosenwald had been contributing $400 yearly for twelve years since the beginning of the Association in 1915.\(^{35}\) His contributions were being renewed annually. At the end of each fiscal year the Association sent Rosenwald a detailed report. In these reports detailed accounting of the amounts received and amounts expended were given. In the annual report for the year 1923 for example the financial statement listed $19,448.94 in receipts and $13,700.70 in expenditures.\(^{36}\) Indeed, Rosenwald often wanted to see these figures. Customarily he agreed to give twenty five per-cent of the amount initially needed, expecting that the rest would be raised by other means. Often, too, such reports would have to include a list of other contributors.

The contents of these reports also shed light on matters which could easily mislead Rosenwald to believe that the Association was not as popular as reflected. For example in 1923 certain matters needed a proper explanation. Woodson explained that “inasmuch as we

\(^{34}\) While this seems to set the standard in letters to Rosenwald, it does not reflect Chafe’s definition of the relationship between philanthropists and their petitioners. Chafe argues that blacks would seek out friendly benefactors, petition them for a new school or a recreational facility, and after exchanging pleasantries white benefactors would be convinced that their contributions testified to good communications between races. This was not true for Rosenwald. Rosenwald kept a close watch on the progress of the institutions he was contributing to, and tried to get other philanthropists involved in these institutions.

\(^{35}\) Letter from C. G. Woodson to Julius Rosenwald, October 14, 1927, Folder 26, Box 2, Julius Rosenwald Papers.

\(^{36}\) Letter from C. G. Woodson to Julius Rosenwald, August 28, 1923, Folder 26, Box 2, Julius Rosenwald Papers.
received $1,772,63 for subscriptions during the last fiscal year and did not receive more than
$1,798.91 during the year just closing, it may seem that the subscriptions have not noticeably
increased.” This, however, was not true. Woodson elaborated on the fact that “included in this
item of last year is the sum received for a considerable number of sets of THE JOURNAL OF
NEGRO HISTORY in bound form sold for $18 each by special effort about eighteen months
ago.” He pointed out that “the actual number of subscriptions increased” even though the
amount received did not specify that. Furthermore, “there was a slight increase in the amounts
received for membership fees and advertisements.” The amounts received for subscriptions
in the current year might have been easily misread as a decline in the popularity of the
Journal. Woodson emphasizes this point because he knew that Rosenwald would have to be
assured of the progress of the Journal to continue supporting it.

The report went on to explain the matter of salaries, and the retirement of Miss A.
Smith, office manager and assistant to the secretary treasurer, who served the Association for
seven years and was a loyal employee in that she worked for the Association even though she
could have been receiving more money elsewhere. Woodson used this example to underline
the fact that the Association operated on a basis of selfless contributions. The rest of the
report listed the achievements and the future plans of the Association including the names of
persons working on the plans.

In 1925 the Association started to work on a project which would collect letters
written by African Americans prior to the Civil War. The Association tried to involve
Rosenwald in this project. Woodson asked Rosenwald if he knew the whereabouts of such
letters and if he would “kindly induce the persons in possession of them to let you have them

\[^{32}\text{Ibid.}\]
for the Association or to permit you to make an accurate copy of them." Interestingly, the Association assigned Rosenwald a personal mission—one that the rest of the members of the Association also received.

Rosenwald’s relationship to the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History was continuous though it did not set the standard for his involvement in other organizations which he helped. S. P. Breckinridge of the Chicago School of Civics and Philanthropy, wrote to Rosenwald on behalf of the National Association for the Advancement of the Colored People, expressing the need to use the old Sinai Temple for the annual meeting of the local branch. Referred to Rosenwald by Rabbi Hirsch, Breckinridge requested to be informed if they could use the Sinai Temple and how much it would cost. However, since these meetings had previously been financed by local branches, Breckinridge did not seem to know how to express herself. She was torn between the need to solicit funds and the recognition that Rosenwald has already made other large contributions. In the end, unable to find the right words, her style became incoherent:

I had thought that if you would tell us what contribution you felt like making to the expense of the meeting, the task of the committee would then become quite definite, and I think that we would go ahead in making the other plans with very little trouble. I know that you have just made a big contribution to the National Association, and I know that you are giving most generously to Tuskegee as well as to the Young Men’s Christian Association work, and I am not writing to ask you to give.39

Breckinridge does not know whether Rosenwald will make any contributions. What she knows is that the Committee will not be able to proceed without a word from him. In the end of the paragraph she says she is not asking him to give, but actually she is. The two sentences contradict each other. Breckinridge appears to be lost for words because Rosenwald failed to

38 Letter from C. G. Woodson to Julius Rosenwald, July 20, 1925, Folder 26, Box 2, Julius Rosenwald Papers.
39 Letter from the Chicago School of Civics and Philanthropy to Julius Rosenwald, March 5, 1912, Folder 16, Box 7, Julius Rosenwald Papers.
specify his intentions. Then again Breckinridge’s hesitation to specifically ask for a contribution could not be traced back to her whiteness because she was one of the reform-minded social workers who took an active interest in the migrants to Chicago. On the other hand there was perhaps a difference in the way black and white social workers viewed and weighed the importance of issues which needed financial donations from contributors. The difference between social workers of both races might also account for the following letter in which she asks Rosenwald not to act until further notice.

The letter from the Chicago School of Civics and Philanthropy, unlike any of the other letters, proposed to stop Rosenwald from taking an uncertain step towards helping for the care of dependent African American children:

I wish we might insist on the Park Ridge people doing what is necessary for the colored girls and give them adequate equipment. At present, of course, the possibility of any care for dependent colored children is so slight that one is tempted to grasp at a straw. Please do not move in this until we can get a little more definite information which we shall be glad to furnish in a few days.

Here Breckinridge acts like Rosenwald’s personal business/investment assistant, who coaches him not to take a step until further news. It required a painstaking effort to keep Rosenwald assured that requests for investment were well-founded. Social workers were always afraid that Rosenwald’s dollars could easily go elsewhere. At the same time even though the Chicago School of Civics and Philanthropy was a long established institution the two matters Breckinridge had to handle were not the sort Rosenwald would take up immediately.

Whereas Rosenwald’s relation to the Chicago School of Civics and Philanthropy remain undefined through correspondence, his interaction with the National League on Urban Conditions Among Negroes proved philanthropic, but uninvolved. When the National League

40 Spear, Black Chicago, p.103
41 Letter from the Chicago School of Civics and Philanthropy to Julius Rosenwald, June 1, 1912, Folder 16, Box7, Julius Rosenwald Papers.
sent the national organizer, Arnold T. Hill, to form a branch in Chicago in 1917, the League's work started out smoothly. Hill helped organize the board, and upon the first meeting of the board they decided to employ an executive secretary who would supervise the activities of the local movement. Hill's letter to Julius Rosenwald also presents the names of the press agents, clubs and their members who supported the forming of a local branch in Chicago. The most important thing in the forming of a local branch in Chicago comes across as the support of the local African American citizens. Hill was proud of African American support and expanded on the idea that they have received favorable coverage in the press. After disclosing that within the previous few days the amount raised by African Americans amounted to $127 of the $353 raised totally, he asked Rosenwald for a contribution of one third their budget, or "$1,000 to help make the work possible." 

African Americans were aware of Rosenwald's way of granting contributions. Hence they often assured success and gave warranty.

The organizations that wrote Julius Rosenwald to ask for financial assistance did not always request large sums, as can be seen in the letters from the Chicago School of Civics and Philanthropy and the Chicago Branch for the National League on Urban Conditions Among Negroes. Likewise the West Side People's Forum organized a meeting where Dr. Du Bois was the guest speaker. The collections, individual contributions and the money from the treasury added up to $60.50 whereas the amount spent on the meeting totaled $94.60. The director of the Forum, Fred A. Moore, in asking Rosenwald for a contribution explained that the deficit of the Forum was $35.00 and that he did "not need to assure you [Rosenwald] that we would be grateful for as much of this you are willing to make up." A request for $35 or less looks insignificant compared to other amounts, but it expresses a need for one third of the expenses to be met. And a need presented to Rosenwald, even if the amount is insignificant,

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42 Letter from T. Arnold Hill to Julius Rosenwald, January 19, 1917, Folder 13, Box 9, Julius Rosenwald Papers.
signifies that Rosenwald had been established in the minds of those who knew of him as someone who only expected to be notified that African Americans were doing their part.

There was a difference in the way individual African Americans and African Americans with an organizational agenda wrote letters to Rosenwald. When individual African Americans wrote personal letters expressing their opinions of sorts they were more defiant than African Americans and whites connected with African American organizations who wrote asking for financial assistance. Organizational letters reflected the accomplishments of organizations as well as what they supposed would be accomplished with further help and they were generally more deferential. Individual blacks associated with organizations might have viewed the benefactor with certain reservations, but once the association was established the relationship became more comfortable and this often was reflected in the organizational letters.

When African Americans wrote whites asking for financial assistance, it was under the assumption that they would have to prove the accomplishments and worth of their associations or missions. Letters with private contents differed largely in tone from letters with requests for financial support or the renewal of financial promises. African Americans approached whites with guarded expectations because they were "highly suspicious of white men, even such white men as they deem their friends ordinarily." African Americans' suspicion of whites had its roots in the Southern Jim Crow past. Even though migrants came to Chicago with hopes for a better future, they did not fully disrobe from the social outfit they carried with them to Chicago.

Whites and African Americans were experimenting with new forms of cooperation in Chicago in the 1920s. African American leaders wanted to rule their own separate sphere in

43 Letter from Fred A. Moore to Wm. C. Graves, February 28, 1916, Folder5, Box 14, Julius Rosenwald Papers.
Chicago. Nevertheless, African Americans did not yet possess the economic means to support their own institutions. Hence they could not achieve complete independence from white philanthropy. White philanthropists were willing to give financial support to African American attempts, so that they could begin to stand on their own feet. Both races were suspicious of one another, and it took persuasion on African Americans’ part to draw financial assistance from whites.

Private letters also reveal the suspicion African Americans felt toward whites. What African American leaders felt in their association with white benefactors, individual African Americans experienced in their daily encounters with whites. Norvell’s letters accent the prejudices in daily encounters between races. The sources reveal an overall picture in which whites acted out of their own belief in the distorted generalizations about African Americans, and African Americans responded to those distortions.

Nevertheless, in contrast to Tuttle’s conclusion, these sources do not disclose any information that would lead one to believe that race relations did not improve after the riot of 1919. Race relations might not have improved greatly on the labor market, in the political arena or in housing problems, but conscientious leaders on both sides worked exceedingly hard to keep a level of understanding between races and opened the way for bettering relations. The next chapter will deal with wealthy white Chicagoans’ discussion of African American possible or established progress.

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44 Letter Norvell to Lawson, op cit.
45 Tuttle, Jr., Race Riot. Conclusion
CHAPTER 2

PHILANTHROPY AND THE POLITICS OF RACE AND PROGRESS

This chapter will examine the relationship among Chicago’s white philanthropists and wealthy citizens who were interested in helping African Americans help themselves. By the early 1920s the North had attracted thousands of African Americans from the South. Chicago had not been preparing particularly for the African American migration, and although African Americans had lived there for a long time, their numbers were relatively small. Now there was a significant increase in Chicago’s African American population. Daily conflicts marked migrants efforts to adjust to northern urban life. Chicago did not turn out to be what they had hoped it would be. Nevertheless, prominent individual leaders of both races made efforts to better the quality of daily encounters. Meanwhile, centuries old prejudices still prevailed in white society’s conception of the migrant.

Julius Rosenwald’s correspondence reveals that wealthy white leaders had to handle a variety of issues when dealing with or working for the good of African Americans. White philanthropic efforts went beyond finding jobs for African Americans or supporting their self-help institutions. Most of Chicago’s institutions barred African Americans from participation. For example African Americans could not attend theaters except in the segregated sections of those reserved for whites or in their neighborhood theaters. African American children, the needy and the delinquent, were accepted by a few white institutions. Only if they belonged to the Catholic Church could they hope to expect some form of support from the Catholic Church. African Americans were encouraged to take white institutions as an example to form their own self-help institutions if they wanted to participate in the society; in other words whites wanted and expected African Americans to create separate institutions but mimic white ones. Developing theaters, political campaigning, and child welfare were issues brought
to Rosenwald’s attention. African Americans needed Rosenwald’s financial contributions to organize their self-help institutions.

When white leaders wrote among themselves, be it about individual African Americans or their institutions, sometimes they echoed the same prejudices as the rest of the society. Yet they were not afraid to experiment with what might prove worthwhile. Obviously wealthy whites did not want their philanthropic efforts to fall into careless hands. Furthermore, there was no consensus among the higher ranks of white Chicago as to the needs of black Chicago. What one prominent Chicago philanthropist held to be important did not always match the view of the next. Meanwhile, representatives of both races aimed to make prejudices disappear. Centuries old prejudices prevailed in the minds of white Chicagoans like the inclination of African Americans toward crime, or their lack of work discipline. African American Chicagoans tried to change these misconceptions whenever the possibility arose.

2.1 Theaters, Political Campaigns

The rich cultural life of the 1920s was everywhere apparent in Chicago. While Chicago’s nightlife embodied the characteristics of the decade, its facilities were segregated. The expansion of cultural life could be seen in the new mushrooming movie theaters in all of the city’s neighborhoods, jazz and dance halls for those seeking leisure, and radio stations becoming a part of households. Leisure opportunities were expanding, but when both races wanted to participate in the same activity tensions rose. Only in the tan and cabarets could both races be expected to come together, but these centers were generally looked down upon by the middle-class citizens. African American entertainers and musicians seem to have dominated the nightlife in which whites and African Americans and other minorities took
part, but in movie theaters they were seated separately. The mushrooming neighborhood theaters significantly brought communities together, at the same time reflecting community prejudices. In neighborhoods where white ethnics made up the majority, African Americans and Mexicans were required to sit in the balcony.¹

The fact that African Americans in Chicago were barred from the same “intelligent amusements of orchestral concerts or the better theaters”, caught Arthur T. Aldis’ attention. Harvard educated Aldis was an early progressive who supported the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People movement.² He told Cyrus McCormick, the industrialist who made millions of dollars from the mechanical reaper, that Raymond O’Neill, the director of a theater in Cleveland, believed that Chicago was ripe for the formation of a “colored theater.” He asked McCormick to give “a few minutes of [his] time and attention over a matter” which both Aldis and his wife “thought worthy of support.” Aldis went on to comment that “there is a large population of really good and intelligent Negroes in Chicago.” Aldis believed that African Americans had proved their dramatic abilities and enthusiasm for dramas in New York. Aldis also noted the fact that O’Neill wanted to “give the colored writers a chance to see the productions of some of their own plays,” stressing the fact that O’Neill had already received manuscripts some of which reflected “negro life from the negro point of view and not imitations of us.”³ Five years before the forming of the theater came up the state of Illinois had passed a law prohibiting “the exhibition, manufacture, or sale of any

² Christopher Robert Reed, The Chicago NAACP and the Rise of Black Professional Leadership, 1910-1966 (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1997) p. 25. Rosenwald made donations to the National Office until 1916 and his secretary, Graves, attended the branch meetings. For other Jewish contributors to the NAACP see Diner, In the Almost Promised Land, pp. 124-142
³ Letter from Arthur T. Aldis to Cyrus H. McCormick, July 18, 1922, Folder 7, Box 1, Julius Rosenwald Papers, Department of Special Collections, Regenstein Library, University of Chicago.
lithograph, moving picture, book or drama which tends to incite race or religious prejudice." Five years later, the forming of a “colored theater” seemed culturally profitable at a time when both races needed a more profound understanding of one another. Aldis believed that it was equally important that blacks be given a chance to reflect their own culture and that whites take the time to learn from it.

Aldis’ comments on the value of such a theater can be traced back to a number of popular beliefs. One such belief asserted that African Americans did not possess a culture of their own. This belief stemmed from the efforts of slave owners and proponents of slavery who forced African Americans to alienate themselves from their own cultural inclinations and imitate white ones. Carter G. Woodson and Charles H. Wesley have argued that it was “Europeans and White Americans” who taught African Americans “to forget their fondness for music, dancing, pageantry, and ceremony in general.” Throughout the 19th century the existence of African American culture was ignored. During the years after the Civil War until 1915, when teachers, writers and scholars were lost in the glorification of the national past, African American culture and history were again ignored. At about this time the most common reflection of African American culture seems to have been minstrel shows, with white actors imitating plantation slaves in the most derogatory way. Therefore, Aldis’ belief that the manuscripts submitted to Raymond O’Neill would be new and worthwhile to support points in the direction of a recovered African American culture and history. Aldis’ efforts to collect contributions for the forming of the theater also points to the fact that philanthropy had no limits; it applied to cultural, political and social aspects of life as well as educational.

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Another popular belief stressed the separateness of the races, accepting that African Americans' culture constituted an inferior one to whites. In this sense Aldis, a firm believer that "racial prejudice manifested itself in a breakdown of democracy," regarded manuscripts reflecting African American life from their point of view as important. The new manuscripts would perhaps change the persistent prejudices in white minds.

Aldis' three page letter to McCormick did not simply introduce O'Neill. Before Aldis could raise the matter of finances he felt he had to convince McCormick that Mr. O'Neill's "artistic productions in Cleveland was [sic] good," and clarify his own interest and contribution to the cause. Aldis pointed out that there were two dimensions in the forming of such a theater: artistic and philanthropic. Aldis believed that the artistic dimension would give African Americans a chance to "show us a good deal in art and particularly in its dramatic side," underlining the difference in terms of us and them. He acknowledged the presence of some "cheap inferior negro theaters here [in Chicago] only, which do not meet the need of the more educated negroes," indicating a difference between educated and inferior African Americans in Chicago. Aldis' elitist attitude helps explain some of the changing attitudes towards blacks. Aldis did not treat African Americans as a group; he differentiated between the more educated and inferior African Americans. Moreover, the letter also suggests that he recognized African Americans had certain talents which would prove worthwhile to support.

Aldis knew that African Americans successfully interested "men like John Carpenter in New York, and as they have already developed interesting music so they might also develop an interesting drama." The 1920s saw an explosion of African American contributions in literary circles. Since O'Neill was in the theater business, he more than likely

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7 Reed, The Chicago NAACP, p. 47
knew that African American artists were experimenting with new forms of self-expression. After the end of World War I, the need for self-expression grew parallel with African American nationalistic sentiments.9

Aldis expressed concern that if white support to O'Neill's Folk Theater became public the news would scare off African Americans who would otherwise take part in it. Since the opening of the theater was intended for the active participation of more educated African Americans, Aldis touched upon an issue which calls for a closer examination. Predominantly, African Americans distrusted institutions financed by whites and intended for their use, even when leading African Americans supported such institutions. It is not clear how deep the awareness of white patrons ran on this subject generally, but Aldis recognized it and feared for the success of the theater. In the post script of a letter to McCormick Aldis wrote that he had "advised Mr. O'Neill to start quietly without patrons or trustees or the publication of financial help or backing." Aldis explained that "people are shy of uplifts or subsidized things." The success of such a venture, Aldis believed, ultimately rested on the support of those for whose benefit it was created. Therefore, Aldis advised to "let the negroes support it because they need it and like it. The critics will treat it more kindly if they regard it as such a venture."10 A year later Raymond O'Neill prepared a report covering the nature of the company and its accomplishments, and he sent the report to all the contributors. It stated that the members of the company consisted of "Pullman porters, cooks, hairdressers, post office employees and others of similar occupations, only 3 of whom had previous stage experience." O'Neill reminded his contributors that acting was a full-time occupation and that it was not something that African Americans were expected to do on the side.

8 Letter Aldis to McCormick, op cit.
The company traveled extensively. Their first show started on January 29 in Chicago and “although it expected to run only four or six weeks in its first season, it did not close until June 9 in New York—a period of 18 weeks.” The Negro Folk Theater seems to have been very popular with a repertory which included plays from masters such as Shakespeare, Moliere, Buechner and Wilde as well as two African American authored plays. The company received praise and material help from “figures of prominence in the cultural world.” Touring the East, the company not only received “critical, special and editorial articles but was also the guest of numerous organizations, both colored and white.” O’Neill also believed that apart from its artistic success, the company would affect white attitudes towards African Americans. “The colored educators as Dr. W.E.B. DuBois, Walter Johnston and others” agreed that the company’s work was “invaluable in its bearing upon the race problem in America.”

African Americans believed that artistic work could enhance racial understanding, but how could a theater company have a bearing on the race problem in America? Another African American answered this question. A. L. Jackson’s column in the Defender talked about a play called “Finger Prints” whose author “is just naturally of the salt of the earth” and who “incurred the criticism of some people from the South.” Jackson pointed out that the Southern people who criticized the play were invited to the rehearsal. The author and the people from the South were all white, and the leading man was black. The leading man “who happens to be one of the brethen” Jackson continued, was very successful and the audience wanted to meet him after the rehearsal. He observed that upon meeting the leading man “they found him to be a gentleman not in the least disturbed or set up over being in the company of representatives of the other race. He did not bite.” Jackson went on to stress that this

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11 Letter from Raymond O’Neill to the contributors to the Negro Folk Theater, October 25, 1923, Folder 7, Box
“gentleman” had manners and personality. Whites could not call him by his first name because he did not wear a uniform. Following these lines Jackson underlined the fact that African American individuals were tired of being viewed as a race and that the leading man without his uniform “as what we [African Americans] all like to be considered—just a person.” The manners, personality and success of the leading man caused the Southern women to go away “from that rehearsal wiser and, we hope, better for the experience.”

Jackson addressed various issues in this one paragraph. The first one is that the play was written by a white woman who “began with no knowledge of you [African Americans] at all has acquired a vision and knowledge which has made her a prophet and an interpreter to her own kind” and she received criticism from Southern ladies. The second one is that the leading actor being African American received praise from the white ladies. Jackson saw this play as a chance to bring better understanding between the races. The third one is that he complained of the same attitude which Norvell had complained of in his letter to Lawson. African Americans wanted individual recognition. White elites recognized and began to emphasize black talents and strengths. Even if the emphasis was not individualistic, it signaled a beginning.

The effort within certain levels of the society to enhance racial understanding lasted through the 1920s. Rosenwald and other philanthropists saw a need to help African Americans eradicate the prejudices in the white mind. Yet try as they might, certain prejudices were hard to exterminate. Towards the end of the 1920s, the efficiency of African American postal employees was being questioned, and Claude A. Barnett, the head of the Associated Negro Press, requested the Postmaster Arthur C. Leuder to make a statement

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1. Julius Rosenwald Papers.
2. A. L. Jackson, *The Onlooker, Chicago Defender*, May 12, 1923
3. Ibid.
which he could print. As opposed to African Americans’ efforts to be seen as individuals at the turn of the decade, Barnett asked Leuder for a positive group assessment. Leuder stated that many racial groups and nationalities worked together in the Chicago postal service, and that “in any large force such as mentioned will be found a certain percentage of employees who do not measure up to the required or average standard.” Leuder declined to compare the efficiency of different groups against one another, but pointed out the fact that “many of the colored employees have been in the service would in itself testify to their efficiency and general good rating.”14 Barnett wanted to use Leuder’s statement to negate the public white belief that African Americans were ineffectual workers.

One area which African Americans could in no way hope to receive individual recognition was their voting behavior. Whites recognized African Americans’ power as a voting bloc in Chicago in the 1920s. During World War I the African American vote in Chicago succeeded in placing three black aldermen on the city council and African Americans’ voting behavior disturbed certain groups and caused them to react violently.15 In searching for an answer to whether African American politics have been shaped by race or class, Michael C. Dawson places the critical era for the politicization of African Americans between Reconstruction and World War I. He discusses a tripartite system of white domination of African Americans politically, socially and economically which had solidified in the South and extended into the Northern urban centers. It made African Americans feel powerless.16 Despite Dawson’s findings Chicago African Americans had political influence and were interested in politics. For example, by 1915 African Americans constituted the

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15 Tuttle, Race Riot, pp.184-199
majority of the Second Ward in Chicago. They demonstrated their electoral power when they voted for Republican William Hale Thompson, and he became the mayor.\textsuperscript{17} By 1920 the Republican Party was under black electoral control in the Second Ward, and white political leaders learned to pay attention to black needs.\textsuperscript{18}

Politicians had long sought African American votes. The Fourth Ward of Chicago was another district where African Americans made up the majority. If African Americans seemed rather humble and suspicious in their efforts to contact whites, whites exercised apparent care when writing among themselves about African Americans politically. In 1929 campaign director for the alderman elections Frank Anderson confirmed his conversation with Rosenwald’s secretary the day before. Speaking on behalf of the operating committee, Anderson noted their hesitation over who to support in the coming campaign for fear that they would be accused of race prejudice:

We feel that the situation is one in which we must exercise care lest we be accused of race prejudice in a ward in which we understand that if there is any majority, it goes to the colored voting population. Accordingly, we are loath to support a white candidate unless we feel he is definitely superior to the colored candidates available and that he has substantial enough support to insure his being able to defeat present incumbent, Alderman Cronson.\textsuperscript{19}

At first glance, the operating committee’s hesitation to support a white candidate reads like the shadow of fears stemming from the 1919 riot. Chicagoans remembered it long after it had become history. Among the reasons for the riot, African Americans’ voting strength and its role in the election of Mayor Thompson was one of the most frequently cited reasons. For many years now, officials had to handle political issues with care because politics came to represent an assertion of African American rights in the white mind. So as the letter

\textsuperscript{17} Tuttle, Race Riot, p. 186
\textsuperscript{18} Spear, Black Chicago, p.191
\textsuperscript{19} Letter from Campaign Director Frank Anderson to Julius Rosenwald, January 23, 1929, Folder 16, Box X, Julius Rosenwald Papers.
proceeded, Anderson introduced Alex Kieferstein as a candidate, making his reason for writing Rosenwald clear. For the alderman campaign they had a white candidate, Kieferstein, who would have to compete with African American candidates, and the present alderman was an African American. Anderson wanted to get Rosenwald’s support for their candidate because of Rosenwald’s “high standing among the colored people.” He was aware that the African American vote was necessary to get Kieferstein elected, and that by getting Rosenwald’s endorsement, Anderson would appeal to black racial solidarity.

Anderson’s recognition that Rosenwald had a high standing among African Americans was well founded. Rosenwald had made the news earlier in the Defender when he endorsed “Morton D. Hull, Republican candidate for Congress to succeed the late James R. Mann of the second district.” African American voters of the Third, Fourth, and Fifth wards supported Hull unanimously, and the news article pointed out that “Defender canvassers were interested to learn that among big white persons who are indorsing Mr. Hull are those who have proved friends of the Race.” This information was followed by the recognition of Rosenwald “who has given much money to organizations for the education and betterment of the Race.” Not only was Rosenwald a friend of African Americans, he was also a provider and an endorser.

Anderson’s intent was hidden behind the language he used. Words like “superior to the colored candidates available,” “exercise care lest we be accused of race prejudice,” or “being able to defeat” an African American incumbent, shows that by 1929 African Americans in the sections of the city where they formed the majority, participated actively and more consciously in the political life. If African Americans detected any signs of prejudice, white leaders feared the outcome.

20 Letter from Frank Anderson to Rosenwald, op. cit.
Not everyone took pains to practice caution in writing a letter with political content, however. In 1925, Francis X. Busch received the following lines by an anonymous author: “It is an established fact among the corporate bodies of the city who wish support for bond issues that the largest strength in proportion to population can be developed among colored people if they are properly approached.” Pointing out that African Americans looked at things from a “group viewpoint,” the anonymous author of the letter went on to suggest that it would be futile to “rely simply on political efforts” to get the vote. The writer tried to lure Busch into letting him take over the matter because he had a plan and he guaranteed results. The writer supported the idea that the African American vote could be had with the proper approach other than political efforts. Furthermore, that African Americans voted as a group was recognized by both races. In 1919 A. L. Jackson had commented that “If you can convince him [the African American voter] that you are right on the question there is hardly anything that you cannot do with him. That is the danger and it is also an opportunity if the right leadership can be had.”

The shift in white attitudes toward African American voting power marked a decade in which African Americans realized their voting strength, came to value it, and use it more effectively. In 1919, whites who were dissatisfied with the politics of Thompson, blamed African Americans for bringing him into office and further disturbed the worsening balance of race relations. Six years later, African American voting strength had become a tool for white campaigners who wanted support in ways other than political campaigns. Finally by 1929, it was a point of serious discussion between white leaders, who did not wish to be accused of prejudice.

22 Anonymous letter to Francis X. Busch, March 31, 1925, Folder 1, Box 345a, Barnett Papers, Chicago Historical Society.
23 William M. Tuttle, Jr., Race Riot, p. 188
The anonymous letter which Busch received did not set the tone for general correspondence between whites concerning African Americans. More often than not whites' correspondence concerning African Americans treated them paternalistically. Leaders who worked towards the betterment of race relations knew that they were dealing with delicate issues. After the appointment of the Chicago Commission on Race Relations in 1919, the Commission needed a secretary. William C. Graves, Rosenwald's secretary, notified Paul U. Kellogg, that Graham Taylor's name had come up. Graham Taylor was a social worker, sociologist, journalist and respected analyst of urban problems.24 Graves listed the qualifications necessary to become a secretary as follows:

The qualifications for its executive [secretary] should be a sympathetic attitude toward the Negro, coupled with tact, discretion, and fair-mindedness. He should be capable of handling a staff of investigators. He should be able to digest material and submit in [sic] quickly understood form to the Commission, and he should be able to write a clear report of findings.25

That the qualifications of the job required a sympathetic attitude toward African Americans as well as secretarial excellence serves to underline the care commissioners exercised to better race relations. A prejudiced secretary would not do, and that it was specifically mentioned shows concern on the part of whites on the Commission who wanted to reduce the threat of racial conflict within its membership to a minimum. It also shows that even in a biracial committee there was the possibility of prejudice. In the end Taylor did get the position and became the executive secretary, not only because he qualified for the job, but also because he had a "sympathetic attitude for the Negro."

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24 Philpott, The Slum and the Ghetto, p. 211
25 Letter from William C. Graves to Paul U. Kellogg, October 21, 1919, Folder 3, Box 6, Julius Rosenwald Papers.
2.2 Rosenwald’s Proposal To Contribute to the Young Men’s Christian Association

Building Movement for African Americans and the Reactions

Young Men’s Christian Association discussions also reflected white sympathy and interest in helping African American organization and betterment of race relations, and served to create a web of contributions. YMCAs served blacks separately in black branches until 1946. YMCA work among African Americans reflected a variety of issues ranging from middle-class African American efforts at controlling the urbanization of large numbers of migrants to African American men’s hopes of building their manhood. This section will deal with reactions to Rosenwald’s contributions to YMCA building programs for African Americans.

Rosenwald’s involvement with the YMCA work for African Americans won him the trust of blacks as well as whites who were interested in betterment of living standards for blacks. He became a national figure in 1910 when he proposed to contribute to the YMCA branches for African Americans nationwide. Upon Rosenwald’s request Jesse E. Moorland, one of the highest ranking African American YMCA officials, prepared a report on the nationwide African American YMCAs. The report explained that African American YMCAs depended on the support of local African Americans, who often could not raise sufficient funds, and therefore local YMCAs provided minimal services. In 1910 Rosenwald promised to donate $25,000 to any community that would raise $75,000. He would give the $25,000 after the $75,000 was raised by the community locally and put to use toward the erection of an African American YMCA. Ten years later he raised the stakes stating that he would donate $25,000 for every $125,000 raised. The buildings would have to feature “separate

26 Men and Women Adrift: The YMCA and the YWCA in the City, eds. Nina Mjagkij and Margaret Spratt, (New York: New York University Press, 1997) Mjagkij and Spratt have put together a volume of studies which
headquarters for men and boys, standard gymnasium, swimming pool, class and club rooms, restaurant and no fewer than fifty dormitory rooms.” Such standard features would make African American YMCAs equal to those of the white YMCAs, giving African American men a separate but equal institution.

Grover B. Simpson, who was a member of the board of managers of the YMCA of Chicago, thanked Rosenwald personally for his contributions to promoting African American YMCA work:

Not only Chicago, but our nation is to be congratulated in having as one of our good citizens a man who has always been to the fore-front in furthering a good cause, and in this particular instance in making such a generous donation for the up-lift of a people whose lot, to say the least, is an unfortunate one. This gift of yours to this city, and to other cities who may comply with the conditions, will unquestionably lead to their up-lifting, will inspire them with new hope, and on the same principle of our Association spirit, mean the helping of those who help themselves, as it gives them a task to do before they can realize upon your generosity.

While praising Rosenwald for doing a good deed, Simpson also praised the work of the YMCA, of which he was a board manager. Simpson’s letter had more praise in store. In a meeting where Rosenwald’s proposition had been announced, N. W. Harris, one of the prominent contributors to YMCA and NAACP work, had paid a high compliment, observing that “Rosenwald’s proposal contemplated such benefits for the colored race eventually that it was only second in importance to the emancipation proclamation.” Though more subtle, Simpson echoed this belief. By holding Rosenwald’s proposal second in importance to the Emancipation Proclamation, Harris and Simpson raised him to the level of a national hero.

_Mjagkij, “A Peculiar Alliance,” pp. 591, 596_

Letter from Grover B. Simpson to Julius Rosenwald, January 7, 1911, Folder 21, Box X, Julius Rosenwald Papers.

_Ibid._

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Most white Chicagoans appreciated Rosenwald's offers to contribute to YMCA projects. Their appreciation showed that leaders of both races understood the significant effects helping African Americans build their own institutions would have on bettering race relations. YMCA work would enable African Americans to prove that they were capable of handling their own institutions. Dr. Graham Taylor of Chicago Commons and professor at the University of Chicago, congratulated Rosenwald on the gift he gave the whole community by proposing to contribute to the African American branch of the YMCA. In doing so, Taylor viewed Rosenwald's contribution as a great gift to all individuals who were interested in helping African Americans help themselves in Chicago and everywhere else. Taylor's appreciation of the offer ran deep:

No other giving has impressed me more deeply or encouraged me so much as yours to the endowment fund of the YMCA and for building in our "black belt." No more neglected people are there in Chicago than they, and they have long burdened my heart. Their provident hospital and nurses training school provide for their sick and dying, but you have started the work of the living for the young—and not only here but wherever strong and helpful hands will join yours.¹⁰

Taylor praised Rosenwald and stated his personal concern for African Americans. Rosenwald seems to have done what Taylor would have done had he the means. Rosenwald earned the appreciation of both races by his proposed contributions to the YMCA work which would be directed to African American use. Rosenwald's contemporaries Woodson and Wesley voiced their appreciation for Rosenwald's contributions which they believed set an example by helping the business and professional men of both races to unite and establish African American YMCA branches.¹¹ Meanwhile, Rosenwald's proposed contribution made clear the differences between white and African American opinions. White opinion suggested that the

¹⁰ Letter from Graham Taylor to Julius Rosenwald, January 3, 1910, Folder 21, Box X, Julius Rosenwald Papers.
¹¹ Woodson and Wesley, The Negro in Our History, pp. 453-454
building of the African American YMCAs would help African Americans help themselves while the African American opinion hoped for the chance for races to work together.

Rosenwald's contributions received criticism as well as praise. While praise came from whites, criticisms generally came from African Americans who condemn segregation. African American leader W. E. B. Du Bois valued Rosenwald's contributions but criticized the YMCA's segregated facilities. Likewise applauding Rosenwald's offer, the Broad Ax, a Chicago African American newspaper, criticized YMCAs for not opening their doors to African Americans and instead creating separate branches.\(^\text{32}\)

African American YMCA branches helped to create an organized community consciousness. By raising funds and taking part in the organizational level, African Americans would learn to imitate white procedures. As well as serving African American males with classes and recreational activities, African American YMCAs would also open up more jobs for African American leaders. While efforts directed to bring the community together were taking place, the insistence by African Americans that they be judged as individuals and not as a group was entering white consciousness. Also at this time, Rosenwald had become such a prominent figure in helping African Americans that leaders thought it would be worthwhile to let him know about individual African Americans' accomplishments. Dr. J. P. Brushingham, Reverend of the South Park Avenue Methodist-Episcopal Church and secretary of the Morals Commission of Chicago, wrote to Rosenwald in 1926 and introduced the personal accomplishments of Reverend C. A. Tindley. Brushingham explained that Reverend Tindley was a "self-established" African American who started out with a small congregation and little means and worked his way to popularity and wealth. It is not clear what Brushingham wanted to achieve by notifying Rosenwald of Reverend Tindley's
existence but he did so “because of the wonderful interest shown by you [Rosenwald] in the colored race.”

2.3 Young Women’s Christian Association and the Indiana Avenue African American Branch

Historians of urban race relations in the 1920s point out that African American women played an important role as diplomats of their race in the absence of a strong and unified male African American leadership. This assessment holds true for 1920s Chicago. There were male leaders like A. L. Jackson and Carter G. Woodson, and although their support of one another can be derived from the pages of the Defender, their connection in leadership is absent from the records. YWCAs were seen as part of a series of efforts dedicated to social change. African American YWCAs were among the “little-known forms of settlement work conducted among blacks.” African American women in Chicago played an important role in shaping their community’s organizations. African American club women shared similar backgrounds: They were mostly educated, middle-class women married to professional men, had multiple club memberships and created “webs of collaborative fund-raising and uplift activities.” Although the African American Indiana Avenue YWCA was organized in 1914, historians do not deal with the Chicago YWCA work among African American women in detail. Rather they concentrate on the importance of the African American women in creating social webs within the African American community. While African American men aimed at changing whites’ attitudes towards blacks, African American women were in the background.

33 Mjałkij, “A Peculiar Alliance” p. 593
34 Letter from Dr. J. P. Brushingham to Julius Rosenwald, July 29, 1926, Folder 2, Box XL, Julius Rosenwald Papers.
creating a better working African American community. The African American YWCA members in Chicago wanted to create a working interdependence with those of the white YWCA; however, at least initially white women declined from fully cooperating with their African American counterparts.

The white YWCA’s initial lack of enthusiasm for cooperation with the Indiana Avenue Branch has roots in the segregationist practices of the YWCA that persisted until and after the end of the World War I. Chicago’s white YWCA first took notice of the African American YWCA at the monthly meeting on May 14, 1914. The records show that their recognition of this issue was brief and disinterested: “Mrs. Chamberlein told of the Colored people wishing to organize a YWCA.” The white YWCA viewed the African American branch as a burden from the start. White women did take notice of the high quality of the African American women who formed the Indiana Avenue Branch, nevertheless, they viewed it with reservations. A year after the formation of the Indiana Avenue Branch, the representatives of the two YWCAs met and exchanged reports frequently. However, the African American YWCA had not begun their operations yet due to lack of funds. After an interview with the representatives of the Indiana Avenue YWCA Mrs. Sippy reported “their need of some financial backing to enable them to start.” While references to the Indiana Avenue Branch’s need of financial backing became the center of reports, the white YWCA recognized and praised the efforts of individual women. Miss Cook, secretary of the African American branch, received compliments from the white women because she did much to

35 Knupfer, Toward a Tenderer Humanity and a Nobler Womanhood, p.24
37 YWCA monthly meeting, May 14, 1914, Folder 2, Box 45, University of Illinois at Chicago, Department of Special Collections.
38 YWCA special executive meeting, May 13, 1915, Folder 2, Box 45, University of Illinois at Chicago
"systematize the work and bring up the different departments. She has talked in a number of churches and tried to interest influential Colored people. New Associate members have been secured." The white YWCA’s wording of the approval testifies to the separateness of the organizations. They expected the Indiana Avenue Branch to interest influential people of their own race, and relieve them from being financial providers.

The connection between the YWCAs remained ambiguous. While the white YWCA did not accept the Indiana Avenue Branch fully, they acted like supervisors when they decided to make contributions. Even though the African American YWCA had been in operation for two years, in 1916 they still needed financial help from the white YWCA. In 1916 their building served 20 girls and women. Of these 20 women some were students and some worked, including one who was a probation officer. White women decided to buy a typewriter for the African American branch, taking money from the Helping Fund. Not only did the white YWCA make limited contributions according to what they thought was worthwhile, but they also decided in what way their contributions would be used. White women paid the African American YWCA $50.00 each month, and they decided that it would go to the salary of the Indiana Avenue Branch secretary. White women did not always mention the Indiana Avenue Branch in their records, but when they did, the records reflected that the African American women were operating satisfactorily except in the matter of finances.

The African American YWCA continuously depended on financial support from the white YWCA, even though they were becoming increasingly better at organizing events. While these events served to bring black and white communities together and to show whites that the black community was doing useful things for itself, they also verified that African
Americans still required white financial contributions to survive. In 1917 “Miss Brown explained that the women of the Colored Branch were getting up an entertainment which will be given in Orchestra Hall, to show the improvement of the Colored Race”41 The African American YWCA’s request for financial help persisted. In 1918 The Indiana Avenue Branch requested assistance to conduct a fund raising campaign, but white women told them that they must bear their own expenses.42 When the African American YWCA gave an entertainment to help pay a coal bill the white YWCA “took a box and sent $5.00 for it. It has seats for 10. The tickets were given to those who could attend.”43 The women of both races did not work together. White YWCA women attended the events held by the Indiana Avenue Branch to help with their finances, paid the salary of their secretary, and took money out of their Helping Fund to buy them a typewriter, but eventually they recommended that the African American branch get a white chairman to straighten them out.44 This was followed a year later by the appointment of 18 women from the white YWCA to act as “a Committee of Management for the Colored Work.”45

Eva Del Vakia Bowles, secretary of the Colored Branch of New York City, was the first “full time employee whose assignment was to work exclusively with the black city associations.” In working towards integrating the work of black associations into the mainstream of the National Organization, she decided that black YWCAs would benefit by affiliating themselves with the local white branches. Consequently she supported the idea that black branches be managed by all-black committees of management, but that the branch

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39 December 14, 1916, Folder 3, Box 45
40 March 8, 1917, Folder 3, Box 45
41 YWCA Regular executive meeting, October 25, 1917, Folder 3, Box 45
42 October 31, 1918, Folder 3, Box 45
43 YWCA special executive meeting, October 3, 1918, Folder 3, Box 45
44 YWCA Regular executive meeting, November 29, 1918, Folder 3, Box 45
45 January 9, 1919, Folder 3, Box 45
committee and the local central board of directors form a “Committee on Colored Work” with equal numbers of black and white members and a white chairwoman. This Committee would then act as counselors and advisors for racial understanding. According to this arrangement the Indiana Avenue Branch would have had to match the 18 white women appointed by the white YWCA. However, this is missing from the records.

White women believed that their committee of management would straighten out the Indiana Avenue Branch’s finances. However, African American women’s participation in the Indiana Avenue Branch seems to have lagged behind the participation of white women in the white YWCA. The Indiana Branch served between 20-25 women before the 1920s. In 1918 the number of girls and women benefiting from the African American YWCA was 25, and they were from ten different states. By 1922 they served a total of 175 women compared to the 10,861 of the white YWCA. The Indiana Avenue Branch’s lack of funds can be traced back to their limited number of clientele.

They might have grown tired of acting as the financial consultants for the African American branch, but at the same time, white YWCA women recognized that among the African American officers were “the best colored women of the city.” When the African American YWCA needed $1,600 “to complete their first payment on the property contracted for,” the white YWCA followed former instructions and helped with an “amount at 5% interest and take their notes.” White women found it encouraging that their finance

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48 YWCA regular monthly meeting, February 14, 1918, Folder 3, Box 45
49 YWCA special executive meeting May 16, 1918, Folder 3, Box 45
committee had "completed plans for launching a campaign to raise money for the purchase of a larger building for the Association."^50

It seems the white YWCA women initially did not completely accept the Indiana Avenue YWCA, but increasingly viewed it as a part of their organization. For example while the YWCA women conducted surveys of and took pride in helping immigrant women, they initially left the Indiana Avenue Branch on their own. Moreover, they contributed whenever the Indiana Avenue Branch organized an event, but declined to help them in the organization process. White YWCA women did not warm up to African American YWCA women quickly. The early records show that the white YWCA helped the African American YWCA financially by making donations or participating in their events, but it seems rather reluctantly. Until they took matters in their own hands by assigning a committee for management consisting of white women, they felt uncertain about black YWCA's future.

Only when the Indiana Avenue Branch acted "as a hostess for two days to the First National Headquarters Secretary to visit the Chicago Association—a colored woman of great charm, ability, and consecration," did the General Secretary of YWCA Eleanor Richardson claim the Indiana Avenue Branch, with the word "our" actually underlined. Richardson further recorded that Eva Bowles, the First National Headquarters Secretary, "brought to our colored leadership here an encouragement and efficiency and purity of leadership motive which none of us could ever give to that race."^51 That was two possessive pronouns in a row. In the previous records there was nothing to indicate that the white YWCA viewed the Indiana Avenue YWCA as an allied branch. Rather it was as if the Indiana Avenue Branch was just another organization to which the YWCA made contributions.

^50 April 11, 1918, Folder 3, Box 45
^51 Report of the General Secretary YWCA of Chicago, February 20, 1919, Folder 1, Box 1, YWCA Records, University of Illinois at Chicago
Richardson attributed Bowles’ success to the four thousand dollars Bowles "received from Roosevelt to spend among colored women." She pointed out that "certainly Miss Eva Bowles played the part of a good fairy to our colored members." Bowles encouraged the YWCA to ask "the National movement for finances to help in equipping their garage as a recreation center and for a Girls’ Work Secretary to give full time to the club membership." By November 1919 the Indiana Avenue Branch recreation center was half finished. The increase in staff had helped form the Girls’ Work Committee which was "composed of outstanding leaders in the colored life of the city." The first publicity leaflets were out and a survey was being conducted to "report to Miss Bowles when she arrives recommendations for the size of the second home for colored girls." Clearly with the coming of Bowles into the picture, the Indiana Avenue YWCA had become the YWCA’s branch, work on the recreation center had started and been half finished, and the staff numbers had increased.

During the November 1919 Board meeting, the Girls’ Work Secretary of the National Board for African American girls, Crystal Byrd, was introduced. She “gave a most interesting account of the development of her people” and she “pleaded that the thinking white meet the thinking colored people for the future advancement of their race.” African American leaders were working hard to represent their race and their race’s progress. This shows that the African American community leaders did not just wait helplessly until white community leaders approached them to better race relations. The timing of Byrd’s plea for the cooperation between thinking women of both races also points to the fact that after the 1919 riot and before the publication of the report of the CCRR, leaders of both races and sexes had similar insights into the ways of bettering race relations.

51 Ibid.
52 Report of the Executive Secretary, November 20, 1919, Folder 1, Box 1, YWCA Records
53 Minutes of the November Board Meeting, November 20, 1919, Folder 1, Box 1, YWCA Records
Contributions from philanthropists played a very large role in the forming and continuation of African American civic organizations in 1920s Chicago. The comparative popularity and unpopularity of the African American YMCA and YWCA, had direct links with the amount of outside support. Although African American women in Chicago had over a hundred clubs that served the black community the lack of enthusiasm for participation in the Chicago Indiana Avenue YWCA might very well be based on the fact that it received little outside assistance from white philanthropy.

The success of philanthropic events such as the establishment of the Wabash Avenue YMCA, and The Negro Folk Theater show directly the significant role philanthropy played in helping African American institutions. By helping African Americans on different levels of their existence, Rosenwald’s image had become such that people of both races were attracted to his philanthropy. Other whites who also actively worked to help African Americans had a common outlook. In viewing Rosenwald’s contributions on a grand scale, they believed the right things were being done, and they thought that Rosenwald’s image reflected the combination of all of their efforts. At the same time, there were many things that whites did not know about African Americans. As in the Negro Folk Theater example, when a new project came up, whites had to be assured that their investment would be made on solid grounds, that the project would prove worthwhile.

The Negro Folk Theater example also shows that whites acted on behalf of African Americans when financial contributions were needed. On the other hand, the YWCA example shows that often African Americans appealed to whites for help after they organized among themselves. Organizing was not enough to become operational. Without outside assistance and financial contributions from whites, African American organizations had a very small chance of surviving or succeeding. When whites felt certain that African Americans held
certain powers and that they might use them dangerously, whites acted according to what they wanted to gain. The gain motive, as in the political campaign examples, pushed certain whites into searching for ways by which they could exploit African American powers.

Perceptions also played a large role in the development of philanthropy. When Rosenwald made it known that he would contribute to the YMCA building movement for African Americans he received positive feedback, which in turn accelerated the building movement. Yet there were many other issues in the society which could not be helped by changing attitudes or perceptions, and which philanthropy could not reach. The next chapter will deal with the failure of certain creative efforts like the building of a park in the black community, and the lack of black and white consensus on the needs of African Americans. It will also look at what joint efforts accomplished for African American dependent children.
CHAPTER 3

THE SCOPE OF PHILANTHROPY

The first two chapters dealt with African American individual and group efforts to establish a working connection with the wealthy whites who, through philanthropic means tried to improve understanding between races in society, and wealthy whites and their manners while they worked together with African Americans. This chapter will try to answer the question to what extent community leaders’ efforts did or did not help better conditions for African Americans.

Throughout the 1920s the African American community faced a persistent housing problem in Chicago. This housing problem was not peculiar to Chicago. As a matter of fact housing became a problem as soon as freed blacks began migrating to the southern and northern urban centers during the Reconstruction period.1 Yet the observations of historians Horace R. Clayton and St. Clair Drake paint an optimistic picture of the Chicago Black Belt in the 1920s. They point out that prior to 1915 Chicago had easily accommodated African Americans. Then between 1915-1920 the sudden increase due to migration created organized resistance from native and immigrant whites over housing. African Americans who had lived in Chicago prior to the migration also felt bitter about the large number of uneducated and rural blacks from the South. These African Americans whom Clayton and Drake refer to as the “Old Settlers” felt trapped because attitudes toward African American housing also had direct consequences for

where middle-class African Americans lived. African Americans were generally excluded from the better neighborhoods, or when a few families moved into one of these neighborhoods tensions arose stemming from the fear that an invasion was in progress and that dilapidation of the property would follow. The Black Belt could not contain the increasing number of African Americans, but frequent white terrorist bombings and organized community efforts made it harder for the black community to move to better neighborhoods or for the Black Belt to expand. It was common for ethnic groups to flock together in their own neighborhoods in slum areas upon arrival in America, but the immigrants from Europe moved out to better areas once they were able to secure better jobs, usually within the next generation. The passage of time only brought more congestion to the Black Belt as African Americans found it harder to move to other parts of the city.²

Clayton and Drake further argue that the years between 1924-1929 were the “most prosperous ones the Negro community in Chicago had ever experienced.” They present banker Jesse Binga’s rise from a Pullman porter to real estate speculator to banker in thirty-five years as symbolic of the promise of American life. In 1928 Binga reported that African Americans had forty million dollars to their credit, four billion dollars worth of property on which they paid taxes, and contributed two million dollars to charity.³ On the other hand, Clayton and Drake also observe the fact that African Americans “of the lowest socio-economic levels” often had to

³ Ibid., pp. 81-82
compete with "middle-class whites" for living space. Class antagonisms provoked and intensified race prejudice, and "class feeling was often expressed in racial terms."\(^4\)

Meanwhile white and black leaders continued working together to better conditions for African Americans and to enhance understanding and relations between races. In the African American community women played an increasingly important role as community organizers. Also in the 1920s children began to receive more attention from public and private agencies. Anne Meis Knupfer mentions that there were 70 African American women's clubs in Chicago between 1890-1920, but the actual number of clubs added up to 150 including youth clubs, church societies, lyceums, and unfederated women's clubs. These clubs had been involved in kindergarten, mothering, and youth activities and child welfare through the thirty years.\(^5\) During the 1920s African American children were excluded from most organizations, but a large proportion received the additional care to make up for a proper upbringing from a few organizations.

These conditions were expected to worsen as a result of large numbers of African American citizens migrating to Chicago. On the one hand, prejudice toward African Americans resulted from their low economic positions in society. On the other hand, the same prejudice made it harder for working-class blacks to better their conditions. In other words, it was not enough for the community leaders to work towards bettering relations between races because economic factors in the lower levels of the African American community slowed the process by

\(^4\) Ibid., p. 114
which elite or middle-class blacks could hope to better educate and train themselves and their community.

3.1 Park Matter, Neighborhood Work

When consulted by the Chicago Commission on Race Relations members, Judge Hugo Pam observed that housing conditions had "a great deal to do with all crime whether it be colored or white persons. I [Judge Pam] think the housing conditions of the colored people are infinitely worse than those of the white man." Rosenwald had been interested in African American housing in Chicago as early as 1914, when he purchased land for the purpose of building a low-cost housing project. The project had been postponed due to the war, and Rosenwald, although he kept the project in the corner of his mind, did not take further action until 1928.

The housing problem did not involve only African Americans. Settlements were created for immigrants to better conditions in poverty-stricken neighborhoods. Between 1900 and 1916 "at least nine settlements in the Black Belt and black satellite districts" opened with African American and white combined efforts. However, with one exception, all of them had disappeared before the riot of 1919. After the riot seven more were opened. Settlement work operated on racial lines. Settlement houses for whites served multi-ethnic neighborhoods, and white control over such settlement houses aimed at assimilation. On the other hand, white run settlement houses for African Americans pointed toward segregation. Settlement workers, be they "anti-

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6 Letter from Judge Hugo Pam to Graham Romeyn Taylor, August 30, 1921, Folder 3, Box 6, Julius Rosenwald Collection
"Negro" or "pro-Negro" helped form and keep African Americans in the "black ghetto."9 Due to restrictions in white settlements African American church leaders, club women and settlement workers joined their efforts to create settlements and social centers for poorer African Americans until the 1920s. The Negro Fellowship League, the Emanuel, Wendell Phillips and Clotee Scott Settlements, and the Frederick Douglass Center served as public libraries, helped African Americans to find jobs, and held sewing classes for women while they were still in operation. They all closed by 1919.10

While the interracial Settlements expired by 1919, the housing shortage for African Americans had become critical in 1917. The central issue was segregation: While African Americans did not object to being confined to African American neighborhoods, they denounced second rate housing facilities. Chicagoans feared that their neighborhoods were being invaded by the African American population which did not fit within the boundaries of the Black Belt anymore.11 African Americans wanted to have the same facilities in their neighborhoods which other neighborhoods had in theirs. Specifically, they wanted to build a park in an African American neighborhood in 1923 which was a natural need arising from congested conditions in the area.

Throughout the 19th century parks were the centers where the greatest intermingling between races took place.12 In Chicago African American children could not use the existing recreational centers because these centers had become the focus of racial violence. Beginning in 1923 the African American community of South Chicago took up the matter of a standard park.

9 Ibid., pp. 344-345
10 Knupfer, Toward A Tenderer Humanity, pp. 90-107 The Wendell Phillips Settlement and Frederick Douglass Center were funded by Rosenwald. See Diner, In the Almost Promised Land, p. 181
South Park Commissioners had already proposed to “build and equip a park accessible to the residents of the second and third wards” which everyone agreed the wards had needed for a long time. African Americans of the community met at the office of the Chicago Urban League and decided to insist that this park should be standard in every respect. The park would have to be “adequate in size and standard in equipment with bath house, library, gymnasium, baseball diamond, tennis courts” and special attention was paid to the need for a “trained director” and to the importance of it being “centrally located.”

When the African Americans met at the office of the Chicago Urban League, out of the twenty-seven people present, eleven were women. T. Arnold Hill, executive secretary to the Chicago Urban League, declared that the Urban League was also interested in the park. Interested community members formed a commission of three to attend one of the meetings of the South Side Commission to “elaborate upon the points of view.” Within three days Hill received a reply notifying him that a special committee had been appointed to “deal with this question of a park for the use of the residents of the second and third Wards.” The special committee consisted of Bernard E. Sunny, John Bain and Edward J. Kelly. However, the committee could not get to

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12 Philpott, The Slum and the Ghetto, p.212
13 Rabinowitz, Race, Ethnicity, and Urbanization, p. 213
14 Letter from T. Arnold Hill to Mr. J. F. Foster, May 15, 1923, Folder 1, Box 345a, C. A. Barnett Collection, Chicago Historical Society. For a discussion of parks see Galen Cranz, The Politics of Park Design: A History of Urban Parks in America (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1989) pp. 231, 67. Cranz states that throughout the 1920s parks were either segregated or separate areas in parks were assigned to whites and African Americans. He points out that the segregated facilities were inadequate, and agrees that parks were arenas for racial tensions. The African American community’s insistence on the need for a trained director can be better understood when one pays attention to the claims of the South Park Commission between the years 1906-1911. Cranz observes that the Commission praised itself for entrusting the care of the playgrounds only to play leaders who “understood that the significance of the play instinct was its relation to the physical and social development of young people.” The play leaders’ importance increased as the nature of playgrounds changed. At first the play leaders only issued equipment, ensured order, organized teams and scheduled games. By 1911 the play leaders served as community activity organizers. The character and qualifications of play leaders were important because the Commission realized that children had imitative tendencies.
work at once due to the illness of chairman Kelly. Speaking on behalf of Kelly, and perhaps to relieve Kelly from accusations of disinterest, Sunny wrote to Hill expressing Kelly’s disappointment because Kelly “wanted to see something done.” Commissioner Sunny added his hope that the Urban League’s decision on the park being centrally located was not final because “one park for so large a territory would be convenient for only a small portion of the population.”

Upon receiving this reply, Hill notified Sunny that a group had met “at the call of the Urban League” and decided the park should be centrally located. It was their understanding that they would be given just ten acres and that it would be “better to have one plot of ten acres than to have so few acres divided into two parks.” The committee of community representatives believed that even if some community members would have to travel a greater distance by having one centrally located park, it was better than having two partially equipped parks. Hill also mentioned that other communities had had to content themselves with one park before and curiously added that he thought it would be a “mistake to put in this community -- and there are several good reasons for this statement -- anything any different either as to the size and equipment that is different from that which is put into any other community.”

From its start, then, the building of the park had been delayed first due to Kelly’s illness, and second because the representatives of the community insisted upon a single centrally located park. Hill sent a copy of the correspondence between himself and Sunny to V. K. Brown, the Superintendent of Playgrounds and Sports of South Park Commissioners. At the end of the month

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14 Letter from T. Arnold Hill to Mr. J. F. Foster, op cit.
15 Letter from Bernard E. Sunny to T. Arnold Hill, May 18, 1923, Folder 1, Box 345a, C. A. Barnett Collection.
16 Letter from T. A. Hill to B. E. Sunny, May 22, 1923, Folder 1, Box 345a, C. A. Barnett Collection.
Hill received an answer from Brown expressing satisfaction with Hill's insistence on adequate equipment. Brown pointed out that the same position was being taken "here at the office," and he stressed that if they all pulled together they could "convince Mr. Sunny of its practicability." At the close of the year the community representatives, not yet aware that building a standard park could be so worrisome, but aware that it was beginning to take a long time, came to believe that an executive committee would reflect the importance they placed on the building of this park so an executive committee of three was formed. The African American community was becoming restless because the South Park Commissioners still had not begun working on the Recreation Park.\(^\text{18}\)

Two years later, in 1925, the park matter was taken up by the City of Chicago Department of Public Welfare. The head of that department, Edward J. Kelly, whose illness had caused the first delay in the building of the park, received a distressed letter from Alice Cole Smith. Work on the park still lingered, and now it was being opposed by African American Alderman Louis B. Anderson. Anderson believed that the schools provided all necessary playgrounds there; hence there was no need for a park. In opposition, Smith pointed out that there were internal changes taking place in that part of the city and that the interest of the future residents would have to be kept in mind. The internal changes created a need for non-commercialized recreation. The Board of Education had decided to build a large addition to Wendell Phillips High School which would also take land away from the present small parks. Furthermore, new people would continue moving into the neighborhood, making it more congested. Smith pointed out that "the South Park

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\(^{17}\) Letter from V. K. Brown to T. Arnold Hill, May 31, 1923, Folder 1, Box 345a, C. A. Barnett Collection.

\(^{18}\) Letter from T. A. Hill to the Board of South Park Commissioners, December 19, 1923, Folder 1, Box 345a, C. A. Barnett Collection.
Commissioners, as the Board of Education and the City Plan Commissioners, must listen to neighborhood groups and should grant their wishes.” On the other hand, she reminded the South Park Commissioners that “Chicago as a whole looks to such bodies to provide for the future health and happiness of the citizens, even at the sacrifice of convenience and sentiment of certain individuals.”

Eventually Mary E. McDowell, the president of the Women’s Inter-Racial Co-operative Committee received the following information on January 27, 1925: First, that Alderman Anderson asked for the relocation of the designated spot for the building of the recreation park deriving his conclusion from a petition that did not even exist; and second that the financial figures involving the buying of the lot and the building of the park had risen. Now it would “cost more money to buy the ground than it would have cost both to buy that ground and to equip it at the time that the matter was first considered.” Some houses would have to be torn down for Park purposes, but the Commissioners intended “to pay adequately for the location which would permit the property owners to buy any other sections of the city.” There was now opportunity for African Americans to buy property in the “district further south.”

Property owners in the Giles Avenue district met a few weeks later, on February 17, with T. A. Hill presiding to discuss the issues arising from the Park. He explained that two years ago “a bond issue of $2,000,000 had been approved by the voters and placed at the disposal of the South Park Commissioners for acquiring and the maintenance of parks in the territory under their control.” No action had been taken until Hill and Mrs. Wells brought the matter before the commissioners after which the commissioners decided upon a place but again stopped going

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19 Letter from Alice Cole Smith to E. J. Kelly, January 7, 1925, Folder 1, Box 345a, C. A. Barnett Collection.
further with the matter. Property owners were asked to see things from the point of view of community welfare. The park would serve all ages as a community center. Property owners were also urged to sell their property because land values would soon decrease. Since further action on the matter depended on proving that the people of the community indeed cared for and wanted this park, Hill presented a petition for signatures. 21

Meetings of this sort were held frequently between January 22 and March 17 in the homes of the property owners in the South Side neighborhood. Community leaders thought that if the meetings were held at the homes of the property owners, it would show that property owners agreed to have the park built. 22

The representatives for the African American community did everything they could to call the community to meetings, to inform them about what to do, and wrote to white authorities. It was important that the community came together and acted unanimously to disprove the account of Alderman Anderson. On March 16, members of the community, especially those who signed the petition, were strongly urged to attend the meeting on the following day at 3:00 when their side of the matter would be presented formally to the South Park Commission. A high turnout was advised as it would "indicate to the Commissioners that you are behind the petition which bears your name." 23 Two days later, on March 18, T. Arnold Hill delivered a speech to the members of the Board of South Park Commissioners to convince them that the community wanted the park. He emphasized the fact that out of fifty-nine affected property owners forty-two

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20 Letter to Mary E. McDowell, January 27, 1925, Folder 1, Box 345a, C. A. Barnett Collection.
21 Report on the meetings held to discuss park and playground situation, March 10, 1925, Folder 1, Box 345a, C. A. Barnett Collection.
22 Report of meetings held on the South Park Recreational Park for the Second and Third Wards at the Proposed Site, Folder 1, Box 345a, C. A. Barnett Collection.
23 Letter to the community, March 16, 1925, Folder 1, Box 345a, C. A. Barnett Collection.
had signed the petition. This speech not only urged the commission to provide the park, but also to provide it urgently.\textsuperscript{24} Three months later, in July, A. L. Foster supplied Walter T. Fisher, secretary to the Conference Committee of Civic Organizations, with the information that the need for a park was obvious. Foster also made references to the report of the CCRR. The report had mentioned the lack of recreation centers in the African American areas. Contrary to the belief that authorities did not take the findings and suggestions of the Commission seriously, this reference to the report stands to show that they did.\textsuperscript{25}

When summarizing the matter in his own words, Foster tried to sound objective. After citing the report of the CCRR, he pointed out that there were six recreation centers accessible to African Americans, but these recreation centers were not used "as much as ten percent by them." Foster did not state why these six recreation centers were not being used. It was generally believed, however, that fear of white violence kept African Americans from using the existing centers. He did not intend to come across as one who advocated "a separate recreational center for the colored people." Instead he made it known that they simply desired "a public place similar to the modern and standard small park, which will serve the people of the district suggested above regardless of race." He reminded Fisher that African Americans composed the majority of the inhabitants of the district.\textsuperscript{26} Foster gave a short but detailed history of the developments, or rather of the reasons which stood in the way of any developments. He noted in conclusion, however, that the majority of property owners agreed that they wanted the park: Alderman Anderson then dropped his resolution to stop action on behalf of community property owners and

\textsuperscript{24} Speech by T. A. Hill, March 18, 1925, Folder 1, Box 345a, C. A. Barnett Collection.
\textsuperscript{25} Tuttle, Jr., Race Riot, p. 258
\textsuperscript{26} Letter from A. L. Foster to Walter T. Fisher, July 15, 1925, Folder 1, Box 345a, C. A. Barnett Collection.
gave his approval. There was now nothing standing in the way of the park, and Foster signed off with the hope of "something very definite being done by the Commissioners within a reasonable period."  

The correspondence on the South Park issue indicates that disagreement, misunderstanding and misgiving existed between black leaders and community members on the one side, and leaders of both races on the other. To activate the building of the park first of all its place had to be agreed upon. In this case, African American representative Alderman Anderson misunderstood or misrepresented his community. Proving that his request for the relocation of the park site did not reflect the idea of the majority was not an easy task. Community representatives designed various meetings to prove Anderson wrong. In doing so, representatives had to convince community property owners of the need for the park and the convenience of its designated location. After the property owners were convinced and the misunderstandings cleared, the community invited the South Side Commissioners to act at once. The proving and convincing processes consumed a period of two years. One cannot help but conclude that in order for the African American community to draw white officials' interest in their community's betterment their interest would have to coincide with that of the white officials.

Racial segregation might have served to keep racial disputes down, but as in the case of the South Park, it made conditions harder for the African American community. To build a park for the African American community, some African American property owners would have to

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27 Ibid.

28 After the riot of 1919, the Commission on Race Relations made certain resolutions for the betterment of racial relations and understandings. In spite of the report segregation continued at certain levels and parts of society. While recreation parks near African American neighborhoods existed, they did not encourage African American use. Philpott has argued that when organizations sponsored group activities they "kept whites and Negroes as far apart as
sell their property. Even if property owners were convinced that their relocation elsewhere would not cause them any inconvenience, community organizers wanted to build the park at the expense of property owners with the future of the neighborhood in mind. Property owners’ consent to selling their property shows that the community had gained a group consciousness. The community was also coming together and learning to care for their own in other ways. Work involving the home placing plan for dependent African American children was one of these ways.

3.2 Work For African American Children

While the building of the park would benefit African Americans of all ages, work specifically aimed at the care of dependent African American children was being undertaken as early as 1919. Work for Dependent Colored Children was started in 1919 as a department of the Illinois Children’s Home and Aid Society. The Department for Dependent Colored Children did not start its operations officially until 1920. Throughout the first year the Department was in its experimental stage. The Department aimed to find homes for African American children in need and place them there under supervision. A central committee was formed for the special work for African American children.29

Edith Wyatt evaluated the contributions of the Julius Rosenwald Fund as a blessing in the work of the Department. She declared that until 1920 “the dependent colored children of Cook County were less responsibly cared for than any other group among homeless children of the community,” and she asserted that the “neglect and need” of “these unfortunate children” was possible.” This point applies to the parks as well. Parks were often the centers of racial violence. The riot of 1919 had erupted from a territorial dispute over the use of a beach by black children.
“dishonorable to the entire community.” A Home-Placing plan had been started by a committee consisting of Amelia Sears, T. Arnold Hill, and W. S. Reynolds. Judging the success of the Department by the number of dependent children being returned to the court, Wyatt took pride in the fact that only four children in two years had been “returned to the court for any delinquency.” Rosenwald’s contributions had been a blessing because little financial support had been received from other sources and African American children were otherwise excluded from most of the existing institutions for children.

The Department developed “community resources on behalf of these children’s futures,” and Wyatt praised the success of the department executives and investigators in doing so. In 1921 widespread unemployment and poverty had affected African Americans more severely than the rest of the society, but more well-to-do African Americans of the community had “taken into their homes free of charge twice as many of the destitute children” as the year before. She evaluated the homes of the more well-to-do African Americans as having excellent standards. African Americans held meetings to announce to the community the nature of their work which increased the awareness of the community and led to contributions. African Americans not only collected contributions in this way, but in 1922 held a charity ball for the benefit of the Society.

While financial contributions from the African American community were scarce enough, the year 1921 was especially hard on the African American population. On January 15 citizens were “urgently requested to attend the weekly meetings of the Citizens’ Relief Committee of Chicago.” This Committee had been organized “to relieve suffering as a result of the widespread

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29 Letter to Mr. W. C. Graves from Amelia Sears and Edith Wyatt, June 27, 1919, Folder, Box, Julius Rosenwald Papers.
and serious unemployment situation in Chicago. The Committee helped 322 people with the cooperation of churches, societies, and civic organizations. They provided food, clothing and lodging for 322, but ran out of funds to continue their relief work. The fact that more well-to-do African Americans helped the Department for Dependent Colored Children at such a stressful time points to the fact that contrary to their initial exclusion of the newcomers, Chicago's older African American settlers came to have a community consciousness by 1921.

The Department for Dependent Colored Children (DDCC) operated in three ways. First some of the children were "provided for outside of boarding supervision." They were placed with relatives, their family difficulties were adjusted, work was found for their parents or proper dispensary treatment and hospital care were secured for them. Second, the children who came under the supervision of the Society, were placed with relatives or family friends after the Society cared for them. Third, the Society placed children in homes and paid for their board. In this way the Society helped 243 children in 1920. The Department for Dependent Colored Children took pride in the fact that African American contributions "placed the work on the footing of a constructive inter-racial effort of genuine value." The Department was run by an interracial committee and whenever African American citizens took responsibility for their own society it was considered a good example that they were better citizens than whites gave them credit for. Generally such activities were believed to contribute to better race relations.

30 Letter to Dr. Shepardson from Edith Franklin Wyatt, March 3, 1922, Folder 13, Box XI, Julius Rosenwald Collection.
31 Ibid.
32 Letter from The Chicago Urban League to C. A. Barnett, January 15, 1921, Folder 6, Box 381, Barnett Collection.
33 Summary of Year's Work And Estimated Budget For Colored Children, January 1 to December 31, 1920, Folder 13, Box XI, Julius Rosenwald Collection.
There were two homes at the time which cared for African American children. Louise Juvenile Home cared for dependent and orphaned boys; Amanda Smith Home cared for dependent and orphaned girls. Wyatt gave three examples of the ways the DDCC helped African American children. A crippled girl to whom she gave the name Margaret was operated on at the Presbyterian hospital, by which her bowed legs were straightened. Wyatt expressed that “the most expert care in the city was obtained for her.” Her operation was successful and she began learning a trade in a trade school. An African American boy who Wyatt called Jim had been deserted in the Louise Home. After the Home closed the DDCC accepted him. His sister had been placed in the Amanda Smith Home. Their baby brother had been taken in by a family in their neighborhood. The DDCC brought the children together, the court found their father, and they were re-united. The father provided for his children after this even though the children remained in the Society. One of the babies brought to them was the illegitimate child of a girl of eighteen. The DDCC placed the baby with a kind-hearted woman, and found out that the mother of the baby “was virtually ill with grief.” They then notified the kind-hearted woman who took in both the baby and the mother.

In 1921 the DDCC was the “only organization, institutional or otherwise, except the Industrial School for Catholic Colored Girls, to care for dependent colored children.” Edith F. Wyatt summarized that “five years prior to 1920 the doors had been gradually closing in private institutions” in Chicago against these children. There was very temporary care, but it was “in the Catholic institutions where the court is permitted to place only the very few colored children...”

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34 Knupfer, Toward a Tenderer Humanity and a Nobler Womanhood, p. 65
35 Letter Wyatt to Dr. Shephardson, op cit.
whose parents have been Roman Catholics." Other institutions which would have received African American children were "constantly being terminated by the authorities because of fire-danger, or inadequate medical care, or improper sanitation." In 1926 the Illinois Children’s Home and Aid Society was still the only "organization in Chicago to which the Juvenile Court can refer dependent colored children, except a few who go to the Catholic organizations." Rosenwald’s son-in-law, A. K. Stern, also took an active part in the work of the DDCC when he was investigating the work of the Colored Children’s Auxiliary. Stern served as a trustee and director of various special activities for the Julius Rosenwald Fund throughout 1927-1937. The Colored Children’s Auxiliary was organized "not for the purpose of giving different care to the colored children, but in the hope of securing from the community the additional support the increased number of needy colored children in the community required." Stern stated that he planned to "accompany two of the visitors into some of the homes where the colored children have been placed in order to see first hand the kind of work that is being done." As was his custom, Rosenwald had offered to contribute $500 when the Society raised $4,500 from African Americans. In 1926 African Americans had paid $1,700.61 in cash, and pledged $2,385. Stern stated that leading African Americans were arranging to make a special drive to meet Rosenwald’s offer. When African Americans could not raise this amount, Rosenwald agreed to contribute the last $250 of $2,500 raised from African American sources. In making his investigation of the Auxiliary, Stern interviewed both white and African American executives

36 Letter to Julius Rosenwald from Wilfred S. Reynolds, April 6, 1921, Folder 13, Box XI, Julius Rosenwald Collection.
37 Letter Wyatt to Dr. Shephardson, op. cit.
38 Summary of Investigation of the Colored Children’s Auxiliary, December 23, 1926, Folder 13, Box XL, Julius Rosenwald Papers.
39 Letter from Edith F. Wyatt to Mr. Stern, September 1926, Folder 6, Box 20, Julius Rosenwald Papers.
and found out that the proportion of African American children who needed care and did not receive it to those of white children were 17 to 9.\textsuperscript{41}

Edith Wyatt reported that in six and a half years only eleven of the 1,090 children in their care had been returned to the court for delinquency. She attributed DDCC's success to the quality of the homes they placed the children in. Free Homes represented "a gradual development of sympathy and interest in the work on the part of the colored community." The children were placed in the households of "Ministers, Doctors, Store-keepers, Railroad men, Real Estate men, Construction workers and Federal Employees."\textsuperscript{42}

Rosenwald had given support to the DDCC from its beginning in "an effort to develop the same facilities for the care of dependent colored children as this [I. C. H. & A. S.] agency provides for white." When in 1927 the DDCC reduced its services to the wards of the Juvenile Court, Rosenwald stopped making contributions. The reason was that "the whole problem of colored dependent and delinquent children was receiving scant attention from any source."\textsuperscript{43}

During the earlier years in the 1920s African Americans proved that they were capable of taking care of their community's needs when wealthier African Americans helped poor families and children who needed better homes.

While the cooperation between different classes of African Americans gained momentum towards the middle of the 1920s, a certain level of understanding between races still lagged behind the improvements in relations between different classes of African Americans. In this African Americans seem to have been more inclined towards cooperation between races than

\textsuperscript{40} Letter from D K R to Julius Rosenwald, July 6, 1928, Folder 13, Box XL, Julius Rosenwald Papers.

\textsuperscript{41} Summary of Investigation of the Colored Children's Auxiliary, op cit.

\textsuperscript{42} Letter from Edith Wyatt to Stern, September 1926, Folder 6, Box 20, Julius Rosenwald Papers.
white leaders. The following section will look at views of the black and white executive and general secretaries of certain African American help institutions.

3.3 Julius Rosenwald’s Sources: Cooperation in Handling African American Affairs

As much as Rosenwald contributed to the betterment of race relations it was hard for him to keep up with the work, needs and improvements in the community. In this his secretary Mr. William C. Graves played an essential role. Graves did more than just sort through the many letters Rosenwald received everyday before he brought these letters to Rosenwald’s attention. His judgement played a big role in which letters Rosenwald saw, and Graves also acted as Rosenwald’s consultant.

On June 17 1926 there was to be a meeting of the Union League Club and Rosenwald was to deliver a speech. Graves contacted executive and general secretaries of the YMCA of Chicago, both African American and white branches, and the Chicago Urban League to inquire about some suggestions for Rosenwald’s use at the meeting. Among the answers he received the central issue proved to be the need for better housing for the African American community. Unfortunately by 1926 the housing problem still remained unsolved. Another problem which remained unsolved from the African American perspective was the persistent prejudice toward the African American race, whether it be in employment practices or in press coverage of their community.

The African American Executive Secretary to the Wabash Avenue Department YMCA, George Arthur, wrote that “the greatest assistance which could be given the Negro in Chicago today, in a practical way, is along housing projects.” Between 1923-1926 African Americans

43 Letter D K R to Julius Rosenwald, op cit.
received property in good neighborhoods. However, rents were so high that African Americans could not easily meet them and the houses were generally too big so that families occupied larger spaces than they needed. Arthur pointed out that if “employment without color discrimination in large plants, factories and offices” could be obtained, African Americans would be economically independent. And it would also help if “propaganda against the inferiority of the Negro” could be done away with. The letter concluded with the recognition that “Julius Rosenwald is the outstanding apostle of doing things—for the Negro and with him—as against the never ending round of academic discussion or philosophizing.” The closing words of the letter bring out the fact that African Americans in general saw most white efforts to help African Americans’ conditions as theories and not practical solutions.44

W. J. Parker, the white General Secretary to the YMCA of Chicago, suggested that the Union League Club Committee become “acquainted with certain leaders of colored enterprises in Chicago and learn their ideas about the conditions under which colored people live and work and the ways those conditions may be improved.” Parker had in mind what he called “a newer group which in many ways is better informed than some of the older leaders.” George Arthur and A. L. Foster were in that newer group. Parker suggested that if “additional school facilities for colored people” could be obtained from the Board of Education, high school drop-outs among African American pupils would decrease. Parker believed that the existing education along literary lines caused drop-outs because “they [African American pupils] are incapable of mastering the subjects.” He stressed the need for a Tuskegee type of education by which emphasis would shift to learning building trades and other manual training. Parker also underlined the need for

44 Letter from George Arthur to W. C. Graves, June 16, 1926, Folder 2, Box 40, Julius Rosenwald Papers.
“meeting of the housing needs of colored people” because it was essential for peace among the races. Parker did not believe the employment issue should be mentioned because with the due changes in education employment would take care of itself. Parker’s suggestions reflect the belief that African Americans should become active helpers of their own race and that African Americans were only suited for manual work.45

A. L. Foster, the African American Executive Secretary of the Chicago Urban League, stated the need for the “committees on race relations of various clubs and organizations [to] coordinate their efforts.” He pointed out that “aside from the problem of discrimination and race intolerance, the problems which are most acute are those of housing, health and industry.” Foster urged the Union League Club to cooperate with the Urban League because the Urban League was already operating along those lines.46

F. W. Shephardson, the secretary of the Rosenwald Fund between 1922-1926, thought that The Negro in Chicago, the official report of the CCRR, had made certain recommendations that Rosenwald could still use. Shephardson believed that Union League Club Committee should encourage the Urban League and the Wabash Avenue YMCA. He stated the need to clear African American neighborhoods of vice resorts. He also argued that the press unduly emphasized the word “Negro in reports of crime involving a member of that race.”47

Throughout the 1920s there was perhaps not a widening but a continuous gap between whites who wanted to help African Americans help themselves and those who expected African Americans to improve certain elements of their existence by themselves because their situation

45 Letter from W. J. Parker to W. C. Graves, June 16, 1926, Folder 2, Box 40, Julius Rosenwald Papers.
46 Letter from A. L. Foster to W. C. Graves, June 16, 1926, Folder 2, Box 40, Julius Rosenwald Papers.
47 Letter from F. W. Shephardson to W. C. Graves, June 15, 1926, Folder 2, Box 40, Julius Rosenwald Papers.
could be bettered if they tried harder. The truth was that only when African Americans cooperated with white leaders could they hope to better their condition. George Arthur’s closing lines make this fact more visible. There was always some form of philosophizing about how to help African Americans, but little came out of all the talk. Contrary to ordinary white citizens’ general perception of them, African Americans actively tried to improve their community; nevertheless for a lack of funds they depended on white protection and financial support.

Rosenwald believed in the worth and knowledge of the individuals and the institutions which he helped. He was a dedicated contributor to bettering race relations and giving a fair chance to African Americans to prove themselves. He encouraged other wealthy white Chicagoans to participate in this matter. Furthermore, the people he worked with had to have believed in improving chances for African Americans also. He entrusted in his secretary W. C. Graves the power to sort through the letters he received. Interestingly, some of these letters were addressed to Graves personally. There was a direct link between Rosenwald himself, his assistants and associates, and those African Americans who received contributions from him which made the efforts on bettering race relations work. While the link specified the existence of a cooperation between races it did not mean that there was a consensus between races. African Americans blamed housing conditions on segregation and white prejudice. Parker’s views based housing conditions on blacks’ economic situation.
CONCLUSION

Chicago race relations were moving along a thin line in the 1920s. The riot of 1919 did not happen overnight; it built up over a long time. When it finally erupted, neither side was surprised. The agitation of the press, both black and white, housing conditions, job competition, increasing black voting power had been causing tensions between Chicago’s working class black and white citizens. That is why as soon as the riot died down authorities formed the Chicago Commission on Race Relations, sitting down to investigate the reasons for the riot and what could be done to stop a recurrence.

The findings of the Commission reflected what was obvious to African American citizens like Stanley B. Norvell, the African American war veteran. A month after the riot, in his letter to Victor F. Lawson, editor and publisher of the Chicago Daily News, Norvell voiced the uncomfortable position African Americans faced daily. The fact that whites viewed African Americans as a group, and that whites did not leave room for individual African Americans to get ahead in the society, were some of the grievances Norvell wanted to draw to Lawson’s attention. Norvell had fought in World War I, and upon coming back to Chicago, he returned to menial labor despite being a highly educated individual. Norvell had what is generally referred to as the “New Negro” spirit. Norvell was not the High School student at Englewood, who believed she was who whites thought she was.

Before the riot, there had been African American efforts to establish a working community consciousness, especially after the influx of migrants from the South. T. Arnold Hill’s energy in organizing the Chicago branch of the National League on Urban Conditions, and the fact that African Americans of the community had raised $127 of the
$353 raised totally, shows that African Americans worked to better their conditions. On the other hand, they still needed outside financial support and in this Julius Rosenwald was the most prominent contributor. As early as 1910 Rosenwald proved that he was a "friend of the Negro" by proposing to contribute to the African American YMCA buildings. By 1912, S. P. Breckinridge of Chicago School of Civics and Philanthropy asked Rosenwald for a variety of favors, ranging from the use of the Sinai Temple to contributions for aid to African American children.

After the publication of the report covering the findings and suggestions of the Chicago Commission on Race Relations, whites and blacks became more careful towards one another. Prominent white Chicagoan Arthur T. Aldis, a strong believer in equal rights for African Americans, wanted to involve Paul U. Kellogg in paying individual attention to African Americans and their artistic talents. African American leader and column writer in the Chicago Defender, A. L. Jackson congratulated white leaders for the outcome of the report publicly in his column. In 1923, Jackson published a paragraph giving details of the experience of Southern white women watching a theater rehearsal, the play being written by a white author and the leading actor an African American. However, the care with which races acted toward one another was slackening within a year after the report.

The South Side park matter that lasted over two years shows that by and by African Americans thought that segregation was a necessity. The persistence of the African American community to have a separate park built had nothing in common with the criticism that the segregated YMCAs received from some African Americans earlier in the 1910s.
Furthermore, wealthier African Americans acted to help their less fortunate brethren. Property owners' willingness to sell their property in order to facilitate the building of the park and their success in helping care for the dependent children mark the beginnings of secular cooperation among African Americans.

In the light of the evidence it can be seen that by the end of the 1910s black Chicagoans had adapted to the northern urban setting. In the beginning of the decade African Americans had come to Chicago with hopes of fulfilling the American dream, looking for an escape from the suffocating conditions of the South. After the end of the World War I when conditions halted abruptly by the return of white soldiers, blacks realized that their living standards would not be as comfortable as they had hoped. However, by the middle of the 1920s they developed a community consciousness which helped them speak out for their community needs. They were in Chicago to stay and they built institutions that would make their stay as comfortable as possible.

If the riot did not recur it was partly because African Americans came to voice their grievances publicly or with individuals who were open to discussions. Some may argue that philanthropic undertakings helped keep down racial discontent. This is not a viable argument for Rosenwald's philanthropy. Rosenwald's business-like philanthropy gave blacks a chance to practice leadership outside the church sphere. Through their interaction with white leaders African Americans learned to ask for ways by which their needs could be met. In return white leaders respected African Americans' needs and looked for ways to meet them. Furthermore, as in the political campaign example, whites adjusted to the changing nature of African Americans to the point of conning them to win their favors to meet their own ends.
Needless to say some disagreement and outbursts of violence between races continued, especially over jobs, and housing and recreational facilities. However, not all of these can be based on race relations. Economic factors played a large role. Throughout the 1920s African Americans increasingly preferred segregated facilities to minimize racial conflicts, but they depended on white assistance even when they wanted segregated facilities. The African American community had many needs, and their leaders did not always get what they asked for when they asked for it.

The role of philanthropy in improving living conditions for the African American community loomed large. Julius Rosenwald’s philanthropic efforts did not just stop at financial contributions. His personal involvement in most of the causes which he helped fund drew others’ philanthropic contributions with it. Once African American institutions received that jump start, philanthropy gave them the ground on which to prove their organizational worth, and the worth of their leaders both in the executive and participant levels.
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