

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

### National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form

This form is used for documenting property groups relating to one or several historic contexts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin *How to Complete the Multiple Property Documentation Form* (formerly 16B). Complete each item by entering the requested information.

  X   New Submission                                 Amended Submission

#### A. Name of Multiple Property Listing

African American Civil Rights in Idaho

#### B. Associated Historic Contexts

(Name each associated historic context, identifying theme, geographical area, and chronological period for each.)

- Black Idahoans' Civil Rights Activism before 1941
- Birth of the Movement, 1941-1953
- Modern Civil Rights Era, 1954-1964
- The Second Revolution, 1965-1976
- Aryan Nations Spark Human Rights Movement in Idaho, 1976 to 2001

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#### D. Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this documentation form meets the National Register documentation standards and sets forth requirements for the listing of related properties consistent with the National Register criteria. This submission meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR 60 and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Archeology and Historic Preservation.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Tricia Canaday

\_\_\_\_\_  
Deputy SHPO

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Idaho State Historic Preservation Office

I hereby certify that this multiple property documentation form has been approved by the National Register as a basis for evaluating related properties for listing in the National Register.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Action

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

African American History and Civil Rights in Idaho  
Name of Multiple Property Listing

Idaho  
State

### Table of Contents for Written Narrative

Create a Table of Contents and list the page numbers for each of these sections in the space below.

Provide narrative explanations for each of these sections on continuation sheets. In the header of each section, cite the letter, page number, and name of the multiple property listing. Refer to *How to Complete the Multiple Property Documentation Form* for additional guidance.

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**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for each response using this form is estimated to be between the Tier 1 and Tier 4 levels with the estimate of the time for each tier as follows:

Tier 1: 60-100 hours (generally existing multiple property submissions by paid consultants and by Maine State Historic Preservation staff for in-house, individual nomination preparation)

Tier 2: 120 hours (generally individual nominations by paid consultants)

Tier 3: 230 hours (generally new district nominations by paid consultants)

Tier 4: 280 hours (generally newly proposed MPS cover documents by paid consultants).

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**E. Statement of Historic Contexts**

(If more than one historic context is documented, present them in sequential order.)

**Introduction**

The African American Civil Rights Movement in Idaho both dovetails with and diverges from the historical periodization of 1941-1976 provided by the NPS Framework, as well as the traditional narratives of the larger northern and southern movements. Therefore, while highlighting activism that fits NPS themes and periodization, this report also reaches beyond them to accurately reflect the most significant moments in black Idahoans' civil rights story.

As Thomas Sugrue illustrates in *My Sweet Land of Liberty*, his definitive study of the northern and western black freedom struggle, organized activism in the North blossomed in the first two decades of the twentieth century, expanded during the Great Depression and Second World War in concert with labor activism and the Great Migration, and continued apace throughout the mid 1940s-1960s as the southern movement compelled the federal government's focus and drew key northern movement leaders South. As true for most of the North and West, Idaho's organized civil rights activism predates the Supreme Court's *Brown v. Board of Education* decision in 1954, often seen as the catalyst of the modern southern movement. It also long predates U.S. engagement in World War Two in 1941, when the United States embraced antiracist and anticolonialist rhetoric about freedom designed to mobilize national and international resistance to Adolf Hitler's white supremacist fascism in Europe. In fact, black Idahoans mirrored protests in other northern cities against showings of the racist film *Birth of a Nation* when it appeared in Boise and Pocatello in 1916. They also staged a sit-in in 1919 to protest a segregated restaurant, because they believed systemic racism violated President Woodrow Wilson's stated purpose for America's engagement in World War One to "make the world safe for democracy," a cause for which black soldiers had fought and died. In the 1920s, black Idahoans resisted Ku Klux Klan (KKK) harassment from chapters strewn throughout Idaho, when the KKK boasted national popularity, prominence, and power.

Additionally, similar to trends in the non-South, Idaho's black population grew from 1942 onward as many black servicemen arrived at the state's various military bases; this spike in diversity both empowered Idaho's African American communities and at times worsened white racism,

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especially around housing. Idaho's civil rights activism focused on several key types of racial discrimination identified by the NPS that prevailed statewide and nationally: employment, housing, and public accommodations. However, voting rights in Idaho were secure for black citizens, so this issue did not percolate in Idaho, with the exception of letters to elected representatives from white Idahoans opposed to the 1965 Voting Rights Act. Likewise, schools in Idaho were racially integrated since the 1870s, but white-centric curricular materials and bias against non-white students in public schools and colleges did spark numerous incidents and investigations during the era being examined. Although missing from NPS themes, racially discriminatory policing and criminal justice practices adversely impacted black Idahoans, as they did African Americans nationwide, and thus helped mobilize and shape activism strategies. This issue remains nationally problematic.

Idaho's civil rights activism also differs in key ways from those most commonly captured in histories of northern and western cities as well as across the South. Specifically, black activism in Idaho: involved small numbers; focused on legal activities; depended heavily on allies of other races to achieve results; and never jelled into a statewide movement until the 1980s, when the Aryan Nations created a threat that prompted statewide resistance against racism and for human rights. These unique characteristics largely stemmed from the state's demographics, economics, and geography.

Black people historically comprised the smallest number of Idaho's racial minorities listed in the census—about 0.2 and 0.3 percent of the state's population between 1950 and 1970. The city of Pocatello had the highest percentage of African Americans in Idaho, topping out at nearly 2.5% in 1920 with 366 people; this hovered between 1.2 and 1.7 percent from 1940 to 1960, dropped back to 1.2% in 1970, and to 0.9% by 1990. In terms of bodies for creating communities and generating activism, black Pocatellans numbered 267 in 1930, 212 in 1940, 406 in 1950, 481 in 1960, 474 in 1970, and 469 in 1980. Boise had the second largest black community. In 1910, it numbered 135, or about 0.8% of its total population. This dropped sharply during the next two decades. By 1940, 102 black people lived in Boise; this grew to 156 by 1950, 198 by 1960, 268 by 1970, and 511 by 1980. Though these figures represented about half a percent of the city's residents, numbers of actual bodies strongly affected activism options and energy. The only other city in Idaho with significant numbers of African Americans was Idaho Falls, but these fell far short of Pocatello's and Boise's, not breaking over 100 people until 1970, with a total then of 125. By contrast, other Idaho towns in 1970 that contained at least 10,000 residents reported relatively tiny numbers of black people:

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Caldwell, 53; Coeur d'Alene, 9; Lewiston, 19; Moscow, 35; Nampa, 20; Twin Falls, 19. These numbers help explain why the civil rights-related activism highlighted in this report center on Pocatello and Boise.<sup>1</sup>

In 1950, Idaho was 98.8% Caucasian, making it among America's whitest states. A decade later, it was still 98.5% white, and in 1970, 98.1% white. At midcentury, Idaho was also one of the nation's most rural, with 57% of the population living in communities of less than 2,500 people. Only Alaska was deemed more rural than Idaho among the Mountain and Pacific States. (In 2000, 54% of Idaho's population still lived in communities of 10,000 people or less; and 74% lived in towns of 50,000 or less. 99.8 percent of the land area was considered rural.) Because African Americans intentionally urbanized when they left the South as part of the Great Migration, and because Idaho failed to draw the wartime industries of coastal cities such as Seattle, Portland, San Francisco, and Los Angeles (LA), far fewer black people settled in Idaho than along the I-5 corridor. The railroad, combined with a few industrial jobs, became the main driver of black in-migration to Pocatello and Boise, along with joining family members already in place who may have chased mining, homesteading, and cowboy opportunities before 1930. Prior to 1970, the only cities in which black Idahoans formed vibrant black communities--with several black churches and identifiable neighborhoods--were Pocatello and Boise. Idaho Falls had several black families, but lacked similar numbers to leverage; African Americans in Idaho Falls could also commute to Pocatello for events if need be. Black people had resided in scattered fashion across the state since territorial days. However, most of them with homes outside of Pocatello and Boise lived as individuals or families, in small pockets, and largely disconnected from an ethnic community setting. Although the city of Spokane, Washington boasted a thriving black community, the northern Idaho towns closest to it, including Lewiston and Coeur d'Alene, lacked similar ones, due largely to antiblack practices of white unions that made securing decent employment nearly impossible for African Americans in the Gem State's panhandle. Though a Democratic Party stronghold, longtime Senator Mary Lou Reed from Coeur d'Alene described northern Idaho's union men as "southern

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<sup>1</sup> Moscow's 35 likely included many University of Idaho student -athletes. On a related note, it is critical to be aware that not every black person was able to protest or dedicate time to that. Small children and the infirm, people especially vulnerable economically or otherwise, people with too little time, students on scholarships who couldn't risk them, young men in the job corps, or people who believed that the best way to survive required one to keep their head down and not make waves—might not be willing or able to join civil rights activism efforts.

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democrats” when it came to race.

As a result, because Pocatello and Boise contained the state’s two thriving yet small black communities between 1941 and 1976, most organized, group-based civil rights activism germinated in those two sites. Individual black people in other locations had ways of resisting racism, and some of those actions will be noted. However, most incidents of organized black resistance to racism in Idaho appeared in those two cities. Pocatello and Boise sit approximately 235 driving miles from one another along I-84 in southern Idaho. Black and white Idahoans involved in civil rights efforts in those towns knew and admired each other. Nevertheless, the civil rights leadership in each rarely collaborated until the statewide battle against the Aryan Nations commenced in the 1980s. Racial incidents that sparked protest in one city generally did not incite protest in the other; they operated independently and largely disconnected from each other. Idaho’s black activists were more in tune and connected with incidents and events related to the national civil rights movement, North and South, than with those happening elsewhere in the state. Few black families between 1941 and 1976 owned cars, making treks across those 235 miles of sagebrush covered desert rare; additionally, black churches in Pocatello kept closer ties with those in northern Utah than in Boise. Because Idaho had only two established small black communities during the prescribed timeframes of this context that, due to size, engaged in mostly small-scale legal protest activities--and because the Boise and Pocatello communities functioned independently from each other with respect to civil rights activism, the term “movement” doesn’t accurately describe it. The state’s first human rights related movement launched in the 1980s and continued to 2001, catalyzed by the overt activities of the Aryan Nations. However, it also operated as one for racial justice, as expressed by the statewide movement to adopt Martin Luther King Jr. Day; in 1990, Idaho became one of the last five states to do so. Black activists who helped spearhead resistance to racism in the state between 1941 and 1976, and established themselves as go-to people on racial justice, often played critical leadership roles in that later movement.

This context is organized into six chronological sections. The first touches upon key incidents of civil rights activism prior to 1941 in order to shed light on Idaho’s longer history of racial injustice and racial activism; this provides essential context for subsequent sections of the context, as well as points historic preservationists toward future opportunities to add to this project’s thematic outcomes. The second, third, and fourth sections follow the time frames provided by the NPS: 1941-1953, 1954-1964, and 1965-1976. The fifth section briefly summarizes black civil rights

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activism in Idaho from 1976 to roughly 2001, in order to capture how the black freedom struggle in Idaho provided leadership, inspiration, and direction to the larger battle against the Aryan Nations.

**Black Idahoans' Civil Rights Activism before 1941**

One of the most activist periods for black Idahoans relative to fighting against discrimination and for civil rights occurred between the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and 1930. In several instances, organized actions during that timeframe rivaled those that occurred after 1941 in significance and courage. They were also largely all-black-led affairs, whereas activism in the 1960s often included coalitions of both black and non-black people. The early activism often fell into one of four broad categories: individual resistance against particular offending racist incidents, economic and sexual resistance through operation of a black underground economy in concert with white police, collective socio-cultural and political resistance organized by black clubs or churches, and confrontive political protest.

Individual resistance:

John West's several acts of individual resistance to racism may be the earliest recorded instances in Idaho. West arrived in Boise in the 1860s, making him one of the territory's pioneers. A free black man born in Philadelphia, he tended to flash in resistance to racial insult. In 1870, he pulled a gun on white election workers who refused to accept his vote, insisting they take it. In 1875 he fought a man who called him a racial epithet. For years prior to his death in 1903, he worked as janitor of the Pioneer Building in Boise, and as a servant in every legislative session of the state. As a proud old man, he carried the banner in the pioneer parade processions.

Similarly, Colonel Steptoe, a black Pocatellan and small business operator, resorted to arms multiple times in 1893 to protect himself, a black prostitute, and his property, against racist assaults. In one instance, he shot at a white crowd that hurled rocks at his home. He shot at an auctioneer who hassled a black prostitute in her home and wouldn't stop. But most significantly, when charged with "vagrancy"—a catch-all charge most commonly used to run unknown, unwanted black men out of town—he appealed the charge from police court to the state Supreme Court. Using the legal system, he accurately insisted that he was one of the town's long-time residents and business owners, not a

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vagrant; through this court appeal he defended the truth and asserted his very belongingness as a Pocatellan. Called “irrepressible” in the local newspaper, he lost his case because his lawyer was not allowed to represent him in court. As a result, he spent two years in a Boise jail and likely lost his business. Steptoe’s stands were principled, forceful, and gutsy. He did this during the decade that saw the highest known lynching rates in American history.

Individual acts of self-defense against racism pepper Idaho’s historical record. In 1902, when a large white miner bought drinks for all of the white people in a Boise bar, but refused to include the black patrons there, six black men fought him. Later that year, James Lisbon slapped a white teenager who uttered racist epithets at him. Lisbon was arrested and fined. In 1903, James Quarels, a black war veteran, shoe shiner at the Overland Hotel, and widely-respected Boisean, physically protected a black boy being abused by a white man after a baseball game in Nampa. As white men punched Quarels, and a white police officer drew his gun on him, Quarels drew his own and fired in self-defense; although aiming at the men assaulting him, he accidentally shot the cop. Quarels was arrested along with a black barber who tried to help him. Lynch mobs formed quickly and stormed the Nampa jail, but Nampa’s mayor turned the crowd back. Governor Frank W. Hunt and attorney William Borah then secured a train to export the two black men to Boise for protection. It was one of several near-lynchings of arrested black men in Idaho that were averted by public officials or lawmen.<sup>2</sup>

Much later, in 1940, Pearl Royal Henderson also used guns to defend property on which he had informally “homesteaded” with owner permission since 1925, located near the Mile High campground on 8<sup>th</sup> street in Boise. The decorated war veteran, mason, and “good neighbor,” was shot dead by an FBI posse sent to evict him, when the federal government took over the land. Henderson killed two during a long standoff before being killed himself. A neighbor attributed the forceful tactics used against Henderson to the fact that he was black; the Boise area contained numerous white squatters and poachers who (unlike Henderson) acted illegally with intent, yet

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<sup>2</sup> Historical numbers of recorded lynchings are almost always estimates, given that lynchings had to have either been identified as such by official police records and/or reported in a newspaper in order to be historically counted—and many went unreported or were differently labeled. For Idaho, this author has not yet discovered a clearly reported “lynching” of an African American. Newspapers and police reported several near-lynchings that required lawmen to move an African American in order to prevent the act. Chinese were reported as lynched near Hells Canyon in Idaho; Native Americans were often killed, though these were rarely termed “lynchings.”



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federal, state, and local law enforcement generally ignored them.

While some individual acts of black resistance involved armed self-defense, a few others resisted discrimination by living alone as self-reliantly as possible, with minimal dependence on white people. Henderson thrived in that fashion before the shootout. So too did Doc Hisom, a miner and homesteader, who resided south of Melba. Dubbed “the Hermit of the Snake River Desert” by white people, he provided for himself through multiple skills (hunting, tanning, blacksmithing, building, animal tending)—and did so purposefully to avoid the discrimination and racial microaggressions that came with being employed by whites. Others found self-reliance, and therefore some independence from white control, through entrepreneurship as self-employed business people. Mamie Greene established her own cooking and catering business in Boise, succeeding as the preferred cook of several rich and powerful families along prestigious Harrison Boulevard. Her tiny home, which she owned, and which she filled with tin countertops for cooking, still stands just off of Hill Road. There she sometimes hired white women as temps to help her with large catering jobs—women whose families needed extra money during and after the Great Depression.

**Economic and Sexual Resistance within the Underground Economy:**

Both Boise and Pocatello contained multiracial neighborhoods where poor ethnic whites and people of color lived. In these areas, after-hours illegal businesses operated in conjunction with police department complicity. These businesses provided their respective cities with prostitution, drugs, after-hours drinking, and gambling not permitted by law enforcement in white parts of town. Perry Swisher (an Idaho newspaper owner, writer, and elected official), once called the wink-and-nod arrangement a “careful blend of illegality [that operated] as a public service and [in] cooperation” with police. Black entrepreneurs operated joints that not only supplied liquor, gambling, and prostitution hook-ups for white and non-white clientele, but also often provided loans to black people who couldn’t get traditional loans from banks, and rooms and meals to black people cut out of downtown hotels, rentals, and restaurants due to racial discrimination. The owners of these businesses generally served as informants for the police with respect to unknown strangers who appeared in town; the police in turn pretended to crack down on them now and then, collected a predictable fine (called “rake offs”) that was essentially a form of extortion, then crafted records designed to never lead to trials or convictions. Red light districts provided income to black residents

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often frozen out of good paying jobs by white racism; police took their cuts and received information on unwanted outsiders to arrest, and white citizens had access to illegal pleasures that stood outside of their own respectable neighborhoods, thereby keeping their images of Norman Rockwell-styled morality intact. In Pocatello, the Porters and Waiters Club owned by Joe Hamilton, which served black sleeping-car porters, and the Jim Dandy club, run by Claude Holmes, operated in these ways for much of the first three quarters of the twentieth century. In Boise, Luther "Pistol" Johnson owned a gambling joint that served liquor and provided loans to black people in the River Street neighborhood south of the railroad tracks. Prostitutes like Big Mama also operated visibly there. In Lewiston, Milton "Blues Pete" David, who had a "shine" business, informed for the police in exchange for being allowed to do business. Operations such as these thrived from the 1890s well into the 1970s; their history extends through all of the time periods in the NPS framework.

Pocatello's red-light district on the east side, along Pocatello Avenue, between 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> streets, was dubbed "the burnt district" or "burnt fields," "the jungle," the "walled city," and the "restricted district," in its earliest years between the 1890s and 1940. This area was far and away the most multicultural and multiracial in southeastern Idaho, in that one found black people, Native Americans, Chinese, and Japanese, all operating or partaking in illegal pleasures, along with white Pocatellans who came for opium, alcohol, gaming, and sex. In fact, numerous arrests occurred when white men engaged sexually with black prostitutes who robbed their johns while incapacitated, or when white women enjoyed sex with black men there, in violation of the state's miscegenation laws. Black and white people used that area to rebel against those laws and the racialized nature of them. The black sporting men and women, as they were called, were known to look out for the black neighborhood's children, and posed little perceived danger to the larger body of black residents. In fact, black children recalled the kindness, warmth, and caretaking nature of the area's black prostitutes, who protected and occasionally shared food with hungry children and mothers struggling to make ends meet.

In Boise, prior to the 1920s and 30s, the interracial red-light district operated downtown between Bannock and Idaho Streets and between 5<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> streets. Additionally, black families (mostly renters) lived downtown on several streets, including Bannock between 1<sup>st</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup>, Front between 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>, on 13<sup>th</sup> and Grove, and on Jefferson. During and after the 1920s, white people segregated these areas, channeling black people and the underground economy more firmly into the River Street area, with exceptions for black domestic help who occupied worker-housing in wealthy

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white areas along Warm Springs, the North End, and Harrison Boulevard.

**Socio-political Resistance and Uplift by Black Churches and Clubs:**

Along with black churches, African Americans across the North and West established socio-cultural and political clubs that provided black people ways to directly challenge racist narratives about black history, culture, and abilities; to engage expressively in political issues while accentuating black voting power; and to unite the black community in cultural and political expressions unavailable to them in the dominant culture. In the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, most of these expressions engaged in a form of racial activism called “uplift.” The uplift strategy rose in popularity as racial violence and repression peaked nationwide, and as the Great Migration drew waves of black people from South to North. Black people helped “uplift” one another to excel in demonstrating achievement, intelligence, and manners in forms that white people deemed “cultured.” This “race work,” as it was called, aimed to undermine erroneous yet ubiquitous eugenics-type racial theories that grafted innate predictable abilities and disabilities onto so-called “races.” It also empowered black people with the tools necessary to succeed via assimilation, if racist structures could perhaps be penetrated. And it drew black people’s voices into the public square in ways white people claimed were desired: by assimilating to and mastering forms whites themselves venerated.

It is important to stress that, while uplift empowered African Americans as individuals within themselves and within their own communities, uplift failed as a method of changing structural and attitudinal racism. Uplift put the burden of change predominantly onto black people, when they were not the root of the problem. While uplift gently tried to educate white people and challenge their stereotypes, white people—at best—responded with polite paternalism; they still held tight to white privileges, power, turf, resources, and the justifications they used to buttress them. In some ways, because uplift placed the burden of proof-of-deservedness onto black people, and because white people remained the judges and rewarders of success, it reinforced the false notion that racial disparities existed because black people were deficient and needed to better emulate white standards. It distracted from the real root of racial injustice: preserving racial privileges, which involved protecting white people’s collective monopoly of economic and political power, while crafting narratives to justify disparities as natural rather than man-made. Systemic racism was not rooted in white ignorance of black abilities, and therefore white people did not

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dismantle their privileges when faced with plentiful proof of black people's equality, abilities, and contributions. However, in the violent vicious world of Jim Crow in the early twentieth century, uplift provided a safer collective way to resist than direct confrontation of systemic injustice. And for black Idahoans, with their small population, uplift drew black people together via churches and clubs far easier, in greater numbers, and with far lower risks to fragile livelihoods, than did more overt protest methods.

Black churches did uplift programming while providing a host of essential spiritual and material support to black Idahoans available nowhere else. Bethel and later Corinth Baptist churches, along with an African Methodist Episcopal (AME) congregation, in Pocatello, as well as St. Paul's Baptist Church and an AME congregation in Boise, operated as centers of spiritual, cultural, social, and economic sustenance for black Idahoans in their areas. When black people struggled to find work, places to stay, people to date, support networks, access to the arts, and avenues of expression, their churches—which were independent of white ownership and interference—became the all-around go-to places for such essentials.

Listoria Harris and husband Reverend Elijah Harris, who helped found and pastor both Bethel and Corinth, exemplified the kind of leadership and service churches gave black people to aid their survival. Listoria, who made a living by cooking and cleaning white people's homes but who had dreamt of being a doctor, was the "Grand Don" of Pocatello's church-going black community, a fierce and savvy force, both generous and tough, according to daughter Fannie Lee Lowe. By that, she meant that Listoria, much like the owners of red-light district establishments cited earlier, knew how to get black people connected to what they needed at any given time, such as jobs, food, a place to rent, legal assistance, and occasionally help from well positioned white people, when discrimination made access difficult. She also ran all of the church music and social programs, and provided many black children free piano lessons in her home, demanding excellence and teaching black culture in the process. She also coached black people in survival skills for operating in a white world—such as how to communicate in ways that got one what they needed while stroking white paternalistic egos—skills that black domestic workers mastered. The Harris's home, at 615 N. 5<sup>th</sup>, which they occupied since 1917, was an informal community center for black Pocatellans. Because the Harrises owned the only car in the neighborhood, their vehicle was put into the service of their neighbors and church, as needed. Listoria Harris was, in her own right, an activist community leader, because she dedicated her life to advancing, assisting, and protecting black people amid a

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segregated discriminatory city. In addition to serving as minister, Rev. Harris, a WWI veteran, also worked as a janitor cleaning four downtown buildings, and as a baggage handler on the Union Pacific. Together, they became the go-to family and home for the larger community.

Boise's and Pocatello's black churches also performed elaborate musicals and dramas that boldly extolled black history and racial justice to black and white audiences. For example, in 1914, Boise's AME church performed the major production "Fifty Years of Freedom" at Boise's GAR (Grand Army of the Republic) hall, highlighting black advancement and accomplishments since emancipation. It promoted black pride and history while countering white tropes used to justify discrimination. This included disputing the sort of white supremacist history, and myths of black inferiority, purported in *The Clansman* and later *Birth of a Nation*.

In 1936 and 1937, Pocatello's AME church organized a series of evening lectures called Community Forum Sunday that dealt forthrightly with social justice concerns. In 1936, these lectures directly addressed lynching and the failure of Congress to pass an array of antilynching bills—bills Senator William Borah of Idaho played a key role in defeating. Borah ran for president in 1936, triggering the national NAACP offices in New York City to protest his candidacy with signs reading, "If You Endorse Lynching, Endorse Borah." That February, congregant Alice Butler offered a Forum lecture on lynching, asserting lynching was a tactic used to intimidate black people from taking jobs or pursuing economic opportunities that white people coveted. She asserted that foreign nations viewed US lynching statistics as hypocritical in light of its self-projection as civilized, educated, law abiding, and Christian. And she advocated for the latest Costigan-Wagoner antilynching bill under attack from Dixiecrats in the South and Republican states' rights advocates like Borah in the West. The *Pocatello Tribune* noted that Borah's opposition "caused a main topic of discussion" during the forum. The following February 1937, Reverend E. B. Vaughan of that AME church, addressed the topic: "Is the Negro Given Christian and Civil Liberty in America." The *Pocatello Tribune* advertised that his talk would address "segregation, discrimination, exploitation, franchisement and disfranchisement, as they relate to the civil liberties of the Negro race." Vaughan also highlighted discrimination in funding "negro education" and in hiring black teachers; and he touched back upon lynching, a topic of fervent concern. According to the *Tribune*, he said, "Christian America is the only country in which lynching is tolerated," and claimed, "it is unchristian to forcefully segregate the negroes, intimidate, harass, and exploit them into servitude, minimum subsistence and ignorance." With this message and through his church's public forum,

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Rev. Vaughan and his congregants operated as a civil rights activists. In January 1938, the *Pocatello Tribune* defended Senator Borah's states rights' rationale to obstruct the latest antilynching bill, while also leveraging his immense power as chair of the Foreign Relations Committee, leader of the western Republicans, and reputation as Congress's Constitutional expert in the process.

Whereas Idaho's black churches incorporated antiracist and uplift-type programming into their full array of services, black clubs allowed members to focus exclusively on particular political issues and goals, or onto educational programming that challenged dominant white myths. The number of clubs in Pocatello and Boise, combined with their high levels of community engagement is impressive, given the tiny size of the black communities in both towns. Between roughly 1902 and 1940 a stunning plethora of black cultural and political clubs formed to promote black socio-political and economic interests, demonstrate their power and presence, and challenge racial stereotypes. The creation of such clubs mirrored the widespread formation of similar ones across the non-South during these years.

Between 1902 and 1919, black Pocatellans created the American Lincoln Club (political), the Gate City Club (a mutual protective association), the Roosevelt Republican Club (political), the Christian Endeavor Society (sewing and literary focus), the Colored Commercial Club, and the Colored Citizen's Protective League (social, economic, political). Similarly, black Boiseans formed the Afro-American Municipal League (political) at 623 Front Street, the Athenian Women's Club (political and cultural), the Colored Progressive Society (political) which used the GAR building, the Young People's Social Club (cultural and political), and the Paul Lawrence Dunbar Lyceum (political) which met at Charles Wagner's home at 711 Washington Street.

Clubs in both towns embraced similar types of activities and foci, all of which aimed to advance racial justice through uplift and community engagement. For example, Boise's Afro-American Municipal League formed in 1903 to press local elected officials to consider black people's concerns, if they hoped to win support from the town's 100+ black voters. Robert Gilmore, its president, formed a committee to advocate for black people's access to municipal jobs, among others. Members also raised \$2,800 to cover James Quarel's bail money, after he'd been nearly lynched in a Nampa jail. League members met regularly at 623 Front Street. Boise's Athenian Women's Club issued a formal strongly-worded resolution against lynching in 1904, and got it printed in the *Idaho Daily Statesman*. Members summoned black people to attend mass meetings to condemn the "diabolical crime" of lynching, while urging white people (especially white clergy) to

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join them. This vocal stand against lynching sprung not only from Quarel's case, but also from standing in alliance with national efforts led by Ida B. Wells-Barnett (who founded the first black women's club in Chicago) and the NAACP against the rising tide of lynching across the country. In 1906, the Colored Progressive Society, led again by Robert (Bob) Gilmore, which met in the GAR building, convinced black voters to boycott an election after white people refused to honor a promise to appoint a black delegate from the 16<sup>th</sup> precinct to the county's convention. Black members refused to vote for candidates the white-dominated caucus endorsed, then later rallied at the GAR to discuss the snub. The following year, Gilmore continued laboring to unite black voters' power into a block that could exert influence.

Meanwhile, the Young People's Social Club organized a formal black dance at the GAR and a literary program, all designed to demonstrate cultured polish and intellectual acumen in a manner white people might recognize. Charles Wagner, who created the club's Paul Lawrence Dunbar Lyceum (named for the black poet), worked as a decorator at the Boise Commercial Club. The lyceum extended from literary to political topics, organizing Idaho's first Emancipation Day celebration. A white Judge, J. H. Richards, who delivered a paternalistic speech there, told black Idahoans that their own improvement (as individuals and as a race) remained key to advancement. Conversely, a black speaker from Pocatello emphasized the many accomplishments black people had already contributed, and stressed that emancipation's intent involved automatic access and entitlement to equal rights for all Americans, with full enforcement forever—not further proof of worthiness. The discrepancy in messages between the featured speakers illustrates the essential conundrum at the heart of the uplift strategy. Despite the plethora of evidence black people displayed regarding their own abilities, civilities, and contributions, white people remained paternalistic, condescending, and detached from their own willful complicity in furthering racial disparities. Along with Emancipation Day events, which continued in subsequent years, black Boiseans answered a national call for Juneteenth celebrations in 1913, recognizing the day in 1865 black people in Texas first received word of their emancipation. This illustrated that black Idahoans connected themselves intentionally to the larger racial justice movement in America well before 1941. Finally, in 1926, amid widespread Klan activities nationally and in Idaho, black Boiseans produced a large musical drama about the patriotism, sacrifice, and heroism of black World War One soldiers. The *Idaho Statesman* perceived it to be a passionate plea for racial equality.

These types of clubs, which were dynamic and vocal on behalf of racial justice before

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World War Two, faded considerably from Idaho's reported civil rights scene after that war.<sup>3</sup>

Confrontational Civil Rights Protests:

Although rare, given the risks to livelihood involved, a few of the state's most boldly confrontational civil rights protests occurred in Idaho well before 1941. In 1908, black Pocatellans collectively denounced *The Clansman*, a theatre production performed in Pocatello's Auditorium that inspired the basis for the movie version, *Birth of a Nation*. Their denunciation of racist portrayals of black people and of heroizing the terrorist Ku Klux Klan as patriotic saviors of the South echoed in concert with black people's criticism in cities around America. The play also came to Boise's segregated Pinney Theatre that same year. Idaho's Governor Gooding endorsed the play, as did elected officials in Bannock County. This laid the groundwork for *Birth of a Nation's* appearance at the Pinney Theatre in April 1916, a movie event that drew crowds for hundreds of miles. Reverend William Hardy of Boise's St. Paul's Baptist Church, its first black church, led a small group (including Thomas Grown and Reverend Baily) before the City Council in two separate hearings to protest the film's airing. A few white civil war veterans—members of the GAR (Grand Army of the Republic)—joined them initially. However, when prominent white people praised the movie, the GAR veterans grew silent and withdrew, leaving the black men isolated. Nevertheless, Reverend Hardy's group pressed to have the film withdrawn or edited to remove the most offending racist scenes. These men acted in concert with similar organized black protests in northern cities as the film appeared in them—some of which were huge, headline grabbing, and successful. However, Boise's City Council embraced the film, claimed it historically accurate, and let it play to huge Idaho crowds. In Pocatello, black people signed a public protest letter against the film, which showed in the Auditorium the same month. One white man, Thomas N. Bell, also affixed his name

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<sup>3</sup> Whereas fraternal organizations such as the Masons, Woodmen, and Odd Fellows were popular among Idaho's white population, I found little activism or information in the historical record related to black chapters of these groups in Idaho. For example, the "Grand Lodge of Idaho" did not recognize Prince Hall Freemasonry officially until the 1990s. The Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Oregon provided some organizational help for Idaho's black masons. Some black women in mid-twentieth century Pocatello, such as Listoria Harris, belonged to the Order of the Eastern Star—and several may have forged social bonds with similar groups in northern Utah. These women seemed to overlap with interstate church denominational organizations, and these lodge memberships likely helped fuel social and cultural connections that were vital amid small populations. More research is needed.



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to the letter. The film reappeared nationally for several years, inciting roiling black protests in northern cities as it did.

Idaho Governor Moses Alexander responded to these national protests, often organized by the NAACP, saying he supported ending the “color line” in part because both black and white soldiers fought to protect democracy and freedom in the World War that raged then. He erroneously claimed that Idaho’s few black citizens enjoyed excellent treatment, as Idaho’s white population “holds no prejudice” against the colored race. Black Idahoans certainly disagreed there. The proliferation of segregated restaurants, hotels, and theatres, which sometimes advertised “strictly white help” to attract customers —along with the demands of white customers for white wait staff in places with diverse ones (leading both the Idanha and the Owyhee hotels to dismiss their entire black staffs in 1908 and 1910 respectively), served as examples of widespread racism. So, too, did violent racial banishments of black people from multiple Idaho towns, including Mountain Home (1904), Sandpoint (1905), Shoshone (1914), and Burley (1915 and 1960). And most revealing, in March 1940, the black opera singer Marian Anderson was refused a room at three downtown Boise hotels before the Owyhee relented on second appeal. The Owyhee allowed the nationally-recognized star to stay there provided she used the back service entrance and took all her meals in her room. Anderson sang in Boise High School’s auditorium in a program of Idaho Concerts and Artists, which the Junior League helped sponsor.

World War One inspired a black minister and two other black Pocatellans to challenge segregation by staging an illegal sit-in at the whites only Louvre Café in 1919; they entered, demanded service, and were refused. The minister published a pointed letter in the *Pocatello Tribune* calling for a world awakening regarding racial injustice in light of the war and black people’s military service. He also pleaded for equality in Pocatello. The men filed a court case but lost when the jury ruled quickly in favor of the café’s owners.

When Ku Klux Klan (KKK) recruiters emerged in Idaho (likely from Washington and Oregon) in the early 1920s, chapters proliferated across the Gem State. By May 1922, the KKK counted about 1000 members in Boise, including many prominent businessmen. By September 1923, it produced its first large parade, with fireworks and an induction ceremony that caused traffic jams downtown due to crowd size. Chapters and marches spread to Nampa, Payette, Pocatello, Shoshone, and Lewiston, among several others. Women of the Ku Klux Klan (WKKK) chapters formed in Boise, Pocatello, and Lewiston—and drew women who supported women’s suffrage and

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political engagement as well as overt white supremacy. Both the KKK and the WKKK took part in targeted overt racial intimidation of black people across Idaho. This included burning crosses in hills overlooking towns, marching around black areas singing racist songs, and confronting black people and children in threatening and abusive ways. In 1965, a white man reflected back on childhood memories of the KKK's actions in 1920s Pocatello. He recalled seeing a large KKK night parade march down East Center Street with hoods and horses carrying "burning fuses" from "railroad supply boxes," signifying participants likely worked for the Union Pacific. He sensed black people were the target, saying "there was that other-world talk of grownups which filtered down to us kids, suggesting there was something wrong with Negroes moving out of the alleys and slum areas adjacent to First Avenue." Black people organized resistance however they feasibly could—most often indirectly by responding with counter messages via black clubs and programming, as discussed earlier. However, in at least one instance, black men gathered with guns to protect their church buildings in Pocatello from rumors of a Klan plan to torch one of them. A light-skinned black police officer helped mobilize this resistance. Bethel Baptist in Pocatello, and St. Paul's Baptist in Boise, are the two oldest still-active black churches in the state and served as critical centers of their communities.

Between 1870 and 1940, black Idahoans actively defended their civil rights in overt, savvy, and organized ways. Their methods and issues often mirrored black civil rights activism apparent in urban areas across the North and West despite their small numbers and isolation in a rural state. And in many instances, they purposefully dovetailed their efforts with this larger movement. While outside of the framework established by the NPS for this African American Civil Rights study, some of the most significant civil rights movement sites in Idaho, as well as nationally, in northern and western places, require a time frame periodization and array of topics that are not driven by the southern story. Particularly striking during the pre-1941 period is black Idahoans' boldness in confronting racism, which in some ways exceeded later periods; and that black organizations formed and acted on their own, enjoying little of the collaboration with other racial groups that became increasingly apparent from the 1950s onward.

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**NPS Time-Frame: 1941-1953 Birth of the Movement**

World War Two catalyzed and transformed America's engagement with racism. Adolf Hitler proudly proclaimed a nationalist Aryan agenda as Nazis conquered much of Europe, and as his fascist and authoritarian allies wedded their own nationalistic imperialistic agendas to his. In desperate need of an immediate all-hands-on-deck response, the United States and Britain crafted an antiracist, anti-imperialist rhetoric designed to rally global resistance, including peoples of color from within and outside of those two nations. It worked. Peoples of color joined the fight in droves, and black Americans called theirs the Double-V: a fight for democracy abroad and democracy at home. In other words, black Americans expected white Americans to honor their rhetoric and make America the democracy it claimed to be: a nation that granted equal rights regardless of race. America's image as a leader of the free world became tied—through wartime rhetoric, and later through its creation of the United Nations—to human rights. When that image clashed hypocritically with reality, which it certainly did on race, peoples of color exploited modern media and protest to pressure US policy makers to address systemic injustices.

World War Two also fueled the great migration of black people to the urban West Coast and industrialized North, as federal law forced wartime industries with government contracts to hire without racial exclusions. Military bases scattered across the West also drew more black men into nearby towns seeking recreational, religious, and other resources—many of whom elected to stay out West after the war. This empowered black communities with growing numbers of young motivated black adults, enhancing the community's ability to organize, leverage voting power, and pool resources. Rising numbers also inspired white people to enhance barriers of racial privilege, especially in housing. Housing segregation became the key tool for executing job discrimination, school segregation, racial gerrymandering in voting, and formation of white-friendly tax districts and zoning ordinances. In other words, World War Two not only created a national and international rhetorical context for demanding racial justice; through jobs and migration, it enhanced both civil rights activism and white resistance in the North and West.

However, the South's boastful, brazen, activist, and extra-violent racism drew the federal government's focus after the war. The South posed the most overt embarrassment to a nation seeking to win freedom-loving allies behind its leadership against the Soviet Union during the Cold War, which ballooned out of the Second World War and lasted four decades. Because the South

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encoded racial discrimination directly into local and state laws, and because terrorist racial violence was endemic and unpunished, communist Russia and China used that hypocrisy to mock America's credibility as a free nation. Communist nations promised to beat America in providing equality and justice to newly independent developing nations that emerged in the wake of war, as colonialism collapsed.

However, the North and West also practiced systemic racial discrimination that worsened in the 1920s and then further in the 1940s as black people expanded in number. Methods were largely "de facto" rather than "de jure," meaning white people hardwired discriminatory processes into policies, traditions, and private and institutional practices—as well as propelled them indirectly yet intentionally through local government, school boards, chambers of commerce, police departments, the courts, realtors, and community expectations—but not as brazenly through state laws as done in the South. Non-southern black people could also vote, meaning their numbers could be leveraged for pressure on the political system in ways southern black people couldn't do until 1965.

World War Two therefore heightened organized civil rights activism widely present in the North and West, while helping set the stage for the birth of a movement in the South.

The war and post-war periods affected racial dynamics in Boise and Pocatello similarly to those described above, but on a much smaller scale than in cities along the I-5 corridor. The war's antifascist equality-praising rhetoric, the rallying of black people to arms for the Double-V, the growth of black populations due to military bases (but not wartime industries), the expansion of railroad work, and the migration of black family members from the South to join others already in Idaho, all sparked a heightened focus on racial discrimination in housing, public accommodations, schools, neighborhood services, state politics, and the criminal justice system in Idaho. Racial incidents and activism burned publicly hotter in industrial Pocatello (with its larger black community) prior to 1964, than in the capital city of Boise, though similar forms of discrimination existed across the state.

The war years 1941-1945:

Boise's Gowen Field, Mountain Home Air Force Base, and Pocatello Air Force Base each received contingents of black servicemen during the war. Due to mandated racial segregation in the armed forces, black men served in separate units, and were barred locally and nationally from recreating at white United Service Organizations (USOs). So black people in Boise and Pocatello

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created and managed USOs for the black servicemen stationed nearby. Black Pocatellans opened theirs on 1<sup>st</sup> and Clark streets, under the leadership of a white USO committee. Charles Hubbard directed the creation of Boise's, situated in an old fight arena on 13th and Main, while black women comprised its largest volunteer and administrative staff. Without these local privately-funded efforts, black servicemen in Idaho would have gone without the recreational opportunities of their white uniformed counterparts.

In the 1940s and 50s, racial discrimination in public accommodations peppered Idaho's landscape. Most of Pocatello's restaurants did not welcome black customers. Boise's bus station allowed black riders but banned them from dining in its restaurant. Black people were supposed to stay off of Boise's Main Street; and unlike white customers, black people were not permitted to try on or return purchased clothing in department stores in either Boise or Pocatello. Some Pocatello theatres, like the Rialto and Chief, welcomed black people (but at times only to sit in a certain section); but the Orpheum banned them. Boise's Pinney Theatre was off-limits to black people early in the century; by mid-century they were permitted in the balcony. Black Boiseans could sometimes attend the Rialto, Reel, and Grenada theatres, but it depended upon who was at the ticket counter or door; there was always a chance black patrons would be sent away. To avoid this indignity, Black Boiseans often frequented drive-ins instead. In Pocatello, black children knew not to play on public playground equipment, and white people generally refused to sit on couches with black people. Communities near Pocatello generally tried to keep that community's black population out. Chubbuck was known to be off limits to black people, and Alameda could be sketchy. A prominent citizen of Blackfoot bragged the town was kept free of racial strife because "no nigger had better be in town after sundown." In other words, they could only come to town during daylight working hours. Emmett, located northwest of Boise, also had a sundown practice. Due to widespread systemic racial discrimination in employment, public accommodations, and city services—including the criminal justice system—Pocatello's and Boise's underground economies, and the roles played by its black businesspeople, expanded, still buttressed and channeled by police collaboration. The racism resistance strategies (noted above) by Pistol Johnson, Claude Holmes, and Joe Hamilton within the sporting communities, as well as those by Listoria Harris within church circles, continued robustly in the 1950s and 60s.

During the war, black servicemen overturned tables in Pocatello's Shanghai restaurant when staff refused to seat them and take their order. Though in American uniforms, they were only offered

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the option to order take-out food, but not to dine in. So they toppled tables in protest. Significantly, Pocatello formed an NAACP chapter in 1943 to respond to racist incidents and advocate for civil rights. Further indicating white discomfort with rising numbers of black soldiers in Idaho, Boise children who attended North Junior High School during the war also recalled white parents warning them to steer clear of the black soldiers drilling at the nearby Boise Barracks on Fort Street, saying their parents feared the armed unknown black men in town.

In line with the *Green Book*, a national guide that informed black travelers where they could find public and private accommodations in America, black Idahoans opened their homes and churches to black visitors who needed places to eat and to stay. In 1945, Jesse Owens came to Boise while touring with a baseball team; because of racial discrimination practiced by downtown hotels, he stayed with the Terrell family on River Street—the same family that had struggled to help Marian Anderson find lodging in 1940. Warner Terrell Jr, a well-known respected waiter at the Arid Club and Owyhee Hotel, along with his wife, operated as point people for black visitors seeking to navigate segregated spaces and meet their needs while in Boise. These networks, whether formally advertised via the *Green Book*, or informally communicated via black leaders and churches, operated as forms of resistance to structural racism.

The war's antiracist rhetoric also inspired certain influential white Idahoans to begin vocalizing support for racial justice in Idaho. G. Nicholas Ifft, manager of Pocatello's *Idaho State Journal*, penned the regular column "Buzz of the Burg" signed with his backward initials "ING." In September 1945, he started using his prominent column to discuss and expose racism. In the wake of world war to defeat fascism, he explained how the war's purposes motivated him to explore racial issues; so he recommended a series of black authored books he'd read to extend his own curiosity to others. This essay launched his eventual emergence as a leading moderate white voice in Pocatello on racial matters and for racial justice, although he preferred non-confrontational methods (and chastised activists who ventured beyond them). By the 1960s, Boise, Lewiston, and Pocatello each contained prominent and gutsy white newspaper reporters willing to shine a critical light on racism in Idaho. Their reporting helped expose racial injustice and bolster civil rights efforts in the state.

The post-war period: 1946-1953

Individual acts of resistance to racism percolated through the postwar decades in Idaho. Raw numbers of black Pocatellans nearly doubled between 1940 and 1950, and grew by 50 percent in

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Boise; this combined with the nation's articulated anti-Nazi rhetoric emboldened civil rights activism among Idahoans. Senator Glen Taylor took perhaps the most outspoken, confrontational, politically courageous, and consistently uncompromising positions against racism of any white elected official in the state's history—especially when considering he did so long before a majority in Congress and President Lyndon Johnson passed the 1964 Civil Rights Act. In fact, his positions against racism put him among the most progressive elected officials in America between January 1945 and January 1951, when he served in the U.S. Senate. Democrats at the time said Taylor's views represented the far-left 'semi-socialist' end of the party. This included advocating for racial equality, and an immediate end to Jim Crow discrimination in arenas such as jobs, housing, voting, and the courts. Like many New Deal populists of that era, he saw racial justice and workers' rights as conjoined, for the rich exploited the poor of all races for profit.

Between 1946 and 1948, the country-western-singing Senator from Idaho took several bold actions for civil rights. In late 1946, he muscled his way onto the Senate floor to interrupt and oppose a Dixiecrat filibuster. Southern senators were trying to prevent passage of a bill to make the Fair Employment Practices Committee (FEPC) permanent; the FEPC ensured non-discrimination in government funded defense jobs during the war. "I hope that those who really believe in democracy will stand by their guns and not yield to this legislative blackmail," Taylor asserted, as he called his fellows to resist Dixiecrat racism. The powerful Southern block within the Senate, which controlled many of its key committees, hated the freshman Senator from Idaho for his direct attacks on their unjust racial order. Taylor zeroed in on Senator Ted Bilbo of Mississippi, one of the most racist and powerful Dixiecrats in the chamber. When Bilbo made racist arguments on the floor or in committee, Taylor called him out for them. But perhaps most striking was Taylor's vocal appeal for the Senate to withhold swearing in Bilbo (thereby blocking him from taking his seat) post re-election, because he had used black voter suppression and racial intimidation to secure his victory.

In 1948, the Democratic Party split into three separate parties for the presidential race of that year. Centrists supported the incumbent, President Harry Truman. Dixiecrats broke away from Truman's support of desegregation in the military and creation of a civil rights commission to create the Dixiecrat party, and promoted a segregationist platform. Meanwhile, Franklin Roosevelt's former Vice President, Henry Wallace, split to Truman's left. He ran for president on the Progressive Party ticket, with robust support for civil rights, including antilynching legislation and ending the poll tax, two things that blocked black people from voting and fighting for rights. Despite

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accurately predicting it would crush his reelection chances among Idaho's white voters, Glen Taylor agreed to be Wallace's running mate.

Although detested by white southerners, Wallace and Taylor took their racial justice message south on a speaking tour. In early May 1948, Taylor arrived at a black church in Birmingham, Alabama to give the keynote speech at the Southern Negro Youth Congress's convention. When he saw signs reading "white" and "colored" demarking two separate entrances to the building, he strolled right through the "colored" door in front of police commissioner Eugene "Bull" Connor. Connor had a full contingent of police there to monitor this radical event, along with some Ku Klux Klansmen, all of whom came to enforce segregation laws. The police immediately grabbed Taylor when he tried to push his way into the church after being warned to use the "white" door. Cops wrestled Taylor to the ground, shoved him against a wire fence, and scratched him in the encounter, before hauling him to jail. Taylor explained his actions later, asserting that unconstitutional ordinances should not be followed. Birmingham's criminal justice system charged Taylor with disorderly conduct plus assault and battery, fined him \$50, and followed with a suspended ruling of 180 days behind bars at hard labor. Taylor appealed his sentence, hoping his case would reach the US Supreme Court, where he could challenge segregation ordinances directly. He also hired Arthur Shores, a black attorney known for his work on NAACP cases, to defend him. But the US Supreme Court refused to hear his appeal. When Bull Connor demanded Taylor serve his sentence, Taylor retorted he had "no intention of turning myself over to that chain gang." When Idaho Governor C. A. Robins refused to extradite Taylor, the issue dissipated.

His progressive agenda related to race, peace, the military, the role of the United Nations, and union rights, inspired opponents (including democrats) to disparage him as a radical dangerous socialist in 1950. Amid the rise of McCarthyism, he lost re-election. In the early 1950s, savage red-baiting forced him to resign the presidency of a construction firm. He worked menial odd jobs to make ends meet until, in 1961, he and his wife used his own homemade toupee as a model for producing more, and created the company, Taylor's Toppers. It became one of America's top wig makers, and he retired wealthy in California.

As Taylor championed civil rights on a national stage during those critical post-war years preceding the court's Brown v. Board of Education decision, black students integrated new educational areas in Idaho's colleges and universities. These often solitary experiences fit into the category of individuals acting to advance civil rights in the Gem State.



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In 1948, Reginald Reeves became the University of Idaho's (U of I), and the state's, first black law school student. Due to his race, he was given a dorm room of his own and socially isolated, both on campus and in the town of Moscow. In fact, he received veiled threats of expulsion if he socialized with white students, because that could apparently lead to mixing with white women. This meant he moved largely between classes, the library, and his room. Reeves excelled academically, and, upon graduation, accepted an invitation from a Jewish classmate's father, Al Denman, to join the family's law firm in Idaho Falls. Reeves recalled being denied access to hotels, restaurant service, and housing in that city; Idaho judges also blatantly discriminated against him in court rooms, such as always reading his name last despite the custom of listing lawyers at trials in alphabetical order. His conscious form of civil rights resistance centered upon dogged perseverance, survival, and success, despite efforts to drive him out of Idaho Falls. Throughout his career he defended clients with civil rights cases, and, as of 2019, continues to practice law there.

Mirroring the national trend, black athletes in Idaho became racial barrier breakers and civil rights icons, especially in Idaho's universities and colleges, while enduring similar types of social isolation as Reeves for similar reasons. In fact, black college athletes in Idaho between the 1940s and early 1970s often experienced both valuation for their athletic prowess, as well as threats of sanctions (including scholarship losses) if they socialized with white women, and disinterested neglect from coaches in their academic interests, performance, and needs. De facto segregation practices in restaurants, bars, and areas of town also negated socializing with white teammates after games and practices, meaning social isolation extended far more broadly than one's dating life.

Whereas black students participated in sports and music programs in Idaho's K-12 schools (while being denied inclusion in some social programs like school dances), colleges didn't enroll black athletes until the 1940s and 50s. Aurelius "Buck" Buckner, a native Boisean, whose family was well known in the community, played basketball and football at Boise Junior College from 1944 to 1946, leading his basketball team in scoring that final year. A white teammate recalls Buck encountering extra-rough treatment by opponents during games and his teammates coming to his defense. Buck later became one of Boise's most beloved high school basketball and football referees. However, his daughter Cherie qualified that this vaulted affection from white community members often ran surface-deep—that its superficiality left her father lonely; he also endured racial epithets when departing small towns after games around the state. Buck's survival strategy hinged on maintaining a mild-mannered get-along demeanor. White people often pointed at Buck's career

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and their fond feelings for him to inoculate the broader community and themselves from charges of racism.

From Jack Johnson to Joe Louis to Cassius Clay, black athletes used boxing as a vehicle for civil rights activism. It involved a mano-on-mano method of defeating white opponents, the credit of which could not be spread to a larger team. In the early 1950s, Idaho State College (ISC), now Idaho State University in Pocatello (ISU), boasted one of the nation's best boxing programs at a time of high popularity for the sport. And in 1952, it sent two of its black boxers to the Olympics. Light middleweight Ellsworth "Spider" Webb (class of 1954) won the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) championship in 1951-52, and, as a professional boxer became one of the world's best. His heavyweight teammate, Ed Sanders, won Olympic gold in 1952, making him the first black man to win gold in that category and event. Shortly after going pro, in 1954 he died from a severe head injury in the ring. Webb and Sanders helped put their school and the state on the national radar. They became the pride of Pocatello, yet like rodeo champion Tracy Thompson, a black Pocatellan who won the state bronc-riding championship in 1930, they still faced the same systemic segregation and discrimination as other African Americans in town. Civil rights activists who organized Idaho's first large public protest in March 1952 against racial discrimination in Pocatello specifically leveraged Webb's and Sanders' examples to highlight the limits of whites' fairness and breadth of white hypocrisy.

The roots of Idaho's first large, group-organized public protest against racial discrimination sunk deep into the layered soil of segregation and discrimination in Pocatello. In April 1950, a student journalist at Idaho State College interviewed black Pocatellans about racial discrimination and received candid accounts of rigid white-made barriers and roiling black frustration. Among the complaints, a veteran with four children explained, "a colored guy can't even buy a lot, much less a home outside the slum district. He can't find a clean place to live. There is no decent place here for his family." A black businessman pointed at strict segregation in Pocatello's Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), housed in a building owned by the Union Pacific Railroad, which employed most of the black people in town. Black youth couldn't enter the building to use the basketball courts or other amenities. And segregation there persisted despite the national YMCA urging its affiliates to desegregate back in the mid-1940s. The student journalist highlighted the hypocrisy of town pride in standout black student athletes, who drew positive national attention to Idaho, while preventing proximal mixing in gyms. Others noted several business window signs reading "No

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colored trade solicited,” and mentioned only one restaurant, the Yellowstone Café, that served a multiracial clientele. Another veteran added that white bars and pool halls were also segregated. “I’d like to be able to bowl and play pool in town. And I don’t like to be penned in a dirty little corner of the city. I can’t see how my pool cue or bowling ball could contaminate the whites because I have used it.” Businesses segregated on the assumption that white clientele would leave if blacks entered. City spaces, like parks, and recreational programs sponsored there were also limited by race. A woman who managed a city park explained, “this city’s program is limited by discrimination... We are restrained from doing what we’d like to do.” A cement finisher from San Francisco who’d recently moved to Pocatello mentioned white resistance to working with him, and his shock at the level of racial discrimination in town. “I arrived here three weeks ago and soon noticed a lot of discrimination against my race although I didn’t expect it in this part of the country.” Segregation at the Y shocked him most, as did hostility from fellow white workers on job sites. “When we first arrived here, the white people wouldn’t work with us. Finally, when they saw we could do our work as well as anyone, things improved a little.” The student journalist emphasized rampant job discrimination in town, too—stating that black people were hired only for menial jobs, not skilled labor, despite their qualifications. Although not mentioned in the article, the writer could have also listed the expansion and sophistication of the rake-off schemes used by police and judges to trap illicit businesses in the black areas of town. Discussed earlier in this context, police operations that used arrests and fines to pad police ledgers and coffers, while protecting illegal business operations for white customers--and then leveraged their power for informant-based tips on outsiders, while rarely providing genuine protection to the community--added to black community frustration, despite needing these economic and social outlets to offset being racially blocked from others. The sheer multilayered exploitation of it all, and its sanction by law enforcement and elected officials, and how white people then used this to typecast black people’s character, deeply angered black Idahoans.

This snapshot of widespread systemic discrimination, black frustration, and chilly white resolve to hold racial boundaries in place, set the stage for the state’s first large, organized, public protest against racial discrimination in March 1952. But, as in much of the North, the largest source of tinder grew out of the post-World War Two housing crisis, old segregation lines that compounded affordable housing shortages for black people, and rigid white intransigence against expanding segregated housing boundaries. In Pocatello, an apartment house fire in 1950, and the ill-treatment

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of its displaced black residents, combined with cruel community rejection of a black veteran's family in need of housing that same year, catalyzed the action two years later.

Near the end of May 1950, fire destroyed an apartment building owned by Reverend E.J. and Listoria Harris, which housed eight black families, one with ten children. All were displaced, and scattered onto the floors of friends and neighbors who had little space to spare. The Red Cross and a group of black neighbors provided temporary immediate aid. But the crisis compounded because no vacant rentals existed for these families within the bounded area whites permitted black people to live. The growing black population had for years exceeded the supply of affordable housing there. And as the Pocatello Housing Authority (PHA) wrestled with options to meet black Pocatellans' basic housing needs, some white Pocatellans organized in resistance. Meanwhile weeks turned into months, and several families, including the Tademey family with ten children, remained homeless. The explicit selfish callousness of white people who refused to cede or share turf with black neighbors, ones who cooked and cleaned in white homes, and who were well-known residents, burst into full public display. Pocatello was not a large town. The city newspaper ran regular stories covering these families' suffering. Mrs. Tademey's personal appeal for help appeared in the paper in late July. "We have been living in crowded quarters ever since [the fire], because we can not [sic] find a house that they will sell or rent to negroes. We are not asking for much, only that some will open their hearts and see what they can do about getting us a decent place to live. We have children and they deserve decent surroundings." Certain white people united to obstruct efforts of the Pocatello Housing Authority to find reasonable solutions; they shut their ears to appeals from the Red Cross, to outside data documenting the larger housing crisis, and to ING's editorials which asserted "a community responsibility to see that decent homes are available for residents of the community." The entire extended incident exposed the cold depth of systemic racism within segments of the white community that exercised leverage with people in power, despite their surface smiles. This stimulated black residents to organize two years later, when time and patience provided no progress.

Willis (Willie) Evans spearheaded the formation of the Pocatello League for Negro and Other Minority Rights in early 1952 to address a host of problems that stemmed from white racism and callous neglect. A veteran of the Second World War, Evans and his young family were among those displaced by the fire and caught in desperate straits for months following.

The fire had stimulated the Pocatello Housing Authority to begin working toward a solution

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to overcrowding and substandard housing conditions in the black area of town (at this time, bounded by Center, 6<sup>th</sup>, and Pocatello Avenues). According to a federal housing administration official, these were worsening, given a growing black population. The 1950 census survey also noted that 18.5% of the city's 896 substandard homes had no running water, and 31.6 % lacked hot water. Nearly half had no flush toilets. The PHA first applied for funds from a federal program to build affordable housing in distressed areas, and had received approval to build 200 units in 1950 and another 100 in 1951. However, some white people (including the board of realtors and chamber of commerce) questioned the need for these and argued the buildings would adversely compete with "private enterprise." The PHA also proposed utilizing two Portneuf Park public housing projects to relieve housing needs of minority residents—Wyton, owned by the city, and Portneuf, owned by the federal government. For Wyton, it proposed selling a building or two to a private owner, who'd assume the expense of relocating them to the black area of town and hooking them up to utilities, provided that owner promised to devote them to minority housing, and to keeping rents affordable.

Portneuf Park, the federal facility, was open only to war veterans needing temporary housing, and by federal law it could not discriminate racially. Only one of the eight black families, Willis Evans, contained a veteran, and was therefore eligible for Portneuf, located in the northwestern part of town. The possibility of even one black family relocating temporarily outside of the east side inspired white homeowners near Portneuf Park to petition the City Council to stop this plan. George Allen, a former Bannock County Assessor and democratic candidate for county commissioner, articulated the "strenuous objections" of white homeowners, arguing that black people would lower property values in the area, and urged the Wyton structures be relocated and used instead. Evans, likewise, preferred living in a Wyton building in the triangle area, since he feared being the only black family in the Portneuf Park project surrounded by hostile white neighbors. However, his infant and toddler, along with his wife, were crammed into one small room in a neighbor's home, without heat. So, with winter nearing, he applied for a Portneuf Park spot. When his name moved to the front of the line in September 1950, the Pocatello Housing Authority followed federal law and issued him Apartment 208.

The Evanses moved in on a Saturday; on Sunday morning Willis found all four tires of his car punctured, and a note tied to a rock on the car's hood reading, "Move out or be moved out on a stretcher." Ku Klux Klan activities had also erupted that weekend. Days earlier, George Allen's group pressed the city council to seek resignations of all but one of the Pocatello Housing

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Authority's commissioners, including G. Nicholas Ifft, Milton Zener, Neil Chas, Ray Merman, and Willis Wright; they also demanded resignation of the PHA's executive director, Henry DeGiorgio. The city council refused the request, and both Ifft and DeGiorgio published extended explanations of the entire housing saga in the *Idaho State Journal*. In November, the PHA facilitated sale of ten Wyton housing units to a private developer, who agreed to move them to North 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue for minority renters.<sup>4</sup>

In February 1951, DeGiorgio provided Pocatello city commissioners with a lengthy report covering the history of low rent housing in Pocatello, and asked them to support efforts to build 100 new low rent public housing units as an initial urgent "minimum relief measure." However, white homeowners in organized opposition to this plan left many commissioners "lukewarm" toward it. The PHA also probed asking the federal government to cede ownership and management of Portneuf Park to the city so it could manage it as public low-cost housing for minority residents. However, opponents called this a form of socialism that competed with private enterprise, and refused to accept that a housing shortage existed. Leaders of the city's realtor board, realtor association, and the Gate City Motor Hotel Association all signed a resolution to the City Council opposing public housing, including continued involvement with Portneuf Park.

Conversely, some white people published letters to the editor in support of meeting black Pocatellans' housing needs. As Jean Romane Sandberg stated, "There are a number of white people in this town who feel just as strongly about the terrible way that the colored people are being treated as I do." And in a related move, four ISC sororities condemned racial discrimination when a local campus sorority Alpha Chi Omega agreed to pledge a non-white member, and its national organization reacted negatively. A general shortage of decent affordable housing in Pocatello caught the attention of the Naval Ordnance Plant, which wanted to hire 180 more machinists but said the housing situation complicated doing so.

Finally, two years after the fire, with no significant remediation taken by elected officials or private industry, and fed up with the success of white obstructionists, several black Pocatellans and at least one white supporter formed the Pocatello League for Negro and Other Minority Rights (PLNOMR) in March 1952. Willis Evans chaired the committee, which also included founding

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<sup>4</sup> Photos taken in the late 1960s of black children in front of relocated Wyton or Portneuf Park structures are archived in the ISJ photo files at ISU.

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members Ed Allen, Frank King, Nate Staggers, Ray Cooper (white), Tobey Davis, Oscar Jones, and Isom Snell. Self-described as a “negro rights group,” they published their seven-point platform in the *Idaho State Journal*, with an introduction that called “Negroes and other minorities” to “lead a fight to obtain some of the minimum needs of the minority groups in Pocatello.” In addition to more accessible, decent, affordable housing, they demanded removing segregation from public accommodations, and equal treatment by city services. Specifically, their platform included “more suitable recreation, better street lighting in sub-standard areas, equal sanitation in the low-income areas, equal traffic enforcement in low-income areas, equal job opportunities and the removal of color, nationality, and income discrimination at the Young Men’s Christian Association.” The words “lead a fight,” printed in the local newspaper, made explicit the level of frustration and worn-down patience black people had reached with white leaders and community members. Fannie Lee Lowe, the Harris’s daughter, later described that language as “super militant” within the Pocatello context. The article announced their first organizational meeting would be held in the “colored U.S.O building” (100 block of N. First Avenue; the league met there regularly), hoping to draw others to join them. Over 70 people attended, at which time they elected officers and formalized their demands.

On Saturday, March 15<sup>th</sup>, a week after their initial public organizing announcement appeared, the new PLNOMR picketed Pocatello’s YMCA, carrying signs that highlighted the hypocrisy of the YMCA’s segregation policies. As black athletic heroes were breaking records and color barriers in national sports, Pocatello’s YMCA blocked black youth from participating in its physical programs. (The YMCA’s secretary did note that black people had “lobby privileges” only.) Particularly poignant amid Sander’s and Webb’s rankings among the nation’s best boxers, was a sign that stressed, “Joe Louis, Ed Sanders, Jackie Robinson, Spider Webb CAN’T TRAIN in our “Y”!” Another asked, “Is the YMCA Christian?” A third reading, “National Y – Yes, Pocatello Y— No.” stressed the intransigence of Pocatello’s Y in following the desegregation lead of its national organization. Willis Evans’ leadership of the PLNOMR, and the fact that two of the Tademey family’s young sons held signs (one demanded “Open the Door Richard!”), illustrated direct ties between those who’d suffered most from the apartment house fire and this confrontational protest of the Y two years later. Two white men also stood among the pickets: Ray Cooper, a young adult member of the group, and Don Hansen, a middle-aged white reporter from Salt Lake City. Fannie Lee Lowe later playfully dubbed these bold protesters, “Pocatello Panthers” to highlight how

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courageous and unusually confrontational this type of demonstration was in Idaho.<sup>5</sup> Given that the Union Pacific Railroad owned the building, and it had long employed many black Pocatellans (albeit often in race-typed jobs), the YMCA's exclusion was striking and hurtful.

Interestingly, the Pocatello Ministerial Association's executive committee issued a public statement that same day, asserting that, while they disagreed with picketing as a method of addressing racism, they supported the PLNOMR's larger list of issues, and had been trying for over a year to meet with the local YMCA board to discuss its racial policies. Given that the local YMCA was supported by Community Chest donations solicited from the wider community, the ministers argued it should be open to all.

The YMCA board also objected to the picketing and initially snubbed the PLNOMR as a result. Interestingly, the 16 board members included Nicholas Ifft (mentioned earlier) and Luverne Johnson, both also members of the Chamber of Commerce who were well aware of the larger housing issues and related complaints. Ifft disapproved of PLNOMR assertive tactics, too. Avoiding the PLNOMR, the YMCA board chose to discuss its racial policies instead with the white Pocatello Ministerial Association at the YMCA's regularly scheduled meeting later in March. Meanwhile, the PLNOMR met with Pocatello's city commissioners to discuss their full list of complaints involving systemic discrimination by tax-funded city services. The city created committees to investigate each issue and agreed to explore passing a policy that would "bar discrimination on city projects." Henry DeGiorgio, head of the Pocatello Housing Authority, also attended to support his long-advocated expansion of low-rent units. And the commissioners created a special committee to focus on housing and produce recommendations, with Don Hansen (present at the PLNOMR protest) as its temporary chair, and DeGiorgio as a member. ISC sociology professor Charles Woodhouse, a vocal supporter of PLNOMR's tactics and goals, spearheaded this study, engaged his students in data collection, and produced a report later that summer. The compilation of this committee's leaders and work illustrates the PLNOMR's effectiveness in getting the city's attention.

Perhaps this productive session inspired the YMCA's board to meet with the PLNOMR. Nevertheless, despite doing so, it opted to move slowly on implementing full racial inclusion. The PLNOMR launched a petition campaign to remove the YMCA from the Community Chest's financial recipients. In early April, the YMCA board then voted to ask the city's four black churches

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<sup>5</sup> See ISU's photo of the protest in its ISJ archival collection.



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to choose which boys from the black community could become “guests” of the YMCA, with access to some but not all of its facilities. For example, the pool remained off limits to them. The required recommendation operated much like having a “temple recommend” within the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS). It made black church leaders the gatekeepers of black access to the YMCA. While this avoided granting full inclusion on the same terms as white youth, it became a first step in the YMCA’s desegregation process. The slow pace drew Perry Swisher’s sarcasm in November 1955, when he wrote, “We think you can count on one hand the young Negroes who have recently been allowed admittance under special conditions, a measure planned to take the head off when it developed that the “C” in the YMCA stood for Caucasian.” By the late 1950s, Pocatello’s YMCA finally fully desegregated.

This story about the creation of the PLNOMR and its efforts to challenge systemic racial discrimination in Pocatello illustrates a larger general pattern with respect the role of black churches in Pocatello and Boise in the 1950s and 60s. While Idaho’s black churches stood undisputedly at the center of those cities’ black communities, they rarely took the lead in organizing civil rights activism during those decades. Black church congregations focused on keeping their communities and culture intact—and upon organizing members to meet the essential daily needs of black people—spiritual, material, cultural, emotional, and social. They also provided outlets for black Idahoans’ immense arrays of skills and leadership expressions. These all indirectly buttressed black people’s civil rights efforts. Sometimes church congregations took clear steps in support of the civil rights movement. For example, in 1955, Pocatello’s Bethel Baptist and the nearby AME congregation organized a prayer and fundraising effort to aid the Montgomery Bus Boycott. St. Paul’s also let black airmen from Mountain Home’s base sleep on its pews when the airmen couldn’t find hotel accommodations due to racism. But these congregations generally steered clear of organizing direct actions in Idaho. When such action seemed needed, new groups like the PLNOMR formed that drew individually-motivated people together from various churches—black and white—as well as people less strongly affiliated with religion. This allowed the black churches to buffer their congregants from full-bore white reaction, given that many members felt highly vulnerable numerically and economically; they could not risk losing jobs. Additionally, some black people felt the best way to survive and perhaps thrive was through winning white people’s recognition for being a “good” black person—one that got along, worked hard, and didn’t challenge the status quo. As the civil rights movement accelerated in the post-war decades, white allies became more prominent in Idahoans’ efforts;

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therefore, new groups willing to confront, organize, and engage politically needed to form that were interracially inclusive. Religious individuals, who felt called to participate, collected together in these new organizations.

As the PLNOMR battled the YMCA's segregation practices, in April 1952, Joe Griggs became the first black person elected to chair the city's Recreation Commission, on which he'd served for several years. This should be counted among the successful repercussions of two years of heated racial unrest, as well as the PLNOMR's explicit list of grievances and assertiveness in publicizing them. Griggs also later joined PLNOMR's housing committee and played a key role in negotiating with the city and real estate board members who advocated for privately funded as opposed to public housing solutions. In May, the PLNOMR selected new officers at a meeting of over 20 attendees, one of whom, Perry Swisher, became a powerful white voice for racial justice in the state. The devoted Pocatellan had long reported on southeastern Idaho for the *Salt Lake Tribune*, when, in 1952, he became editor-publisher of the *Alameda Enterprise/Intermountain* newspaper (later merging into the *Intermountain Observer*, a progressive alternative Boise-based newspaper in the 1960s), and Pocatello's choice for the state House of Representatives. In 1962 the Republican won a seat in the Senate. A lifelong champion of equal rights for black people, which endeared him to Pocatello's black residents, he served on the Idaho Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights in the late 1950s and 1960s. His participation at this PLNOMR meeting, when other racial moderates and powerful newsmen like Ifft criticized its tactics, illustrated his personal and professional commitment to racial justice. He also got involved with the Pocatello Committee on Civil Rights in 1961. Pleased to have grown up around the most diverse sections of Pocatello, Swisher was among the most outspoken, well known, and willing of Idaho's prominent white men to stand with the state's boldest civil rights advocates throughout his career. A number of working class ethnic white people, raised in the triangle area due to immigration and income status, played with children of color while their families also lived there. As adults they often remained proud of hailing from the multiracial section of town and frequently displayed more open-mindedness than other white Idahoans on the issue of race.

As the PLNOMR, and the Pocatello Housing Authority, urged city commissioners to support a public housing project, in conjunction with Federal Housing Authority (FHA) support, Pocatello's Real Estate Board organized objectors on the grounds that private developers could better meet the housing needs of black Pocatellans than a government-funded one; city leaders also

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questioned their ability to finance public housing.<sup>6</sup> The city agreed to pause its plans until the real estate board had time to explore private options, and the PLNOMR cooperated with the board during this process, despite doubts that private investors could be found for a project that would produce such low profit margins. In December, the real estate board did finalize plans to build several homes priced at \$6-7,000, which would be reserved for low income minority buyers; and it secured agreements for bank loans to buyers. However, this small number of homes failed to meet the overwhelming need by a wide margin.

In July 1953, private buyers received permits to renovate and move two old buildings from the Portneuf Park public housing project to 247 and 257 North 4<sup>th</sup> street to serve as low income apartment rentals for black residents. City Building Inspector, Virgil Harriman, also pressured the owners of rentals in the triangle area to upgrade facilities in terms of demolishing outhouses and installing indoor plumbing; this stemmed from strengthened building codes passed in April 1952, as the larger housing crisis crescendoed. Harriman also pushed for demolition of dilapidated structures in the area. Meanwhile, the insufficient supply of low-cost housing open to minorities continued to be a point of contention for civil rights activists for decades.

The 1950 fire placed a spotlight upon racial discrimination in housing and public accommodations, and the PLNOMR's activism at least made systemic racism a public issue that forced city officials and businessmen to wrestle with it. Racial incidents during the entire period between 1946 and 1953 in Boise and Pocatello illustrated overtly that, despite Idaho's small black population, white Idahoans practiced systemic racial discrimination commonly seen in the northern and western United States. In Pocatello particularly, organized civil rights activism accelerated in ways clearly reflective of the kinds seen in other non-southern places prior to *Brown v. Board of Education*.

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<sup>6</sup> This argument and effort—that private developers could best meet black people's housing needs—mirrored similar arguments at the national level with respect to public housing programs.

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**NPS Time-Frame: 1954-1964 Modern Civil Rights Era**

On May 17, 1954, the U.S. Supreme Court declared de jure school segregation unconstitutional in *Brown v. Board of Education*. While this ruling did not affect Idaho, and largely failed to oblige school districts segregated by de facto methods to integrate, it provided the first death blow to overt segregation policies; therefore, it intensified civil rights activism and massive white resistance across the nation. The Cold War played an indispensable role in the strategies activists and opponents used, and in compelling the president to address racist incidents captured in the media. As America's racial caste system of economic and political exploitation drew media exposure, these images undercut America's credibility as "leader of the free world," and compromised its efforts to command a global coalition in the name of capitalistic democracy against communism. Russia and China leveraged America's hypocrisies on race to advocate communist revolution in newly independent developing nations in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East. Meanwhile, the U.S. Congress remained torn between the power of southern segregationist Dixiecrats, who controlled powerful seats on committees through their seniority, and tenuous coalitions of northern Democratic progressives and centrist Republicans who supported civil rights both for domestic and foreign policy reasons. This larger context helped move civil rights dealings into legislative chambers, as well as further into the streets, both of which occurred in Idaho as well as nationally.

In October 1954, despite the escalating activism and rising consciousness in Pocatello over its widespread racial discrimination, the brand new Cowboy Bar on South First and East Center streets opened its doors with a sign stating "White Trade Only." Signs like this were not unusual across southern Idaho; Latinos found them ubiquitously scattered in places where migrant laborers worked, like Canyon County; Native Americans commonly saw signs in towns near reservations that specifically excluded them. The practice of serving only white clientele within dining areas was so much the norm in Pocatello that explicit signs were unnecessary for established businesses and longtime residents, who learned informally where racial limits existed. In fact, the common sign "We Reserve the Right to Refuse Service to Anyone" became the default notification tool for denying service to racial minorities. Nevertheless, the *Idaho State Journal* printed a photo of the new bar's sign and interviewed the owners, illustrating that overt racism had become controversial there. While the owners claimed the sign served simply to signal that it was a clean, safe, respectable

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establishment with a desire to attract that type of clientele, the *Idaho State Journal* (ISJ) pondered if the sign also delivered an overtly-intended public slap of resistance against what the Brown decision symbolized. Regardless, both explanations illustrated again how broadly accepted racial prejudice and racial segregation were among Pocatello's white community.

Despite white Idahoans' efforts to downplay or deny endemic racism in their communities, several racist incidents over the next seven years—some violent—further revealed the statewide extent of the problem. For example, sometime in 1957 or 1958, native Boiseans Dorothy and Aurelius (Buck) Buckner, discovered a six-foot cross burning on their lawn. The black family had moved from the River Street neighborhood to 19<sup>th</sup> street in the segregated North End about a year before the cross appeared. Because the Buckners were very well-known and liked, many white neighbors and the Boise police responded protectively toward them. Nevertheless, Dorothy's anger roiled as she displayed the cross outside on the porch for months, and then kept it in the family for years as a talisman-type reminder that the fight for social justice was imperative. Dorothy Buckner became one of Boise's most fierce-spirited activists; she organized with others to draft Idaho's 1961 Civil Rights Bill, pass its 1969 Human Rights Act, and create the River Street Community Center for black children in 1970.

Although both the River Street neighborhood in Boise and triangle area in Pocatello contained an interracial mix of people of color and low-income immigrant white families, the latter could easily purchase or rent elsewhere whenever finances allowed; black people, however, met resistance no matter their financial ability to move. A few black people who labored for wealthy white families occupied worker residences along Warm Springs, Harrison Boulevard, and in the foothills in Idaho's capital city.<sup>7</sup> But black Boiseans, like the Buckners, who sought simply to buy on the same terms as whites, often encountered realtor, banking, and white neighbor resistance. One of the first black families (Carolyn and Philemon Watts) to move to the Bench in the 1960s, with the help of St. John's Cathedral (Catholic), received repeated death threats that often targeted their children. The Watts were local NAACP and YWCA leaders. In Pocatello, the only black person folks recalled who lived outside of the triangle area was suspected to be the mistress of a powerful white man. In Mountain Home in 1961, a black non-commissioned officer with a masters degree reported that black airmen "were forced to accept inferior housing and search for it much longer

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<sup>7</sup> See YWCA map of black occupancies in Boise during the 1960s, YWCA files, ISHS.

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than white servicemen.”

In 1960, a persistent mob of whites drove a black family of ten out of Burley. It harassed the family for months—physically, verbally, and via written petitions—to compel them to leave. Apparently white townsfolk heard a false rumor that large numbers of black migrants were seeking work in Burley’s potato processing plants. Since the head of this family, A. J. Thomas, labored as a field hand on a potato farm, he drew the mob’s focus. Thomas informed police and town officials of the rising harassment, but they did little to stop it or to protect the family, so threats escalated. Eventually, when teenaged children of the white mob threw a flaming oil flare onto the front porch of the home, after a series constant abuse, the family left town in fear for their lives.

The following year, two six-foot KKK crosses burned brightly in Stites, Idaho—one on a hill directly behind the community center and the other on the South Fork of the Clearwater River — as the state legislature considered a mild mannered civil rights bill that made racial discrimination in employment and public accommodations a misdemeanor.

In late 1961 and early 1962, “ING” used his Buzz of the Burg column to expose how Pocatello’s Board of Realtors had collaborated with City Commissioners to foil, yet again, the Pocatello Housing Authority’s latest efforts to build low cost housing for minority Pocatellans. First, the city stalled the NAACP and PHA’s housing efforts citing a desire for more evidence—and this despite over a decade worth of studies verifying the desperate need for decent affordable housing in the triangle area, and substantiating that white Pocatellans refused to rent or sell to black people outside of that neighborhood. Then, shortly thereafter, the four city commissioners voted unanimously to dissolve the PHA, take their funds, and divert the money away from minority-specific needs. In a special luncheon address, City Commission chair Luvern Johnson bragged to the realtors how the commission had effectively hijacked \$188,109 raised specifically by the PHA for low income minority housing, and channeled it instead toward city parks. Ifft (“ING”) recalled the decade long saga in a September 15<sup>th</sup> column: “The proposition [of the PHA to build affordable decent minority-group housing] had practically jelled, and only needed the permission of the city. This was never forthcoming as pressure groups worked on the city commissioners, and they seemed to be absolutely helpless under the barrage....[W]hen the tests came and they stood up to be counted, courage was lacking to see the project through. The whole proposition has its tragic side as there is now, and probably never will be an opportunity in the immediate future for low-income and minority groups in our community to live in decent, sanitary and adequate quarters.” The dilapidated

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segregated situation brought profit to landlords, who gouged trapped minorities with rents that exceeded what would be charged elsewhere, while avoiding market or city pressure to bring buildings up to decent standards. Then they blamed black people for the conditions.

As a result of racial discrimination experienced broadly by Idahoans of color, a multiracial group that included people of Japanese, Native American, African, Mexican, and European decent formed the Idaho Citizens Committee for Civil Rights. It crafted and lobbied for a bill outlawing racial discrimination in public accommodations and employment during the 1961 state legislative session. The group included several clergy, teachers, lawyers, housewives and members of the YWCA, ACLU, Indian Tribal Council, organized labor, and the Idaho Civil Rights Commission. Dorothy Buckner and Reginald Reeves (the Idaho Falls attorney) got involved. The group selected two white male co-chairs—a minister and a lawyer—likely for their community stature and expertise. Of the several original drafts proposed, the group selected one written by the Indian Tribal Council. They secured individual support from key legislators and brought minority witnesses to testify to the discrimination their communities experienced. House Bill 217 made it a misdemeanor to discriminate in employment and public accommodations on the basis of race, creed, color, or national origin. In March 1961, it passed fairly easily, with minor opposition, by a vote of 44 to 10 in the House, and 29 to 14 in the Senate (Republican Bill Roden championed it there). Most states outside the South had these, although neighboring Utah had recently failed to pass one. However, Idaho's enforcement proved weak, leading minorities and allies in 1968 to press for a stronger law, and for creation of a Human Rights Commission to ensure compliance.

In July 1961, the Ink Spots, a nationally-known black quartet heard on the radio, performed a gig at the Green Triangle supper club in Pocatello. Afterward, they ordered drinks at the Motor City Inn (296 Yellowstone Avenue)—a place long off-limits to black people—and were refused service. However, Idaho law now made this illegal. When the Ink Spots informed the local NAACP branch of the refusal, its president Charlie Woods, and two members, as well as a white ISU professor (Ray Obermayr), drove to the Motor City Inn. They ordered drinks to test its compliance, and they, too, were denied. Woods informed the bar staff of the new law, but they replied, “We don't serve Negroes, period.” (Obermayr had attended the Ink Spots' concert, and joined them at the Motor City Inn afterward; so he had witnessed their treatment.) While waiting to talk to the manager, at least two white patrons attacked the NAACP members, one slashing Woods' face with a broken beer mug. The NAACP men then took legal action, making this the first test case for Idaho's

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civil rights law. During the trial, Obermayr confirmed hearing bar staff explicitly state the bar did not serve Negroes, and that's why it refused not only to serve them drinks, but also rejected one man's request to buy gum. During the trial, the bartender also admitted she'd refused them service because the tavern would lose white customers if she did so. Lawyers representing the tavern argued the new civil rights law conflicted with other Idaho laws, and was unconstitutional; they also pointed to the public sign reading "We Refuse the Right to Refuse Service to Anyone" as justifying an owner's prerogative to keep order and decide who received service. Magistrate Judge R. Don Bistline ruled in favor of the Motor City Inn, declaring it "not guilty" of violating the 1961 act. Because the Inn refused to serve Woods' entire group, including Obermayr who was white, Bistline said it had not discriminated on the basis of race. Bistline's ruling struck Idaho's civil rights supporters as ludicrous. Despite Obermayr's whiteness, he was there with the NAACP to serve as its witness, so tavern workers associated him with the black men; and Obermayr heard the staff explicitly cite race as the only reason they were denying service. Therefore, this ruling appeared to be an intentional dodge of enforcement.

Shortly thereafter, anger and frustration led black and white civil rights supporters to form the Pocatello Committee on Civil Rights (PCCR). Spearheaded originally by eight people, many of whom were ISC faculty and students, and led by ISC professor David McCormick, they gathered initially to issue a complaint with the Fifth District Bar Association about Bistline's ruling, and seek its review of the case. When this failed to create change (F.M. Bistline was president of the bar), the PCCR widened its mission, formalized its structure, and invited broad membership. Saying "We will become the community's conscience and a source of help," it strove to educate the community about the 1961 law, pressure elected officials to declare public support for civil rights, advocate for integration of jobs inaccessible to black people, and urge businesses to exchange exclusionary signs (including "We Reserve the Right to Refuse Service to Anyone") for one which stated "This is a place of PUBLIC ACCOMMODATION / Our Accommodations and Facilities are Available to All Orderly Persons." Their replacement sign included a summary of the 1961 law that prohibited racial, religious, or color discrimination as well. From its formation through at least 1965, this group exerted powerful influence in Pocatello. Using public meetings, lobbying, and negotiations with businesses, in addition to news articles, speeches, and networking, the PCCR commanded the attention of city leaders, and, with gathered data, held them accountable on racial matters. In February 1963, Pocatello became the first city in Idaho to adopt a fair employment rule because of



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their advocacy. The city also promised the PCCR to work for improved housing and sanitation. The PCCR failed, however, to compel city officials to actually relieve the endemic housing injustices.

The hypocrisy of Pocatello's segregation became especially stark as Pocatello High School produced an array of remarkable black graduates—not only athletes like Sanders and Webb, but standout academic leaders. Marvin Brown surpassed them all. When the straight-A student graduated in June 1962, Harvard Law School had granted him a full ride scholarship. His resume included student body president and being one of two Idaho delegates to Boys' Nation in Washington DC. His leadership and eloquence there so impressed the other boys (all outstanding in their own right), that its leaders published a letter in the *Idaho State Journal* praising him as extraordinary. And if that weren't exemplary enough, he'd earned his athletic varsity letter as a tender sophomore, and sang beautifully in school choirs. Brown's superlative excellence was a form of path-paving resistance against pervasive racial prejudices. Swisher noted as much in his columns: "Not every aspiring Negro child could become student body president, a Boys' State governor, a straight A scholar. He could. In the process he left room for others in respect of a society compelled to make room for him: It could make room for others." Tragically, a car accident took his life that August.

In 1964, Pocatellan Dorthy Johnson won the Miss Idaho title, and then became a semifinalist in the Miss USA pageant. Whereas previous state winners received free clothing and travel tickets from local business sponsors eager to support them in the national competition, they shunned Dorthy. Her father Pompie, a railroad redcap widely praised by white people for his service and devotion to his town, was left to cover her costs alone.<sup>8</sup>

Boise mirrored Pocatello's racist landscape, but a tad less severely. For example, its YMCA had generally admitted black residents it knew, but resisted permitting entrance to black youth in town temporarily. Boise's YWCA, conversely, became a path-breaking champion of racial integration in the 1950s and 60s. When black airmen stationed at Mountain Home visited Boise for rest and relaxation, and received cool reactions from downtown establishments, the YWCA hosted integrated dances for the men; another motivation involved helping young black women in town to meet eligible young men. Given that interracial social dances were deemed inappropriate (even if couples still paired off by race), their inclusive innovations made a bold statement. Earlier, in April

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<sup>8</sup> Photos of Dorthy Johnson are plentiful in the ISJ photo files at ISU.

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1953, four black couples in Pocatello had crashed their labor union's Labor Day dance—shocking the tense white crowd unfamiliar with social mixing. So the YWCA's intentional creation of interracial dancing spaces in the 1950s and 60s proved revolutionary. By the early 1960s, Boise's YWCA also sponsored an Interracial Friendship Club, which hosted social events, programs, and activities for women; it drew a number of dedicated black members who collaborated in facilitating these. The YWCA took numerous interracial public relations photos to advertise its advocacy of racial justice. It also opened its building space to social justice groups needing places to meet, including ones pushing hardest against edges of the status quo. In the late 60s and early 1970s, the YWCA's racial advocacy became even more intercessory and confrontive.

Likewise, the League of Women Voters (LWV) in both Boise and Pocatello championed racial integration throughout the 1960s and early 70s. In Pocatello, the League reinforced the PCCR's work through its own public relations efforts encouraging integration in public accommodations. In Boise, the League organized women's grassroots advocacy on state and local policies connected to racial justice. Many of its active members overlapped with those in the YWCA. And many of the same women, like Margaret Keener, Mary Buckner, and Carolyn Watts, were also active in social justice work through their respective churches.

Each of these organizations played key roles in buttressing Senator Frank Church's efforts to pass the federal 1964 Civil Rights Bill outlawing segregation in public accommodations and employment. He desperately needed their promotional help in Idaho, for Idahoans' widespread and vocal opposition to the bill surprised him, as did their misunderstandings of it and of the discriminatory problems it sought to address.

Church had replaced Herman Welker, the ardent anticommunist supporter of Sen. Joseph McCarthy, in 1956; Welker (who rebaited civil rights activism) had replaced the progressive Glen Taylor. In 1957, Church helped Senate Majority Leader Lyndon Johnson moderate that year's civil rights legislation in a way pleasing to southerners in order to pass the first national civil rights legislation since the post-Civil War era. In 1963, co-sponsored the federal Civil Rights Bill designed to end legal discrimination in public accommodations and employment. Given that Idaho had passed its own mild version of the same thing in 1961, and had such a small minority population to mitigate the bill's impact on Idaho, Church did not expect white Idahoans to concern themselves greatly with this proposed federal legislation. But they did. In the year it took between the bill's introduction and passage, Idahoans flooded Church's mail with letters on the bill that ran about 70% in opposition.

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(Church once said the mail was running 10 to 1 against passage.) His colleagues Compton White (D), Len Jordan (R), and Ralph Harding (D) received the same.

Part of the problem, Church discovered, stemmed from large (often full page) ads against the bill that flooded Idaho's small town and rural newspapers. The Coordinating Committee for Fundamental American Freedoms was a lobbying group created and funded by the Mississippi Sovereignty Commission to fight the bill. Remembering their longtime allies in western states, like William Borah, who had opposed antilynching legislation for states' rights reasons, the Mississippi-funded group targeted western places with misleading ads. They painted the bill as an underhanded federal power grab designed to give undeserved special rights to black people while eroding white Americans' individual freedoms and property rights. The ads' effectiveness was illustrated by how often constituents' letters echoed their talking points. (See Church's and White's mail in Boise State's and the University of Idaho archives, respectively.) The Idaho Farm Bureau even ran a letter-writing campaign of its own against the bill utilizing those talking points. Several other organizations joined the Farm Bureau with statements officially condemning the bill, including the Hailey, Kimberly, and Sandpoint Chambers of Commerce, the Gooding Jaycees, the Canyon County Republican Booster Club, the Idaho Women's Christian Temperance Union, the city of Glenns Ferry, and an American Legion Auxiliary in Lewiston. Church called upon supporters such as religious leaders, Perry Swisher, the YWCA, and League of Women Voters to help correct the flood of misinformation that existed. (Rev. William Spofford at St. Michael's Cathedral (Episcopal) in Boise was particularly involved in civil rights; Margaret Keener, active in civil rights via the YWCA and First Presbyterian Church, wrote the most letters in favor of the bill. The nationally-powerful, interdenominational Church Women United helped connect black and white Boise women together in supportive ways, too.) Despite continued virulent constituent opposition from across the entire state, and in an act of principled political courage, Church, Jordan, Harding, and White all voted for the bill—which they knew the country needed. They heard the national debates in Congress, which gave them a better sense of the national crisis than many Idahoans possessed. However, in the next election cycle two of the four lost their seats to candidates far less supportive of Martin Luther King Jr. and the civil rights movement. George Hansen, who unseated Harding, opposed the bill as unconstitutional and equated civil disobedience with mob rule. The PCCR continued to operate and advocate for civil rights during this time.

However, Pansy Washington, a black woman who had quickly assumed a vocal leadership

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role on behalf of Pocatello's NAACP branch since at least mid 1961, and who had worked closely with the PHA, PCCR, and Unitarians on housing and other racial justice issues, knew the struggle went beyond passing legislation and ordinances. In January 1964, ING used his newspaper column to argue that Philadelphia's recent injunction stopping white marchers from donning blackface in the Mummers parade was excessive, and therefore bad for the overall civil rights movement. Seeing blackface as rather harmless, he pushed instead for a focus on "practical" discrimination matters. Washington rebutted him with a forceful explanation of how blackface, "Little Black Sambo," and other offensive derogatory depictions of African Americans, were tangled into the broader web, reinforcing white superiority while undercutting black children's self-conceptions. "Destroying the stereotype which dehumanizes us, which mythologically and psychologically seems too necessary to maintain the Caucasian humor and ego, is a cultural must for the Negro. It is not and never has been a benign image you create of us in blackface." Washington had first worked as a school teacher in another state, starting in 1940. She reminded "ING" (one of Pocatello's most powerful men) that Pocatello hired its first black teacher in 1963. Washington's name and writing appeared frequently in articles about civil rights advocacy in the early to mid-1960s; she clearly was one of the key outspoken advocates and educators on civil rights in Pocatello then.

Pocatello-born Idaho Purce, and her husband John, also both spoke out frequently to confront discriminatory racial incidents and issues that ranged beyond those addressed by the federal civil rights bill or Pocatello ordinance. Pocatello's Police Chief blamed black people's lack of cooperation with police as the root cause of poor policing in the triangle area of Pocatello Avenue, 5<sup>th</sup> and Center Streets. In rebuttal, Idaho Purce noted the long collaborative relationship between the police, black underworld, and white johns who sought its services. Citing little "rapport" between the black community and police, including her own disappointment in and mistrust of Pocatello's law enforcement personnel, she said, "The Negro underworld has a closer relationship with the police than the respectable Negroes do." The Purces were long among the first responders for the black community to racist incidents in town, both willing to speak up and show up as civil right advocates. Their home on 6<sup>th</sup> street, like Dorothy Buckner's in Boise, served as a site for conversation, coordination, and grassroots activism for local civil rights advocates.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Idaho and John Purce were members of St. Anthony's Catholic Church, not one of the black churches in town. Dorothy Buckner's closest female allies in her civil rights efforts tended to be white women who were affiliated with other churches (such as Margaret Keener and Pauli Crooke, both Presbyterians

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The Idaho Commission on Civil Rights, a “fact finding body” assigned to investigate racial discrimination and report back to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights had labored since 1960 to source such information. Perry Swisher long served as a member. In 1964, its attention turned more sharply onto numerous employment discrimination situations in Pocatello and elsewhere, as qualified black applicants for jobs usually reserved for white people faced strings of rejections. Eli Oboler, ISC librarian (for whom the library later renamed itself) also served as a visible, dependable, vocal advocate for civil rights throughout this period, including on housing and employment discrimination. In February 1964, as he had done numerous other times, he published an essay in the paper citing the lack of black people hired for professional positions or accepted into unions beyond the railroad. People like David McCormick, Pansy Washington, the Purces, and Oboler—black and white—who wrote and spoke and testified to racial realities as Idahoans and the nation more broadly debated civil rights, played a critical role in educating their communities and holding those in power accountable.

The decade 1954 to 1964 bracketed the South’s acceleration into the civil rights struggles and the nation’s most rapid federal progress in outlawing de jure segregation in schools, employment, and public accommodations. In Idaho, the national movement combined with rising black activism locally (both individual and group-organized), especially in Pocatello, brought more white allies into the movement in a bolder vocal way. This helped accelerate some progress while also exposing the strength of white reluctance, resistance, and backlash in Idaho with respect to employment, housing, policing, enforcing the 1961 state law, and support for the federal Civil Rights Act of 1964.

**NPS Time Frame: 1965-1976 The Second Revolution**

Between 1965 and 1976, Pocatello’s black residents continued to battle housing discrimination and purposeful white intransigence while making slow progress in integrating certain sought-after employment sectors through securing token hires as initial breakthroughs. In 1966,

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at different congregations); so they all collaborated through the YWCA and in creating the Citizens for Civic Unity (CCU)—and not through the black churches themselves.

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racial segregation in housing remained little changed from decades earlier. As described in the *Idaho State Journal* that summer,

“Almost all Negroes in the city live in a 65-block area bounded by Pocatello Avenue, Oak, Tenth and Center. Fifth is the dividing line through the Negro area. East of it, Negroes live in attractive middle-class homes. But the blocks west of fifth harbor a collection of shacks and ramshackle housing which would equal any Negro slum in the Deep South....Operating in the midst of this residential area are the dregs of the city. There are prostitutes and their pimps, bootlegging establishments specializing in the illegal sale of liquor, and illegal gambling spots. This is a place of frequent violence.... ‘Realtors just won’t sell to Negroes,’ said the resident of an attractive home in the Negro district.”

Charles Woods, president of Pocatello NAACP urged the Bannock County Commission to begin hiring black people for county jobs, arguing that, other than janitorial roles, no black people worked for the city or county in 1966. In 1969, Rev. Robert Adams, pastor of Bethel Baptist and former NAACP leader, worked individually to help integrate job sites for black applicants; this included threatening Pocatello’s Safeway store with a boycott until it hired a black person. The Chamber of Commerce also created a subcommittee to help the jobless find work, and found point-people within particular disadvantaged groups to be intercessors between those populations and the Chamber. Idaho Purce served that function for black Pocatellans. For several years she worked with local businesses to extend jobs to their first black employees, and she partnered closely with the Pocatello Community Center in her advocacy. Meanwhile, she led the PCCR to file formal public complaints of job discrimination at the State Employment Office.

The PCCR and its individual members (such as Eli Oboler and Idaho Purce) continued organizing public educational events about racism and civil rights locally and nationally, as the community debated rising black militancy nationwide and its supposed connections to communism. In 1967, LDS Apostle Ezra Taft Benson claimed the civil rights movement was “a Communist program for revolution in America” while speaking at the church’s General Conference. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints’ racial exclusions, rooted in beliefs about the cursed nature of black skin, started drawing protests from civil rights groups such as the NAACP in 1965, and, in the late 1960s, from college students whose schools played Brigham Young University (BYU) in sports. Perhaps in his own quiet protest, Marion Coleman, an LDS bishop with a lumber business, helped some black Pocatellans possessing solid credit and job histories to secure loans for

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home construction on N. 9<sup>th</sup>, just on the far edge of the so-called “negro” district. Eastern Idahoans paid close attention to these protests and engaged in discussions of race and religion. During the early 1970s, Idaho National Laboratory (INL) began hiring several black people in Idaho Falls; the black community there grew large enough to organize its own NAACP chapter and sponsor cultural and educational events. Meanwhile racist incidents and interracial civil rights activism crescendoed in Idaho’s capital city of Boise—centering both on city and state policies. Black students and athletes pushed more vocally against racism at the state’s three largest university campuses.

In June 1965, Governor Robert Smylie created a committee to glean out de jure racial discrimination from the state’s constitution. This included ridding its ban against Asians and Indians voting, and repealing the state’s anti-miscegenation law. To please conservatives, he framed these efforts as a means of preempting federal interference. He described them as stopping the “drift toward centralism in DC” by taking charge at the state level to “sweep out some cobwebs of bigotry and suspicion that currently mar our constitution.” Darrell Manning and Perry Swisher, two consistent civil rights supporters in the legislature, served on the committee. Similarly, in 1972, the legislature formally repealed sections of Idaho’s code that had created a state Board of Eugenics.

In 1965, Idaho also began participating in a variety of federally funded government programs connected to President Lyndon Johnson’s Great Society initiative designed to declare a “war on poverty;” these also helped mitigate the economic repercussions of systemic racism in America. The programs provided job training, early education, and migrant worker services to disadvantaged people. Idaho received Job Corps programs in several towns, including Cottonwood, Marsing, Mountain Home, and Lowell. And through funding provided by the Office of Equal Opportunity, local head start pre-kindergarten programs began in Ada and Bannock counties. Though Head Start served local children, Job Corps participants were usually racial minorities, ages 16-24, sent to Idaho most frequently from other states and regions. Job Corps Centers provided room and board, while offering General Educational Development (GED) education and training in various trade skills—seen as the necessary foundations for an escape from poverty. In Cottonwood, its 4000+ trainees participated apprentice-style in a variety of construction and forest management projects, including building campgrounds, fences, roads, culverts, and buildings, planting trees, painting structures, and helping restore historic structures.

But these small town and rural locations offered little for the minority participants to do, and

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white Idahoans feared that young black men might proposition white women. In 1968, black Job Corpsmen at the Cottonwood center said they hated Idaho because white locals were so unfriendly. They complained they were not allowed to do anything truly social; even when bussed to Lewiston for recreation, they encountered cold stares and felt lonely—expressing eagerness to return to the South where, despite its dangerous racism, the Corpsmen could have full social lives. As one interviewed in late 1968 said candidly, ““And I’ll tell you this – the South may be bad, the way we always hear tell. But people in the South are way ahead of people in Idaho when it comes to the plain facts of living. / There’s lots of good, kind people here, I make no doubt. There’s people who’ve worked hard for us and tried to help us, and we’re grateful to them....But I tell you people down home let me feel more a man and worth something than they ever do here. And I think that’s what counts.””

Marsing’s Job Corps Center bussed its young men to Boise for recreation on weekends. However, in 1971, when Boise’s YMCA refused to let them use their Teen Center facilities, Cherie Buckner Thompson (daughter of Dorothy and Aurelius), Marsing Job Corpsmen, and other Boiseans picketed in protest. “This is a case of racial discrimination,” she asserted. “In reality a white corpsman can say he is visiting the area, or something, and get in. It is really the blacks that are barred.” In protest response, the YWCA gave one of their rooms to the black Job Corpsmen (and their carpentry students renovated it into a recreation space), as well as invited the young men to their Saturday night dances. The YWCA also tried to intercede on their behalf when Boise police officers overly policed the youth in ways deemed harassing. In a story printed in the *Intermountain Observer*, 1969, the author explained that Boise’s “Nightspots...are less than willing to entertain black customers” and connected this to white parents’ widespread discouragement of interracial dating. When the YWCA invited Wright Congregational Church’s senior youth group to attend “a canteen-style dance” arranged for Job Corpsmen, many parents in town vocally protested the practice. One of the five boys and one girl from the church who participated, replied, “They [the parents] were afraid we might turn into Negroes, or something.” A handful of valley-area churches, in addition to the YWCA, worked purposefully to engage and educate their white youth with respect to racism and civil rights. Among these were St. Michael’s Episcopal (Very Rev. William Spofford), Wright Congregational, and Boone Memorial Presbyterian (Caldwell). Along with this, St. Paul’s Baptist Church, a predominantly African American congregation, also brought extensive civil rights leadership to Boise via its individual members, youth group, and Reverend Jim Hubbard. Hubbard



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also served as Vice President of the Treasure Valley's NAACP branch, helped found Citizens for Civic Unity (CCU), provided training on racism to local groups, and became a point person to contact when racial incidents occurred. As noted earlier, church people interested in civil rights tended to form new groups outside of any particular church or NAACP chapter in order to create religiously and racially diverse action-based organizations, such as the CCU; they also often met in places like the YWCA, rather than in black churches where vulnerable members felt conflicted about taking risks.<sup>10</sup>

In late 1968, white men physically challenged black Job Corpsmen from Mountain Home over interactions with white women at a pool hall, and police answering the call purposefully muffled the story. Once KBOI news and the *Idaho Statesman* reported it, anger roiled among some whites. Days later, when a busload of Marsing Job Corpsmen arrived in Boise for regular recreation, a group of 30-plus white people armed with chains, hoses, knives, metal trash cans, and fists, attacked the Job Corpsmen and their bus. As the Job Corpsmen ran toward the bus to escape the mob, four near the back were beaten. The bus driver headed straight for the police station a block away and filed a complaint. The police booked only one of three named assailants. Jerome Kovis, Marsing center assistant director, said "Our boys are waiting now to see what the community does."

The Marsing Job Corps started driving its 40 corpsmen 400 miles to Portland once a month to dance with the female Job Corps members there, after parents' complaints forced the YWCA's Saturday dances to end. Meanwhile, a white girl in Canyon County, whose parents forbade her to date a black Job Corpsman she favored—and who refused to follow her parents' orders to not see him—was turned over to the sheriff by the parents and jailed for 18 days. She was never charged with a crime—just held in jail to teach her a lesson about the wrongs of interracial dating.

A multiracial civil rights advocacy group, called Citizens for Civic Unity, which formed in

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<sup>10</sup> More research is needed on black church activism in Idaho. From extensive oral history interviews conducted with black churchgoers in Boise and Pocatello, all generally stressed that, while black churches remained central to the social, spiritual, cultural, and material aspects of people—and were verbally supportive of racial justice—actual organized civil rights activism occurred mostly via other organizations. While NAACP chapters played sporadic roles here, new groups more willing to press faster and/or who had different leadership that bigger coalitions could rally around, tended to form. This includes the PLNOMR, the PCCR, and the CCU. The YWCA and Church Women United could draw women interracially together across different denominations and races—with the YWCA also inclusive of the non-religious; so places like the YWCA and GAR hall, along with people's homes like the Buckner's or Purce's, became frequent sites for meetings.

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1968 to advocate for a stronger state civil rights law, demanded the mayor and city council seek a full accounting by the police regarding the white mob attack against Job Corpsmen in downtown Boise. Much like Pocatello's earlier PCCR, the Citizens for Civic Unity became the go-to group that publicly confronted racist incidents in the community, calling authorities to account and providing educational forums and consciousness-raising sessions, while also seeking policy and legislative changes to advance racial justice systemically.

Citizens for Civic Unity emerged in the wake of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination and out of the outrage created locally when Idaho's governor's office failed to show due respect to his passing. When a bullet to the head and neck killed Dr. King on April 4, 1968, President Johnson ordered flags flown at half-mast until his funeral concluded four days later. However, Idaho's governor's office equivocated, citing confusion over protocol, and ended up lowering the flag for a small portion of this span—a mere four hours on the day of his televised funeral, then raising it before the service ended. Outraged community members, organized first by the NAACP (and its president Phil Watts), quickly called for a march—later mellowed to a rally. Boise's police and mayor feared the violence exploding in other cities might take hold locally. While meeting about what to do, people poured forth their stories of racial discrimination and indignities. The discussion, facilitated by Rev. Hubbard at the YWCA, helped the NAACP shape three demands for elected officials: 1) create a state human rights commission to enforce laws, 2) institute a formal method of direct communication between the governor's office and minority communities in Idaho, and 3) begin a concerted effort to promote minority hiring by state offices and local businesses. On April 12, an estimated 700 people gathered for the massive rally, Boise's first, on the Capitol's south steps. Only about 40 were black, since many African Americans feared being fired by white employers if they showed up. The vast majority in attendance, therefore, were white people, including an overwhelming proportion of high school and college-aged students. Police were everywhere, and the governor put the national guard on alert in case things got out of hand. At the rally, both the mayor and lieutenant governor spoke briefly as part of a formal program that included a prayer by Rev. Dwight Williams of Hillview Methodist, the Pledge of Allegiance led by civil rights proponent and local attorney Byron Johnson, and short statements not only by Mayor Amyx and Lt. Gov. Murphy, but Rev. Spofford as well. A teen-aged Cherie Buckner appeared on the steps with other young adults from St. Paul's to sing. A few black airmen from Mountain Home defied direct orders not to attend to join St. Paul's singers.

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The centerpiece purpose of the rally, however, involved a formal call for a stronger Idaho civil rights law and creation of an Idaho Human Rights Commission to enforce it. As part of this, Curtis Oler, a black attorney for Boise's Small Business Association (and the only other black lawyer in the state beside Reeves), provided the public with a litany of examples of racism. These included: both James McClure's and George Hansen's Republican votes against the open housing bill in Congress (which put them in league with southern Democrats' strident opposition), the Boise Board of Realtor's openly advertised lobbying against the bill, the blatantly racist talk-radio programs locally produced on two stations that red-baited civil rights activism and promoted derogatory racial stereotypes, and rampant job discrimination against black people applying for positions in downtown stores (where only one black clerk was employed).

After the rally, Oler, Pauli Crooke (director of public information and public relations at the College of Idaho, who soon became the first female broadcaster in Idaho for KBOI, and who in 1957 was elected Vice President of the Young Republicans of Idaho), Bob Jeffrey (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission), Margaret Keener, Rev. Hubbard, and others met at Dorothy Buckner's house to create a Committee for New Civil Rights Legislation. Crooke initiated this. Shortly thereafter, they also created Citizens for Civic Unity. They felt they needed different groups beyond the local NAACP to push for legislation and coordinate community education and activism. At that time, Crooke noted widespread indifference among most white Idahoans about civil rights—including among the faculty and staff at the College of Idaho where she worked—as well as hostility from the popular John Bircher segment of the community.

Crooke spearheaded the drafting and lobbying process of the bill, while Oler used his legal expertise to craft the bill's content. The two worked daily in the evenings until well past midnight researching and finessing the legal language. Because of his earlier civil rights activism in other states, Crooke recalled Oler having a national network of sources they could call for assistance. Crooke also brought in Don McClenahan for his advice; he had drafted the 1961 bill and had long urged something stronger. The federal 1964 Civil Rights Act provided the content for strengthening Idaho's Human Rights law; and they modeled the section creating a state human rights commission on legislation that had produced the same in other states. Oler's bill blueprinted a robust commission that would have subpoena and investigative powers when responding to charges of civil rights violations. These activists believed that legal measures needed to be crafted, then used robustly and publicly, to shake white Idahoans out of their complacent, lackadaisical, I'm-not-the-problem

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approach to civil rights. Crooke then convinced Senator Phil Batt (R-Canyon County) to carry the bill in the Senate. From Crooke's investigations, Batt had the most humane migrant labor camps in southwestern Idaho, illustrating his respect for their humanity; additionally, their daughters socialized in each other's homes, which provided an entrée. Crooke got Rep. Fred Koch (R-Ada County) to sponsor the bill in the House, and Rep. Pat McDermott (D-Bannock County) lent important aid on the House floor when the bill nearly died three times there. Crooke did 90% of the lobbying for the bill—much of which happened over strong martinis in the Hotel Boise restaurant, where legislators routinely gathered.

The CCU met almost nightly for months in Buckner's living room as they worked on all of this. Sam Day, editor and publisher of the *Intermountain Observer*, and a strong civil rights advocate, provided crucial visible and behind-the-scenes public relations to advance the effort. His paper served as the liberal media voice in Boise. Given that the John Birch Society maintained a strong presence in Boise then, something the *Idaho Statesman* noted in 1967, Day's paper presented an important counter view. Women in the YWCA and in the League of Women Voters gave additional numerical and vocal support to the CCU's efforts to pass this legislation as well as raise community attention onto racism. In April 1968, the president of Boise's League of Women Voters called her membership to address racism; it sponsored a meeting with Rev. Hubbard at Wright Congregational Church to learn and discuss the issues, analyze the problems, and more directly face the problems minorities encountered in Boise. This helped prepare the League to mobilize members on behalf of the changes CCU sought.

However, Governor Samuelson did not favor the black freedom movement; most people didn't think he understood or cared about it. Crooke felt sure he was behind halting the flag honors for King. Samuelson's election represented a rightward turn in Idaho's Republican leadership in 1968, which mirrored the nation's when it elected Richard Nixon. Idaho had given segregationist Governor George Wallace of Alabama 12.5% of its vote when he ran as a third party candidate for president that year, second highest in the West. Although Samuelson agreed to support a stronger human rights bill (that would bring the state into alignment with the national law) and creation of a state human rights commission, behind the scenes his actions purposefully weakened the latter. With the guidance of friend Richard Cooke, whom Samuelson later chose to head the future commission despite Cooke's inexperience with civil rights, they hired a smart conservative attorney, Stan Crow (Cooke's personal lawyer), to help coach legislators on how to gut Oler's bill via the amendment

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process. Essentially, Crow kept the bill's original number-title, but rewrote Oler's section that created a strong human rights commission, replacing it with a weak dysfunctional structure that couldn't ensure justice for victims of racial discrimination. The governor's office feared Oler's rendition might produce a "quasi-independent" commission that could "force things."

When Idaho's Human Rights Act became law in 1969, it authorized forming the Idaho Human Rights Commission (IHRC), which was one of the least powerful in the nation. It lacked subpoena power, depended upon the Attorney General's (AG) office to investigate and bring charges despite lacking political motivation to do so, was overseen by Samuelson's appointed commissioners (some of whom didn't believe in human rights or racism's existence, or feared confrontation, or lacked a basic understanding of racism), had to depend upon county commissioners who were antagonistic to the IHRC's work to screen initial complaints, and was given such a slim budget and administrative support that it could barely function. Samuelson also appointed a director, Richard Cooke, who didn't fulsomely grasp civil rights, and who believed in Samuelson's go-slow, soft-peddled, keep-incidents-private approach to civil rights enforcement. (At the time, Cooke thought Martin Luther King Jr's actions were too radical.) Samuelson supported creating the Commission because state commissions were allowed to investigate alleged violations of the federal civil rights law internally without federal interference. As Marilyn Shuler (commission director 1978 – 1998) recalled being told regularly by the governor's office, "you're [the IHRC] just a shield against the feds."

Therefore, although the CCU, NAACP, and other local civil rights supporters could claim a legislative victory, the resulting commission was a deep disappointment. Like the Bistline ruling in 1961, it proved unwilling or unable to bring justice to victims of civil rights violations. Between 1969 and 1972, as the first test cases of the new 1969 law appeared, the AG's office, county prosecutors, legislature, and county commissioners all collaborated in different ways to obstruct the Commission's ability to pursue justice for victims of racial discrimination. In some instances, IHRC state commissioners had to investigate charges of discrimination themselves because law enforcement stalled sharing official reports for months. Phil Batt, Rev. Hubbard, black people in Boise and Pocatello, Latino and Native American leaders, student groups, and the next governor, Cecil Andrus, became increasingly frustrated. In 1970 a slew of complaints charging race-based civil rights violations against black, Latino, female, and Native American Idahoans hit the Commission's desks. Senator Andrus asserted civil rights cases "don't have a prayer" given the

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IHRC's crippled condition, and campaigned for governor by urging measures to strengthen it. Hubbard called the IHRC a "token" organization. Hubbard confronted the legislature and governor's office repeatedly with direct, forceful, angry complaints about the blatant disregard he saw from elected officials with respect to racial injustice in Idaho and the Commission's built-in dysfunctions. The League of Women Voters added their organized appeals, testifying before the Senate State Affairs committee that the IHRC couldn't do its job under current conditions—and urged including minorities on the IHRC county commissions, adding subpoena power to the IHRC's functions, and giving it adequate funding. Of course, legislators also heard from farmer and business interests that disliked the entire idea of a human rights commission. And some considered any bending in the direction of the CCU or Rev. Hubbard's requests as buckling to "radicals" and subversives. The Senate State Affairs Committee directly told the IHRC it didn't want it to become an "advocate body" for minorities. Several in the legislature tried to defund and even kill the Commission in those first few years before Governor Andrus helped buttress and retool it in small but significant ways. The election of Andrus in 1972 meant the embattled IHRC finally had a powerful friend in the statehouse with the ability to protect it. He guaranteed that human rights supporters—and people deeply knowledgeable of civil rights issues—received critical roles on the commission. Under Samuelson, people with little understanding or interest in those subjects were often awarded IHRC positions at the state or county level. Unlike Samuelson, Andrus also helped ensure the AG's office took prosecution of human rights violations seriously.

In January, 1971, Hubbard told an *Idaho Statesman* reporter that Boise was "ripe for a racial outbreak" due to the deep embeddedness of racism combined with young black adults' loss of patience with it. He felt this tense situation stemmed from a rapid increase in the local black population. The demographic growth sprang in part from over 1000 nonwhite people stationed at Mountain Home Air Force Base—who often complained of harassment they experienced in town when socializing—as well as from the "equal opportunity efforts of Boise Cascade and Morrison-Knudsen" to recruit and retain more people of color. Hubbard said he was aware of eight to ten physical altercations between black and white people in Boise, but added this was unknown publicly because the police covered up these incidents. That same year, a federal Housing and Urban Development administrator criticized Idaho's fair housing law as substandard and in need of strengthening. By 1976, black Boiseans were noticing improvements in racial inclusion, at least in some overt areas, while others remained intransigent.

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Black people complained to Governor Andrus that Boise's Elks Lodge (along with similar others in the state) discriminated racially in its membership rules. In 1972, a bill died in the legislature to end property tax exemptions to fraternal clubs that banned racial minorities. Although Idaho's legislature failed to act, a US District Court ruling the following year ordered Oregon to stop providing tax exemptions to a racially restrictive Elks lodge there, which by precedent compelled Idaho's Tax Commission to follow suit.

Meanwhile, the League of Women Voters in Boise and in Pocatello each organized local actions to support civil rights; this included projects that helped inform their communities about non-discrimination practices to support fair employment, fair housing, and equal access to public accommodations. They were local expressions of the national LWV's study of and focus on human rights. Similarly, the national YWCA adopted the "One Imperative" goal of making anti-racism the main focus of the organization's advocacy efforts. By the early 1970s, Boise's YWCA, which had embraced racial justice work for decades, also adopted the One Imperative. This led it to retool its programming even more decisively in an antiracism direction. And this dovetailed with the rise of feminism within the YWCA, locally and nationally. During this time, a group of Boise women affiliated with the YWCA and civil rights causes organized a sit-in take-over of the male legislative leaders' special "round table" at Hotel Boise's coffee shop. For years, a large round table sat permanently reserved for the legislature's and governor's office's power brokers—all dominant white men. Young male aspirants eager for these men's attention would sit on the periphery day after day, hoping for a moment when one of the power-wielders would motion him to take a seat at the round table. That signified moving from the outside to the inside of the old boys club. One day, a group of YMCA-affiliated feminists usurped the round table, much to the nervous chagrin of the wait staff, who tried unsuccessfully to convince them to leave. Therefore, empowering young women as advocates and leaders—beyond simply learning the domestic arts—also informed the YWCA's programmatic makeover. As a result, state leaders who managed Boise's "United Fund," which accounted for a sizeable chunk of the YWCA's annual operating budget, suddenly slashed the YWCA's funding—because they felt the organization had gotten too political. The YWCA women, conversely, knew this was targeted at their feminism and antiracism work—and to force them to back off of it. Sue Reents, still a civil rights and feminist advocate in Boise, was a central player in this part of the YWCA's history.

In 1970, Dorothy Buckner spearheaded creation of the River Street Community Center (500

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S. Ash Street, Boise), so that black children would have access to books, educational and recreational programming, and their own safe affirming place to congregate. Both Boise and Pocatello had long neglected providing minority children with recreational and educational spaces that were fully accessible, inclusive of, and welcoming to them. It was a decades-long fight in Pocatello to even get promised playground equipment added to the park in the triangle area, when white people denied black children access to the equipment in white-used parks in order to minimize physical contact and familiarity. Buckner's work ensured black parents and children had privileged space with affirming images, messages, and open doors.<sup>11</sup>

Three women who helped staff the new center—Willa Mae Robinson, Jackie Robinson, and Dorothy's daughter Cherie—worked with others to “preserve and strengthen” the River Street neighborhood as a culturally significant place, as businesses sought to buy up and repurpose that valuable well-located area for commercial enterprises. It had long been zoned for mixed use, so lacked the residential zoning protections that white neighborhoods enjoyed to preserve their livability. Organized efforts by the League of Women Voters, the River Street Tenants Union, El-Ada Community Action Agency and others, tried for years to convince elected officials to preserve River Street as a rich residential cultural area, as well as add more affordable housing there. But these efforts largely failed. Unlike the Basque Block, which the city turned into a cultural tourist attraction and praised as a retainer of Basque heritage, the River Street area received little official support until well past 2000. The city's Department of Arts and History collaborated with the Idaho Black History Museum and Preservation Idaho to provide the area with commemoration as a multicultural and black enclave, if only on historical websites, via rare markers, and through the preservation of the Erma Hayman home.

In the early to mid-1970s, college students and student athletes at the University of Idaho, Idaho State College, and Boise State College, grew more outspoken and organized in leveling complaints of racism in university policies, culture, and community. For example, ISU students demanded a black studies course and received one in the fall 1969; it observed the national black liberation week the following spring semester; and it opened a Minority Cultural Center in the fall 1970. Pocatello High School started a black studies program fall 1969, too—a first for Idaho. A

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<sup>11</sup> See *Idaho Statesman* photo archives at BSU for terrific images of Buckner and the Community Center, C. 1970.



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Black Student Union was formed at Boise State College in 1971 to advocate for black students and athletes, and to promote racial awareness. (Students abandoned an attempt to create one in 1970 “fearing reprisals.”) At ISU in the late 1960s, Idaho and John Purce’s oldest son, Les, was elected student body vice president, and he gave the commencement address at Pocatello High School in 1970. He pursued his PhD in education and was the first black Pocatellan to serve on its City Council in 1973. In 1976, the city council appointed him mayor. This empowered black students and community members in Pocatello.

From boxers Jack Johnson and Joe Louis, to baseball and football greats such as Jackie Robinson and Jim Brown, to track stars like Jesse Owens, Wilma Rudolph, and the gold- and silver-medal winners from the 1968 Olympics—who lifted black power fists during the national anthem—athletics had long provided black people platforms on which to assert excellence while exposing racism. College athletes in Idaho became more confrontational in addressing campus and community racism from the late 1960s onward—far more so than Buck Buckner, Ed Sanders, or Spider Webb felt able to do a decade or two earlier. Issues in the late 60s through mid-1970s remained much as they were: pressure to avoid socializing with white girls (whether on campus or downtown), miniscule numbers of black female students on campus, being cheered in athletic events but spurned in downtown establishments (all of which doused nurturing an enjoyable social life), difficulties finding housing to rent, disinterest by coaches in their academic success or futures, coaches favoring white players, and being intimidated by coaches against taking part in civil rights activism. Being vocal came with a potential price: loss of one’s scholarship, being benched for upsetting coaches, fans, or university administrators, or being ostracized or nastily-hazed by white teammates. If one’s aspirations beyond college involved professional sports, risking reprimands for resisting racism could jeopardize one’s future as well as one’s college career. Yet, the local, state, and national conversation, as well as legislative landscape, had advanced enough to create a bit more safe space for athletes to speak out; campus leaders could be held more accountable for racist actions by then. And competition had inspired coaches to recruit far more black athletes than past decades. Greater numbers translated into a stronger voice, mutual corroboration opportunities, and less social isolation.

In 1970, Boise State’s star athletes Puddin Grayson and Rocky Wilson shared publicly how black athletes’ bottled up frustrations over race-based mistreatment had spilled into the open with coaches and senior administrators that academic year. The two spoke for their teammates about the

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grievances listed above. Additionally, black athletes across the West (first at San Jose State and University of Texas, El Paso), who played on Western Athletic Conference (WAC) teams against Brigham Young University, began protesting their Mormon rival for the LDS church's ban preventing black men's inclusion in the priesthood, rooted in racist religious beliefs. Wherever BYU teams played in the late 1960s and early 70s, they encountered hostility from rival schools' players and fans. This included criticism from black student leaders at Weber and Utah State universities. When the University of Wyoming's Black Student Alliance (BSA) planned a campus protest against LDS policies before UW's football game against BYU in 1969, fourteen football players at the University of Wyoming donned black arms bands at a meeting with their head coach to signify unity with the BSA, and their frustration with that coach for disallowing players to take part in civil rights demonstrations. When they were immediately suspended, black athletes at other WAC schools demonstrated support for those players in words and/or deed, while white fans generally cheered the coach. National headlines carried the story, and affected already heated racial tensions in Idaho universities' athletic departments. ISU held two open forums on "Mormonism and Racial Controversy" in spring 1970. ISU also suspended 14 black football players who chose to miss practice to protest white coaches' disinterest in meeting with them to discuss players' grievances. Rev. Hubbard drove to Pocatello to help mediate, and urged Gov. Samuelson to take an active interest. Players also urged hiring a black assistant coach who could better communicate with and understand black athletes. ISU's black fraternity Kappa Alpha Psi spoke in support of the suspended athletes. The suspension at ISU drew a fair amount of news coverage, so university administrators, as well as coaches, ended up meeting with black players to discuss frustration points and issues.

In early 1970, the Idaho Advisory Committee to the US Commission on Civil Rights was reconstituted after five years of hiatus due to a funding shortage. It resumed its role of studying the status of civil rights in the state and reporting its findings to the national body. Nonwhite Idahoans provided testimony of continued discrimination in housing, employment, policing, customer service in bars and restaurants, and treatment of athletes—in addition to racism against Native Americans. Pocatello's NAACP also flowered with activity during this time, bearing witness to discrimination and working in a grassroots fashion to seek systemic improvements.

All in all, civil rights issues and activism in Idaho between 1965 and 1976 largely mirrored

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trends seen in the rest of the North and West.<sup>12</sup>

**Post Script – late 1970s to 2001**

**Aryan Nations spark Human Rights Movement in Idaho**

In April 1970, after black friends entered Challis to visit a Bahai family there, white people burned a cross on the family's lawn in protest. Some in town wanted to keep the town white, and signified their preference publicly through the cross lighting.

The Pacific Northwest's whiteness, including Idaho's, had attracted white-flighters since the Civil War era. Between 1954 and 1968, federal civil rights legislation that allowed people of color access to housing, schools, the vote, and jobs previously off limits, combined with whites' fears that their neighborhoods and white rights would decline as a result, sparked several new waves of white-flighters to leave West Coast cities, and particularly the Los Angeles area, and head to Idaho.

Richard Butler, founder of the Aryan Nations (Aryans), became Idaho's most infamous LA transplant. He and his wife Betty had vacationed in Idaho for years before buying land in Hayden Lake, Idaho in 1974; by the late 1970s, he'd built a compound and created the Aryan Nations, an activist white separatist organization that wanted the five states in America's northwest corner to become a white homeland. As a minister in the Church of Jesus Christ Christian, a white supremacist faith, Butler used religious theology to justify and buttress his political goals. Butler's print room allowed him to spread literature internationally, and his compound became the site of ecumenical white supremacist "Congresses" to which he invited white supremacist factions, young and old, from around the nation—including KKK, skinheads, militia, and brownshirts. His group also led marches through downtown Coeur d'Alene, and organized sympathetic members in southern Idaho as well. By the early 1980s, some of his followers branched out in violent attacks against minority groups and symbols of the federal government, and began to steal or counterfeit

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<sup>12</sup> See 1970 census figures for black populations in towns larger than 10,000 listed in introduction of this report. As noted earlier, the tiny population of black people outside of Boise, Pocatello, and Idaho Falls help explain why activism in this report centered around Boise and Pocatello. More research is welcomed on Idaho Falls—although its proximity to Pocatello and heavily Mormon population may have muted activism. More research could also be done on Twin Falls; some is currently underway by Justin Vipperman at the College of Southern Idaho.

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money. Butler's actions drew nationwide media attention from papers like the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*, and helped paint Idaho as a haven for racial extremists.

Around 1980, several human rights supporters in Coeur d'Alene formed the Kootenai County Task Force on Human Relations (KCTFHR) to publicly rebut the Aryan Nations' messages and actions, provide support to minority Idahoans, and communicate a warm welcome of diversity. By the 1990s human rights task forces had sprung up in several Idaho counties, working in tandem to advance civil rights protections and minority welcome while responding to incidents of hate in their counties. Under the superb leadership of Marilyn Shuler from 1978 to 1998, the Idaho Human Rights Commission evolved into the strongest iteration of itself it could be, as it helped coordinate and buttress human rights related advocacy springing forth around the state. Shuler also began to find more willing partners within the business community, like Hewlett Packard, to help address systemic racism, for the Aryans' presence hurt the ability of businesses and universities to recruit and retain the best workers and students. Due to the Aryan Nations, the black civil rights movement in Idaho merged into a larger statewide movement against extremist white supremacy, seen in the form of hooded Aryans and their supporters. Leaders and groups that had advanced black civil rights carried that work into this larger effort. And because the Aryans hurt the state's image and businesses, elected officials who cared little about black civil rights had to express interest, at least publicly, in ridding the state of the Aryan Nations and the racist image that expanded through Idaho with them.

The four-year legislative struggle that culminated in 1990 to make Martin Luther King, Jr. Day a state holiday illustrates this political phenomenon, as well as the Aryans' impact in jelling a statewide human rights movement for the first time. The federal holiday that began in 1986 was observed voluntarily by several Idaho groups, but not recognized by the state. Yearly efforts from 1987 to 1989 to introduce legislation to adopt the holiday statewide failed repeatedly, defeated by several Republicans who saw little need for a holiday named for a supposed communist agitator who never visited Idaho, in a state that they didn't think had a civil rights problem, and that might be too costly to add. Although advocates for the holiday organized demonstrations and education events across the state over these years, including black civil rights groups, the IHRC, and minority students at the U of I, ISU, and Boise State University, the repeated negative impact of the Aryan Nations finally convinced reluctant legislators to adopt the holiday—mostly as a shield to ward off criticism and potential boycotts by people who refused to do business in Idaho or who mocked it.

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The efforts to adopt Martin Luther King Jr. Day, and to counter the Aryans' message whenever and wherever it appeared, included work to address racial discrimination in the state. Groups focused on black civil rights received allies from this larger movement. It also helped generate official support for creation of the Idaho Black History Museum (housed in St. Paul's original Boise building) in the 1990s, the Anne Frank Human Rights Memorial and the Wassmuth Center for Human Rights in Boise in 2002, and the Human Rights Education Institute in Coeur d'Alene, which secured a building in 2005. Veterans of the black freedom struggle in Idaho, both black and white, also became key players in the larger human rights movement, bringing their organizational experience, gravitas, and understanding of the issues and politics into it. By 2000, Idaho had more human rights groups per capita than any other state in the US, due to the Aryan Nations' presence.

In 2000, the KCTFHR partnered with the Southern Poverty Law Center to bring a lawsuit against the Aryan Nations that ultimately bankrupted Butler's operation in a settlement for \$6.3 million. By 2004, Butler was dead and the Aryan Nations in disarray. However, as of 2019, new white supremacist groups had taken root in Idaho and continued to recruit white-flighters from the far West Coast—especially southern California—where demographic shifts showed rapid rises in minority populations and where statehouses were controlled by liberal Democrats. These groups retained Butler's vision that Idaho provided a safe homeland for white power, white privilege, and white-dominated conservative politics.

Whereas in the 1950s and 60s Pocatello boasted Idaho's most diverse population and highest number of black residents, as of 2019, Boise far exceeded all other places in Idaho in black population, topping 1 percent. Nevertheless, Idaho remained one of the whitest and most rural states in America, and northern Idaho (Coeur d'Alene and Sandpoint) were still over 90% white. In 2010, Governor Butch Otter tried to terminate both the Idaho Human Rights Commission and the Hispanic Commission, saying they were no longer needed. A huge public outcry against this effort, which included a widely signed letter by notable Idahoans, prevented him from doing so. This illustrated though, that black Idahoans continued to live amid a white population and political environment that could be obtuse about and disinterested in racial justice. This continued to mean, as it always had, that black Idahoans generally protested using legal means rather than through civil disobedience or confrontational protests, and they needed allies from other racial groups to address systemic racial injustice.

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**Abbreviations**

AME	African Methodist Episcopal
BJC/BSU	Boise Junior College/Boise State University
BSA	Black Student Alliance
CCU	Citizens for Civic Unity
EEOC	Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
GAR	Grand Army of the Republic
IHRC	Idaho Human Rights Commission
ISC/ISU	Idaho State College/University
ISJ	Idaho State Journal
KCTFHR	Kootenai County Task Force on Human Relations
KKK/WKKK	Ku Klux Klan/Women of the Ku Klux Klan
LWV	League of Women Voters
NAACP	National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
PCCR	Pocatello Committee on Civil Rights
PHA	Pocatello Housing Authority
PLNOMR	Pocatello League for Negro and Other Minority Rights
UofI	University of Idaho
YMCA	Young Men's Christian Association
YWCA	Young Women's Christian Association

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**F. Associated Property Types**

*Property Types*

Given the complex history of the African American Civil Rights Movement (Movement), both nationally and in Idaho, it is perhaps unsurprising that the variety of property types associated with the movement are broad. These sites are not race-exclusive, and may have either a positive or negative connotation in relation to the Movement. Specific types of identified properties run the gamut from residential properties, including single family homes and multi-family apartment buildings, to commercial buildings, offices, churches, social and meeting halls, as well as institutional buildings such as schools, libraries, and other public buildings. Though none have been specifically identified in Idaho thus far, given the national context, further research may reveal that property types may extend to structures, such as bridges, as well as sites such as parks, public squares, etc. There are no specific physical characteristics that define any of these property types.

Though the Movement in Idaho followed national trends, the timeline for this MPD goes beyond the timeframe identified in the NPS document “Civil Rights in America: A Framework for Identifying Significant Sites”, the last period for which is ‘The Second Revolution, 1964-1976.’. The period of significance for the Movement in Idaho as defined by this document spans from the 1860s, when along with other pioneers, blacks arrived in Idaho and faced discrimination and adversity settling the land, to 2001 and the struggle against the Aryan Nations and the broader human rights movement in Idaho. Although this MPDF provides the context for the Movement in Idaho, inclusive of properties associated with these contemporary events, individual National Register nominations for properties in this recent past must be evaluated individually and meet Criteria Consideration G: Properties That Have Achieved Significance Within The Last Fifty Years.

*Significance*

Most sites utilizing the context provided in this MPDF will be significant at either the local or state level under Criterion A, in the area of Social History or Politics/Government. Events associated with a particular site must contribute to the larger story of the Movement in Idaho, either positive or negative, but must also rise to the level of having had an impact on that movement. As the Movement in Idaho benefited from allies (and antagonists) of all social, economic, and racial backgrounds, sites associated with individuals or groups regardless of these demographics may utilize this context.

Some sites utilizing this context may be associated with a particular person significant to the story of the Movement in Idaho. In those instances, the property may be eligible for listing in the National Register under Criterion B. Properties nominated under Criterion B must provide additional justification that the particular individual’s contribution to the Movement is directly tied to that site. For instance, the childhood home of a Civil Rights leader or advocate may not be eligible for listing in the National Register under Criterion B as their contribution to the movement did not occur during the time they occupied that dwelling, or during their productive life. Whereas, the home or office of a leader or advocate where meetings were held or during the time of their contribution to the Movement in Idaho may be eligible. In general, sites will not be significant simply for association with Idaho’s African American population or the history of that community, but must also have a direct or significant tie to the Movement in Idaho.

It is possible that some properties associated with the Movement in Idaho may also be eligible for listing in the National Register under additional Criteria unrelated to the Movement, such as Criterion C, in the area of

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architecture. In those instances, eligibility must be evaluated on a case-by-case basis and provide its own architectural context.

*Registration Requirements*

In order to meet the Registration Requirements under this MPDF, a property must be associated with either a person or event associated with the Movement in Idaho, but also that individual or event had to rise to the level of having had an impact on the Movement. As previously stated, properties associated with contemporary events will also need to provide additional analysis under Criteria Consideration G. Churches and/or other religious properties must also provide an analysis and meet Criteria Consideration A: Religious Properties.

Properties associated with the Movement in Idaho must also possess historic integrity. Given that the majority of nominations utilizing the context provided in this MPDF will fall under either Criterion A or B, less emphasis is placed on alterations to buildings or structures. As many of the buildings associated with this context are family homes and churches, some alteration or material replacement is expected. That said, a property must continue to convey some form of its past, by way of location, scale, massing, and design. Location and Association are the aspects of integrity most integral to properties associated with the Movement in Idaho, and must be evaluated in concert to ascertain historic integrity.

**Association:** In order to retain historic integrity, a property must continue to convey the direct link between a significant historic event and/or person associated with the Movement. Association is perhaps the most important aspect of integrity for properties associated with the Movement.

**Location:** As with other historic properties, the presence of a building or structure in its original location is important in the retention of historic integrity and ultimately listing in the National Register. Because so much of the Movement is tied to specific events, rather than patterns of events, integrity of location is essential to historic properties associated with the Movement.

**Feeling:** Feeling is a property's expression of the aesthetic or historic sense of a particular period of time. Given that many important locations associated with the Movement in Idaho were closely associated with the lives of a population that was often discriminated against, it is not uncommon for the areas where the population lived and socialized to be the target of "urban renewal" efforts, thereby diminishing the integrity of feeling provided by a property's setting. This should be taken into consideration and leeway may be given in regard to this aspect of integrity.

**Design:** As many identified sites associated with the Movement in Idaho were located in urban centers and working-class neighborhoods, some alteration is expected in the original design of the structures. While enough of the historic design – particularly the massing and scale - of a property is important in that it must still be able to convey enough of its historic appearance to be recognizable, the fact that these properties will most often be listed under Criterion A or B make this aspect of integrity less important than others. Therefore, greater leeway may be given for design changes that alter the historic appearance of properties listed under this MPD. .

**Materials:** Home remodels, updates to commercial and institutional buildings, and general maintenance through the years have the potential to affect the retention of original materials. Though some historic fabric is important in order to retain historic integrity, less emphasis is placed on this aspect because properties listed under this MPD will most often be listed under Criterion A or B, where integrity of materials is less crucial, greater leeway may be given for design changes that alter the historic appearance of properties listed under this MPD.



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Workmanship: As diminished integrity of design and materials is anticipated with properties associated with the Movement, so too is integrity of workmanship. As the aforementioned alterations occurred over time, the original physical evidence of a particular craft or construction method may likely be lost. In addition, as most properties utilizing this context will be eligible under either Criteria A or B, integrity of workmanship is of secondary importance.

Setting: As previously discussed, many identified properties associated with the Movement in Idaho are located in urban centers that were often subject to urban renewal efforts and other programs that drastically altered the physical surroundings of the historic property. In addition, organizations oftentimes utilized various meeting locations based on availability and were transitory in nature, without permanent locations. As such, it is anticipated that integrity of setting will be diminished if not fully compromised as a result of redevelopment over time, and greater leeway may be given for changes to the setting of properties listed under this MPD.

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**G. Geographical Data**

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**H. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods**

Initial steps in the identification of historic properties and sites associated with the African American Civil Rights Movement in Idaho consisted largely of historical research, including exhaustive review of historic regional newspapers, to identify events and persons associated with African American history or the African American Civil Rights Movement in Idaho. Both direct and indirect events were noted; individuals of all races were identified. Based on this historical research, a matrix was developed linking relevant stories with potential specific locations throughout Idaho. State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) staff then reviewed the matrix to determine whether specific instances and/or locations likely rose to a level of significance warranting listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Where significant individuals were identified, additional research was conducted (e.g., Polk City Directories) in an attempt to locate residential addresses or places of activity possibly associated with them. From there, SHPO staff used Google Earth to determine whether specific buildings, structures, and sites remained extant. Field visits were made to take current photographs of these locations to determine integrity. Finally, for those properties still extant that continue to possess historic integrity, a prioritized list of properties was developed for potential listing in the National Register.

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**I. Major Bibliographical References**

(List major written works and primary location of additional documentation: State Historic Preservation Office, other State agency, Federal agency, local government, university, or other, specifying repository.)

**Selected Sources and Repositories**

**Interviews**

Personal Interviews, conducted by report's author, Jill K. Gill, in person or by phone, between 2012-2014, with Cherie Buckner-Webb, Richard Cooke, Pauli Crooke, Stan Crow, Alice Dieter, Mary LaRue Sanders Watkins, Fannie Lee Lowe, Curtis Oler, Mamie O. Oliver, Idaho Purce, Mary Lou Reed, Sue Reents, Reginald Reeves, Bill Rodin, "South of the Tracks" River Street Reunion attendees, Marilyn Shuler, Warner Terrell III, Carolyn and Phil Watts.

**Newspapers**

*The Alameda Enterprise/Intermountain and Alameda Enterprise* (Pocatello)  
*Idaho Triweekly Statesman/Idaho Daily Statesman/Idaho Statesman* (Boise)  
*Intermountain Observer* (Boise)  
*Lewiston Tribune* (Lewiston)  
*Pocatello Tribune/Idaho State Journal* (Pocatello)  
*Spokesman Review* (Spokane)

**Archives/Special Collections**

Bannock County Historical Society

Boise State University

Collections consulted include: Aryan Nations, Boise State University, Frank Church, Len Jordan, Cecil Andrus, photo files of *Idaho Statesman*

Idaho State University:

Collections consulted include: Pocatello Chamber of Commerce, Perry Swisher, James Aho, Jo Ann Ruckman, photo files of *Pocatello Tribune/Idaho State Journal*

Cassia County Historical Society

Idaho State Historical Society (Papers/Photos):

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Collections consulted include: African Americans (Vertical Files), William Borah, League of Women Voters, photo files, W.C. Roberts, Don Samuelson, Robert Smylie, YWCA

Idaho State Historical Society (Interviews):

Oral History Collection interviews consulted: Richard Butler, Sam Day, Darrell Manning, Sue Reents, Pat Ourada, The Civil Rights History Project (comprises several oral history projects related to the African American experience in Idaho)

Legislative Reference Library, Idaho State Capitol:

Journals of the House and Senate, Idaho State Legislature, 1961, 1963, 1967, 1969, 1970, 1972-1976, 1980, 1986-1990

Library of Congress

Museum of Idaho/Bonneville County Historical Society (Idaho Falls)

North Idaho College:

Collections consulted: Kootenai County Task Force on Human Relations

University of Idaho

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**Articles, Books, Websites**

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