

SELF-DEFENSE, SUBVERSION AND THE STATUS QUO:
FOUR TENNESSEE NEWSPAPERS ASSESS THE COLUMBIA RACE RIOT OF
1946

A Thesis
presented to
the Faculty of the Graduate School
at the University of Missouri-Columbia

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
LONDON WOODROOF
Dr. Earnest Perry, Thesis Supervisor

May 2016

The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the thesis entitled

SELF-DEFENSE, SUBVERSION AND THE STATUS QUO: FOUR TENNESSEE
NEWSPAPERS ASSESS THE COLUMBIA RACE RIOT OF 1946

presented by Landon Woodroof,

a candidate for the degree of Master of Arts,

and hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.

Professor Earnest Perry

Professor Ryan Thomas

Professor Keith Greenwood

Professor Mark M. Carroll

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank the kind folks at the Tennessee State Library and Archives for their patience in putting up with my near constant presence there over a period of many weeks. Numerous questions of mine were answered with great forbearance, and everyone retained their pleasant dispositions even on the occasion or two when I accidentally ran the microfilm completely off its spool.

An acknowledgment is due as well to Professor Keith Greenwood for attending to my many inquiries about photographs.

Finally, thanks to Dr. Earnest Perry for overseeing my research and for teaching the class that inspired me to undertake this study.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....ii

ABSTRACT.....iv

Chapter

1. INTRODUCTION.....1

2. METHODOLOGY.....26

3. INTRODUCTION TO THE FOUR NEWSPAPERS UNDER STUDY.....29

4. THE RIOT ITSELF AND ITS AFTERMATH.....55

5. THE GRAND JURY PROBE.....86

6. THE TRIAL AND THE VERDICT.....103

7. THE RIOT: THE PHOTOGRAPHIC COVERAGE.....128

8. CONCLUSION.....144

ENDNOTES.....150

BIBLIOGRAPHY.....162

SELF-DEFENSE, SUBVERSION AND THE STATUS QUO: FOUR TENNESSEE
NEWSPAPERS ASSESS THE COLUMBIA RACE RIOT OF 1946

Landon Woodroof

Dr. Earnest Perry, Thesis Supervisor

ABSTRACT

The period immediately following World War II in the United States saw an uptick in racially charged violence, as increasingly empowered black veterans came into conflict back home with white Americans content with the continuation of the Jim Crow system. Columbia, Tenn., about 40 miles south of Nashville, became the site of one such incident in 1946, when an altercation between a black mother and son and a white clerk erupted into a full-scale invasion of the town's African-American business district by Tennessee state troopers. Numerous black Columbians were beaten and arrested.

By looking at how four different newspapers in Tennessee covered the Columbia riot story, this study hoped to discover the ways in which race and civil rights were presented to local readers at the time. What assumptions did reporters make about culpability in the riot? How did discussion of the riot mirror discussion of other political matters in 1946 America? How did white and black newspapers differ in their coverage? These were some of the questions asked.

The study found vast differences in how the papers covered the riot story, the most profound of which revolved around two issues: attention paid to the historical context surrounding perceived threats of racial violence and empathy shown to black citizens.

Introduction

On the morning of February 25, 1946, Gladys Stephenson and her son, James, walked into the Castner-Knott department store in downtown Columbia, Tenn., to have their radio repaired. Gladys had taken it in some time before, but was not satisfied with the work and decided to bring it back. She was less than pleased when the clerk quoted her a price that she found too high, so she and her son, who had recently returned from a three-year stint in the U.S. Navy in the South Pacific, decided to take their business elsewhere. On their way out, Gladys told an incoming customer that he should do the same, and James glowered at another clerk who had been rude to them.¹

Nothing may have become of this encounter if not for the fact that Columbia was in the Jim Crow South, the Stephensons were black, and the clerk was white. “What you stop back there for, boy, to get your teeth knocked out?” the clerk, another recently returned Navy veteran named Billy Fleming, asked. “Well, if that’s what it takes,” James said. Billy punched James in the back of the head, and James, a boxing champ in the Navy, punched back, knocking Billy through a plate-glass window. Other whites came to Billy’s rescue. Police officers who arrived on the scene chose only to arrest the mother and son.²

As the day progressed, rumors began circulating in the city’s African-American business district—called “Mink Slide” by whites—that whites were looking to lynch James. The talk was not unfounded. An angry mob of about fifty white Columbians showed up at the courthouse to try to take James Stephenson away early that evening, but was stopped by the machine gun wielding sheriff. Adding to the sense of incipient

violence, cars full of white men brandishing guns circled the town square, and word began to reach Mink Slide that some whites had purchased rope.

Black Columbians had good reason to plan for the worst. There had been two lynchings in the vicinity of Columbia in the previous two decades—those of 18-year-old Henry Choate and 17-year-old Cordie Cheek. Choate had been kidnapped from jail and killed by a bloodthirsty mob in 1927, his lifeless body hung from the courthouse balcony for all to see. An excited crowd, including women and children, gathered to witness Cheek’s castration and hanging just outside Columbia in 1933. Numerous Maury County officials and law enforcement officers played a part in Cheek’s lynching. A constable was among the men who kidnapped Cheek before his murder, and the county coroner was identified as the person who actually caused Cheek’s death by pushing him off the ladder to hang.³

All of this was not lost on Columbia’s African-American community. Several black business leaders had arranged secretly with the sheriff to have James Stephenson released into their custody for safekeeping. One of those leaders, 76-year-old barbershop owner Julius Blair, summed up the feelings of black Columbians when he told the magistrate at the courthouse—a man whose car was widely believed to have been used in Cheek’s lynching—“We are not going to have any more social lynchings in Maury County.”⁴

Groups of armed black men in Mink Slide, an estimated 20 percent of them war veterans, took to the roofs to make sure that Blair’s words held true. Random fire was exchanged between carloads of whites and the men on the roofs. A few Columbia police entered Mink Slide to try to ease tensions a little after dark and were greeted with shouts

of “Here they come” and “Halt.” Local blacks had shot out the streetlights to afford extra protection. When the cops failed to stop, four of them were shot, one of them seriously wounded.⁵

At that point, Sheriff J.J. Underwood called the governor to ask for state assistance. Governor Jim McCord called in the Tennessee State Guard as well as the Tennessee Highway Patrol. Political scientist Ann V. Collins, in a study of all 20th century race riots through World War II, identified the complicity of police and government authorities as one of the primary contributing factors to the formation of a race riot.⁶ In Columbia, the actions of law enforcement agents went farther than mere complicity. They did not simply contribute to the riot; by and large they *were* the riot. Before dawn on the morning of February 26, the highway patrol, accompanied by some thrill-seeking local whites, moved into Mink Slide ostensibly to round up whoever had shot the Columbia police officers. By the time they were done with their sweep, 31 men were under arrest, many of them beaten, several severely, and every shop in Mink Slide had been vandalized. One highway patrolman told a black man he arrested, “I ought to blow your Goddamned black brains out.” Mary Morton, whose husband owned the neighborhood funeral home, would find the letters “KKK” painted on a casket.⁷ The NAACP described the highway patrol’s tactics in language that hearkened back to recent history: “Gestapo-like.”⁸

In the ensuing days, state officials undertook house-to-house searches without warrants, mostly targeting African-American homes, confiscating guns and indiscriminately rounding up suspects. They arrested over 100 men, almost all of them black. Prisoners in the overcrowded local jail were denied attorneys and phone calls.

Tensions reached their zenith on February 28 when two prisoners were shot and killed in what authorities deemed an escape attempt.⁹ The nation began to take notice.

In the weeks and months that followed, the Columbia riot and its aftermath became a rallying cry for advocates from opposite ends of sides of the ideological spectrum. The NAACP and other civil rights organizations saw the episode as a violently racist affront to the dignity of black Americans that was sadly indicative of the post-war era. Many of these organizations' ideological opponents reached a different conclusion. To them, the events in Columbia were not the result of a society built on racial subjugation, but a dangerous example of what happens when a previously content black populace is riled up by outside agitators who just could not leave well enough alone.

These opposing views were informed by several trends apparent in postwar America. James Stephenson and Billy Fleming may not have realized it, but the America they returned to after the war was not the same one they left. While the threat of Nazism had disappeared, the specter of Communism loomed as the next existential challenge facing the nation. And the unifying bonds of World War II paradoxically created a tension at home felt both by blacks, who thought they deserved better after risking their lives for their country, and whites, many of whom wanted to make it abundantly clear that they were not going to tolerate greater racial equality.

Press coverage of the Columbia race riot provides a window through which to examine these alterations in America's sense of itself and Americans' sense of themselves. The field of journalistic history is suffused with countless pages examining the role of journalism in covering the civil rights movement, but the preponderance of that work has focused on the "classical" phase of the movement, as Bayard Rustin put it;

the period between the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling and the major legislative victories of the mid-1960s. Less space has been devoted to examine earlier phases of what historian Jacqueline Dowd Hall has dubbed “the long civil rights movement,” a term that expands our understanding of the civil rights movement from a decade-long golden age of dramatic events and larger-than-life figures like Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. to a more protracted struggle featuring innumerable figures and events that fail to make it into most history textbooks.¹⁰ This study will contribute, however modestly, towards redressing both of those insufficiencies.

The examination of how four Tennessee newspapers — *The Columbia Daily Herald*, *The Nashville Banner*, *The Tennessean* and *The Nashville Globe and Independent* — covered the riot in the context of the times will also illuminate the ways in which journalism both encoded and challenged the cultural assumptions of the segregated South. Whereas some reporters relied on official sources and gave readers a top-down view of the incident, others sought to undercut the mainstream narrative and demonstrate how one-sided reporting can dehumanize victims and obscure abuses of power. At a time when many Americans, white and black, depend on the news media for coverage of prominent incidents of racial violence in places like Ferguson, an historical study of how power and privilege can inform reporting could scarcely be more valuable.

These newspapers were chosen for a number of reasons. *The Columbia Daily Herald* is an obvious choice given that it was the daily paper of Columbia at the time. Its pages contain the first mentions of the riot and provide a glimpse at how the local community interpreted the riot in historical and social terms. *The Tennessean* and *The Nashville Banner* were respectively the morning and evening newspapers of Nashville,

about 45 miles north of Columbia and the second largest city in Tennessee. Longtime rivals on the newsgathering front, the papers were also ideological opposites. Whereas the *Banner*, under its editor James G. Stahlman, had a conservative, Republican, business-friendly bent to it, the *Tennessean* was a staunchly Democratic newspaper that frequently showed support for New Deal policies.¹¹ An examination of their pages will provide the study with two different angles from which to view how mainstream, white metropolitan dailies from the area reported on the riot. Finally, *The Nashville Globe* was the state's largest circulation African-American newspaper at the time. Its reporting supplies a rich and resounding counterpoint to that of the white newspapers, showing how African-Americans journalists in Tennessee understood both the riot itself and their roles within the journalistic sphere. The diversity of the sources is intentional and designed to capture an array of perspectives on the riot, in the belief that only by comparing and contrasting disparate sources can the uniqueness or conformity of any one source be ascertained.¹²

Two additional newspapers, *The Chicago Defender* and *The Chattanooga Times*, will be consulted at somewhat less length, in order to lend the study some outside perspective. *The Defender* was one of the preeminent African-American newspapers of its day, widely read and circulated beyond its hometown. *The Chattanooga Times*, progenitor of *The New York Times*, was, like the *Tennessean*, a more liberal daily newspaper, published a few hours away from Columbia. Studying how these papers responded to the events in Columbia will provide an angle from which to view the relative uniqueness, or not, of the coverage of the *Tennessean* and the *Globe*, thus

situating their work in a larger field of Southern liberal and African-American publications.

To guide the study, several research questions will be examined: How did the white press in the South differ in its coverage of the Columbia race riot from the black press? How did the white dailies' coverage differ from the other white dailies? How did the two black newspapers under study differ in their treatment of the event? And finally, how do all of these differences under study reflect the status quo racial environment of 1946 America?

Racial Unrest and Foreign Policy in 20th Century America

Although they were allies during World War II, in the early months of 1946 it was becoming clear that the United States and the Soviet Union had very different approaches to dealing with postwar Europe. Primarily, the West felt threatened by Josef Stalin's determination to expand his empire by turning territories that had been occupied in World War II into de facto Soviet states.¹³ The rise to power of Soviet-backed communist regimes in Poland, Romania, and Bulgaria alarmed the Truman administration.¹⁴

Two speeches in early 1946 established the ideological battle lines for the decades-long Cold War to come. On February 9, in Moscow, Stalin declared that true peace would only ever be realized after communism had swept the globe, since capitalism, by its nature, led to continual war. A few weeks later, on March 5, Winston Churchill told a crowd at tiny Westminster College in Fulton, Missouri that "catastrophe may overwhelm" Western democracies if they did not attempt to do something about the Iron Curtain of communism that had descended across Europe.¹⁵ Between these two events, George Kennan sent his famous "long telegram" that first sketched out the

strategy of containing the spread of communism.¹⁶ Despite the formulation of the containment policy, between the end of World War II and Stalin's death in 1953 the number of communist countries in the world grew from two to 12.

These international developments had profound effects on how questions of civil rights were viewed in the U.S. After all, America's self-perceived advantage in the early stages of the Cold War was that, unlike the Soviet Union, it was a free and open society. Projecting that freedom and openness to the world was a key part of waging the ideological war against communism.¹⁷ As a result, all eyes were watching to see if the reality of life in America matched the rhetoric. News reports of racial conflict frequently proved that it did not, supplying America's Cold War foes with an abundant supply of material to be used for propaganda purposes. The Soviet state newspaper, *Pravda*, for instance, editorialized in 1946 that the rights dictated in the U.S. Constitution did not seem to apply to blacks.¹⁸ Likewise, the Soviet Union rebuffed Secretary of State James Byrnes in 1946 after he criticized the Soviet Union for restricting voting rights in the Balkans. The Soviets pointed out that people in the Balkans had the same voting rights as blacks in Byrnes' native South Carolina. It was a difficult point to refute, much to the consternation of Undersecretary of State Dean Acheson, who lamented "being reminded over and over by some foreign newspapers and spokesmen that our treatment of various minorities leaves much to be desired."¹⁹

Nothing provided more ammunition to the Soviet propaganda machine than high-profile incidents of racial violence in the United States. Numerous such incidents afflicted the domestic front during World War II, most of them exacerbated by police or other law enforcement officials' complicity and participation, with some larger

disturbances occurring in urban areas, including Harlem. Most seriously, a race riot in Detroit in 1943 showcased the combustibility of the American melting pot. The genesis of the riot could be found in the increased need for labor generated by the war. Factory jobs in cities like Chicago, Philadelphia and Detroit beckoned many Southern blacks to abandon their rural homes and go work for Uncle Sam in the North or Midwest. White industrial workers, however, were not used to working alongside blacks, especially ones making as much money as them after the War Labor Board banned wage discrimination based on race.²⁰ Walter White, the executive secretary of the NAACP at the time, wrote about one angry white worker in Detroit stoking a disgruntled crowd. "I'd rather see Hitler and Hirohito win the war than work beside a nigger on the assembly line," the man said.²¹

Detroit had seen an especially large increase in its black population in the previous decades as a result of the Great Migration. In 1920, 41,000 blacks lived in Detroit. By 1940 that number had increased to about 150,000. The war years brought an additional 35,000. The number of African Americans who migrated to Detroit, though, paled in comparison to the 450,000 whites who streamed into the city looking for war work. Such mass immigration taxed the city's housing and educational infrastructures, as well as its police force, and led to interracial squabbling over space and access to services. These tensions spilled over on June 20, 1943 at the predominantly black-populated Belle Isle amusement park, where a series of fights broke out between a group of black teenagers and some white patrons of the park. The fighting spread and soon 5,000 angry whites were looking to rid the area of all African Americans. "We don't want any niggers on Belle Isle," one of them said.²²

The 48-hour melee that followed had a tragic cost: 34 dead and 676 injured. Many claimed that those official numbers were too low. In addition, property damage totaled \$2 million and over one million hours of war labor were lost.²³ The police response was anything but evenhanded. Seventeen of the dead were African Americans killed by police. The police killed no whites. Police arrested nearly 2,000 people in the riots, the vast majority of them young, black males. One officer subsequently wrote a letter to the mayor blaming the rioting solely on “Negro Hoodlums” who harbored a “militant, abusive, destructive race consciousness.”²⁴ The reaction was little better from national leaders. When asked how a future outbreak of racial violence in Detroit could be prevented, Attorney General Francis Biddle said, “No more Negroes should move to Detroit.”²⁵ The police response during the riot attracted vehement criticism from black leaders. Thurgood Marshall, the NAACP special counsel at the time, spoke of how the killing and mass arrests of African-American citizens by police contributed to an atmosphere of racial violence since it gave white citizens the impression that black lives were worth less than their own.²⁶

It was the worst race riot in the United States since the deadly Tulsa riot of 1921, the last in a series of especially destructive mass racial incidents that shook America during and just after World War I. At issue then, as well as in the WWII period, were the twin phenomena of African Americans leaving the South in search of work and of African Americans giving voice to the idea that if they were willing to go overseas and fight for their country, then their country ought to treat them fairly when they came back. An examination of several of the WWI-era riots illustrates the scale of violence that had been visited upon black Americans —like the WW II-era riots, often with the cooperation

of police or other law enforcement officers — within memory of many black Columbians at the time of the 1946 riot.

The first major race riot of the period occurred in East St. Louis, Ill., in 1917. Black emigration into East St. Louis during the war years had antagonized white union workers who believed that factory owners were deliberately importing African-American labor to use in the event of a strike. Many owners inflamed tensions by threatening white workers that they could easily be replaced with black labor if need be.²⁷ At the same time that black laborers were drawing the ire of white factory workers, East St. Louis's white citizenry was becoming alarmed by a deteriorating public safety situation that many blamed on black emigrants. Such beliefs were abetted by the *East St. Louis Daily Journal*, a publication that played up black-on-white crimes whenever possible.²⁸ In fact, although black migrants did undoubtedly commit many crimes, crime was an integral part of the way the city operated, with the city's budget being largely dependent on fines levied against unlicensed taverns and prostitutes. Consequently, when violence broke out on July 2, 1917, East St. Louis had a built-in population of armed roughnecks eager to take part in the action.²⁹

What followed was not so much a riot as a massacre. African Americans were shot and killed as they lay wounded in the street. They were shot and killed running away from burning buildings. A reporter for the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* said that every African American he “saw killed had both hands above his head begging for mercy.”³⁰ On the day after the riot, whites gathered downtown and celebrated. Many cheered at the sight of bodies being pulled from burned out buildings.³¹ The death toll was reported to be 37 blacks and 8 whites but, as in Detroit, many disputed that figure, claiming for instance

that numerous witnesses saw blacks being pushed off a bridge into the Mississippi River, from which no bodies were recovered.³² The response of some members of the African-American community displayed their belief that they deserved better from a country willing to send them overseas to fight in wars. One young African American personally wrote President Woodrow Wilson informing him that he would refuse to enlist in the armed services if the government failed to do something to better protect the nation's black citizens.³³ Again, local police played an ignominious role in the proceedings. Witnesses described police officers killing blacks without provocation, and a committee formed to investigate the riot criticized "the great majority" of East St. Louis police for letting white rioters run loose and condoning assaults on African Americans.³⁴

Widespread racial strife became more frequent and pronounced in 1919, when there were 25 race riots in the U.S.³⁵ The deadliest of those occurred in Chicago, Knoxville, Tenn., and Elaine, Ark. Like East St. Louis, Chicago's black population was growing rapidly in the war years, doubling from 55,000 in 1914 to 110,000 in 1920. Also as in East St. Louis, there was the sense that African-American migrants constituted a "scab race," ready and willing to take jobs from white citizens.³⁶ Alongside this there was a great deal of hostility directed at African Americans who had moved into traditionally white parts of Chicago. In the two years leading up to the riot, 26 bombs went off at black homes in white parts of town or at the offices of realtors who sold blacks those homes. More than half of those bombs went off in the six months preceding the riot.³⁷

The riot began when a fight broke out between some black Chicagoans who ventured onto an all-white beach. Unaware of the fighting, some black youths rafting in Lake Michigan drifted towards the contested area and were pelted from the shore with

rocks. One of the boys was hit in the head with a rock, fell in the water, and drowned. Word of the youth's death spread throughout the largely African-American South Side and before long police officers were involved in a massive brawl near the beach. In the midst of the fracas, police refused to arrest the man who had thrown the rock at the boys but instead arrested a black man. At one point, an African-American man shot into a group of police officers, wounding one of them. The ensuing race riot lasted five days.³⁸ One witness was impressed by the willingness of black Chicagoans to arm and defend themselves, "to impress upon the whites their readiness, willingness, and eagerness to fight the thing through."³⁹ In the end, though, blacks accounted for the majority of casualties. Of the 38 reported dead, 23 were black. Police killed 7 black men, but no white men. One African-American man recalled lying on the ground injured and having a police officer come up to him and declare, "'Where's your gun, you black son of a bitch? You damn niggers are raising hell...'" The officer then knocked the man unconscious with his nightstick. The injuries, likewise, were lopsided. Of the 537 people injured, 342 of them were black. Despite these racial disparities, blacks were arrested at a much higher rate than whites. When a police officer saw white rioters running amok, he was likely to turn the other way.⁴⁰

The most devastating riot of the period took place in Tulsa, Okla., in 1921. Like the riot cities from the WWI period, Tulsa had seen a large increase in its black population in the first decades of the twentieth century, from 1,959 in 1910 to 8,873 in 1920. This trend upset many white Tulsans. The *Tulsa Democrat* voiced those concerns in 1912 when it worried that the influx of blacks threatened Tulsa's "prestige as the whitest town in Oklahoma." In 1916, the city passed an ordinance making segregation the

letter of the law on a block-by-block basis.⁴¹ Adding to the racial tension was a particularly robust, 3,200-member strong local chapter of the Ku Klux Klan.⁴²

Whereas Tulsa had enjoyed great economic growth in recent decades as the result of an oil boom, from 1920 to 1921 the price of a barrel of oil fell from three dollars to one dollar.⁴³ It was in the midst of this economic slump that the catalyzing event for the riot occurred: the alleged assault by a 19-year-old African-American man on a 17-year-old white girl in an elevator, the “only integrated public conveyance” in Jim Crow America. While it was far from clear that an assault had actually taken place, the young man was arrested the next day. The *Tulsa Tribune* reported on the arrest and included on its pages notice that a lynch mob was forming that very night to deal with the perpetrator. What happened next is strikingly similar to what happened on February 25 in Columbia, with the caveat, of course, that the scale of death and destruction to come in Tulsa was far greater than what visited Tennessee in 1946. Shortly after the newspaper was distributed that day, talk of lynching began to disseminate around town and by that evening 400 whites had assembled outside the courthouse that held the accused. Before long news of the lynching talk got around to Tulsa’s African-American community. One man announced to the crowd at a local theater that, “We’re not going to let this happen. We’re going to go downtown and stop this lynching. Close this place down.”⁴⁴

Throughout the evening, armed groups of African Americans approached the courthouse demanding that the young man accused of the crime be released, lest he be kidnapped and lynched. They were turned away each time, but the sight of black men with guns moving through downtown Tulsa proved both alarming and provocative to whites who soon gathered strength and arms in preparation of an invasion of Greenwood,

the most prominent African-American neighborhood in town. Whites systematically ransacked and set fire to black-owned homes and businesses throughout the night and into the morning. According to a white judge, John Oliphant, members of the Tulsa Police Department were “the chief fellows setting the fires.”⁴⁵ The result was the unprecedented destruction of a large and thriving black business community. Greenwood was virtually burned to the ground. The number of houses destroyed by fire stood at 1,256. Estimates of deaths ranged from 36 to 300.⁴⁶ The next day, six thousand black Tulsans, over two-thirds of the city’s black population, were rounded up at gunpoint and marched to the Convention Hall for internment. When that filled up, they were taken to the fairgrounds.⁴⁷ It was the worst American race riot of the twentieth century.

One notable characteristic common to many of the World War I-era riots is the presence of black Americans ready to aggressively defend themselves against white violence. There were the black Tulsans marching on the courthouse to prevent a lynching, and the Chicagoans taking up arms to battle the angry, white masses. During the 1919 Knoxville riot, black citizens with weapons congregated in the heart of the African-American section of town to ward off white invaders.⁴⁸ “There is a lesson in the Tulsa affair for every American who fatuously believes that Negroes will always be the meek and submissive creatures that circumstances have forced them to be during the past three hundred years,” Walter White wrote in *The Nation*, about black mobilization in the face of the lynching threat.⁴⁹ White’s sentiment was representative of a new, more militant strain of black advocacy in the post-WWI environment that echoed in the pages of many African-American newspapers. “Having performed a ‘brown skin’ job ‘over there’ [the black American] now expects Uncle Sam to clean up his own premises and

since THE BLACK MAN FOUGHT TO MAKE THE WORLD SAFE FOR DEMOCRACY, he now demands that AMERICA BE MADE AND MAINTAINED SAFE FOR BLACK AMERICANS,” an editorial in the *Houston Informer* declared in 1919.⁵⁰

The same sense of righteous anger would course through much of black America in the violent years leading up to the 1946 Columbia riot. During that time, black servicemen, especially those stationed in the South, were frequent targets of violence, accounting for 17 out of 19 instances of collective racial violence reported in black newspapers in 1941.⁵¹ The death of a black soldier at Fort Bragg who was gunned down by a white military policeman inspired a poem in the African-American *Pittsburgh Courier* that encapsulated how many black citizens felt about being called to defend Jim Crow America:

They say this is a war
For Freedom Over There.
Say, Mr. FDR
How ‘bout some Freedom Here?
‘T was a Fort Bragg M.P. shot him down
One Evening when he was leaving town.⁵²

Unfortunately, violence towards black Americans only picked up at war’s end. Black veterans returning at the end of WWII proved to be a particularly enticing target for resentful whites who wanted to make sure that life in the armed services had not given African Americans any new ideas about their place in the social hierarchy. Such violence was evident on February 5, 1946 in Freeport, Long Island when two African-American

brothers, recently home from the war, were murdered after trying to eat at a segregated lunch counter. An infamous incident followed the week after when Isaac Woodard, a veteran of the Pacific theater, took too long to get back on a bus after a rest stop break and was beaten so badly by a police chief in Batesburg, South Carolina that he went blind.⁵³ In perhaps the most notorious and disturbing episode, two black couples, George and Mae Murray Dorsey, and Roger and Dorothy Malcolm, were summarily executed by a white mob in Monroe, Georgia on July 26, 1946. Dorsey was a veteran and his death was the central focus of a story called “The Position of Negroes in the USA,” published in the Soviet *Trud* in August 1946. The story made special note of “the increasing frequency of terroristic acts against negroes” in the U.S.⁵⁴

The authors of the article were, of course, right. In the three months that followed V-J day, at least five blacks were killed by whites in the U.S. with no legal repercussions. In just four weeks in the summer of 1946, over a dozen blacks were murdered in the South.⁵⁵ This was particularly striking given that lynchings had grown less common in the South as the 20th century progressed. Whereas, in the 1890s an average of 166.5 black American were lynched per year, by the 1920s the number was down to a still awful, but considerably fewer 38 per year.⁵⁶ Of course, these are just numbers for lynchings. In total, between the summer of 1945 and the end of 1946, at least 60 blacks were killed by whites in the South, often with the tacit approval of police.⁵⁷ 1946 also saw the Ku Klux Klan’s “second major revival attempt since the Reconstruction Era.”⁵⁸ Newspaper articles mention new chapters getting together in locales as distant as Knoxville, Tenn., and Los Angeles, Calif., where in May of 1946 KKK members scrawled swastikas on a Jewish fraternity building and burned crosses in the lawn of African-American homeowners.⁵⁹

Cross burnings would also be reported at Tugaloo College in Mississippi, and in South Carolina, where black citizens were reportedly warned that if they thought about joining the NAACP, “the Klan will ride.”⁶⁰

Disappointment greeted most African Americans looking to Washington to help stop such discrimination and violence in 1946. Although there were some heartening court victories that year — in March a circuit court affirmed the right of blacks in Georgia to vote in primary elections, and in June the Supreme Court declared that the segregation of buses crossing state lines in Virginia was unconstitutional — Congress was still ruled by segregationist Southern democrats who had resisted efforts to do anything about poll taxes or lynching legislation for over a decade.⁶¹ Not that they were without ideas. Senator Theodore G. Bilbo of Mississippi, for instance, who proudly declared he was “once a Kluxer, always a Kluxer” on a national radio show in August 1946, proposed something he called “the Greater Liberia Act.” This law would have used government funds to buy land in Africa where millions of deported African Americans could go and live.⁶²

President Truman expressed his sympathy for the plight of black Americans by attempting to make the Fair Employment Practices Committee—a wartime measure to end discrimination by all unions and federal employers— permanent, but opposition to the program among Republicans and especially Southern Democrats was intractable. In January and February 1946, Southern Democrats staged a 22-day-long filibuster against the FEPC, the longest filibuster in the country since Southern Democrats’ 30-day filibuster to forestall anti-lynching legislation in 1938.⁶³ World War II and the nascent Cold War provided rhetorical tools to be used by both supporters and opponents of the

filibuster. West Virginia Democratic Senator Harry Byrd called the proposed bill “the most dangerous proposal ever seriously considered by Congress during my 13 years of service in the Senate,” warning that if Congress were to pass it “we will have taken a long step toward a totalitarian government, which, in the end, means a Communistic State.” W. Lee O’Daniel, a democrat from Texas, argued along similar lines, in a more creative fashion perhaps, blasting the FEPC legislation as “this nefarious, Communistic brain-
abcess No. 101” that represented the handiwork of Soviet “gophers”: “They work underground. But when you see the dirt moving, you know they’re there.”⁶⁴ According to a United Press wire article, Senator Richard B. Russell, a Georgia Democrat, actually succeeded in joining two of the war’s most mortal foes onto the same side for perhaps the first time since the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact went bust, describing the bill “as a Communist-backed monstrosity that would prevent Americans from refusing to hire Adolf Hitler on grounds that he was a Nazi.”⁶⁵ Senator Bilbo went to so far as to announce on the Senate floor the names of FEPC supporters he said were Communists. At least one person he mentioned, Rep. Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. of New York, did not take the accusation lightly: “It’s ridiculous to call me a Communist, but I would far rather be a Communist than be Bilbo...it won’t be long before the sane white people of Mississippi will knock him out of office on that part of his anatomy where his brains are undoubtedly located.”⁶⁶

Whereas many anti-FEPC figures expressed their distaste for the bill by warning of the ominous, Big Brother-haunted future they foresaw if it were to pass, a good deal of the bill’s supporters thought that a future without the FEPC promised injustice. Senator Majority Leader and future Vice-President Alben W. Barkley of Kentucky, for instance,

said he had no choice but to support a permanent FEPC “because he had voted to draft men without discrimination because of race, creed, or religion.”⁶⁷ Senator H. Alexander Smith, a Republican from New Jersey, might have had Soviet propaganda on his mind when he stated his measured support of the bill: “The problem is the problem of minorities, not only here but all over the world. All over the world people are turning to us and saying, ‘How are you going to handle your minorities?’”⁶⁸ Finally, the sponsor of the bill, Senator Dennis Chavez, a democrat from New Mexico, saw the defeat of the bill as an impediment to equality with which the country would one day have to reckon: “America will go on, but we can not have one country for the South and one for the rest.”⁶⁹

Of course, this being 1946 and the opposition being what it was, not all criticism of the bill revolved around its relationship to international affairs. Sen. Russell, for instance, used racially inflammatory language to dub the FEPC “a ‘legislative lynching’ against Southern Democrats.”⁷⁰ Senator Allen J. Ellender, a democrat from Louisiana, after airing fears that the FEPC would harm business interests, stated simply that it would also “lead to ‘mongrelization’ of the races,” pointing out the relative poverty of Brazil when compared with the U.S. despite the former’s greater age and size, a fact he attributed to Brazil’s widespread “intermingling of races.”⁷¹ Still another brand of opposition argued that the FEPC was a cure in search of a disease. “There is no need for the FEPC,” Senator Tom Stewart, a Tennessee Democrat, declared in the filibuster’s last days, because “no one is being discriminated against because he is Catholic or Protestant, white or black, Jewish or Gentile.”⁷² Interestingly enough, the ways in which Southern democratic politicians chose to frame the threat of the FEPC—as a Communist wolf in

sheep's clothing, as an undesired aberration disturbing the peace of the nation, especially the South—correspond quite neatly with the ways in which at least two of the papers under study here framed the Columbia disturbances, as will be demonstrated below.

Dissention within the Democratic ranks, as evidenced by the fight over the FEPC, as well as separate fights over such Truman-backed initiatives as a full employment bill, nationalized health insurance, and price controls, was a hallmark of the political scene in 1946. Increasingly, Southern Democrats began to wonder if they had a home in a party that was getting more and more out of touch with traditional Southern values. During the FEPC filibuster, for example, Sen. Bilbo admonished democrats from the North that if they “keep monkeying around with us Southerners,” it would fracture the party forever.⁷³ At a Democratic caucus meeting in April, characterized by one Northern democrat as a gathering of “complete disharmony,” dominating Dixie senators demanded the creation of an 11-person committee to act as a liaison between Southern senators and the national party. “I don't know if I want to be considered a Democrat if I have to be classed with those who controlled the caucus,” Senator Frank E. Hook, from Michigan, said.⁷⁴ These tensions would only get worse in ensuing years, leading to the breakaway Dixiecrat ticket headed by Strom Thurmond in the 1948 election.

Truman made some effort to revive the FEPC after it was bled dry by Congressional intransigence, but it was never reinstated. Truman would eventually make real strides in support of civil rights, releasing the groundbreaking report *To Secure These Rights* in October of 1947 and issuing an executive order desegregating the armed forces in 1950, but a little after his first year in office, Truman's reputation in some sections of the African-American community was that of a well-meaning but ineffective leader, not

the “rugged militant champion” that the *Pittsburgh Courier* editorialized was needed to tackle the injustice of the times.⁷⁵

In the absence of help from on high, blacks began asserting themselves as never before and looked to non-governmental groups for assistance in furthering the cause of civil rights. One sign of growing black activism could be glimpsed in the literary world. In the summer of 1945, a year after Gunnar Myrdal’s *An American Dilemma* had caused a sensation for declaring that racism was a cancer on the moral fabric of the nation, Richard Wright published *Black Boy*. The book’s evocative illustration of what it was like to be black in the Jim Crow South resonated with Americans, turning it into a bestseller. *What the Negro Wants*, published in 1944, overflowed with the thoughts of black leaders like W.E.B. Du Bois and A. Philip Randolph, fed up with the treatment afforded to African-American soldiers: “The Negro Marines in the South Pacific, the black engineers, the colored quartermaster units getting the supplies through the mud and heat and cold of the battle-fronts, are not working for the status quo...Nor will they take kindly...to surly suggestions as to their ‘place.’”⁷⁶

For proof of this sentiment, one need look no farther than the Columbia race riot itself. Early in the evening of the riot, police attempting to stave off any black resistance were informed by one gun-toting black Columbian that “he had fought for freedom overseas and he was going to fight for it here.”⁷⁷

Another way in which blacks became more pro-active during this period was by signing up to join groups like the NAACP. The NAACP’s membership jumped from 50,556 in 1940 to just under 450,000 in 1946. This growth was perhaps emblematic of the notion advanced in 1942 by the *Pittsburgh Courier* that many African Americans

were tired of “relying upon the gratitude and sense of fair play of the American people.” Instead of just wishing and hoping for change, the *Courier* proclaimed that African Americans needed to realistically deal with the situation they faced and act accordingly: “We have neither faith in promises, nor a high opinion of the integrity of the American people, where race is involved. Experience has taught us that we must rely primarily upon our own efforts.... That is why we protest, agitate, and demand that all forms of color prejudice be blotted out.”⁷⁸

Other civil rights groups also attempted to harness the growing restlessness among African Americans at the time. The Congress of Racial Equality was founded in 1942 by James Farmer and Bayard Rustin among others and dedicated itself to the pursuit of greater rights through civil disobedience. Farmer and Rustin based their non-violent philosophy on that of Gandhi, who used civil disobedience as a strategy to gain Indian independence from Britain.⁷⁹ Farther to the left was the predominantly communist National Negro Congress. In February 1946, the NNC issued a statement calling for “1,000,000 Negroes to leave Mississippi and move north as ‘our peaceful answer to the homespun Hitlers in Congress.’”⁸⁰ A couple of months later, in June 1946, the NNC voiced its frustration with Washington’s impotence in combating racial discrimination by presenting a petition to the newly-formed United Nations Commission on Human Rights seeking “relief from oppression.” In filing the petition, the NNC noted its “profound regret that we, a section of the Negro people, having failed to find relief from oppression through constitutional appeal, find ourselves forced to bring this vital issue, which we have sought, for almost a century since emancipation, to solve within the boundary of our country to the attention of this historic body.”⁸¹ The petition ultimately came to nothing,

as the UN informed the petitioners that it was unable to adjudicate matters brought before it by non-governmental entities.⁸²

The Southern Conference for Human Welfare, founded in 1938 and consisting mostly of liberal whites, was also active both during and immediately following World War II, advocating for the abolition of the poll tax and expanded voting rights. Shortly after the riot in Columbia, the SCHW would distribute 200,000 copies of the pamphlet “The Truth About Columbia” in an attempt to counter the predominant narrative that the episode was caused by unruly blacks.⁸³ This pamphlet, and the SCHW in general, were favorite targets for reactionary elements involved in the Columbia story.

Not all groups attempting to ease the burden of African Americans in the 1940s were expressly civil rights organizations. The Congress of Industrial Organizations launched a drive in the spring of 1946 throughout the South in an attempt to unionize a million workers, white and black. The name of the initiative was Operation Dixie, and it struck fear into the hearts of segregationist Southerners. Rennie Arnold, president of the Southern States Industrial Council, summed up those fears: “By advocating a system of social and economic equality...these people are promising the Negro an earthly utopia which they know they cannot deliver...”⁸⁴

To right-wing Southerners, groups like the NNC and the CIO represented the embodiment of their two worst fears: communism and integration. The melding together of these two subjects would prove to be one of the favorite rhetorical devices of reactionaries in the post-war years. Whereas before the onset of the Cold War, one’s feelings that blacks should enjoy greater civil rights provided reason enough for denunciation, in 1945 and beyond opponents of racial equality repeatedly linked support

with civil rights with support for communism.⁸⁵ Thus, the examples cited above of Southern democrats denouncing the FEPC as part of some Communist conspiracy. Even the Truman administration played into this assumption. When Tom Clark became attorney general in 1945 he created and publicized a list of groups deemed to be “subversive” or “un-American.” Many of the groups had one thing in common, as Jack “Hunter Pitts” O’Dell, later an aide to Martin Luther King, Jr., explains: “Every organization in Negro life which was attacking segregation per se was put on the subversive list.”⁸⁶ This linkage of communism and civil rights would play a role in much coverage of the Columbia race riot.

Methodology

This study will be based on the textual analysis of news articles relating to the riot from the six newspapers mentioned above: *The Columbia Daily Herald*, *The Nashville Tennessean*, *The Nashville Banner*, *The Nashville Globe*, *The Chicago Defender*, and *The Chattanooga Times*. The most attention will be paid to the first four newspapers, with the two later ones serving mainly to supplement the research. Photographs of the aftermath of the riot will also be analyzed when available. In some cases, the researcher will also analyze articles pertaining to race-related issues besides the Columbia riot in order to ascertain patterns of bias that may shed light on both the Columbia coverage, and the general racial attitudes evinced by the newspaper. The researcher chose textual analysis as the methodological foundation for this study for a number of reasons, the first of which has to do with simple practicality. The central event under study occurred nearly 70 years ago and the likelihood of locating journalists who covered the event is unrealistic. Even if the riot belonged to a more recent historical period, however, interviews with direct participants would not necessarily help to achieve the desired goal. Texts can speak for themselves and for the time and place in which they were written more strongly than memory. They transport readers to the liminal stages of an event, allowing them to experience it and its aftermath chronologically, free from anachronism or hindsight. In this sense, they reflect far better the cultural and political spaces of their own production.

More importantly, though, textual analysis provides the best tool with which to study the journalism of the Columbia race riot because it seeks “a richer sense of meaning” than other methods of media analysis.⁸⁷ For instance, where traditional content

analysis regards texts as repositories of information to be studied systematically, textual analysis assumes that texts contain “implied truths” whose meaning is “encoded in the text” rather than being readily apparent at its surface.⁸⁸ These “implied truths” often take the form of “underlying ideological and cultural assumptions,” that inspire the form and content of a text.⁸⁹ It is the job of the textual analyst to figure out just what those assumptions are.⁹⁰

The study will look at all newspaper coverage of the riot from the day of the event itself to the eventual acquittal of nearly all of the black defendants charged in relation to the riot months later. The researcher will study every headline, article, photograph and editorial from each paper that centers on the events of the riot and look for differences or commonalities in coverage. Likewise, the researcher will look for recurring themes within each paper’s coverage of the riot. Are African Americans consistently presented as the ones to blame for the riot? How are law enforcement or other local officials portrayed? Particular space and attention will be afforded to an analysis of the coverage of the initial riot itself, the federal grand jury probe that followed the riot, and the eventual acquittal of nearly all of the black Columbians charged in relation to the riot. The researcher will also, for the same time period, look at other race-related stories published in these papers, with a similar focus in mind. For instance, does a newspaper’s coverage of the FEPC battle—the number one national civil rights related discussion occurring in the country in early 1946—contain any of the same rhetoric used in the Columbia coverage? What connections can be drawn between the coverage of these stories and of the disturbances in Columbia that will provide a richer, fuller picture of how racial progress was imagined by the newspapers under study? It is hoped that

through this inductive, emic method of analysis the researcher will be able to uncover the specific biases or motivations that inform each paper's commentary and journalistic decisions.

An Introduction to the Four Main Papers Under Study

The Nashville Banner

Nashville's daily evening newspaper and conservative rival to the more progressive *Tennessean*, the Republican *Nashville Banner* was on a mission in 1946 to warn its readership about the incipient threat of Communism, to halt any progress in the area of civil rights, and to support the candidates favored by E.H. Crump, a notorious political boss in Memphis, in the year's forthcoming elections. These were complementary goals to the *Banner*. The founder of the *Banner*, Major Edward Bushrod Stalman, had allied his paper with Crump in 1915, when he supported the candidacy of Kenneth D. McKellar, a Crump-backed candidate, to the U.S. Senate against Colonel Luke Lea, the founder of the *Nashville Tennessean*, sparking a bitter rivalry between the two papers, as well as a long, sympathetic relationship between Crump and the *Banner*.⁹¹ McKellar, in his capacity as President pro tempore of the senate, served a key role in prolonging the filibuster that eventually killed the FEPC.

The *Banner's* primary strategy in achieving its goals was to devote an enormous amount of attention to warning readers of the dangers of Communist subversion. Any group who supported the FEPC or opposed the efforts of Senator McKellar and similar Dixiecrat politicians was a potential "fellow traveler" who the *Banner* was willing to commit as much ink as it took to expose before the public. Of course, in actuality, a number of different groups and individuals supported the FEPC and opposed Southern democrats for a number of different reasons, but the *Banner's* use of red-baiting, conspiratorial language had the effect of weaving, in edition after edition, a vast

rhetorical spider web that caught many disparate political actors or social activists whose primary sin was disagreeing with the conservative editorial views of the *Banner*. Since many of the same groups who advocated on behalf of the FEPC—the SCHW, the CIO and its political action committee, CIO-PAC, etc.—also came to advocate for black Columbians after the race riot, they too were eventually ensnared in the same web, as were the black Columbians themselves, as will be demonstrated a little later on.

In early 1946, the sentiments of the *Banner* were so in line with those of Dixie Senators, that one of those senators, James O. Eastland of Mississippi, stood on the Senate floor and read from a copy of the *Banner* in the early stages of the FEPC filibuster. The article had to do with the SCHW—headquartered in Nashville—and its executive secretary, James Dombrowski, who Eastland referred to as the “the prime movers and one of the prime agitators” behind the FEPC. In the course of his harangue, Eastland managed to brand the Highlander Folk School, the SCHW, the CIO-PAC, and the National Farm Union as Communist-front organizations that were “all interlocked and tied together behind the drive for enactment of the FEPC legislation.” After lumping all of these organizations together, Eastland then discussed the CIO-PAC specifically: “Its leaders are Fifth Columnists endeavoring to bring about a Communistic America. Many of its members are patriotic Americans, but they are subject to the control of radical Communists bent upon the destruction of their country and enslavement of the men who labor for their living.” This theme of ordinary Americans unwittingly manipulated by sly Communist front groups served to “otherize” and stigmatize dissent from traditional Southern mores, and appears again and again in the *Banner*’s pages in 1946. Finally, in this article, Eastland also managed to tie the theme of Communism in

with the 1946 midterm elections, noting that “this Dombrowski and this Communist Gelders [Dombrowski’s secretary] are heading the movement to defeat the senior Senator from Tennessee [McKellar] this year.”⁹² The strategy is clear: unite different ideological opponents under the banner of Communism and anything or anyone they support can likewise be branded Communist.

Thus, you have *Banner* editorials that refer to the “PAC, Truman, Southern Conference for Human Welfare, FEPC point of view” and articles that make special care to mention that a prospective political opponent of Senator McKellar “would have the support of the Farmer’s Union, the Highlander Folk School at Monteagle and the Southern Conference for Human Welfare...”⁹³ Closer to election time, the *Banner* responded in a special front-page editorial to the news that the CIO-PAC was supporting Ned Carmack against McKellar for Senate by pointing out that “it shares its platform with the SCHW’ers, and the FEPC’ers; yea, even the avowed Communists—all of them comprising the Senator’s enemies both in the state and in the nation.” The editorial went on to outline the stakes of the race in the alarming language of an incoming invasion: “Tennessee is the battlefield, as much of the South has been, because Southern Democracy withstood the revolutionary impact attempted by this leftwing combination. It knows that combination to be the PAC, itself, political instrument of the subversive host; the SCHW, the FEPC, the Communist Party—thus seeking to move in upon the South, the party, the nation.”⁹⁴

The paper was truly obsessed. Communism was everywhere, and the *Banner* took it upon itself to make sure that its readers were ever-vigilant. About the rampant strikes around the country in early 1946, the paper asked, “What percentage of the American

people, caught in the maelstrom and directly involved in violent controversy at this moment, realize that in this controversy they are serving as pawns upon a Communist game board?”⁹⁵ In another editorial, the *Banner* said that Communism was “using every American worker who swallows its bait” to “to convert the United States and its government into a Moscow-style Soviet.”⁹⁶ Potential Soviet agents were all around, and it was important to be constantly on the look for them. Maybe that is why the *Banner*, in a story examining the Communist newspaper *The Daily Worker*’s criticism of Senator McKellar for his opposition to the FEPC—“which Communistic elements have used as a bludgeon on the South”—actually printed the home address in Nashville of a couple it suspected of being secret Communists (the paper said the couple, Laurent Brown and Margaret Frantz, were current members of the SCHW and used to be “closely associated with” the author of *The Daily Worker* piece).⁹⁷ The feeling of pervasive Communist encroachment was certainly the impetus for one edition of “From the Shoulder,” the front page free-verse feature written by the *Banner*’s publisher, James Stahlman:

“There’s no excuse/For allowing that sort of thing/To continue./America’s eyes/Should be opening a bit by now./It’s time the REDS/Were being CLEANED/OUT of the government,/OUT of the Army/OUT of the Navy,/OUT of our educational institutions,/OUT of industry/OUT of labor organizations,/OUT of our churches,/OUT OF AMERICA!/ America has had enough./Let’s GET RID/Of every single RED./America will not return/To peace/Economically,/Industrially/Sociologically,/Militarily,/Until the RED influence/Is driven from our borders./There’s no half-way ground./It’s all the way OUT,/Or America will/Reap the whirlwind./Make up YOUR mind!”⁹⁸

So fixated on Communism was the *Banner* that even an editorial about Attorney General Tom Clark’s denunciation of the KKK developed into a consideration of why the Attorney General could not instead have used his speech to denounce the Red Menace: “What intrigues us—and must, in fact, intrigue the whole Democratic South, subjected to

the extravaganza of the whole leftwing hymn of hate, is the mystery of just why Mr. Clark so completely overlooks anti-Americanism in the Red dress, the outright conspiracy of violent revolution.”⁹⁹

As far as the paper’s treatment of race is concerned, the *Banner* ran a weekly feature, close to if not on the very last page of the paper each Friday, called “Activities of Colored People,” written by Merl R. Eppse. The column featured information about social activities or meetings held by African Americans throughout the city. A typical listing includes the heading “South Street Center” and goes on to alert the reader to the fact that, “The junior department of the Belmont Methodist Church sponsored by Mrs. GH Battle is supporting a pupil in the South Street Community Center Nursery School.” This type of information, more likely today to be found tacked to a bulletin board than on the pages of a newspaper, was nevertheless the material that filled the pages of many African-American newspapers at the time and was doubtlessly appreciated by the *Banner*’s black readers to the extent that there were any.¹⁰⁰ Black church services also had their own section. “Negro” was listed as a category of church, separate from Baptist, Methodist, Church of Christ, etc.¹⁰¹ Like the other white-run dailies covered in this study, though, the *Banner* did publish stories related to African Americans elsewhere in the paper. Some of these stories called attention to community issues. The paper published a slew of stories, for instance, about efforts to raise funds for a new YWCA building for black Nashvillians, in one edition even printing a donation slip that could be cut out and sent in to support the drive.¹⁰² Other articles alerted readers to a “Negro golf tourney” taking place, or the purchase of land to host a “Negro scout site.”¹⁰³ More common, though, were short crime stories involving black people: “Negro Bound Over For

Stealing Truck,” “Negro Slasher Still at Large,” “Negro Hunted After Attack On Woman.”¹⁰⁴

The Banner ran a rather remarkable series in the fall of 1946 with the title “The Negro In Nashville: An Asset or Liability?” These articles included the results of a study by a Dr. Roy L. Garis, which the *Banner* commissioned, that examined racial disparities in city expenditures, crime, and health to determine if black Nashvillians were utilizing more resources than they were putting in to the system. The *Nashville Globe* understandably took great exception not only to the results of the series, but to its very premise, noting that the wealth of this country was built on slave labor, rendering such a study “wholly phony.” It expressed its harshest criticisms in World War II terms:

However, there are a not a few who have read the articles who see in them a repetition of the foul campaign that Hitler waged against the Jews of Germany succeeding thereby in rounding up a brutal political party called Nazis whose members became so inflamed against a minority group as to overlook the fact that they themselves were being exploited and deprived of a just share of the things their labor had produced.¹⁰⁵

This comparison seemed not to have occurred to the *Banner* or Dr. Garis who felt no shame whatsoever in reducing a population to monetary statistics, thus enabling the publication of a sentence like this: “All services of the Red Cross which are extended to white persons are extended to Negroes and, in view of their improved incomes in the past five years, there is reason to believe that the financial cooperation on the part of the Negro could have been greater.”¹⁰⁶ The conclusion drawn for the study was, predictably, flattering to white Nashville: “Nashville has done and is doing more than is necessary to allay any charges of racial discrimination in the promotion of the welfare of its Negro citizens.”¹⁰⁷ This idea that African Americans actually did not have much to complain about is one that appeared regularly in the pages of the *Banner*.

Indeed, the paper's views on the subject of racial discrimination were, not surprisingly, not progressive ones. The *Banner* maintained that racial discrimination was no different than any other kind of acceptable discrimination that people practice every day: "When one prefers one thing to something else in the same general category — be it a profession, a nation, a system of government, a human being, a creed, or what-not — one is 'discriminating.' In the realm of free society, one is exercising one's God-given right thereby."¹⁰⁸ Discrimination is simply a fact of life, something that cannot be legislated away because it is tied inextricably to personal choice: "'I applauded his [Senator Tom Stewart's] speech/Against the FEPC,/That iniquitous effort/To force by unenforceable law/Recognition of racial inequality/That can come only/From racial equality/And Man's willingness/To waive color/In his social life."¹⁰⁹ This could be read as a kind of fatalism, a throwing up of the hands out of the belief that racism is a problem with no solution, but that would require that the *Banner* actually believed there was a racism problem. It did not.

If there was a troublesome issue related to race in the country, it was the same troublesome issue related to labor: the potential for Communist forces to exploit imagined racial grievances for subversive ends. The *Banner* outlined this concern in an editorial about the NNC's appeal to the U.N. for relief from racial oppression in the United States. Titled "Red Agitators Pushing Negro to Crossroads," the piece bemoans the communist bent of the NNC and touts the opinion that, really, blacks had it just fine in America: "The American Negro is not oppressed. It is only the cunning of Communism, encouraged by fellow travelers in Washington that has led some Negroes to believe they have not been given a square deal."¹¹⁰

In an editorial published less than a week before the Columbia riot, “‘Minority’ Crusade Hurtful to Real Brotherhood,” the *Banner* outlined the importance of “being Americans first, last and always, and getting along together,” and outlined the malicious impulses and actors behind calls for progress in race relations:

What disturbs that harmonious relationship? What jeopardizes the pattern that IS America? Not isolated instances of human differences, or the natural and proper preference of one individual for another individual, but the serious effort to deprive a people of that right of preference in their private affairs. More, the arrayment of group against group, and the antagonism of class to class by the machinations of those USING the discord thus arranged for their own political aggrandizement. And the PROMOTION of this discord by well-intentioned but loosely-thinking groups who need to be told that harmony and Americanism and brotherhood are not to be attained by inciting and exciting jealousy, resentment, suspicion and hatreds.¹¹¹

Evidently, to the *Banner*, the right of individuals to discriminate was more sacrosanct than the right of minorities to live as full American citizens. Furthermore, the editors apparently believed that black Americans only grew discontented with their lot in Jim Crow America when incited or excited towards “jealousy, resentment, suspicion and hatreds.” Ignoring evidence to the contrary, the editorial looked at the black experience in America and saw what it wanted to see — what bolstered its conception of how the country should be. Even when confronted with undeniable evidence of racial violence in this country—after the lynchings in Monroe, Ga.,—the paper could not bring itself to admit that there were systemic problems underlying that violence, instead choosing to view the situation as an aberrational episode that resulted purely from the actions of a few bad apples: “A MOB did that; not Georgia; not the South! An estimated score of men whose bestiality is foreign to the heart that beats in the Southern breast; whose thought processes are foreign to the mind and conscience of the region.... Whence, then, the

smoldering cell that fired this train of horror?”¹¹² The *Banner* could only fathom—or at least admit to fathoming—racial unrest as a result of some outside influence. The fact that it could arise organically from black Americans as a reaction to threats of violence or simply greater collective pride after the war was unspeakably wrong. This idea would radiate from almost every page of the *Banner*’s coverage of the Columbia race riot.

The Nashville Tennessean

The Nashville Tennessean was founded in 1907 as the personal political megaphone for the sentiments of Colonel Luke Lea, a colorful, roguish character who became a U.S. senator in 1911, and in 1919, after his service in World War I, attempted, with a group of fellow veterans, to kidnap Kaiser Wilhelm II and take him to Paris to face a war crimes tribunal. Failing to find success in this endeavor, Lea returned to Tennessee where he saw his political and business rivals, represented by the Crump machine in Memphis and the Stahlman-run *Nashville Banner*, succeed while his influence waned. Lea went to prison in 1934 for bank fraud, and in 1937 the *Tennessean* was taken over by Stillman Evans, a staunch advocate of Roosevelt and the New Deal. The *Tennessean*’s outright self-identification as a Democratic paper from that point on made it unique among Tennessee’s major dailies, even though it had ideological peers in the progressive *Memphis Press-Scimitar*, *Knoxville-News-Sentinel* and *Chattanooga Times*.¹¹³

The *Tennessean* devoted much of its energy during the period of this study attacking the poll tax and what the paper thought was one of the main benefactors of the poll tax, the Crump political machine in Memphis. Indeed, “*Kill the Poll Tax*” was listed under a heading of the paper’s priorities titled “The Tennessean Firsts” on every single editorial page. Jennings Perry, one of the paper’s editors and a SCHW member, was the

chair of the National Committee to Abolish the Poll Tax and wrote an entire book on the subject, *Democracy Begins At Home*, in which he laments the the effect of Tennessee’s poll tax this way: “*Vox populi* had been stifled. Boss Crump had become *vox Dei*.”¹¹⁴ In 1946, the *Tennessean* published editorial after editorial blasting away at the poll tax, and the senator and benefactor of the Crump machine who had played such a vital role in the past few years filibustering national poll tax legislation, Kenneth D. McKellar.¹¹⁵ “This newspaper despises the poll tax and the political juggling that has kept it on your neck,” one editorial read. “We fight it because it is wrong; we fight it because it is right to fight a wrong; we will continue to fight it until it is killed.”¹¹⁶ In another editorial, Perry appealed to patriotic sentiment around the war to argue for the abolition of the poll tax: “The Tennessee veteran would have considered such a system barbarous in any of the counties he helped to liberate. He would have been right. In Tennessee, too, it is barbarous.”¹¹⁷ Repeated editorials against the poll tax were fortified by an endless parade of news stories about people who opposed the poll tax. If somewhere someone gave a speech against the poll tax, it seems, the *Tennessean* ran an article about it.¹¹⁸ The paper even ran a front page story about a high school youth legislature vote to abolish the poll tax.¹¹⁹

Intriguingly, the *Tennessean* is careful to note that its calls for poll tax abolition have nothing to do with a quest for racial equality: “The nation has become well educated to the fact that many more millions of white than Negro voters are by the poll tax denied a right to vote in the South. There is no race issue involved as was the case in the recent successful FEPC bill filibuster.”¹²⁰ Unlike the *Banner*, which published a plethora of editorials on the FEPC, the *Tennessean* largely remained silent on the subject. Whether

this was a result of Perry and other editors not wanting to get too far ahead of public opinion in Tennessee, is unknown. If the editorial staff did not support the FEPC, though, it is interesting that they did not say so during the filibuster fight. Even if the *Tennessean* remained reticent on the issue of the FEPC, it did not have kind words for the Southern democratic congressmen who supported the FEPC filibuster or those who blanched at what they saw as excessive liberalism coming from the White House. An editorial from early March refers to Senator Bilbo as the “Big Mouth” and expresses hope that he will be defeated in the upcoming election by an “inching tide of liberalism in this region.”¹²¹ Likewise, the editorial page responded with skepticism to some who had called for Southern democratic senators to form their own conservative splinter party: “The South has been, and doubtless will remain, a mighty fortress of Democratic strength. But to say that that strength must necessarily be conservative is stretching rhetoric in the face of history.”¹²²

Perhaps the starkest difference between the outlooks of the *Tennessean* in comparison to the *Banner* has to do with the issue of Communism and subversive elements in general. As demonstrated above, the *Banner* saw them nearly everywhere. The *Tennessean* saw them almost nowhere. “The 1946 political campaigns are shaping up as a great Communist hunt—where there are no Communists,” Joe Hatcher, the paper’s main political reporter, wrote on April 26. “If there is any state free of the issue of Communism, it is Tennessee. The effort to make it an issue—to hide the real issues before the people of Tennessee—is falling on fallow ground...”¹²³ This notion that the idea of a Communist threat was a red herring used by savvy politicians to hoodwink voters was backed up by the paper’s editorial page, which praised Alabama voters in June for

electing an anti-poll tax governor who had the backing of the CIO-PAC: “The house-top effort to inject the fake ‘PAC-Communist’ scare in the campaign fell flat as usual.”¹²⁴ In as close to a *cri de coeur* as the *Tennessean* made in the period under study, the editorial page expanded on this notion, imploring its readers to focus on the real threats to the nation and not the smoke and mirrors of lurking Communism:

What America must be genuinely and desperately afraid of is unemployment. It must be afraid of the consequences of unequal educational opportunities. It must be afraid of the maldistribution of the national income, resulting in the inability of this nation to consume the fruit of its hands. It must be afraid of the separation of government from the will of the whole people by such undemocratic devices as the poll tax and the undue influence of lobbies. It must be afraid of the failure of nations, including our own, to accept and practice the principle of collective security.

It is to prevent a courageous attack on these barriers to effective democracy that elements in this nation have raised the cry of Communism. By this device of obscurantism they seek to brand price control, poll tax repeal, full employment, social security, tax reform, restraint of monopoly, and other measures associated with the advance of democracy and turn back the clock of time. Surely they must not succeed.¹²⁵

It is difficult not to read this as a direct rebuke of the politics of fear as practiced by the *Banner*.

Noticeably absent from that list of democratic priorities is anything specifically to do with race. Where the *Banner* was forthright about its disapproval of anything smacking of civil rights progress, the *Tennessean* was, to a great extent, agnostic on the subject. Indeed, if you subtract the often-reactionary editorials from the *Banner*, reading the *Tennessean* would give you a similar experience of race in print as its conservative rival. Its church listings were segregated, as were its obituary pages. It had a special section for black readers called “Happenings Among Colored People” that gave information about things like weddings and social clubs.¹²⁶ Articles about crime involving “negroes” were plentiful elsewhere in the paper. “Negro Man Killed in Dice

Game” and “Police Hunting Negro for Assault” are two typical headlines.¹²⁷ Less prevalent but still numerous were articles featuring African Americans who were not victims or perpetrators of crimes. “Negro College Fund Push Opens” and “Negro Veterans Organize Club” are two examples of this kind of story, as is a story about a fundraising drive for a new YWCA for African Americans that, like in the *Banner*, included a tear-out donation form.¹²⁸ Unlike the *Banner*, the *Tennessean* also wrote an editorial about the YWCA drive. Its expressed sympathy towards the needs of Nashville’s black community provides a striking counterpoint to the *Banner*’s callous “The Negro In Nashville” series: “It is not often that the entire city is given an opportunity of this type to share in strengthening the community services of its Negro secetion.”¹²⁹

Something the *Tennessean* had that the *Banner* did not was not one but two daily cartoons, “Hambone’s Meditations” and “Sunflower Street,” featuring thick-lipped, bug-eyed African-American caricatures.¹³⁰ The *Tennessean* also featured more folksy, feel-good, slightly condescending articles about black figures, such as one about “Uncle George,” a 75-year-old black man who went on his first plane ride alongside his “young master,” John Farris, whose family “Uncle George” had served for many years.¹³¹

The *Tennessean* editorial page did distinguish itself from the *Banner* in some respects vis-à-vis its treatment of race-related issues. Its piece about the Monroe lynchings, for instance, while not directly addressing the role that Jim Crow-influenced thinking may have played in the slayings, does seem to acknowledge something uniquely violent in the South’s racial history: “All had hoped that that beast had been chained—and now fervently join in the hope that it speedily may be caged again by prompt and

exemplary extermination of the brutal canaille who have loosed it.”¹³² Similarly, its editorial about the resurgence of KKK-led violence is willing to face the implications of the phenomenon head on, rather than parry the subject by retreating into an exhortation on Communism: “The uneasiness which the burning of the night crosses has stirred rests less on the fear that the KKK itself may recover its power of 1926 than on the knowledge that there exists a fertile soil in America in which it or another organization promoting similar objectives might make this postwar period as ghastly as the era which followed the 1918 armistice.”¹³³ The *Tennessean*’s coverage of the events in Columbia would follow this pattern: distinguishable from its fellow dailies in some respects, similar to them in others.

The Columbia Daily Herald

The Columbia Daily Herald, launched on October 3, 1899, published six days a week, serving the 40,000 or so people who lived in the town nestled about fifty miles south of Nashville.¹³⁴ It was in many ways a quintessential small-town publication, frequently publishing on its front page obituaries of local citizens that died as well as lists of Maury County soldiers returning home from war. One front page headline from early April 1946 showcases its local focus nicely: “17 New Books at Library.”¹³⁵

Herald readers could get a glimpse of the wider world through its pages, though, as the paper ran numerous stories on national and international affairs, largely courtesy of the United Press wire service. Of particular interest to the *Herald* in early 1946 were stories about strikes. The steelworkers strike, of course, was a huge story, as was the rail strike that disrupted work at Maury County’s two phosphate plants—businesses that boomed the local economy for whites and blacks during the war—but strikes at a dairy in

Detroit and among building trade employees in Houston also made the front page of the community newspaper.¹³⁶ Internationally, headlines dealt with early Cold War concerns like spying and, ironically in the issues the day before and then the day of the city's own riot, massive protests in India led by Mahandas Gandhi. On February 25, right next to a piece about a scuffle that had broken out that morning between a black mother, her son, and a clerk at a local department store, was the headline: "Riots Spreading Through India But Order is Finally Gained In Bombay."¹³⁷

The paper was broadly sympathetic to the Democratic party, in one editorial worrying that a Republican congress, if elected, would unwind much of the progress made by the Truman and Roosevelt administrations, returning the U.S. to the type of isolationist philosophy that allowed the post-WWI Republican Congress to jettison the League of Nations.¹³⁸ Nevertheless, for the most part, its ideological allies were those Southern Democratic senators who broke with Truman on many of the issues of the day: "We support the attitude of Senators George, of Georgia; Fulbright, of Arkansas; Eastland, of Mississippi, and Bilbo, of Mississippi. Their statements speak out for the Southland." The editorial page reserved special vitriol for the FEPC, applauding the aforementioned senators for filibustering it. In denouncing the FEPC, the *Herald* followed the lead of Southern senators by proclaiming it a Trojan horse for Communism. In this sense, its editorials on the subject mirror those of the *Banner* quite closely: "It is a serious and dangerous measure. IT can and possibly will plunge this nation into a bloody revolution, which the Communist party wants and is hoping for, which would result in the complete overthrow of our national government."¹³⁹

The *Herald* did not just see in the FEPC, however, the threat of a Communist takeover. Again, like for the *Banner*, the FEPC and its promise of ending discrimination in the workplace also resurrected the image of a long-vanquished foe of the solid South: the Reconstruction-era carpetbagger. If Senator Kenneth McKellar, second in command in the Senate, and instrumental in defeating the FEPC, were to lose re-election, the *Herald* feared, the results would be unthinkable: “We, of the present day, and those of us who came shortly after the days of Reconstruction and Carpet Bagger days would have something similar to, if not worse. We people of the South would not have any say in what sort of legislation we were to live under, and we would have just such things to contend with as our grandfathers had to contend with right after the Civil War.”¹⁴⁰

Also, similarly to the *Banner*, the *Herald* was quick to regard any pro-civil rights or pro-labor group with red-tinted suspicion. The paper, for example, stated that the fact that the SCHW supported the universal health care bill championed by Truman in 1946 “should be sufficient notice to members of Congress for them to see that it is just another step toward centralizing government in Washington, and paving the way for those who do not believe in the rights of the individual to take over.”¹⁴¹ At the same time, however, the *Herald* on occasion did take pains to proclaim its agnosticism as to the Communist sympathies of groups that the *Banner* saw as outright Soviet proxies. In an April editorial, for instance, titled “All Groups Should Be Treated Equally” the *Herald* considers an allegation by Rep. John E. Rankin, of Mississippi, that the CIO-PAC was a “Communistic-front organization.” Quoting a politician sympathetic to the PAC, who states that he “could see nothing subversive about American citizens going about their political business as long as they observe the law,” the *Herald* concludes that it has no

opinion as to the political allegiances of the CIO-PAC. Rather than obsess over such questions, the paper instead states that the Golden Rule should be followed when dealing with such organizations.¹⁴²

As far as race is concerned, unlike the *Tennessean* and the *Banner*, the *Herald* lacked a page devoted to African-American news. Some editions did feature a small bold subheading with the title “Colored News” placed somewhere in the paper, but in the examples studied this section seemed to serve as nothing more than a place to print the obituaries of local African Americans.¹⁴³ Like the Nashville dailies, though, the *Herald* did publish numerous stories involving African Americans that appeared elsewhere in the paper. Many of these, of course, were crime stories, with black perpetrators or victims identified as “Negro” in the headlines: “Pete Polk, 35, Negro, Killed By Shot Gun Blast,” “Negro Held In Death of Common-Law Wife,” “Negro Knifing Puts One In Jail, One In Hospital.”¹⁴⁴ In cases where a black person was accused of committing violence against a white person, this was invariably noted in the headline: “Negro Kills White Woman And Wounds Her Daughter, 26,” “Negro Is Held For Shooting White Girl,” “2 Negroes Are Held After White Girl Hit By Car.”¹⁴⁵ Innocuous articles about the activities of local African Americans also were a regular feature of the paper. “Negro Veterans Told Of Plan For Farm Training” and “Center Star Negroes In Garden Contest” are two representative examples of this type of story.¹⁴⁶ Some material of this type were condescending. A few days before the riot, a front page item appeared concerning the \$4,000 that local blacks had raised to construct a new school building.¹⁴⁷ An editorial the next day applauded the actions of these “patriotic Negroes:” “This act upon the part of the Negro citizens of Columbia is proof positive that the Negroes are interested in the

education of their boys and girls and are willing to ‘put out’ to have this done and to secure more suitable and up-to-date school quarters.”¹⁴⁸ Of course, white citizens would never have to prove to the editorial board of the local paper that they cared about educating their children; that would just have been assumed. Nevertheless, white Columbians reading this story and this editorial would likely have come away with positive thoughts about their city.

As to why local blacks needed a new school building, that was a story the *Herald* was not interested in. To get that story, one would have had to have gone to the *Nashville Globe and Independent*, a paper that will be discussed at length a little later. In an editorial during the summer of 1946, that paper referred to the fact “that the officials of Columbia had let the Negro high school get in such a depressing condition that Negro citizens have been forced to raise funds themselves in an effort to get a new building.”¹⁴⁹ In the *Herald*, the new school was an example of Columbia at its best, a place where blacks could enjoy shining, new schools. In the *Globe*, Columbia was a place where blacks were neglected to the point that if they wanted a decent school for their kids, they would have to put up the cash for it themselves.

One regular feature in the *Herald* that stands out, is a monthly accounting of births in Columbia, specifically white births. “James Alvin McGee 1st of 33 White Babies Born Here During December” declares one headline to a story that then lists all of the Caucasian babies born in Maury County during that month. Lucky James Alvin McGee, the reader is informed, will receive a “25-pound bag of flour from Columbia Mill & Elevator Co., a box of face powder from Woldridge Drug Store, a novelty plant from Vaughan’s Flower Shop” and many other gifts.¹⁵⁰ In March of each year, appears the

“annual stork edition” of the *Herald*. The 9th Annual Stork Edition, for the year 1946, goes on for five pages, alphabetically listing the names of all 577 white babies who were born in Maury County in 1945, along with photos of some.¹⁵¹

In terms of the most notorious white on black crimes of the era—the blinding of Isaac Woodard, the Monroe lynchings—the *Herald* did run wire stories about those events. Its editorial about Monroe, “Lynching Never Justified,” advocated a colorblind fidelity to the law: “There is never any justification for any citizen taking the law into his own hands, regardless of who they may be, and of what race, creed or color.”¹⁵² The *Herald* really set itself apart, though, by more frequently running wire articles about racially charged violence. The *Herald* ran numerous stories on this theme that went unreported by the Nashville dailies, including a piece about a black man in Mississippi getting flogged for trying to vote and an article about a lynching in Mississippi.¹⁵³ The KKK also appeared more regularly in the *Herald*’s pages. One article that appeared is basically an advertisement for a Klan meeting: “KKK Meeting in Knoxville Tonight.”¹⁵⁴ It is impossible to definitively account for the more numerous appearances of these types of articles in the *Herald*. The KKK was founded in nearby Pulaski, Tenn., so perhaps the *Herald* thought that its readership was more interested in the organization. On the other hand, more than a third of Columbia’s population of 8,000 or so was black.¹⁵⁵ Perhaps the *Herald* figured that Columbia’s African-American population would be more interested in reading stories of racially-inspired violence against blacks.

The Nashville Globe and Independent

Founded in 1906, by an ex-slave turned wealthy entrepreneur, Dr. Richard Henry Boyd, the weekly *Nashville Globe* was, within three years of its establishment,

Tennessee's widest circulating African-American owned and operated newspaper, with readers in such far-flung states as Washington and Massachusetts. The *Globe*, which merged with another black publication, the *Nashville Independent*, in the 1930s, offered a progressive look at news affecting African Americans nationally and in Tennessee until it eventually folded in 1960, after its brand of Republican politics had become largely unpopular with African-American audiences.¹⁵⁶

The weekly paper was formed to provide a forum for protest against Nashville's segregated streetcar laws, the target of a boycott in the local African-American community in 1905. One way in which it supported protesters' efforts was by serving as a counterweight to biased coverage of the boycott in the white press.¹⁵⁷ Over 40 years later, in 1946, the *Globe* was still doing just that, looking at news stories of the day from different angles than the dailies, giving a black, progressive perspective on white, Jim Crow-era news reports and editorials. This has already been demonstrated briefly in the discussion above about the dilapidated school in Columbia, but there are many more examples in the *Globe*'s pages from 1946. One issue that received a lot of space in the paper throughout the year was a proposed redevelopment project in downtown Nashville that called for a new plaza for government buildings and a new municipal auditorium for events. This was the main front-page story in both the *Banner* and the *Tennessean* on February 23 and 24, respectively. The *Tennessean*'s editorial page was enthusiastic about the project: "By it the city would gain in self-respect and in importance, and all the people of Tennessee would delight in a grand-scale improvement so becoming in the governmental seat of their rich and extraordinary state."¹⁵⁸ The *Banner* referred to the proposed auditorium as "magnificent." Here is what the *Globe* said about the project:

“One of the most surprising and drastic proposals for removing and ‘resettling’ a colored community that probably has ever been made in the South is seen in the long awaited recommendations of the Municipal Auditorium Commission which were released to daily newspapers last Saturday and Sunday.”¹⁵⁹

The *Banner* had either missed or ignored the racial implications of the proposed development completely, simply noting that it called for “the conversion of the block immediately south, that bounded by Deaderick, Charlotte, and Fourth and Fifth, with the exception of St. Mary’s Church and Rectory, into a properly landscaped park.”¹⁶⁰ The *Globe* could not help but see the impact the racial undertones; its offices were in that conversion area. As were such black businesses or gathering places as “the Colored YMCA, the Citizens Savings Bank and Trust Company, [and] the Morris Memorial Building.” St. Mary’s, the one building in the area that project would leave standing, was, as the *Globe* pointed out, a white church. The *Tennessean* did briefly mention race in its piece, quoting the commission report that a “beautiful and constructive improvement is contemplated to serve the Negro population” in the redevelopment area, but the *Globe* was not impressed: “The proposed ‘beautiful and constructive’ resettlement project, it is held, will cost real money to be anything like what the colored property owners now have.”¹⁶¹ The *Globe* would run several more front page stories about the project long after it had receded from the front pages of the Nashville dailies.

The increased activism of returning black veterans was a central part of another story that the *Globe* covered in a much different way than the white dailies. In August, the three main white dailies in this study all ran stories about a band of armed black veterans—several of them brothers—in Mississippi who had apparently ambushed and

shot four police officers. The “fighting Craft’s,” as one article called them, were on the run for several days before being apprehended by police.¹⁶² The *Globe* offered a take on the episode that did not fit in at all with these accounts. It prefaced its editorial with a word of warning to anyone seeking information on such racially charged episodes from the mainstream white media:

A safe rule to follow is never to believe the stated CAUSE of a clash between whites and Negroes as it appears in the daily newspapers, even when the story is sent out by one of the leading press associations. The daily press has a set policy of making Negroes appear as the aggressors in such conflicts, or if it is plain that the whites were outrageously lawless toward the Negroes, to give a wholly fictitious reason for the clash.¹⁶³

The *Globe* went on to describe a version of events much more sympathetic to the Crafts, saying that the white officers who were shot had actually tried to drag the brothers from their car. The scene was summarized in language that attests to the changes in attitudes that many black veterans experienced upon their return from war:

And so a bullying white man, dressed in the authority of a deputy, and with a reputation for beating up the Negro boys just back from war, was the real cause of the Mississippi trouble. He made the mistake of thinking that ALL Negro boys who went off to war returned as docile and easy to be shoved around as they were when they went away.¹⁶⁴

Whereas the white papers ran wire stories about the manhunt for the Crafts and their subsequent arrest, the *Globe* followed up on the story and teased out its meaning with regards to post-war race relations.

Sometimes the *Globe* could be quite biting in calling out the white dailies for biased coverage. In an editorial, called “Figures On Crime,” the *Globe* tackled the way in which the white-run dailies wrote about crimes involving black people: “In violation of the rules of decent journalism a large section of the daily press North as well as South, headlines the word ‘Negro’ in reporting any crimes that members of the Negro race

commit.” The *Globe* sees this habit as just another example of how white supremacy operates in America: “It is held that it bolsters the ‘superiority’ complex of the people of one race if they can see continually another race advertised as criminals. Newspapers thus are able to exploit ‘Negro Crime’ and reap an abundant harvest of financial profits by continually advertising the Negro as a criminal.” Examining a recent example of a crime story in the *Banner*, the *Globe* mordantly suggested a new title: “The headline over the story buried way over on page 12 says: *3,210 Arrests Made in City During August*. The story under the headline more appropriately might have been headlined: ‘*Nashville Negroes Less Criminal Than Whites of City*.’ Such a headline would have compensated a little for the repeated use of the word ‘Negro,’ telling who stole a chicken or a watermelon or cut his neighbor’s throat.”¹⁶⁵

Of course the *Globe* did not only critique or add context to stories published by the white dailies. It also published stories and other material that the dailies ignored. One good example of this has to do with a small, local issue in Franklin, Tenn. Displaying a fluidity between editorial and news report that was another hallmark of the paper, the *Globe* wrote an editorial in January about school officials in Franklin who had allowed school buses for African-American children to fall into disrepair. Since no other mention of this is made in the paper, the editorial acts as both editorial and news report, informing readers that the black citizens of Franklin decided to raise the money for new buses themselves, which made the school officials’ hearts “melt a little,” resulting in the decision to furnish new buses for the black children themselves.¹⁶⁶

Also fitting this pattern also were the *Globe*’s stories on international affairs. A piece from January 1946 serves as a good example: “Negro Soldiers Want To Get Out Of

China.” Whereas the *Tennessean* and especially the *Banner* printed a great many stories about Communistic efforts at expansion throughout the world, this article makes no mention of the “Red Menace,” but instead reproduces a letter sent by black soldiers stationed in Burma to President Truman. Describing themselves as “pawns in a dangerous game of imperialist power politics,” the soldiers paint their reluctance to continue serving as being related to their feelings about discrimination in the U.S.: “We haven’t known too much freedom ourselves and that’s all the more reason we don’t want any part of suppressing the freedom of other peoples. Send us home, sir.”¹⁶⁷ It is hard to imagine such language appearing in any of the other papers examined here.

The *Globe*’s apparent lack of concern for the type of secret Communist takeover that had the *Banner* on edge is made clear in several editorials in 1946. In one, the *Globe* doubts the dangers of Communism, laying the blame for its popularity in the U.S., to the extent that it was popular, not on sleeper agents, but on the unpalatability of its foes: “The number of Americans who understand and have become disciples of Communism are few and far between, but there is a possibility that the Russian system of government and economics will increase in popularity in this country—in the South as well as in the North. The reason for this is that the most violent foes of Russia and Communism are among the most reactionary leaders in the country.” Whereas the *Banner* constantly warned its readers of the threat posed by such progressive Southern groups as the SCHW, the *Globe* defended such organizations from rightwing attacks, describing the SCHW as having been organized by “enlightened Southerners, friendly to the New Deal” who have to put up with the unjust attacks of “the Old Guard exploiters of this region” who “raise the false alarm of Communism in an effort to smear the men and women connected with

the conference.”¹⁶⁸ The idea that it was the accusers rather than the accused who were the truly guilty parties in the national conversation about Communism was one that the *Globe* embraced, taking many opportunities to point out, in terms fresh from World War II, the hypocrisy of those who embraced Jim Crow and still had the gall to criticize others for their political leanings:

We need to study the most blatant critics of Communism. If they are found to be persons who have never been true friends of American democracy but have always espoused the ‘master race’ philosophy of Hitler, it does these critics no injustice to class them as workers from the inside for the triumph of German Nazism in the United States. Their professed patriotism can be ignored since it has been said of old that ‘Patriotism is the last refuge of scoundrels.’¹⁶⁹

Clearly, the *Banner* and the Southern Democratic senators it supported were the intended targets of this harsh criticism.

Unsurprisingly, on the political front, the *Globe* was highly critical of those Southern senators who took up three weeks out of the year to filibuster the FEPC in early 1946. The editorial page expressed antipathy for the filibuster, stating in a piece called “Down With Filibustering” that “this nation cannot endure if Southern men in the Senate of the United States, with no argument better than unreasoning race hate, can filibuster the Congress of the United States into helplessness...”¹⁷⁰ At the same time, the paper did not always have kind things to say about more progressive Democratic politicians, issuing the following criticism of Franklin Roosevelt in one editorial: “President Roosevelt always was shrewd enough to make lovely promises to Negroes and at the same time fail to carry out any of them that might prove politically hurtful.”¹⁷¹ In a similar vein, the paper was quick to call out black leaders who it felt hewed too closely to the Democratic party, lambasting NAACP officials, for example, for “slavishly” following “the New Deal party line.”¹⁷²

Of course, it is important to note that the vast majority of each edition of the *Globe* was not taken up with reports of politics or world affairs, but with news that would nowadays be referred to as “hyperlocal:” meetings, social clubs, church services, etc. Reports of church services took up by far the most space. Each edition included a large section called “Activities of Churches in and Near Nashville” as well as a section called “News of Neighborhood Towns,” which was also mostly about churches. A typical example appears like this: “Carthage, Tenn. - Braden Chapel M.E. Church - Rev. J.H. White, Pastor - ‘S.S. opened at the usual hour with the Supt., officers and teachers in charge for 30 minutes. 8 o’clock p.m. services, the Pre-Xmas program was rendered, ‘The Song of Mary.’ Directed by Mrs. T.A. Clark and Miss M.L. McKinley. The program was nice. Collection was good.’”¹⁷³ This type of thing may seem trivial to modern readers, but at the time it served a vital function in connecting scattered black communities that could not communicate as easily as they can in the present day. The white dailies certainly were not covering this type of information in this quantity, so looked at from that angle, these pages and pages of minutes from meetings and listings of activities serve the same purpose as the more substantive material the paper published: to give its black readership a forum and a voice for news and views that would not appear elsewhere.

The Riot Itself and Its Aftermath

Each newspaper's coverage of the events of February 25 and the ensuing days will be examined in this section. Special attention will be paid to such topics as how each paper framed the story, who the sources were for the story, what each paper identified as the root causes of the riot, how much context for the riot was given, and what kind of language was used to describe the main actors in the riot. News articles as well as editorials from each of the papers will be scrutinized in order to try to discover underlying themes, biases, or patterns that can be used to better interpret the coverage.

A few weeks before the riot, the *Herald* published an editorial about the conduct of some local police officers. Apparently an out-of-control man wielding a shotgun had caused a disturbance on a city street, and police officers, fearing bloodshed, decided not to attempt an arrest: "We don't know who was in the right or in wrong [sic] in the matter, but we do believe and back up the officers in their precaution in not trying to force an arrest where possibly several hundred people had gathered and where there was danger of having several men's lives snuffed out. We think the officers acted strategically."¹⁷⁴ The *Herald* would not demonstrate such a bias for police caution in the riot weeks later. Instead, praise for authorities who rampaged their way into a dangerous situation would be one of the main characteristics of the *Herald's* coverage.

The first article that appeared in the *Herald* connected to the riot itself actually dealt with its precipitating event, the fight between Billy Fleming and James Stephenson on the morning of February 25: "2 Negroes Held for Attack On Veteran."¹⁷⁵ The headline itself speaks volumes about the assumptions of the reporter. First, Stephenson was a

veteran himself, but that is not mentioned here. Only the white Fleming is recognized for his service. Secondly, the words “attack on” presuppose that the Stephensons were the instigators of the fight, when in fact, according to the most definitive accounts of the event, James was drawn into the fight by a punch to the back of the head delivered by Fleming.¹⁷⁶

The next day the real coverage of the incident began. “70 ARE HELD IN LOCAL JAIL AFTER SEVEN ARE WOUNDED IN NIGHT-LONG RACIAL RIOTS,” the headline blared. Referring to “fear-crazed negroes who had believed that lynching parties were out to get them,” the front-page piece gave an account of the events of the preceding night and morning that is heavily biased in favor of official accounts coming from law enforcement and local political leaders. The article mentions that only one black Columbian was injured, when in fact the number was quite a bit higher. A quote from Governor Jim McCord calling the actions of the highway patrol—the main perpetrators of the destruction in Mink Slide—and its leadership “just tops,” for instance, goes unchallenged. State guardsmen patrolling Mink Slide the day after the riots are described as “maintaining order,” as if the black citizens of Mink Slide were the main agents of chaos the night before. The march of the highway patrol through Mink Slide is presented in heroic, militaristic terms: “To war veterans, the scene was reminiscent of American troops going through a captured town in Europe.”¹⁷⁷

In all respects, the attitude toward authority figures is flattering and serves to evoke sympathy and a sense of solidarity in the reader. Lynn Bomar, the head of the highway patrol, is introduced as “towering Lynn Bomar, state public safety director and former All-American football player.” A scene of Bomar touring Mink Slide in an “open

command car” is depicted in such a way as to allow his own words to trump the reality of the scenes of devastation around him and the injustices of the indiscriminate roundup of suspects his men instigated. “[W]e are going to give you folks the same protection as the people on the other side of town (whites),” he is quoted as saying. “Let me see you smile; come on, smile. We’re going to get things straightened out.”

The destruction wrought by the highway patrol is noticeably downplayed in the report. “All stores in the Negro district were closed but most of the stores in the downtown white business district opened,” the story says about the day after the riot. As to the fact the black-owned businesses were closed because they had all been ransacked or vandalized, that explanation is not given. The piece does mention that highway patrolmen “fired through windows when frightened and barricaded Negroes refused to surrender,” but says nothing about the willful, wanton destruction that followed.

As far as sourcing is concerned, to their credit, it does seem like the reporters took some time to talk to actual black Columbians in the course of their work. It is not clear, however, that they asked any meaningful questions. As an example, several men were arrested at the home of James and Mary Morton on the night of the riot. James, the owner of the funeral home vandalized during the riot, was fingered as one of the ringleaders. His wife is introduced in the article, but just to say that the men arrested in her home had come over uninvited. The reporter apparently did not think to inquire about her perspective on the riot itself. The article states that a *Herald* reporter talked to several blacks holed up in Mink Slide during the riot, however the views of only one, who “said that he was sorry that the trouble ever happened and termed it ‘very deplorable,’” are included. Whether the other men interviewed expressed such contrition is unknown.

Most troubling about the coverage in the *Herald* is the lack of historical context given. Although the article does make the important point high up that blacks had taken cover and armed themselves because of rumors of a lynching—something other papers would not do—it either does not discuss or provides inaccurate background information as to why their fears of a lynching were warranted:

Cal Lockridge, one of the negroes arrested on charges of ‘attempted murder,’ after four Columbia policemen had been wounded by gunshots, told Underwood that the negroes had heard rumors that some whites planned to lynch a negro. ‘We heard that a white man walked into a store and bought some rope. When the clerk asked him what he wanted it for, he said ‘We’re going to hand some negroes tonight,’ Lockridge told police. ‘We didn’t like that. We didn’t want to get killed,’ he said. ‘We heard that two negroes were hanged not so long ago,’ Lockridge told police. Mayor Eldridge Denham said that there had not been a lynching in Columbia for 20 years. In 1927 a negro man was hanged on the courthouse steps here for attacking a white woman.¹⁷⁸

The fear expressed by Lockridge is not explored whatsoever in the piece. White crowds had gathered on the square earlier, attempting to break into the jail to capture the Stephensons. Perhaps the reporter did not know about that incident, but a historical overview of the lynchings that had occurred in recent memory in Columbia would have been in order. Instead, the reporters quickly insert a statement from the mayor, who swiftly dismisses Lockridge’s concerns, before giving at best misleading information about Columbia’s past. While it is true that Henry Choate was lynched in Columbia in 1927 as the article claims, neither the mayor nor the reporters mention the case of Cordie Cheek, the seventeen-year-old who was castrated and lynched on the outskirts of Columbia in 1933, some thirteen years earlier, by a mob that included several Maury County officials.¹⁷⁹ Such information could have let readers better understand black citizens’ behavior on the night of the riots. The historical record makes it clear that they

had real reason to fear the angry whites that had milled around the town square after James Stephenson's arrest. No one would know that from reading this article, though.

The piece ends shortly after another appearance by Mayor Denham. It, too, draws no skeptical follow-up from the reporters, even though it contains some claims that are plainly suspect: "Mayor Denham said that race relations had always been excellent between whites and negroes in Columbia, a town of 15,000 people. He denied reports of tenseness between the two races, 'only last week our negro citizens voluntarily raised \$4,000 for a new school here,' he said."¹⁸⁰ His statement contradicts his own admission of a previous lynching earlier. And again, somehow the fact that black Columbians wanted to raise money for a new school, a school that, as demonstrated above, was needed because the old one was allowed to fall in disrepair, shows that race relations are ideal in Columbia. They may have appeared ideal to white Columbians, but they obviously did not to their black neighbors.

February 26 also featured the *Herald's* first editorial on the riot, titled "Keep Calm." At this point, it must not have been clear that the violence on the streets was over, as the editorial, despite its title, evinces a near-panic on the part of the writers that things might flare up again. The events of the past 24 hours are described as a "Negro uprising," and it is warned that "unless there is a complete surrender of the entire Negro gang and the cleaning up of all firearms and ammunition, there is likelihood of further disturbances." The responsibility for the outbreak of violence is placed squarely on the shoulders of black Columbians, and it is intimated that the shooting of the police officers the night before was the result of some kind of pre-mediated, rebellious plan.¹⁸¹

Then comes a passage that reveals a great deal about how the majority race in Columbia viewed its minority neighbors:

There is no arguing the matter. The white people of the South, and Maury County is (sic) an integral part of the South, will not tolerate any racial disturbances, without resenting it, which means blood shed. The Negro has not a chance of gaining supremacy over a sovereign people, and the sooner the better element of the Negro race realize this the better off the race will be. There is no reason why the two races cannot live together in peace and harmony in the future as they have lived for the past seventy-five years.

The South has done much for the Negro race, and there has been an increasing desire upon the part of the white people to give the Negro every opportunity to advance in his home life and in his economic life, but such actions as those committed Monday night will detur (sic) this movement, and as it is, it has halted that progress, and in reality, turned the clock back for twenty-five years.¹⁸²

The tone at the beginning is threatening, referring to whites as “a sovereign people” and predicting violence against blacks if they do not accept their second-class status. Then, there is an abrupt transition to a description of idyllic race relations in the city, seventy-five years of “peace and harmony.” Again, there is no mention of context in the form of an examination of the the lynchings in decades past or the numerous other smaller acts of violence, physical or mental, that doubtlessly plagued black Columbians over the years. The second paragraph is paternalistic, portraying the white race as the benefactor of the black. The last line raises an interesting question. If the Columbia riot “turned the clock back for twenty-five years,” but the races had been living agreeably side by side for seventy-five years, then really what difference did it make?

Deference to both authority and tradition with little in the way of context suffuses much of the *Herald's* subsequent coverage of the riot as well. An article from February 27, featured Bomar admitting that “some ‘chaff is probably included in the wheat’ in reference to the charges against the 69 Negroes now being held in the county jail,” a euphemism for the indiscriminate roundup his highway patrol engaged in that the paper

never chose to view critically. An editorial from the same day, “Our Appreciation,” praises authority figures outright: “We want to thank the city and county officials for their quick action with sincere regret that four of the city policemen were victims of the Negro outlaws.” The press, another type of authority, is also congratulated for “handling our ‘big news’ in the most efficient manner.” The status quo is presented as the ideal state to which the city would like to return: “We have gotten a lot of publicity, the kind we did not want, but Columbia and Maury County, the best town and county in the world, can stand it, and we will rise to the top for good government and civic pride where we belong and where we are determined to stay.”

The *Herald* betrays no hint of believing that anything needs changing in Columbia. The editorial board on February 28, in reference to a possible repeat of racial violence in the city, declared that “we can best prevent it from happening by fitting ourselves with the necessary prevention by having a State Patrol organization and a Guard outfit that will cause those who have the least idea of inciting a riot, to think twice before acting once.” The solution that the *Herald* comes up with to avert a repeat of February 25 does not involve improving conditions for African Americans or educating citizens on the fraught racial history of the city and county, but on the greater accumulation of brute force.¹⁸³

The concept that the *Herald* seems to rally around in an attempt to deal with the aftermath of the riot is “normalcy.” In an article from March 4, “Mayor Says Goal Here Is Return To Normal,” the *Herald* reports on a speech that the mayor gave, which asked citizens to forget recent events and focus on such things as the “glorious, natural beauty” of Maury County or the many great men, including President James K. Polk, that the area

has produced. Religiosity is also given special notice. “I doubt that there is another county in the United States with a greater percentage of church membership than Maury County,” Mayor Denham says in the piece. The mayor expresses his hope “that normal, peaceful relations be resumed as quickly as possible between the white and colored peoples.” Never does the reporter ask the mayor any tough questions about the recent riot or its aftermath. It’s almost as if the reporter is eager to take the mayor’s way out and just pretend that in Columbia, everything is and always has been “normal” and “peaceful.”¹⁸⁴

Additional articles appeared in coming days that hammered on the theme: “Pastors Urge Early Return to Normal Status,” “City Nears Normal As Restrictions End,” “Mayor Says Goal Here Is Return To Normal,” “Return to Normal.” An article from March 2, ostensibly about some black prisoners posting bail, contains the following passage near the top: “Citizens from all over the country and of both races were on the streets and in the stores, going about their week-end shopping and banking in a wholly normal way, and stores reported good business.”¹⁸⁵ A story about the early stages of an FBI probe of the riot begins this way: “Every section of Columbia had taken on a normal appearance and activity today following last week’s headline-making disturbances and no activity growing out of the disorders was evident except the very quietly conducted investigation of a battery of FBI agents who arrived here Monday.”¹⁸⁶ That same day, the paper wrote an editorial praising a speech the mayor gave on the radio, titled “Mayor Eldridge Denham’s Sunday Broadcast Was Good.” Echoing statements the mayor himself previously made, the editorial board says, “No serious race troubles have ever arisen before, and there is no reason why those conditions cannot continue.”¹⁸⁷

This bias towards authority in the *Herald's* pages was not an unconscious one. In response to questions about why the *Herald* had failed to publicly take exception to outside media reports of the Columbia riot that differed markedly from its own, the *Herald* had this to say in its defense: "This paper has tried to publish only facts and to make statements given out by the authorities." Furthermore, the editorial board stated, "We, the people of Maury County know ourselves, and we know that the outside influences that have played a most important part in this affair, will not, don't want to be, and cannot be made to believe the truth, so any efforts to try to convince them would be futile."¹⁸⁸ Besides the rather defeatist attitude towards its own influence, what is notable here is the mention of "outside elements" having played a part in the riot. Remember, in the first night's reporting there was mention of "fear-crazed" black people who had staged an "uprising," but there was no suggestion that they had been led to do so by some foreign influence.

The next day's editorial, however, included one section that hinted at a slight change in the *Herald's* understanding of the riot:

The whole affair is regrettable, but maybe there will be good come out of the affair. It should teach other sections a lesson, and let them know that the State of Tennessee will not tolerate disregard for law and order or subversive action by any group, and that the State has the material with which to quell all such uprisings, and will do it in no uncertain terms and that the offenders are bringing down dire trouble upon their heads when they think they can get away with any such actions. The Negro race and the white race should take a lesson from what has happened, and understand that only under law can our problems be solved.¹⁸⁹

The use of the phrase "subversive action" signals an evolution in the way the paper saw the event. It is an example of the same sort of conspiratorial language that the paper used to describe supporters of the FEPC legislation. The next night the board stepped up its suspicions even more, reprinting a *Banner* editorial titled "Agitators Brought on the

‘Columbia Case’” that included the following sentiment: “There is no natural antipathy between the races. The antagonisms that break out in ‘incidents’ and climactic rioting are CULTIVATED and aggravated for the purpose they serve.”¹⁹⁰ On March 14, the *Herald* ran a piece responding to charges made by James Dombrowski and Clark Foreman of the SCHW among others that local officials had mismanaged the response to the riot. It prominently featured District Attorney Paul F. Bumpus, who would eventually try the main court case arising out of the disturbance, sounding similar to the *Banner* when he stated that those who criticized local officials “include Reds and agitators whose only interest is the overthrow of our system of government.”¹⁹¹ A few days later, the *Herald* reprinted an editorial from the *Banner* titled “Arsonists at Work”—to be explored more later—that accuses “agitators from afar” of wanting to turn the Columbia story “into a major conflagration.”¹⁹²

The first article about the riot appeared in the *Banner* on the evening of February 26, the day after the fight involving the Stephensons and Billy Fleming. Like the first *Herald* piece, the title says a lot about the paper’s ideological assumptions: “Order Restored In Columbia; Officers Probe Arms Source, Outside Contacts.” By mentioning the possibility that someone “outside” the Columbia community could have had something to do with the riot, the *Banner* was already showing its cards. As was previously demonstrated, it was the *Banner*’s view that since there was no actual oppression of African Americans in the United States, if African Americans in Columbia had taken up arms, then, it must have been because they were being manipulated by “Reds.”

Early in the piece, this possible outside influence is discussed further. It is reported that “authorities have begun checking several long distance telephone calls intended for Negro leaders of Columbia.” The calls came from places like Chicago and Detroit, migratory hubs for blacks that had fled the South as part of the Great Migration. These calls did not feature in the *Herald*’s reporting, denoting a meaningful difference of opinion between the two papers regarding their newsworthiness.

Like the *Herald*, the article predominantly relies on quotes or information gleaned from officials, repeating the claims that the Stephensons had instigated the fight and that highway patrolmen had only fired after being fired upon. It also features the Mayor’s plea that blacks and whites should return to “normal relations relations with each other.” The *Banner* article does, however, include some valuable information that the *Herald* did not get. For one thing, the *Banner* piece does at least acknowledge the fact that highway patrolmen did damage some businesses, even if they assign equal blame to armed blacks: “Plate glass windows were shattered, doors were knocked down and all of the business places were virtually wrecked by the highway patrolmen as they rounded up the large group of Negroes who had opened fire on them at dawn.” Almost as if the reporting got ahead of the editorial prerogative, this fact was not followed up on in any future reporting in the *Banner*.

Whereas the *Herald* piece mentioned the fear of lynching towards the top of the article as the animating cause of the black Columbians’ behavior on the 25th, the *Banner* waits until almost the end of the story to mention the role lynching played in the day’s events: “Morton’s wife said the Negroes who came to her home believed there would be a lynching and one of them said: ‘We are aiming to stop it.’”¹⁹³ Additionally, less context

is given than in the *Herald's* coverage in that the previous lynchings in Columbia are not referenced at all. Like the *Herald* it made explicit mention of the fact that William Fleming was a veteran, without mentioning the fact that James Stephenson was as well.

This article suggested that the *Banner* had conspiratorial views about the Columbia riot from the very beginning. An editorial that appeared in the same edition offered confirmation. Called "A Lesson At Columbia," the editorial sought to place blame for the violence not on authorities or on black Columbians fearful of a lynching, but on the same types of subversive forces it blamed for any other deviation from the norms of Southern conservatism: "Blood flowed in the streets, and terror reigned. Is that what the forces of a calculated conspiracy have wanted?[sic] Is that their answer to biracial harmony? Is that their preference to the peaceful deliberation of men of good will—irrespective of race—which has borne fruit in improving, mutually responsible relations? It is a contrast for all to see and to ponder as these incite to new excesses."¹⁹⁴

These sentiments would be expanded upon in the next day's editorial, "Agitators Brought on the 'Columbia Case,'" which, as was mentioned above, the *Herald* chose to reprint on its editorial page. After praising the Tennessee State Guard and Highway Patrol for their conduct, the editorial board propounds the importance of getting to the root cause of the disturbance:

Meeting force with the superior force of law is a necessary step to quiet the emergency of such an outbreak — but deeper than that a concerned society must go to eradicate the CAUSE of such strife.

Outside agitation is the direct cause, and that is the challenge that must be met.

Poison isn't to be counteracted by superficial treatment.

There is no natural antipathy between the races. The antagonisms that break out in 'incidents' and climactic rioting are CULTIVATED and aggravated for the purpose they serve.

Indifference to them, the 'broad-minded' treatment, treating liberty as LICENSE, and disregarding their vicious aims, play into their hands.

How many ‘Columbia cases’ will it take to awaken the South to these facts?¹⁹⁵

Apparent here is the melding of two themes: a kind of Cold War hyper-vigilance for anything that challenges the status quo that at the same time affirms the status quo. No facts are offered in this editorial. The *Banner* has no hard evidence that “outside agitation” had anything to do with the Columbia riot. What the paper does have, though, is a conviction that the world is a certain way and that it grasps what that way is. If black Columbians have taken to the rooftops with guns it couldn’t be because they were faced with the prospect of imminent racial violence, but because they were goaded to do so by undesirable elements.

The *Banner* kept up the drumbeat for possible communist collusion in the riot in succeeding articles. A March 1 article unquestioningly avows, based on anonymous sources, “As the general investigation was resumed today the indications were that ‘outside influences’ would be found in the causes of the riot. It is known that calls coming to a Negro undertaking establishment after the riot are being checked. IT is reported that those calls, some of them coming from distant cities, offered help.”¹⁹⁶ No real evidence is offered to back up this claim, but a similar allegation is made in an article from the next day: “Long Distance Calls To Columbia After Riot Are Being Checked.” That piece starts off by saying that outside influences “may have been directly connected with racial discord in Columbia this week...” Again, an anonymous informant is the sole basis in that article for the idea that Columbia police were looking into these calls: “An informant, who requested that his name not be used, admitted that authorities have spent considerable time during the past week delving into the ramifications of telephone calls received here from Chicago, Detroit, Columbus, Ga., and several from Nashville.”¹⁹⁷ The

piece goes on to state that authorities have “declined to release the exact significance of the outside calls but it is assumed by those investigating” them that the calls “had certain implications” related to all of the weapons confiscated from black Columbians’ homes.

The type of guilt by association rhetoric that the *Banner* engaged in with regard to the FEPC and labor issues, became connected to Columbia in a March 8 article, where labor unions are reported to have been implicated in causing the riot: “It is also known that representatives of some Communist front organizations and the CIO in this section made several calls concerning the disturbance to large Northern cities.”¹⁹⁸ The words “it is also known” is as deep as the sourcing gets in this article. The claim is not traced back to any official or even a confidential informant. Here, though, what the *Banner* has effectively done is to tie the CIO to Communism to the Columbia riot. The CIO, a labor union, can now be linked in readers’ minds to the “rioting negroes” in Columbia. An article from March 15 goes beyond the CIO to mention that Clark Foreman and James Dombrowski of the SCHW have been critical of officials’ conduct during the riot: “In Nashville, James A Dombroski[sic], executive secretary of the Southern Conference for Human Welfare, said that the disorders in Columbia ‘is exactly what happened in Germany except that in Germany they spoke of the ‘master race’ and in Tennessee they talk of ‘white supremacy.’”¹⁹⁹ Fitting a pattern the *Banner* would follow several times throughout the year, this article featuring critical voices from groups with which the paper disagreed was followed shortly thereafter by an editorial, “Arsonists At Work,” which the *Herald* reprinted as noted above. Here, the paper excoriates those outside agitators it believes are twisting the Columbia narrative to their own ends:

Restoration of harmonious relations by exercise of good will doesn't appeal to them, because harmony is foreign to their peculiar ideologies and so is good will. They are bent, rather, on DISTURBING racial relations because racial relations are a convenient medium of their agitation. They are spouting their venom on the South because the South is a stronghold of Americanism, and their technique is that of divide-and-conquer.²⁰⁰

Yet again, the suggestion is that Communist subversives are at work. Coming so soon after the appearance of an article wherein members of the SCHW are seen voicing their concerns about the racial situation in the South, the implication is that they are some of the outside agitators the *Banner* is talking about.

The *Tennessean's* first article is framed mostly around the shooting of the four police officers, which was reported before the invasion of Mink Slide by the highway patrol. It relies mostly on official sources, including again Mayor Denham's remarks about how wonderful race relations have always been in Columbia, but the reporter takes time to mention that he "attempted to reach by telephone an establishment reported to be headquarters in Mink Slide but received no answer." Notably, there is no mention of the lynching threat that inspired black Columbians to take up arms, but there is a reference to white crowds congregating around the courthouse in the afternoon as well as a statement from a highway patrol sergeant about an angry white mob that tried to steal weapons from the state armory that day.²⁰¹

The paper's report from the next day similarly relies on predominantly official sources of what happened in Mink Slide, but its description of the destruction there is more detailed than appeared in the other papers: "The Mink Slide district showed many signs of violent battle. Not a store in the two-block area was intact. Plate glass windows were shattered, and produce was knocked from shelves as participants in the battle scrambled for safety from flying bullets." Despite its reliance on Bomar as a source

throughout the piece, there is no sign that the reporter asked Bomar to explain the extent of the damage. Another feature of the piece is a much more visceral portrayal of the white threat that loomed over Mink Slide that night: “Hundreds of whites roamed the city throughout the night, brandishing sawed-off shotguns and pistols, but were forced off the streets before officers began their search of the Negro district.” The *Tennessean* finally gets to the lynching threat towards the bottom of the story, quoting a local black man. “We didn’t like that,” he said. “We didn’t want to get killed. We heard that two Negroes were hanged not long ago.” Not only is lynching referenced, but the man’s words also refer back to the region’s violent history, providing some much needed context to the reader, although the reporter makes no effort to dig into the man’s statement about the two hanged black men.²⁰²

The *Tennessean*’s increased attention to the potential of white violence on the day and night of the riots is further explored in a separate article that appeared on the 27th. Titled “Nashville Colonel Halted Columbia ‘Death March,’” the piece details the efforts of a member of the National Guard member to keep “some 50 armed civilians” from storming Mink Slide. “Shotguns, rifles and small arms bristled among them,” the story says. “Nerves were at the snapping point. The men were grim-lipped, and gripped their weapons tensely.” Reporting like this offered readers a better sense of the very real threat that angry mobs of white Columbians posed to the people of Mink Slide.²⁰³ The paper also reported a different version of the fight between Stephenson and Fleming that ended with racially charged threats being directed towards the Stephensons. After Fleming was thrown through the plate glass window, the *Tennessean* quotes a shop employee as saying ““a crowd began to form and somebody started yelling: ‘Let’s lynch them!’ Somebody

else yelled: ‘Well, what are we waiting for?’” The same piece references the rumor going around the black community that a white person had bought a rope with the intention of lynching somebody.²⁰⁴ Another story, from a few days later, referred to the “large group of men formed around the county jail, threatening mob violence” that Sheriff Underwood had to disperse at gunpoint.²⁰⁵

Early on in the reporting process, it was clear that the *Tennessean* did not share the *Banner*’s preoccupation with finding outside causes for the riot. A story referenced above included some information about the long distance phone calls that the *Banner* seemed so interested in, but the subject was not investigated any further by the *Tennessean*’s reporter. An editorial, “Nick of Time,” praised the actions of the National Guard and the State Highway Patrol, and did not search for conspiratorial reasons to explain why violence broke out: “The night of terror saw Negroes, allegedly fearful of a lynching, fortified in their section and white townspeople, agitated by rumors of a race uprising, congregating with weapons of all kinds.” The so-called Columbia race riot was really nothing more than “a local disorder in which all the contributing factors were familiar—rumor, suspicion, night and an edge of hysteria.”²⁰⁶

This skepticism that somehow Communistic agitators might have played a key role in fomenting the Columbia riot was a main aspect of the *Tennessean*’s coverage and was soon borne out by the paper’s reporting. “Meanwhile, reports of ‘outside interests’ agitating the recent disturbances here were described as ‘pure folly’ yesterday by Police Chief J.W. Griffin,” a story from March 4 stated. There was no mention of this revelation in the pages of the *Banner*.²⁰⁷

Going back to the issue of sourcing, there is some additional evidence that the *Tennessean* saw the importance of finding non-official sources for its stories in order to lend its reporting a more critical eye. For instance, in a story from March 3 the *Tennessean*'s reporter interviewed a black man who had been swept up in the mass arrests following the riot and just been released: "A *Nashville Tennessean* reporter interviewed one of the Negroes released yesterday, but he denied any knowledge of the affair. 'I don't know why they had me up there,' the Negro said. 'I don't know nothing about the thing.'" By reporting these words, the *Tennessean* introduced to readers the idea that maybe some men had been arrested unjustly. If this man did not know anything about the riot, then why was he arrested? The *Tennessean* also included a statement from Walter White, executive secretary of the NAACP, in one piece. Described second-hand, the statement came after a meeting between White and Gov. McCord. Whereas White had gone into the meeting thinking that local officials had entered Mink Slide "promiscuously shooting and mistreating the Negroes," after "'learning the facts'... he said he had nothing but praise for the manner in which the situation was handled." Although this does represent the inclusion of a black source in the *Tennessean*'s reporting, White would later dispute this account in the pages of the *Chicago Defender*, writing that the depiction of his words in Tennessee newspapers was a sign of the "moral delinquency of the South."²⁰⁸

Since it only published on Fridays, the *Globe*'s first article about the situation in Columbia came out several days after the riot occurred. "Columbians Acted in Self-Defense" was the headline, with a sub-head stating "Trouble In Maury Caused By Threat To Stage Lynching." Immediately, it's clear that the *Globe*'s take on the riot is going to

be vastly different than the other papers studied, as it shifts blame for the riot away from African Americans in Columbia and foregrounds the reason that many blacks took the actions they did that night: fear of lynching. The opening line of the piece, furthers these contentions, explaining that, despite the injuries that occurred and the amount of gunfire let loose, “Tennessee and the nation are undoubtedly in a better light before the world than they would have been had not a group of colored men of Columbia jeopardized their lives and the lives of their families and property to prevent another lynching in Maury County.”²⁰⁹ This echoes back to Myrdal’s idea that racial violence and discrimination do harm to the United States. Not only is the *Globe* saying that blacks were not to blame for causing the Columbia riot, it is saying that the state and the country as a whole should *thank* black Columbians for taking up arms, since in doing so they averted an act of violence that would have made the country look bad. Furthermore, sounding a theme they would return to again and again, the *Globe* maintains that had the people in Mink Slide “been white men they would have been called alert and useful citizens, instead of being smeared as criminals.” The *Globe* tells it like it sees it, with little recourse to objective norms of reporting. Whenever it can, it highlights not just the righteousness of the Mink Slide occupiers, but the larger injustices of the Jim Crow system in which those occupiers are likely to be judged. This is apparent when, early in the piece, the *Globe* refers to the fact that indictments “will be made by an all-white grand jury because despite what the Supreme Court of the United States has said, they have only all-white grand juries in Maury County. If they are brought to trial they will face an all-white petit jury and a full array of court officials, all of whom will be white.” These words would be proven true in the court battles to come.

Next, the *Globe* engages in a practice it would return to consistently in the weeks and months after the riot: media criticism: “The daily press associations and newspapers of this area have already given the white folks’ side of the Columbia trouble. They have suppressed all of the facts that would lead an unbiased person to appreciate the harassment of Columbia’s colored people, both before and at the time of the flareup on Monday and Monday night of this week.” Again, the *Globe* sees itself as a corrective force in journalism, providing a narrative of events that undermines the widely accepted storylines of white officials and the white press, a white press that it sees as suppressing information germane to understanding what it’s like to live life as a black person in Columbia. In other words, what is missing from other papers’ coverage of the riot is context.

The *Globe* provides that context by next launching into an account of the two lynchings in Columbia’s recent past, noting the rope that hung from the Maury County courthouse for months after the 1927 hanging of Henry Choate and the mob of 500 who took part in the lynching of Cordie Cheek in 1933. These details bring the tragic events out of the shrouded past and into the clear present. They humanize them. “It was with these thoughts in mind that colored Columbians prepared to prevent the lynching of a mother and her son here this past week,” the *Globe* asserts.²¹⁰

The account given of riot itself, it should be noted, is vastly different than that of the other papers studied. For instance, according to the paper’s description of the fight outside the department store, Gladys Stephenson was “beaten and knocked down” and Billy Fleming was knocked through the glass window only after the “boy and mother fought back.” It is furthermore reported that “policemen came and arrested the mother

and and her son but did not arrest the white man.” The first shots of the evening are reported not to have come from Mink Slide, but from carloads of whites. Reverend Calvin Lockridge is cited as saying he heard a white man had gone into a store to purchase rope for a lynching. Additionally, it is reported that the four police officers were shot not as some kind of planned rebellion, but due to certain safety precautions the people in Mink Slide had taken: “When this threat got to the colored people of the section they went to their homes, got their guns and decided to defend themselves as best they could against mob violence. As a first precaution they put out all of the lights in their section of town.” The highway’s patrol subsequent sweep through Mink Slide is depicted in a considerably less heroic fashion than in the dailies. Instead of upstanding defenders of law and order, the reader is given the following description of officials’ actions: “When they did go in they used their tommy guns with devastating effect, but succeeded only in wrecking about all of the business places in the area.”²¹¹ Finally, attention is again drawn to the disparities in law enforcement likely to befall black versus white citizens: “It appears that very little consideration was given to that clause in the Constitution of the United States which protects a citizen from unreasonable search and seizure. There was no report of white homes being searched and their arms taken from them.”²¹²

Shoddy reporting from other news outlets would be a main target of the *Globe*’s next couple of pieces about Columbia as well. In a March 8 article, Walter White, the executive secretary of the NAACP, is featured expressing “surprise over the fact that the real news about Columbia had been so carefully suppressed.”²¹³ The *Globe* really went after other newspapers, though, in an editorial titled “Dailies Prefer Fiction.” The editorial advises readers that they may want to preserve clippings from other newspapers

about the Columbia riot for future consultation because, “When what has been printed since the outbreak at Columbia is read in connection with later developments, daily newspaper subscribers will be astounded by the incompetence of dailies to get and publish news.”²¹⁴

The board cautions the reader, though, not to be deceived. For what may appear to be incompetence is really the product of unscrupulous journalists “suppressing and DISTORTING the news and thereby, to their secret amusement, leading the hurried readers of papers down blind alleys and victimizing them with phony mental pictures of the Columbia troubles.” The editorial board then delved into a story published by the *Tennessean* in which it was reported that blacks had “barricaded themselves Monday night (February 25) in preparation to standing off the mass of police and guardsmen who surrounded the area.” The *Globe* resented this choice of words, and saw a clear motive behind them:

The inference that can be drawn from such a story is that Negroes of that district had first provoked the mass of police of Columbia and the State Guard of Tennessee into a decision to come down into the Degro (sic) district and “shoot it out”; that the thing had been planned for a battle to the death, and to make it certain that the Negroes would wipe out Columbia’s mass of police...the Negroes had thrown up barricades — or powerful obstructions against the ‘invaders.’²¹⁵

The *Globe* felt sure its version of events would be vindicated as the investigation into the riot unfolded: “To make a long story short, we can promise that the trials of the outraged colored leaders of Columbia will furnish TRUTH that will make the readers of daily newspapers wonder why, day in and day out, they palm off so much fiction on their customers.”²¹⁶

The *Globe*'s most forceful denunciation of press coverage of the Columbia riots came a few weeks later, not on the editorial page but on the front page. The article, "Facts And Pictures On Columbia Prove Daily Press Misled Public," spoke positively of work published about Columbia by the NAACP, the SCHW, TIME Magazine, and the Daily Worker, but heaped scorn on everyone else:

The press had made every attempt to mislead the nation with snide news stories, which pictured Columbia Negroes as having plotted a riot against the white people; they refused to picture the terrorism visited upon Negro citizens and their property by uniformed men sent to preserve order by the governor of the state; they said not a word in defense of the provision of the Federal Constitution which guarantees EVERY citizen the right to be free in his home and place of business against unreasonable search and seizure.²¹⁷

As a counterpoint, the article mentions the notorious picture of the casket in the Morton funeral home, which had been defaced by the letters, "KKK." Obviously, such evidence of wrongdoing existed, so why weren't mainstream news organizations doing anything to publicize it, the piece asks? Walter White offers one compelling answer to that question, noting the economic incentive that white papers have only to present one side of the story. He contends that there are probably a lot of good reporters out there who want to do their jobs well, but who are obstructed by "editorial staffs that prefer making money to telling the truth and have found out that always damning the Negro pays big cash dividends."

Indignation is particularly directed at members of the press intent on providing a political explanation for black Columbians' activities on the night of the riot. These reporters and editorialists are rebuked for trying "to work up a hysterical fear that the Communists had stirred up the Columbia Negroes and gotten them to plan the mass

murder of white citizens.” Since the nearby *Banner* covered the story largely in this way, it seems likely that the daily was one of the main targets of the *Globe*’s ire.

As inflammatory as such coverage was, though, the *Globe* recognized that it wasn’t new. Time and again, much of the white press twisted the reality of stories involving African Americans to fit its blinkered view of how things ought to be. Still, if coverage like the *Banner*’s was not different in kind from that which came before it, it was different in degree, according to the *Globe*, which described it as a “new low in the kind of journalism always palmed off on the public when any kind of racial trouble breaks out in the South.”²¹⁸ The *Globe* took it as its mission to fight against such whitewashing of history. It continually and reasonably demanded that the lived reality of African Americans should play a part in stories about them. The *Globe*’s stories invariably included this reality, and, as has been demonstrated, when others’ failed to do so, it was only too happy to point those failures out to all who would listen.

The other two papers in the study, the *Chattanooga Times* and the *Chicago Defender*, do offer some interesting contrasts with the four papers that are the primary focus of this study. The *Times* relied mostly on Associated Press articles for its initial Columbia coverage, but those articles are still worth examining for the ways in which they resemble and differ from the other papers’ coverage. The lede for the *Times*’s first in-depth story does not break much new ground: “State patrolmen and guardsmen completed a search of sections heavily populated with Negroes late today, confiscating an estimated 300 weapons in a move to prevent recurrence of violent disorders which resulted in the wounding of 10 persons and arrest of 70 others since last night.” This lede demonstrates the same equation of state officials with law and order, and black

Columbians with perpetrators that all the other daily papers displayed. The story then, however, notes something about the confiscation of weapons and searches of homes that none of the other papers noted: “The patrolmen and guardsmen, deputized by Sheriff J.J. Underwood...did not sue search or seizure warrants. Gov. Jim McCord said that in event of a threatened breach of peace, the sheriff had authority to deputize persons to search houses without warrants.”²¹⁹ The reporter obviously noticed a possible breach of the law here and decided to bring it up with state officials. There is no evidence that any of the reporters at any of the other dailies did that. Absent, though, from the piece is any mention of lynching and, yet again, there is a lack of recognition of either Fleming’s or Stephenson’s veteran status.

Lynching is referenced in “Wild Shooting In Columbia,” the *Times*’s first editorial about the event. The threat, though, is dismissed as one of several “wild and apparently unfounded rumors” that caused both black and white Columbia to overreact on the evening of Feb. 25. No historical background is given as to past lynchings in Maury County. A sense of false equivalency is evident in the piece, especially when describing the destruction in Mink Slide: “The patrol fired into some windows. Negroes fired on the patrol. Two white men who went through the lines in the Negro district were shot in the legs. One Negro was wounded when the highway patrol fired into windows. There were no deaths, no direct clashes between Negro and white crowds, such as occur in other ‘race riots.’” The editorial board believes that the disturbance is worthy of investigation, but only insofar as the actions of black Columbian in Mink Slide are concerned: “Gov. McCord was reported in Columbia for a full investigation. And it

should be thorough. Certainly, every effort must be made to identify and bring to justice those who wounded the four policemen while they were performing their duty.”²²⁰

The subject of possible outside inspiration for the riot was the subject of one AP article that the *Times* published. Like the *Banner*'s coverage, this report is based entirely on “an informant, who asked that his name not be used.” Some of the arrested blacks are referred to as the “ringleaders in trouble,” suggesting that the taking up of arms in Mink Slide was somehow planned and coordinated in advance. Again, though, as in the *Tennessean*, this line of questioning was not really followed up on in future reporting.²²¹

The *Times* really sets itself apart from the other Tennessee dailies by something it printed later in March: a three-part series about Columbia by its staff reporter, Springer Gibson. The intention of the series was outlined at the beginning of the first article: “The purposes of this survey made after the height of tension had passed, are to report insofar as possible from available information what actually happened, to outline the possible sources of the disturbance, and to explain how and why the attention of the nation has centered on the city.” Interestingly, Springer identifies an integral part of his truth-seeking mission as revolving around talking to a diversity of sources: “In an effort to determine as nearly as possible the accurate story of events, white and Negro persons have been interviewed.” Based on his interviews, Springer proceeds to give a version of the precipitating events of the riot on February 25 that is more even-handed in many ways than what appeared in the other dailies. First off, he admits that there are two different versions of the story about the fight between Fleming and Stephenson, one in which Fleming was the initial aggressor and one in which Stephenson was. It was not suggested in the other dailies that Fleming made the first physical contact. Secondly,

Springer gives the most detailed information yet of the white mob that tried to bust in the jail and apprehend the Stephensons:

At about 5 o'clock the sheriff was in the back part of the jail. He heard some loud talk and kicking on the door. He obtained a gun and, accompanied by a deputy, went to the front door. The white persons, Underwood reported, demanded to know if the Stephensons were there. He doesn't know how many were in the crowd but guessed that possibly 20 or 30 were congregated, some of whom, he believes, were only bystanders.²²²

Finally, accounts of damage in Mink Slide are considerably more detailed than in the other papers and seem to rely on both his own personal observations and those of black sources.²²³

The second piece in the series mostly concerns rumors and reports that sifted around Columbia both on the day of the riot, i.e. the lynch threat, and afterward, i.e. reports that Springer said he could not verify such as one that a "coffin filled with ammunition was shipped to a Negro undertaker."²²⁴ Again, such rumors had been addressed, albeit briefly, in the other three papers. What truly makes this series so unique among the Tennessee dailies are the contents of the third report. In this story, Springer really digs into the subject of race relations in Columbia, depicting the sentimental, paternalistic attitudes of many whites towards blacks in the city, and, more surprisingly, looking at how black culture and self-identity had changed as a result of the recent war.

Springer starts off by reporting that whites are quite upset by the recent violence in Columbia, especially how that violence and the reports about it have reflected on them and their feelings towards blacks, of whom they are really quite fond: "White persons are eager to tell stories of their happy relations with Negroes; of how mammies helped rear them, their parents and their children; of how they would give their right arms for Uncle Willy or Aunt Sara." To lend some credence to the idea that race relations were not as

dire as some had reported in Columbia, Springer then quotes one of the indicted blacks as saying that “before the disturbances his race possibly was treated better here than in many other Southern communities.” The wording here raises the idea that perhaps the black man was asked if race relations were better in Columbia than elsewhere in the South and answered, “Possibly,” but, at any rate, Springer’s key point is that Columbia was not, say, Mississippi as far as racial violence was concerned. Springer conceptualizes the white Columbians’ incredulous reaction to the violence and the reaction to the violence this way: “Today they are puzzled and angry that the incidents have precipitated national discontent and have besmirched Columbia’s reputation. Unaware of the trends in recent years, particularly since 1940, they don’t understand the mass protests.”²²⁵

The “understanding” that white Columbians lack, according to Springer, concerns the new blossoming of black consciousness attendant with and following World War II. One symbol of this growing consciousness Springer situates in reference to the increased popularity of such black newspapers as the *Chicago Defender*: “The *Defender* and similar publications constantly emphasize what they describe as discrimination, prejudice, undemocratic treatment. They fight Jim Crowism. They attack the Bilbos, Rankins and Eastlands. They urge Negroes in the southland to be ceaseless in their efforts to eliminate traditional conditions.” He also mentions the growth in membership of the NAACP from 100,000 in 1940 to 500,000 at the time of his report. He then goes on to list a whole host of influences that have enriched and expanded black pride and activism in the preceding years:

They have noted the fight for a permanent FEPC; the defeat of Cotton Ed Smith in South Carolina; the stands in the Senate by such men as Claude Pepper; the election of Ellis Arnall as Georgia's governor and the abolition of the poll tax in that state; the white primary fight in Texas; the acceptance of Negro servicemen by white people in Great Britain.

They have heard and some have read of Richard Wright's 'Black Boy'; Carey McWilliams' 'Brothers Under the Skin'; Gunnar Myrdal's 'An American Dilemma,' and other recent volumes which discuss sympathetically the problems of minorities.²²⁶

This is far beyond the analysis undertaken by either the *Tennessean*, the *Banner*, or the *Herald*. Even the most progressive among those, the *Tennessean*, while admitting that the African Americans in Mink Slide acted out of fear rather than some sort of violent Communistic ventriloquism, never went so far as to locate within that action the proof of a new understanding of the world, a new necessary threshold of justice, among black Columbians. But, to Springer, that acknowledgment is the Rosetta Stone of the whole affair: "Obviously that gathering of Negroes in Mink Slide on the night of Feb. 25 was an expression of a new frame of mind. They have listened and read and believed."²²⁷

The *Chicago Defender* was, predictably, closest to the *Globe* in its handling of the Columbia story. Its earliest stories emphasized the centrality of lynching and black self-defense to the violence that took place, although it did not engage in the same level of media criticism of the event as the *Globe*. Its first big story on the disturbance, not published until March 9, framed the situation this way: "The bloody 16-hour 'white supremacy' riot raged to an end here with 'Mink Slide' gutted, looted and more than 100 Negro leaders locked in jail." Containing more minor factual inaccuracies than the *Globe*'s early reports, the *Defender*'s piece nevertheless gives an accounting of the day and night's events considerably more accurate in its criticism of official action than that which appeared in any of the white dailies. The article includes quotes from Walter

White calling on the country to support the arrested black men of Columbia, and includes a quote from an SCHW telegram to Gov. McCord demanding the prosecution of highway patrolmen in terms that call attention to the rising activism of black America:

We have just won a war in which Negro and white Americans fought side by side for democracy and the rights of minorities. Into every American community, South and North, Negro veterans are returning who, like James Stephenson, have grown away from the home pattern of race relations and had a taste of democracy they were called up on to defend. The reintegration of these men into civilian life presents a tremendous challenge to the moral conscience of America and our democratic ideals.²²⁸

Clearly, the *Defender* was less interested in what people like Commissioner Bomar or Gov. McCord had to say than in what black leaders and civil rights organizations had to say.

In the same edition of the *Defender* as the above article, also appeared a piece called “Columbia Boasts Long Tradition As Lynch Town” that investigates—again with some minor inaccuracies—the violent history of Columbia and the surrounding areas. Pointing out that Columbia is close to Pulaski, the birthplace of the KKK, the article states, “This week the town lived up to its birthright and terrorized its 3,000 Negro citizens.” It then lists the name of three men who it says were victims of racial violence in the vicinity in the last few years. Like the other article the term “race riot” is used to denote the actions of authorities and armed white civilians, not the men in Mink Slide.²²⁹ Another story, “Eyewitness Describes Riot Town,” relies on the first-hand accounts of Carl Hirsch, a reporter from the *Daily Worker* who claimed to be the “first Northern white reporter to roam for two days through the tense town.” “It was like being in a Nazi concentration camp,” Hirsch is quoted as saying of Mink Slide. This piece also references

the riot in terms of the actions of whites, not blacks, as Hirsch says that “one of the main motives for the riot was resentment at gains Negroes had made during the war.”²³⁰

The war also figured predominantly in the *Defender*'s first editorial about Columbia. Whereas the first editorial in the *Globe* was about all the erroneous, biased coverage of the event coming from white dailies, the *Defender*'s, titled “HITLERISM IS NOT DEAD,” is pure fire directed right at the white power structure of the South:

Down in the small town of Columbia, Tenn., all the earmarks of the Nazi pattern of terror and intimidation, all of the despicable tactics of the Gestapo are being revived by the hate-crazed local gauleiters. The headlines out of this Tennessee town read like the news stories of a decade ago out of Berlin when the Hitlerites turned their full fury on the Jewish people in Germany.²³¹

Whereas papers like the *Herald* and the *Banner* suggested that the riot was pre-planned by blacks who had forgotten their place, the *Defender* implies that it was actually the white, “Neanderthal-minded bigots” who had conspired to start the riot, comparing the fight between the Stephensons and Fleming as “the Reichstag fire” intended to “light the faggots of hate and set the night-shirt crowd off on a mad hunt for men with black skins.”²³² It would be almost impossible to envision an interpretation of the Columbia riot more different than those of the *Herald* and the *Banner*.

The Grand Jury Probe

The idea that the federal government would intervene and investigate racial violence in the South was a fairly new idea at the time of the Columbia riot. During the 1930's, the Justice Department was "extremely reluctant to move against racial violence in the South," according to historian Michal R. Belknap. During World War II, however, as shocking acts of violence against blacks began to gain more international notoriety, President Roosevelt instituted a policy that the Justice Department would automatically examine all lynchings in the South to see if the federal government had any legal basis to act. The failure of Southern grand juries to return indictments, though, in instances where the federal government did investigate lessened the appetite for federal intervention in the Roosevelt administration. When Truman became president, though, in the post-war period when racially motivated violence was on the rise, Attorney General Tom Clark mandated that all lynchings would be investigated by the FBI "even if there was no possibility of federal jurisdiction," in hopes that just the threat of government involvement would shame Southern states into action.²³³

In the wake of the Columbia riots, many organizations, including the NAACP, the SCHW, and the Committee of 100, whose members included famed historian Carl van Doren and former first lady Eleanor Roosevelt, petitioned the federal government to pursue an investigation of what happened. Attorney General Clark sent FBI investigators to town, and soon Judge Elmer Davies, a former Ku Klux Klan member, and friend of Sen. McKellar, was tasked with overseeing a grand jury probe of the Columbia riots. Ignoring the specific confines of his mandate, Davies instructed the grand jury to pay

special attention to the pamphlets, letters, and reports from outside elements that had descended upon Columbia and the nation following the riot. Those pamphlets and other materials—though many were more accurate than mainstream news reports—also included some exaggerated information that several of the papers under study here, as well as several government officials, would seize on in the coming weeks as proof of a Communist conspiracy afoot in Columbia.²³⁴

The *Herald* addressed the grand jury probe in an editorial on March 26, ostensibly welcoming it, while at the same time snidely proposing that “the civil rights of four Columbia policemen, shot from ambush as they are about their official duties, were violated.” This apparent testiness increases throughout the piece, as the editorial board becomes defensive about the perceived motives of the groups and individuals who called for the probe:

Meanwhile the Federal investigation is welcomed. It would be more heartily welcomed if it were not fully and well known in Washington as well as here, that this investigation is sponsored by individuals and groups who have shown no dispositions whatever to get at the truth of what happened in Columbia, and who apparently have no regard whatever for the well-being of the citizenship of this nation, much less of this section, and quite obviously are seeking, by distortion of the facts, and vicious, lying propaganda, to stir up hatred and ill-will between the races.²³⁵

As mentioned above, some of the material written about the report and disseminated was inaccurate. Much of what the *Herald* found inflammatory, though, was doubtless closer to the truth than what they printed on their own pages. The SCHW’s pamphlet, for instance, began, “On the night of Monday, Feb. 25, 1946, the Negro citizens of Columbia, Tenn., courageously prevented a lynching.”²³⁶ Careening down a steep rhetorical embankment towards *Banner* territory, the *Herald* then portrays the intentions of these pamphleteers in language any Cold Warrior could understand, asking Clark to

“direct an investigation into all of these, to see whether or not, in the background, there is not the subversive work of some agencies or organizations bent primarily on overthrowing the government....”²³⁷

Increasingly, more conspiratorial articles begin appearing on the *Herald*'s pages involving the actions of the NAACP and other groups who reported critical coverage of the riot. One article is all about a story that appeared in the *Daily Worker* that certain “Negroes of Columbia,” including some of the black defendants from the riot, are starting the Maury County Voters League to register more black voters. The story lays out the immediate intentions of the nascent group, careful to attribute where the information came from: “The cooperation of churches, trade unions and fraternal organizations will be sought in a drive for full registration and united political action, the story in the Communist paper said.” The specific mention of the participation of some black defendants in this piece associates them with Communism, which as has already been demonstrated, was the preferred brush with which the *Herald* and the *Banner* painted their ideological enemies in other matters. Advocacy for the black defendants could now be looked upon as suspiciously, as treacherously, as support of things like the FEPC.²³⁸

An article from April 26, discusses the formation of a group in Tennessee, the Tennessee Committee for Justice in Columbia, whose purpose is “to disseminate information about the happenings in Columbia, especially as they concern the violation of constitutional liberties, and to raise funds for legal defense to insure a fair trial for the defendants and to see that justice is done.” The *Herald* then points out that James Dombrowski of the SCHW as well as Myles Horton of Montegale—a reference to the

location of the Highlander Folk School—are associated with the group. The paper says no one from Maury County is.

The *Herald* addresses the question of outside propaganda most forcefully in an article and editorial on April 30. These pieces coincided with news that members of the grand jury had asked for more time to investigate the various pamphlets and letters that had flooded the town and steered national conversation after the riot. The article starts off by mentioning the unprecedented amount of attention the riot has received, adding that “no event occurring here has been the subject of such widely varied accounts.” It considers favorably the work of “newsmen, long trained in the business of getting facts” from “reputable news services” who showed up in Columbia on the night of the riot. The pamphlets and other publications that arrived later are deemed suspect because they contained accounts “widely at variance from those written by trained newsmen on the scene and distributed by reputable news services, for publication in papers of general circulation.” Even in the realm of journalism, the status quo is presented as the ideal.²³⁹

The report tackles head on one recent pamphlet that it says was written by Oliver Harrington of the NAACP and disseminated by the Committee of 100. The exceptions the *Herald* takes with its contents are quite telling:

This pamphlet intimates that such headlines as that of the New York World-Telegram, ‘7 Hurt in Tennessee Riot as Negroes Battle Cops’ and ‘Shots Fly in Race Rioting in Tennessee’ are misleading and that actually it was state police who acted as mobsters, and that investigators for the NAACP ‘uncovered as shocking a tale of mass terrorism, unbridled vandalism, and murder as America has known since the hooded Klan first robbed, mutilated, and burned defenseless Negro citizens.’²⁴⁰

Granted, some of the language here is certainly strong—the reference to murder for instance—but some of it is closer to the truth than many news reports, especially the

lawless description of the state police. The paper takes similar exception to another Committee of 100 pamphlet which refers to “a cordon of State militia and highway patrolmen” who “with tommy guns blazing invaded the Negro business section wrecking and looting every store.” The *Herald* does point out factual inaccuracies in a couple of the pamphlets, calling attention to the fact that one, which asks for funds “to provide bail and legal defense,” was written and sent out long after all of the defendants had already been bailed out.²⁴¹

This suspicion of a profit motive behind some of the advocacy is at the forefront of the editorial from that day, “What Is The Purpose Of The Race Riot Propaganda?”:

Every detail of the full truth may never be written. There is every reason to believe, however, that the accounts of what happened, as printed by this paper, other Tennessee newspapers, and regular newspapers everywhere, gave much nearer the true facts than did the pamphlets printed for purposes of raising funds for the defense of Negroes charged with attempting to murder Columbia policemen.²⁴²

No ulterior motives are suspected among the white members of the mainstream press, because their actions are considered normative. They are described as simply doing their jobs. Support for the black defendants, though, whose actions momentarily disrupted the balance of power in Jim Crow Tennessee, is judged with great suspicion. This suspicion runs free at the end of the editorial, when the editorial board wonders what else supporters of the black defendants may be lying about:

Now that so many lies and distortions have been printed about what happened here, in defense of the Negroes, with never one word being said about the fact that not a single Negro was shot or otherwise molested by anyone except officers of the law, ground is given for the suspicion that some of the property damage was as bogus as some of the publications, perhaps done by those on the side of the Negroes for the purpose of ‘presenting a case’ just as the writings have been on the side of the Negro, for the same reason.²⁴³

Again, there is no admission that perhaps some of what was written about the riot in these other types of publications could possibly be true. Instead, the editorial board stretches incredulity by imagining a truly remarkable explanation of events: that pamphleteers or other outside elements did the damage to Mink Slide themselves in order to make police—who are apparently allowed to rough up African Americans judging from this editorial—look guilty.

On June 13, the grand jury returned its verdict. It found that no civil rights had been violated in Columbia. The *Herald* and the *Banner* reprinted the jury report in its entirety, while the *Tennessean* excerpted vast chunks of it. The jurors found, among other things, that “there was no evidence to support charges that Negroes arrested in the disorders were subjected to brutal treatment, other than that required to subdue some during arrests.” They also expressed their wish that they could prosecute those responsible for the pamphlets about the incident, lamenting that “to our regret we are advised that the mailing of such pamphlets does not constitute a violation of any federal statutes.”²⁴⁴

The *Herald's* reaction to the verdict was contained in two editorials that nicely encapsulate the paper's attitude towards the whole story. The first contained the following passage:

This will not please those who have been most active in circulating vicious propaganda, designed to spread race hatred. Such ‘organizations’ will be far from pleased by the report. Good citizens of both races, who have worked and lived in harmony for so many years, will take the report for what it is, a sound and sober conclusion arrived at after long deliberation, by men under oath who reported without bias from an investigation of the facts, and in so doing gave the lie to those who have persistently distorted the truth.²⁴⁵

Expressed therein is: conspiratorial thinking—that the pamphleteers were looking “to spread race hatred”; the sense that non-mainstream groups are somehow illegitimate—the use of quote marks around the word ‘organizations’; belief in and praise for the status quo—the idea that good citizenship equals working and living “in harmony” in the Jim Crow South; and finally the idea that mainstream sources are without bias. The second editorial elaborates on this notion that the preferable state of society is the status quo one, by contrasting “those things which promote harmony, dignity and good citizenship” with those “which promote unrest and discord.” It maintains that the grand jury report should be the final word on the matter by approvingly quoting Judge Davies’s words that anyone “who hereafter persists in circulating false and malicious rumors will render a distinct disservice to both races, and in the opinion of this court cannot possibly have the best interests of this country at heart.”²⁴⁶

It is worth noting that on the day after the grand jury decision was released, the *Herald* chose to write a front page article about a story that the *Chattanooga Times* ran the day before. This article, which will be examined in more detail below, was about a report by a group called the Southern Regional Council that found, unlike the grand jury, that civil rights had been violated during the Columbia riot. The above editorials make it plain that the *Herald* did not sympathize with this view, but the appearance of this article gives support to the view that the paper expressed in an editorial, “Freedom of Press - Lack May Mean War,” that the *Herald* was not afraid to publish the viewpoints of those with which it disagreed.²⁴⁷

Like the *Herald*, as the grand jury probe got underway, more and more articles began to appear in the *Banner* that looked with suspicion on groups seeking to help the

black defendants. Just as the *Banner* previously sought to insert Communism into its articles in outlandish ways in order to smear ideological enemies, in at least one noteworthy article the *Banner* does something similar with the Columbia case. The story, “Communist Daily Workers Pushes CIO Vote in South,” reveals, through its unwieldy attempt to tie together several disparate strands of story together, perhaps more than any other the *Banner*’s biases.

One thing the *Banner* often did in 1946 was to base an entire article on a story in the Communist *Daily Worker*. Several such articles appeared that did nothing but regurgitate the contents of the *Daily Worker* article, being careful to include the names of any SCHW or NAACP or CIO members contained therein. In the story cited above, the *Banner* examines an editorial in the *Daily Worker* about a CIO vote drive in the South, highlighting at the top the fact that a meeting about the drive was attended by a SCHW representative and Z. Alexander Looby, one of the NAACP lawyers working on behalf of the Mink Slide defendants. The article then goes on to mention how Senator McKellar had been attacked at a CIO meeting the Sunday before while his opponent, Ned Carmack, had been praised at a different meeting. The story then shifts without explanation into a discussion of an article that appeared on the next page of the *Daily Worker* opposite the aforementioned editorial, titled “Thaddeus Stevens: Fighter for Democracy.” No rationale is given for this shift of focus other than the fact that this piece appeared on the next page of the *Daily Worker*. The *Banner* quotes this Thaddeus Stevens piece, saying that Stevens “demonstrated in his entire life what true statesmanship really means...All the children of America, white and black, should be taught about this great commoner.” In another abrupt shift, the *Banner* then quotes the Encyclopedia Britannica entry on Thaddeus

Stevens, part of which reads, “He was not in harmony with Lincoln, who was far more conservative. He introduced...what became the Fourteenth Amendment and also the Reconstruction Act of February 6, 1867. He advocated the Freedmen’s Bureau bills...and went beyond Congress in favoring the confiscation of property in the Southern States.” Next, out of nowhere, appears James Dombrowski, of the SCHW, who the *Banner* says “had praised the Reconstruction as a ‘great and glorious period in the South.’” The story ends with a passage about how why Dombrowski was not at the CIO meeting that was the initial subject of this article because he was “attending a conference in connection with U.S. Grand Jury investigation on possible civil rights violations during the Columbia race riot.” There is an awful lot to unpack there, but suffice it to say, in the space of one digressive article, the *Banner* manages to connect Communism to the CIO to the SCHW to the NAACP to Senator McKellar’s opponent to support for Reconstruction to support for the defendants in the upcoming Columbia trial. It really is a breathtaking feat of guilt by association.²⁴⁸

These kinds of connections between politically unpopular elements and support for the Mink Slide defendants would be made frequently over the ensuing weeks in such articles as “Communist Daily Worker Editor for South Helps Maury Negroes Organize,” “Leaflet Seeks Funds To Aid Maury Negroes,” and “Negro Defense Drive Here Reported Set,” about how the Committee of 100 with the help of the SCHW sought to raise funds for the defendants’ legal defense.²⁴⁹

When the grand jury report was released, the *Banner* reprinted it in full, and in huge letters on the front page announced “Jury Finds No Rights Violated In Maury.” The news prompted an editorial the next day: “Grand Jury Puts Blame Where It Belongs.” It

is abundantly clear that the *Banner*'s editorial board feels that its views have been vindicated by the grand jury report, which showed "*that Tennessee and the South (strange as it may seem to some) can handle their own problems.*" Indeed, the *Banner* feels that this sentiment was so evident from the beginning that the grand jury probe happened in the first place only "at the behest of Communists and fellow travelers who bombarded [Attorney General Clark's] office with exaggerated and inflammatory stories." In vividly antagonistic language, the editorial board goes after these ideological foes who it believes made the story a national controversy: "Now that report has been made, what does it show? It shows, first of all that no civil rights were violated, but that the Communists, pinks and punks who abuse the privilege of American civil rights, tried by lying and incendiary propaganda to divide the races of the South and to inflame the rest of the world against Tennessee." The riot is described as "unfortunate," but the *Banner* sees no systemic reasons for its occurrence. The *Banner*'s solution to the problem is a simple one: "The leaders of each race must see that it does not happen again. They must settle their own problems."²⁵⁰ An editorial from a couple of days later, "South Can Handle Its Own Affairs," restates this basic proposition, bristling at the notion that the South needs any help dealing with racial problems. It is interesting to note that the editorial's title closely mirrors the exact phrasing of Governor Jim McCord who, a few days before, had been the subject of a front page story in the *Banner* titled "Tennessee Can Handle Its Own Affairs, Gov. McCord Declares." The editorial itself also utilizes this same language: "The South has no intention of invading the premises of these outsiders. It has no intention of seeking to run their affairs. IT ALSO HAS NO INTENTION OF ALLOWING THEM TO RUN ITS AFFAIRS. The sooner that is

generally understood, the better for all concerned.”²⁵¹ In the *Banner*’s view, the status quo was just fine and the only time anyone ever had any problem with it was when outsiders came in and caused trouble.

The *Tennessean*, not as alarmed at the prospect of outside invasion, was the only one of the three main dailies studied that straightforwardly called for a grand jury probe. In an editorial, “To the Bottom,” in which Tennesseans are described as “shocked and depressed by the recent violence at Columbia,” the editorial board says a grand jury should investigate the riot so that “imaginative versions” of events can be dismissed. Like the other dailies, the *Tennessean* calls attention to the sometimes exaggerated pamphlets and other publications that appeared in the days and weeks following the riot: “The people of Columbia themselves, save for a minute and irresponsible few, had no part in the disturbances and are properly resentful the[sic] rumors and halftruths and outright fictions that have built an event, shameful enough in itself, into a cause celebre of discordant factions.” Unlike the other dailies, however, the *Tennessean* does not dwell on the possibility that behind those pamphlets, lying in wait, exists a fifth column of subversives eager to subvert democracy. The editorial ends with a passage that seems to recognize in a way the other dailies did not the implications that the Columbia riot has for Tennessee’s self-identity: “Tennessee has been proud of the equanimity of race relations within its borders and treasures the ideal of justice toward all men. In justice of its own principles and honor it must urge that the lamentable Columbia case be not left, as thus far it has been, in the realm of uncertainty and suspicion.” At first glance, due to the reference to “the equanimity of race relations” in Tennessee, this could seem like an appeal to the status quo, as if the *Tennessean* is saying everything is basically fine in our

state. A closer examination, though, reveals a sort of pained recognition on the part of the *Tennessean*'s editorial board that perhaps that self-conception is an illusory one; that the violence in Columbia has revealed that there is something seriously wrong in Tennessee. Rather than wanting the pamphlets to be investigated in order to suss out some kind of a Communist plot, it seems like the *Tennessean* is saying that the information in the pamphlets must be investigated because it is essential that fact be separated from fiction and the real truth known.²⁵²

The *Globe*, in a rare instance of praise for the Nashville dailies, wrote an article on March 22 article applauding the *Tennessean* for its "To the Bottom" editorial. As part of that article, the *Globe* re-published the editorial in full on the front page, commending the *Tennessean*'s willingness to make a "plain break with 'Southern tradition.'"²⁵³ The paper also dedicated its own editorial to the issue that same day in which it extolled the "moral courage" of the *Tennessean*. The piece, "To the Very Bottom!," did take some exception to the *Tennessean*'s references to "rumors and halftruths" in the pamphlets, but was willing to overlook them, reasoning that because of the *Tennessean*'s sheltered entrenchment in the mainstream press, it was likely unable to grasp the truth of the riots: "The editor can be excused for this thought because, like so many other readers of the daily press, he probably is not aware of the many of the things which took place in Columbia both preceding and during the week beginning February 25." Perhaps due to its support of federal assistance, the *Tennessean* is not viewed as one of those newspapers, discussed earlier, which the *Globe* described as willfully suppressing and distorting information of the riot. Instead, the *Tennessean* is just ignorant.

In this editorial praising the *Tennessean*, the *Globe* also takes time to emphasize once more the journalistic malpractice that it holds so many other papers committed regarding the Columbia case. These papers' primary sins are again explained in terms of failure to provide the necessary context for understanding the riot:

It is regrettable that most of the news about the Columbia troubles wholly ignored the brutal lynchings of recent years that had taken place in Maury County and how the memory of them was bound to put fear into the hearts of its Negro population, while the absolute failure of public officials ever to bring any of the mob members to justice was bound to have been encouraging to that element of Maury and surrounding counties that gets pleasure of engaging in lynching parties.²⁵⁴

Here, the *Globe* declares that the press didn't fail the Columbia story only by not mentioning past lynchings, but also by neglecting to explain how official inaction in the face of those lynchings could have engendered an "anything goes" sort of environment, where violent racists felt free to act with impunity.

The *Globe*'s early coverage of the federal investigation was enthusiastic for the most part. One article says that news of the investigation represented the "first real peace of mind the large colored population of Columbia has enjoyed" since the riot.²⁵⁵ The paper's expectation was that the "crack Federal Bureau of Investigation men" called in to look at the case would easily see what had happened:

There is no doubt whatever that men, wearing the uniform of the State of Tennessee and sworn to preserve peace and order, in strict obedience to the CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES, as well as the Constitution of Tennessee, committed acts of violence, intimidation and wanton destruction of property, the likes of which has seldom been seen anywhere in the United States.²⁵⁶

This enthusiasm quickly tempered, though, as the paper was confronted with Judge Davies' grand jury proceedings. Although witness testimony and evidence presented at

trial were not open to the public, Judge Davies' instructions to the jury were, and the *Globe* did not like what it heard:

The part of Judge Davies' instructions which caused amazement was the amount of consideration given a pamphlet published by the Southern Conference for Human Welfare, and what is considered to be advice to the Grand Jury that it can investigate the publishers of the pamphlet. Much ado is made in local circles over the reference to the SCHW pamphlet, because the organization has gotten in the hair of a number of the Old Guard enthusiasts for reactionary methods of dealing with Negroes and labor organizations.²⁵⁷

Whereas, the advocacy of groups like the SCHW, in the forms of the pamphlets, were of primary concern to publications like the *Herald* and the *Tennessean*, they were almost an afterthought to the *Globe*, which just took it at face value that the information contained therein was the most accurate available to the public.

As the date set for the end of the grand jury probe approached, and it seemed like the SCHW and the pamphlets had not been the subject of much attention from the jury, the *Globe* allowed itself to feel somewhat hopeful once again, referring to the "unprecedented departure from the custom of ignoring defenseless Negroes" that the probe represented, and quoting the old line that "The mills of the gods grind slowly but they grind exceedingly small."²⁵⁸ This optimism was quickly dashed, though, when news came that the grand jury had requested more time solely to investigate the pamphlets and their authors. Incredulous, the *Globe* again castigated the mainstream press for missing the real story in Columbia and praised the pamphleteers for attempting to fill that gap:

It was after the press had put over its cock and bull story and fed the public with stuff indicating that a Communis[sic] plot to murder the white people of Columbia, engineered by 'outsiders' had been handled magnificently by the minions of the law, that God-fearing Tennesseans sought, by the issuance of pamphlets, to get the real story of what had happened to the public.²⁵⁹

Several weeks later, it became clear that the grand jury found the “cock and bull story” more accurate than the one propagated by the *Globe* and its ideological allies.

“Unpopular Report Is Made By Federal Jury” was the name of the article the *Globe* ran in the wake of the probe. The piece reprinted the text of the Pledge of Allegiance at the top, and then mused how anyone but small children could actually believe its words after reading this grand jury report, which found that no civil rights violations had taken place in Columbia. The editorial the *Globe* ran about the report, referred to the jury’s “farcical findings,” called attention to the uniform whiteness of the jurors, and christened the whole grand jury investigation a “whitewash.” The paper’s most cynical fears had been realized.²⁶⁰

The Chattanooga *Times* again stood out from the other Tennessee dailies through its unique handling of the grand jury decision. On June 15, the paper ran a pretty straightforward AP story about the verdict: “Columbia Riot Held No Abuse of Civil Rights.” The piece discusses the contents of the grand jury report, and then that report is reprinted in its entirety on an inside page of the paper. The *Times* also, though, ran a separate article on the front page of the paper beneath the one about the grand jury report, this one called “Council Finds Rights Abused.” This piece outlines the findings of the Southern Regional Council, a group that made its own investigation into the Columbia riot based on interviews with people involved in the riot and reporters who covered it. This report found, as the *Times* shows, that civil rights “were violated in five respects: (a) needless destruction of property; (b) mistreatment of Negroes at time of arrest; (c) refusal to give Attorney Maurice Weaver (of Chattanooga) immediate access to prisoners; (d) unwarranted arrests and indictments; (e) unlawful search and seizure.”²⁶¹

This second report is given equal weight in the *Times* editorial that appeared two days later: “a Federal grand jury failed to find evidence of violations of civil rights in the Columbia racial disturbance of last February. The Southern Regional Council, however, reports that there were five cases of violations.” The editorial does utilize some space to say that the grand jury was “right to attack ‘the avowed Communist press’ for the inflammatory and untruthful pamphlets and letters” they spread, but this is not the main focus of the piece. Instead, the editorial goes on to express dismay at the grand jury’s conclusions in terms that demonstrate a respect for impartial justice: “There were guilty men, whites and Negroes, at Columbia, and it is unfortunate that evidence against them could not be found.”²⁶² Again, this goes farther than the *Tennessean*, which did not even publish an editorial after the grand jury report was released.

The *Defender* joined with the *Globe* in referring to the grand jury report as nothing but a “whitewash.” Pointing out the fact that Judge Davies was a former member of the KKK, the paper’s initial story on the jury report includes a quote from Z. Alexander Looby, one of the defense attorneys for the indicted, that he had not really expected “much more from a lily-white jury which had been picked from rural Dixie towns nearby.”²⁶³ A Walter White opinion piece appearing in the same edition likewise mentioned Davies’s former Klan affiliation, but went even farther in questioning the judge’s objectivity, asserting that he only got his judgeship due to “slick parliamentary trickery by Senator Kenneth McKellar.”²⁶⁴

The paper’s editorial treads similar ground, noting Davies’s KKK membership for a third time, and referring to Columbia as a “little backward burg.” It lambastes Davies for apparently expressing the view that people who disagreed with the jury report “were

either communist or agitators who were interested in stirring up trouble between the races.” For the *Defender*, if there was any conspiracy going on in Columbia it was one devised and set into motion by the powers of the white status quo and dedicated to the perpetuation of racial injustice:

Thus we have the spectacle of southern justice—of a cracker judge—of small town Dixie jurors born and bred in an environment of race hate—sitting in solemn session with only one purpose in mind—of finding a way to absolve their comrades of like training and environment from legal responsibility for killing a few ‘niggers’ and destroying their property.²⁶⁵

The next phase of the Columbia story would bring more welcome news to the black defendants and the numerous groups who struggled to find justice on their behalf.

The Trial and the Verdict

The jury selection process and trial of 25 black defendants—charged with a combination of accessory to commit murder and attempted murder—stretched out over most of the summer and into the early fall. NAACP attorneys used every legal means at their disposal to attempt to get their clients a fair shake from Southern justice, raising frequent objections that were often overruled and battling mightily to get as favorable a jury as possible. After successfully arguing that coverage from the *Tennessean*, *Banner* and *Herald* had so prejudiced the minds of Maury Countians that they would be unable to give the defendants a fair trial, Judge Ingram had the trial relocated to Lawrenceburg, about 40 miles away. In the end, despite plainly biased behavior on the part of the prosecuting attorneys and the judge—who often seemed to be on the same team—the extraordinary occurred: all but two of the Columbia defendants were acquitted of all charges. It was a stunning verdict, surprising to even, if not especially, the defense attorneys. How the papers covered certain aspects of the trial and reacted to the verdict says a lot about their values and operating philosophies.

Part of the drawn out process for the trial revolved around jury selection. It took several weeks for the defense and the prosecution to whittle down the prospective jury pool. The defense repeatedly asked prospective jurors questions related to the “social customs” of Maury County when it came to blacks and whites, provoking the frustration and ire of both the judge and the district attorney. Eventually the judge ruled that any questions about race had to be submitted to him in advance so that he could read them to the jury. Many jurors claimed race prejudice and were summarily dismissed by the court.

Others had to be specifically challenged by the defense or the prosecution, who each had a finite number of such challenges. One interesting thing the *Herald* did in its reporting that no other paper covered did was to specifically point out the fact that the state challenged every black prospective juror who took the stand, who was not dismissed for health or work reasons. For instance, one article on the jury selection process contains the following tally: “Three of those excused by the State in the exercising of its 100 peremptory challenges were Negroes, reducing substantially the possibility of a Negro serving on the jury. Fifteen Negroes are on the panel and the State has 95 challenges remaining.”²⁶⁶ What is so interesting here is that the *Herald* seems to just assume that the state will use enough of its remaining challenges to keep any black people from serving on the jury. The *Herald* for the most part published daily updates on the jury selection process, keeping track of how many blacks had been challenged by the state. It is far from clear that the *Herald* intended to suggest any bias here, however, as another article includes the information that “the defense had used 50 of its peremptory challenges in excusing as many white men, and the State had used 13 challenges in excusing the majority of the 11 Negroes who have been rejected thus far.”²⁶⁷ Despite the fact that in pre-trial hearings the defense basically got the state to reveal that no blacks had served on Maury County juries since the very beginning of the 20th century, the *Herald* still felt obliged to create a sense of equivalency between the state’s and the defense’s challenges.

Other coverage by the *Herald* showed a clear preference for the prosecution. An article near the end of the trial, for instance, quotes copiously from Bumpus’s closing remarks—wherein he denounces among other things “agitators” and “traitors and anarchists who would crucify America” and says he “wouldn’t give one good Negro for

all the Dombroskis[sic] and Eleanorskis and their ilk”—but barely mentions the defense’s.²⁶⁸ Other articles feature material favorable to the defense that is buried deep near the end. For instance, in an article with the headline “Underwood Denies Rights Of Negroes Were Violated,” the last line refers to a defense cross-examination of a state’s witness wherein that witness said “some Maury County official told her she would have to stay in jail three months if she did not sign the statement she gave Bumpus.”²⁶⁹ It would be easy to imagine a newspaper today choosing to make that accusation the headline.

When the surprising verdict did come, the *Herald* announced it on its front page in the smallest font it had used in covering recent trial developments: “23 Columbia Negroes Freed, 2 Guilty Ask For New Trial.” The description of the judge’s reaction when he received the verdict is priceless: “The judge read the verdict over to himself, paused, apparently re-read it, and then read it again to himself. He asked the jurors if this was their verdict, and then read it aloud. Smiles spread over the faces of the acquitted defendants.”²⁷⁰ The paper’s editorial from that day, “No Prejudice Here,” offers an interpretation of the verdict that neatly summarizes the *Herald*’s conception of a just, contented South that has little need of reform. To the *Herald*, the verdict proves that all is well, that the status quo is hunky dory: “And it must be remembered that this was a verdict by a white jury, in the South, in a case in which every effort had been made by outsiders to play up race hatred. If that verdict does not prove to the world that the Negro can get fair trial before a Southern jury of white men, nothing ever will.”²⁷¹ The acquittal allows the riot itself to recede into the past, to be subsumed by this demonstration of white justice. Interestingly, the *Herald* also republished an editorial on the verdict that

first appeared in the *Chattanooga Times*. The *Times* was hardly an ideological ally of the *Herald* on most topics, but its editorial in part slammed the pamphleteers, specifically the SCHW, for spreading misinformation, so this particular editorial did not seem too out of place in the *Herald*. Still, its willingness to share its editorial space with content from a more progressive newspaper is notable.

Following the grand jury decision, the *Banner*'s coverage of the Columbia case continued much as it had before. Communism and the need for vigilance against potential Communist subversion were main concerns of the paper and attracted numerous headlines. For instance, on July 1 when the defense and the prosecution were in a legal wrangle over the defense's request for a change of venue, the *Banner* ran the following headline: "Bumpus Flays Communists In Maury Case." The title refers to statements Attorney General Bumpus made in court that "there have been many vicious and malicious slanders circulated against Mary[sic] County since the February incident occurred." Apparently afterwards, reporters asked him to elaborate and he clarified he was referring to a specific article in the "Communist New York Daily Worker." The bulk of the article concerns a series of affidavits filed by both sides on the subject of whether or not the defendants could get a fair trial in Maury County. The defense alleged that biased media coverage made that impossible. Despite all of the court proceedings that day on this contentious subject, the *Banner* chose to focus on one comment of Bumpus's and make Communism the focus of the piece.²⁷² Other non-court related stories dealing with domestic Communist threats also appeared during this time, including one, "Lions Hear Warning on Communism," that was actually about a speech given to the Lions Club by the E.B. Stahlman, Jr., the executive director of the *Banner*. The leading quote makes

his views quite clear: “If the present trend in America continues, it’s only a short step into Socialism—and mind you, it’s only a step from Socialism into Communism.”²⁷³ Another article—an AP story the *Banner* picked up and put on page one—brought race into the story in an inflammatory way: “Negro Pastor Prefers Communism to U.S. Democracy.”²⁷⁴

Continuing with another of the paper’s favored themes, the status quo state of race relations in Tennessee was displayed in an attractive light when the *Banner* reprinted on its front page a *New York Times* article reported from Columbia. The *Banner* explained its decision to republish this article in an editor’s note by pointing out “its apparent fairness, which is in contrast to the extremities of the Communist press in the North.” In addition, the editor’s note singled out one particular phrase for close attention: “The Times writer makes this striking statement: ‘What worries the more serious thinking white people here is the (to them) surprising fact that a prior arrangement appears to have existed among the Negro population as to tactics to be employed in case of emergency.’”²⁷⁵ The inclusion of that sentence in the *Times* article elucidates the *Banner*’s interest in the piece well enough. It lends authority to the conspiratorial mindset that the *Banner* displayed repeatedly on its editorial page. Beyond that sentence, however, the *Times* story depicts Columbia as a place where blacks and whites live together in harmony. Consider the following description of the town square where a couple of months before angry whites had attempted to take the Stephensons from the courthouse by force:

Yesterday the typical Saturday afternoon crowds, equally divided between shoppers and loafers, milled about the courthouse in the main square. About a quarter of the visitors in the square were Negroes, and they gave no visible evidence of being in fear of their lives. They behaved as Negroes in little Southern towns normally behave on Saturday afternoons—joking with each other, and occasional white friends, sitting on the courthouse lawn, and shopping more than ever before in stores formerly catering only to white clientele.²⁷⁶

Obviously this is a highly problematic illustration of the scene. The lack of mortal fear on the part of black Columbians doing their weekend shopping should not be noted as evidence of a copacetic system of race relations, but that is just what the *Times* reporter has done. The reporter's relation of a tour given him of Mink Slide is equally unthinking in its positive gloss:

The man who took me to see Mink Slide, with its Saturday afternoon affluence, called attention to the fact that automobiles were parked fender to fender and that every establishment open to business was jammed. He wanted to know whether I considered these laughing, obviously prosperous Negroes as victims of a brutal, calculated system of economic repression. The answer was obviously in the negative....²⁷⁷

Here, too, from the fleeting observations of a few moments in time, the reporter draws a definitive conclusion about what it is like to be black in Columbia. And the conclusion is one that is ideologically flattering to the *Banner*: it is fine. The piece ends with an ill-conceived clang. The author hears of a potential lynching in Texas. A local responds: “‘Maybe you had better go to Texas,’ said one of the group. ‘We haven’t lynched anybody here in twenty years.’”²⁷⁸ This, of course, was not true, yet the *Banner*'s response to the piece in an editorial was literally glowing: “‘There’s nothing like a ray of light to expose those whose deeds are evil. The New York Times has furnished that ray.’”²⁷⁹ This article would come in for harsh criticism in the Nashville *Globe*, which pointed out its factual inaccuracies and suggested that if the reporter had really been

interested in the truth he “would have taken just as much time interviewing leading Negro citizens of Columbia as he took in interviewing his Columbia hosts.”²⁸⁰

In covering the court proceedings themselves, the *Banner* oftentimes betrayed a predilection for the prosecution. Sometimes this took the form of indirect praise of the prosecuting attorneys’ efforts in court, such as when the paper described remarks by an assistant attorney general: “In a quiet unaffected manner, which apparently registered favorably with the jury, Asst. Dist. Atty. Gen. William A. Harwell, Jr., of Lawrenceburg, reviewed the State’s case against the defendants for one hour and 35 minutes.”²⁸¹ A similarly sympathetic impression of Attorney General Bumpus’s remarks was related the next day:

For an hour and 15 minutes this morning the attorney general held the entire courtroom’s rapt attention as he brought the State’s closing arguments to an end. On more than one occasion the spectators made audible expressions of appreciation for the thoughts he expressed in his attack upon ‘carpetbaggers and other outside influences who would undermine our government.’²⁸²

Needless to say, no defense attorneys received such glowing reviews of their work. One article did say that defense attorney Leon Ransom “passionately pleaded with the jury,” and that he spoke “with great deliberation throughout his hour and one-half of argument,” but neither of those brief phrases carry with them the positive spin of the above.

In fact, one of the articles referenced above contains evidence of another way in which the *Banner* cast the defense if not in an overly negative light than at least in a light in which they could be viewed as outsiders or as suspicious. In a description of defense attorney Maurice Weaver’s closing statements, for instance, Weaver is introduced as “Maurice Weaver, white Chattanooga attorney who is a representative of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and former CIO lawyer.”²⁸³ These

identifiers frequently followed mention of Weaver.²⁸⁴ Given the *Banner*'s unmistakable views of the CIO, as well as its articles wherein the NAACP is linked with the SCHW and the Columbia pamphlets, the tactic here has the effect of painting Weaver as an outcast. A more overt guilt by association sort of ploy was utilized in another article where an entire section of the piece was devoted to the presence of Oliver Herrington, the public relations man for the NAACP, sitting behind the defense table for a few days. Mentioning that Herrington had "talked back and forth" with the defense, and that he had been "called to testify before the Federal Grand Jury in connection with the circulation of inflammatory pamphlets...", the *Banner* here manages to connect the pamphlets with the defense at trial.²⁸⁵ Finally, as a slightly different type of example of this kind of guilt by association reporting, the *Banner* ran a story that begins by mentioning the incredible amount of press coverage the trial was getting, "approximately 15,000 words daily," before segueing into information about angry letters that had been sent to the judge calling for the release of the "innocent men." For no apparent journalistic purpose, one of these letters, purportedly from a nephew in Chicago of one of the defendants, is reprinted in full. In racially charged language, it denounces the judge: "You just like all Dixie pale face, think you own the whole world. I hate very pale face and you better watch your step because if those boys get a long time, you better sentence yourself because I be calling on you, big boy."²⁸⁶ The decision to publish this entire letter reflects peculiar standards of newsworthiness. A more likely explanation for its inclusion, based on the apparent ideological biases of the *Banner*, is that the letter creates a connection between the Columbia trial and extreme, violent language directed at white authority.

The *Banner*'s editorial page reacted to the shock verdict much as the *Herald* did, by referring to the outcome of the case as proof that Tennessee justice worked just fine:

The 'Columbia case,' moved by change of venue to Lawrenceburg, was handled in a manner which, by the very record—open to full review and competent analysis by any higher court—upholds the prestige of the judicial system of which Judge Ingram's court is a part. The verdict yesterday rendered disposes of it, and those who professed to see injustice in the very fact of putting these defendants on trial today should—but will not—retract their vicious smears.²⁸⁷

In other words, state authorities may have lost this specific case, but the process by which the verdict came was equitable and disproves any contrary assertions that black men cannot get a fair trial in Tennessee. This line of thinking is perfectly in keeping with the *Banner*'s ideological views as expressed throughout 1946. Time and again it expressed skepticism if not outright hostility to any group or individual questioning the status quo; recall the editorial, "The South Can Handle Its Own Affairs." Of course, what the *Banner* failed to admit was that the verdict in the Columbia case veered widely from the status quo.²⁸⁸ By acquitting 23 of 25 black defendants, the Lawrenceburg jury upended rather than confirmed the expectations of the Jim Crow south. What this means is that by the *Banner*'s own logic it actually took a deviation from the standard script of how the Southern legal system dealt with black defendants to legitimate the Southern legal system. Only by turning its back on Jim Crow-era standards of justice, did the jury deliver justice. Perhaps someone at the *Banner* realized the choppy ideological waters they were straying in to with this editorial's argument. It ends succinctly, with the sense that whoever wrote it was eager to put it out of memory: "The case is over. The evidence is in. The verdict has been rendered."²⁸⁹

The *Tennessean*'s coverage of the court proceedings in the Columbia case is a bit of a mixed bag. In some instances, the paper displayed a bias towards the prosecution in

its reporting, while in others, especially later in the trial, it framed its stories in ways more favorable to the defense than either the *Herald* or the *Banner*. The decidedly pro-prosecution coverage is most evident in an early stage of the court proceedings when the defense sought to have the case dismissed on the grounds that the jury system in Maury County systematically excluded black citizens from service. The defense's strategy to prove this point was to call scores of black Maury Countians onto the witness stand to testify if they had ever been summoned to serve on a jury before or if they had every heard of any other black people who had been summoned before. All but one said no, with the one exception saying he received his summons and then went promptly to the sheriff to have himself excused, sensing that a mistake had been made. The calling of so many witnesses obviously took a lot of time, much to the consternation of Attorney General Bumpus, but only the *Tennessean* chose to frame its articles around this defense strategy using a loaded term utilized by Bumpus. "Courtroom Filibuster Opens Columbia Case," read the first headline the *Tennessean* reported on these hearings. The same article contained a quote from Bumpus wherein he stated that the defense's strategy "constituted 'a legal filibuster to keep us there in court for 50 years.'"²⁹⁰

The term "filibuster" is clearly one that fits the prosecution's take on events, yet it is one that the *Tennessean* continued to use objectively in headlines in the coming days to describe the defense's attempts to prove the injustice of the local jury system. Other headlines from around this time include "Filibuster Continues in Columbia Case," "Filibuster on Negro Jury Service Continued in Maury Hearing," "Columbia Filibuster Can Go On 'Until Christmas' Prosecutor Says," and "Court's Effort Fails To End Filibuster."²⁹¹ The reader would have entered each story with an understanding gleaned

from the headline: that the defense's efforts were an illegitimate ploy to put off the coming trial. On June 12, the *Tennessean's* headline diverged slightly from the ones cited above: "Columbia Defense Closes 'Filibuster.'" ²⁹² By putting the term in quotes, the paper was admitting the subjectivity of the term as it pertained to the trial. Perhaps it had realized the error of its prior use of the word.

Pro-prosecution bias crept in again, though, in a story from a few days later about how Bumpus began to call whites to the stand to ask them questions about jury service in Maury County. Without exception, the paper notes at the beginning of the piece, all of the whites called testified "that they had never served on a jury in Maury County and had never been summoned for jury service." The *Tennessean* reporter plays into the prosecution's hands by observing, "This testimony was almost exactly the same as that given by more than 200 Negro witnesses placed on the stand by the defense during the preceding two weeks of hearings." This is glaringly inaccurate since black witnesses were specifically asked not only if they had ever been summoned for service, but also whether they had ever heard of any black people being summoned. Tellingly, that question was not asked of white jurors. Defense attorneys doubtlessly noticed this discrepancy. Indeed, buried at the very end of this article is the news that defense attorneys Thurgood Marshall and Z. Alexander Looby asked the white witnesses if they had known any white people who had been called for jury service. All answered yes. ²⁹³

The *Tennessean* switched to running AP wire stories for the duration of the jury selection process—the only of the 3 main dailies under study to do so—but picked back up with its own coverage once the actual trial began, only this time with a different reporter, H.B. Teeter. The paper's stories about the trial are not distinctive so much for

the information they contained, but the ways in which that information was conveyed. While the *Herald* and the *Banner* tended to choose headlines and ledes that played up the testimony of state's witnesses, the *Tennessean* consistently framed the news in ways that highlighted arguments made by the defense. To see how this manifested itself, it is useful to take a look at the ways in which the *Tennessean* reported on a given day's proceedings versus how the *Herald* and the *Banner* reported on that same day's proceedings. The *Herald* and the *Banner* were afternoon papers while the *Tennessean* was a morning one, so they did not all report on the same testimony on the same day necessarily, but even so it is possible to view different priorities in the afternoon papers' reporting versus the *Tennessean*'s.

For instance, on September 26, the *Tennessean*'s front page trial story was "Lynching Rumor Revealed As Cause of Race Clash." The lede described the testimony of a police officer from Columbia: "Reports heard among the Negro population of Columbia that unidentified white men had purchased a coil of rope, apparently put the spark to a powder keg of racial conflict in Maury County last February 25, a state witness revealed late yesterday afternoon." The next few paragraphs detail Collins's testimony that he had gone to Mink Slide that day and overheard a group of black people say, "We heard that some white men bought some rope this afternoon and that a mob is coming down here to get the Stephensons."²⁹⁴ This testimony was outlined in the *Herald* story from the same day, but farther down in the piece, which was framed around the testimony of Lynn Bomar, the chief of the highway patrol. The *Banner* also chose to focus its story on Bomar's testimony and alluded to Collins's testimony about the fear of lynching only obliquely deep down in the piece: "Yesterday's session was marked by speeded up

defense attempts to establish fear of mob violence as the motivating power behind the shooting of policeman.”²⁹⁵ Further *Tennessean* headlines also foregrounded information more representative of the defense’s perspective: “Negro Tells Graphic Story of Columbia Racial Tension,” “Witness Airs Hanging Threat At Columbia Negro Trial,” “Columbia Defendants Taken At Random, Defense Says.”²⁹⁶ Compare those with the *Banner*’s headlines from the same days: “Defense Offers Alibis for Julius Blair,” “Defense Rests Case in Maury Negroes’ Trial,” “State Resumes Arguments in Negroes’ Trial.”²⁹⁷ Whereas the *Tennessean* gave more attention to the substance of status-quo threatening claims by the defense, the *Banner* gave non-descript, process-oriented headlines.

This greater sympathy to the views of the defense was amplified in the editorial that the *Tennessean* published after the verdict, “The Columbia Case.” Leaving little doubt as to how its editors viewed the trial, the piece praised the jury for acquitting 23 of the defendants “since no direct and concrete evidence was presented by the state to show that any one of them fired the shots in question.” Furthermore, the editorial expressed hope that the two men who were found guilty would have their cases reviewed because “of the tenuous nature of the evidence against them.” The piece stood out also for featuring an account of the riot that mostly coincided with the account provided by the defense: “Fears ran high among both races. The policemen were forced to enter the Negro section in carrying out their duty to keep the peace between the races. Fear of mob violence among the Negroes was evident.” Like the *Banner* and the *Herald*, the *Tennessean* did exhibit pride in the state’s legal system. The main difference, however, is that the former seemed to profess pride for the legal process that rendered the non-guilty

verdict, while the *Tennessean* seemed grateful for the verdict itself: “The record of Tennessee justice in the deplorable Columbia affair has been lightened by this latest decision.” The use of the term “lightened” unquestionably reveals the editors’ belief that Tennessee was lacking when it came to racial justice in its courts. While the *Banner* and the *Herald* could and did contend that the status quo system of justice in the state was just fine, the *Tennessean* clearly saw through that. It viewed the Columbia verdict as a positive sign that perhaps things were getting better in the state for black defendants.²⁹⁸

In keeping with the trend apparent throughout this study, the Nashville *Globe*’s court coverage was dramatically different than that of the white dailies. Its news stories were often openly laudatory towards the defense, reading at times more like editorials. It made a frequent point of calling out what it saw as biased coverage in other papers. It emphasized the prejudices of the Southern criminal justice system. No one could ever mistake even one of its court stories for one appearing in the white dailies.

From early on in the court proceedings, the *Globe* clearly telegraphed which side it was on. One of the ways it did this was by portraying defense attorneys in glowing, even heroic terms. An article from May, referred to the attorneys working for the NAACP as litigators who “can not be surpassed for the ability they will bring to the cases to be tried.” Each one was introduced to readers with far more depth, and brio, than any of the other newspapers provided. Maurice Weaver was described as “a veteran of World War II bitterly resentful of acts of Hitlerism in his own State of Tennessee that rivaled those against the defenseless people of Germany and other countries over run by the Nazis.” Z. Alexander Looby was presented as a man “who neglects no point of law when defending his client and generally prepares to carry the most ordinary of cases to the

highest tribunal of the land as the first move in his client's defense." Finally, Thurgood Marshall was described as the "winner of the 1945 Spingarn medal," an award bestowed by the NAACP, for his "outstanding service in battling for the equality of teachers' salaries throughout the South."²⁹⁹ Compare this with the way the *Banner* would simply append an affiliation with an organization it considered suspect to its references to defense attorneys.

The *Globe* certainly took notice of this. A story from late August stands as a good example of the type of press criticism it continued to engage in throughout the entirety of the Columbia story. Note the fact that this is not an editorial:

Defense attorneys, it is known, have already taken note of what appears to be an effort to smear one of them by the daily newspaper, which to the delight of 'native Fascists,' needles every liberal person and cause with a hint that they are in league with the Communists. This paper for instance, despite the need to conserve newsprint, constantly makes use of the following line in its story about the Columbia trial: 'Maurice Weaver, attorney for the National Association of Colored People and former attorney for the CIO.'

The assumption is that, already having made the CIO a 'Communist front' in the minds of hordes of yokels, the newspaper is intending to make both Mr. Weaver and the NAACP Communists.³⁰⁰

Here, the *Globe* was doing some of the work tasked to the author of this study. Indeed, its description of the *Banner's* method of guilt by association smearing echoes one made earlier in this investigation. While many of the *Banner's* readers may not have considered the implications of the paper's repeated allusions to Weaver's past work with the CIO, to the *Globe* the purpose of such allusions was clear. By linking the CIO to the Columbia case, the *Banner* was effectively linking Communist sympathies with the Columbia case. The *Globe* recognized the ploy for what it was, but editorialized that it did not think the *Banner* would prove successful in its efforts: "We make the prediction that regardless of

the outcome of the trials at Lawrenceburg, there will not be a single shred of evidence introduced by the prosecution that will connect the defendants with Communism.”³⁰¹

Examining biased press coverage was not just an academic exercise on the part of the *Globe*. As an editorial from August 23, “Unfair Newspapers,” explained, the press became an actual part of the trial when defense attorneys cited prejudicial coverage in local newspapers as a reason for the court to grant its request for a change of venue. In fact, the *Globe* referred to those papers’ “deliberate attempt...to inflame the community against the colored defendants” as the “principal reason” that the defense was successful in its request. This raises an important issue. When the *Globe* singled out articles from white dailies that it thought were unfair, it was not objecting principally to bad journalism but to the dehumanizing effects bad journalism could have on race relations in the south.

The *Globe* illuminated this idea in the same editorial cited above:

When the press tries to make much of the fact that Negroes were able to assemble quickly, get guns and set up a defense against a threatened mob invasion of their section, it seems unwilling to concede that defenseless Negroes were acting just as a group of defenseless white men would have acted had they lived in a community where repeated acts of violence had been committed against them with impunity.³⁰²

Papers like the *Banner* that offered blinkered accounts of the Columbia story suited to their own ideological ends, the *Globe* is saying, failed to recognize the humanity of the black men holed up in Mink Slide. They failed to consider the reality of what black life in the south was like. The ways in which survival sometimes meant bucking the status quo rather than clinging to it.

The *Globe* expanded upon this point by alluding to the dailies’ press coverage of another big event that had shocked the state of Tennessee in 1946, an event that later became known as the Battle of Athens. Briefly, on August 1, the day of primary elections

in the state, a group of World War II veterans rebelled against the Crump-affiliated political machine in McMinn County, armed representatives of which spent the day intimidating voters—even shooting one black man who dared to try and vote—and, later that night, suspiciously took ballot boxes away from polling places to be counted in secret in the county jail. A group of armed veterans laid siege to the jail, demanding the return of the ballot boxes. When the deputies inside refused, the veterans blasted away the jail with submachine guns and other weapons seized from the local national guard armory. The siege ended only when, in the early hours of August 2, the veterans threw sticks of dynamite at the front of the brick jail, demolishing several police cars in the process. As the deputies stumbled out of the building, they were attacked by angry throngs of locals. One deputy had his throat cut. The sheriff resigned and was replaced by one of the rioting veterans. None of those veterans were ever charged with any crimes related to the event.³⁰³

The white dailies' reactions to the violence in Athens were yet another sign to the *Globe* that blacks were held to different standards than whites:

The Athens GI's did some shooting and otherwise thwarted persons who wore the badges of the law. For what they did the Athens GI's are acclaimed as heroes and rightly so. But they merely thwarted an attempt to steal an election. Columbia Negroes, last February thwarted a mob that openly threatened to lynch a Negro boy and his mother.
What is 'equal justice under law' anyway?³⁰⁴

While the *Banner* was more tempered in its attitude towards the Athens riot, the *Globe* could have been referring here to coverage of the event in the *Tennessean*, which was effusive in its praise of the veterans who staged the uprising. The *Tennessean* objected to the very use of the term riot in reference to Athens, seeing the event instead as an historic demonstration of patriotic activism: “There was no ‘riot’—unless Bunker Hill was a riot.

It was one of the finest demonstrations of courage in defense of ‘inalienable and indefeasible rights’ this state has witnessed since its beginning. IT could be the ‘Boston Tea Party’ of Tennessee.”³⁰⁵ Although the *Tennessean* was definitely more moderate in its take on the Columbia riot than other white dailies in the state, it certainly never came close to treating the black veterans in Mink Slide with anything like the reverence it treated the white veterans of Athens, so the *Globe*’s point is well-taken. This is evidenced even more so by considering the *Tennessean*’s response to criticism directed against Gov. McCord in the aftermath of the Athens riot. Some pilloried McCord for not sending in the state guard, as he had done in Columbia, to try and quell the violence. The *Tennessean* responded to that charge in a very interesting way given its initial praise for the actions of the state guard and highway patrol in Columbia: “It would have been shameful if veterans in the guard had been pitted against civilian veterans who had risen in defense of their civil rights.”³⁰⁶ The rich irony of this statement was undoubtedly not lost on the *Globe*.

Returning to the trial, another way in which the *Globe* stood apart from the white dailies was through the consistent attention it paid to the role bias played both in Southern society in general but also in the legal proceedings. Going back to the abatement hearings—the attempts by the defense to prove systematic jury bias that the *Tennessean* had referred to as a “filibuster”—the *Globe* gave a wry voice to what many black Tennesseans must have been thinking as the defense called black witness after black witness to testify that they had never been summoned for jury duty:

To people in this area it has been amusing that so much time was taken up discussing such a question. Everybody knows that Negroes are generally excluded from jury service, even in enlightened Nashville, and there has never been even the slightest suspicion that Negroes were considered good jury material in a place which for some unexplained reason is called ‘the Dimple of the Universe.’³⁰⁷

This fact may have been lost on white readers and spectators disengaged from the realities blacks faced in the Jim Crow south, but to the *Globe* it was just a given. This same perspective led the *Globe* to call attention to the uniform whiteness of the jury that was eventually seated in Lawrenceburg in a much more direct way than any other paper: “In the selection of the twelve jurors, it can be stated, that not a single man is colored...[T]he prosecution has exercised its right to use a peremptory challenge to get rid of any colored man that was called.”³⁰⁸

This lack of deference to the Southern legal system, this insistence on pulling back the curtain and exposing the prejudice that lay beneath the genteel trappings of a Tennessee court, was at the heart of the *Globe*'s reporting. When the judge or the prosecution acted in a way that betrayed bias, the *Globe* called them out, having no compunction about telling its readers of the vast discrepancy between the “way white defendants and their counsel are treated and the way the 25 colored defendants and their attorneys have been treated both at Columbia and Lawrenceburg.”³⁰⁹ The editorial board's denunciations reflected the vast gulf it saw between impartial justice and the selective justice meted out by the state in the case of Columbia.

Attorney General Bumpus was a special target of the editors' ire in this regard. The *Globe* portrayed him as a man more committed to railroading blameless black defendants than in getting to the truth of the matter about Columbia: “Certainly he has not got around to employing the strategy of mass indictment of highway patrolmen or would-be lynchers, thus excusing us heathens for refusing to see him as an official who remembers what he said in his oath of office and in the best passages of his campaign oratory.”³¹⁰ To the *Globe*, Bumpus was an opportunist, committed to using the Columbia

conflict to bolster the white supremacist legal system that brought him to power. And again, the *Globe* saw nothing controversial or provocative about that point. It was simply stating a fact:

From the time of the trouble on down to the end of the trial, it has been clear to unbiased observers that the prosecution has been a persecution. The accused have gotten the reminder in actions more than words that the old edict in the Dred Scott decision still stands: 'Negroes have no rights that white men are bound to respect.'³¹¹

The Columbia trial was regarded as just one more ignominious milestone on the long, arduous path of discrimination that black people in the south had been suffering on for centuries. The *Globe* did not know at the time that the Columbia verdict would represent a detour from that path.

That is part of what makes it so surprising that the *Globe*, having covered the Columbia story diligently for months, ran nothing about the verdict in the edition following the end of the trial. Not one word was printed regarding the momentous decision. The closest the *Globe* came to directly commenting on the verdict itself was in a story from more than two weeks after the trial: "Columbia Trial And Verdict Held Unjust." Rather than applauding the jury's decision, this story instead focused on the fact that those the paper deemed responsible for the greatest outrages of the Columbia riot had faced no criminal charges at all. Specifically, the *Globe* had in mind Lynn Bomar: "‘Commissioner of Safety’ Lynn Bomar has testified, under oath, that he willfully deprived citizens of their constitutional rights by indulging in intimidation and brutality in jail and by breaking into homes without warrants. He has defied the Constitution by announcing boldly that he intends to repeat such lawless actions." The story called for Attorney General Tom Clark to arrest Bomar.³¹²

The verdict was unquestionably a cause for celebration to the editors of the *Globe*, so why did they choose to focus on the downside of the story rather than its upside? The answer is, good as the verdict was, it did not really solve anything. Yes, it exonerated innocent black men who may otherwise have ended up in jail, but it did not exactly represent a sea change in the way the Southern legal system worked. How could it have when people like Lynn Bomar could commit countless outrages upon the homes and bodies of black citizens and walk away without even so much as a reprimand? Perhaps that is why the editorials that the *Globe* did publish in the weeks after the verdict did not simply contain expression of joy or contentment, but dealt expressly with the newspaper coverage of that verdict by outlets outside Tennessee. To simply celebrate so manifestly correct a decision would not move the ball forward, so to speak; it would not shake up the status quo. To point out the ways in which some outside papers covered the trial and verdict equitably, however, was more in fitting with the paper's activist mission. Thus, the first editorial after the trial largely praised the work of *Time* magazine. Specifically, the editorial board applauded the magazine's publication of a photo that showed "troopers standing with their feet on a colored man they apparently had shot down and a civilian standing with a shotgun in his hand." It also commended the magazine for its post-trial summary of the Columbia case, a summary that the *Globe* said "must give concern to every Tennessee citizen who wants his state to have a position among the more civilized states of the union." The story in question painted a picture of a hopelessly biased court, depicting scenes left out of local coverage of the trial, including one in which Bumpus apparently "threatened to wrap a chair around Ransom's head." This bias

led *Time* to declare that the “trial itself was hardly recommended reading or law students.”³¹³

Another editorial extolled the work of the *Nation* magazine, which published an account of the trial and verdict that put the onus on Bomar for the violence and destruction that occurred in Columbia. The *Nation*'s story also complimented the work of *New York Herald Tribune* reporter Vincent Sheean for his unbiased coverage of the riot and the trial. The *Globe* echoes this approbation, but goes on to wish that outlets like the *Nation* would also remember the important work that unheralded individuals did to spread the truth about the Columbia riot. In particular, the *Globe* acclaimed the efforts of pamphleteers who disseminated their version of events in opposition to local newspaper accounts that “deliberately tried to mislead the public.” It was those pamphleteers and not the reporters for any of the Tennessee dailies who the *Globe* thought journalists should emulate, because they were willing to buck the status quo. They represented the type of true change that would have to take place if the United States was ever going to shake off the shackles of Jim Crow oppression and move towards a more just society:

It is to be hoped that the press of the nation, aware of its responsibility of trying to make this nation PRACTICE some of the democracy it pretends to want the world to embrace, will, in the future, look with suspicion upon any reporting done by its representatives in the South when a news story involving a conflict between whites and Negroes is wired to the metropolitan centers.

If that had been done at first, there would have been no need for honest people to print and distribute pamphlets and certainly the nation's press would not have been guilty, as it was, of informing its public that Columbia had a race riot in which Negroes were the aggressors.³¹⁴

How telling that when the *Globe* chose to extrapolate the prospect of a brighter future from the Columbia verdict, it did so in journalistic terms. It did not say that maybe the verdict would result in a less biased legal system or more rights for black Americans.

Instead it said that maybe the verdict will put the lie to the type of status quo-supporting stories issued by mainstream newspapers and result in a more conscientious national press. The *Globe* realized how instrumental such a press would be in achieving meaningful social change. In Columbia, the white dailies had failed. Perhaps someday they would succeed.

Briefly, the Chattanooga *Times* reaction to the verdict was, of course, quite different than the *Globe*'s, but also quite different from the *Tennessean*'s, its closest ideological ally. While the *Tennessean* had drawn attention to the rather precarious nature of the evidence against the defendants, basically questioning the justice of convicting even two of them, the *Times*, in its editorial—republished in the *Herald*—“An Outstanding Verdict,” had nothing but praise for the trial and the way it was conducted: “The trial was scrupulously fair and the presiding judge specifically warned the jurors that they were not to be swayed by prejudice.” Also unlike the *Tennessean*, the *Times* had some harsh words for those who had questioned the official version of events. In fact, the *Times*'s piece ends with the admonition that “the verdict will give food for thought to the Southern Conference for Human Welfare which broadcast unfair charges against Columbia and Tennessee justice.” Here the *Times* sounds more like the *Herald* or the *Banner* than the *Tennessean*, strange considering how relatively liberal the Chattanooga paper's coverage had been up to this point. Apparently the paper's liberalism stopped short of questioning the nobility of the Southern legal system.³¹⁵

Like the *Globe*, the *Defender* dedicated much of its trial coverage to spotlighting instances of prosecutorial and judicial bias both inside the courtroom and out. Articles ran with the headlines “Bias Rules At Riot Trial” and “Judge Writes Own Laws At Columbia

Trial.” The former included the following less than flattering depiction of life in Columbia: “This pleasant town of white clapboard houses and clipped lawns boasts of its fine race relations. Everywhere friendship with the Negro is emphasized but everywhere it is made clear that the friendship will last only while the Negro ‘keeps his place.’”³¹⁶ Another article contained scenes of Judge Ingram overruling defense attorney Looby before he could even get his objection out of his mouth and of Attorney General Bumpus “referring to several defense witnesses as ‘nigger women.’” In the same story Bomar is called “a trigger happy sadist.”³¹⁷ This type of coverage was similar to the *Globe*’s in that it paid no heed to standard journalistic conventions of objectivity, instead staking out a reportorial position that was decidedly pro-defense.

Where the *Defender* parted company from the *Globe* was in its relative lack of interest in media criticism of mainstream papers and in its conclusions regarding the implications of the verdict. The former can easily be ascertained by the lack of articles on that theme in the *Defender*. The latter takes some explanation. The *Globe* had been modest in its interpretation of what exactly the verdict meant for the future. As demonstrated above, the most it would say is that perhaps the verdict would cause mainstream journalists rethink the ways in which they reported on racial conflict. The *Defender*, however, was more idealistic: “The jury’s verdict seems to be incontrovertible evidence that the flagrant disregard of Negro rights in a court of justice and obvious legal persecution is offensive even to the average white southerner.”³¹⁸ This is farther than the *Globe* was willing to go. The *Defender* followed this line of thinking in the only editorial it wrote about the Columbia case in the weeks following the verdict. The piece hailed Maurice Weaver’s contributions to the trial, claiming that he “brought a new concept of

the manner in which Southern white attorneys should handle the defense of their Negro clients.” It specifically brought up his habit of referring to black witnesses as “Mr.” or “Mrs.,” a significant breach of Southern white rules of decorum. It then went on to speak of the verdict, referring to it as “a tribute to Southern progress in racial justice.” Shortly thereafter, it held that the Columbia case had set “a new pattern...for Southern trials.”³¹⁹ Although this last remark was qualified somewhat, with the board wondering whether other parts of the South would build on the progress this trial represented or react against it, the hope of a better future for race relations due to the Columbia verdict is present in this piece in a way that it was not in the pages of the *Globe*. Perhaps the *Globe*, operating as it did out of the South, was simply more cynical about the possibility of change. Perhaps it was warier than the *Defender* to raise the hopes of its readers by alluding to a rosier future that might not materialize. Regardless, the *Defender* viewed the Columbia verdict in a more optimistic way than the *Globe*.

The Riot: The Photographic Coverage

Visual representation of the riot, in the form of photographs, was prevalent in the days after February 25. Of the papers studied here, however, only the *Banner* and, to a lesser extent, the *Chattanooga Times* allocated much space for the display of pictures surrounding the event. The *Tennessean* ran a couple of photographs after the two defendants were shot in prison, but none of the original disturbance. The *Defender* ran some photos of principals involved weeks later, as did the *Globe* and the *Herald* (photographs on the *Herald's* front page were not a daily occurrence like in the other dailies). In the main, the photographs that appeared in the white dailies supported the official line offered in the reporting. Blacks are pictured with their hands up being led by police, as if they were the only perpetrators of violence. Guns confiscated from black households are prominently displayed. There are no photos of the devastation left in the wake of the highway patrol, photos that did exist and were eventually published elsewhere.³²⁰ The *Globe*, for its part, noticed this tendency:

The press appeared to get glee out of reporting with words and pictures the thrilling raid on the Negro section—but confined its pictures to the alleged ‘arsenal’ of guns. It had no pictures of wrecked places of business, destroyed furniture in homes, destroyed papers of an insurance company office and destroyed caskets and other costly paraphernalia of a funeral home. The press missed entirely getting that unusual picture of a casket with KKK painted on it in foot-high letters.³²¹

A look at the evidence will show that the *Globe* was correct in its criticism. It will also show how the black newspapers differed from the white newspapers in their use of photography to tell the Columbia story.

By far the most photographs related to the riot in any of the newspapers studied appeared in the February 26 edition of the *Banner*. Not only did that edition feature several AP photographs on the front page, it also reserved an entire page deeper in the paper for its own photographs. The photographs are quite telling, bolstering the narrative of black criminality ubiquitous in the paper's stories about the riot. The first photo—which has been removed due to a copyright claim, but which can be viewed at the following url: <http://www.apimages.com/metadata/Index/Watchf-AP-A-TN-USA-APHS364242-Racial-Disturbance/d48a28c3c81946bcb3a6cf54f3d2f23f/33/0> — features a number of black people with their hands up.

This photograph also appeared on the front page of the *Chattanooga Times* February 27 edition. The caption in the *Banner* describes this photo as consisting of “patrolmen [searching] a large group that has been brought into the jail.” The image of black men with their arms raised suggests both subjugation and guilt. Armed white police officers look on. Several black prisoners look down towards the ground. This fits perfectly with the *Banner*'s narrative that black perpetrators were the cause of the trouble in Mink Slide.

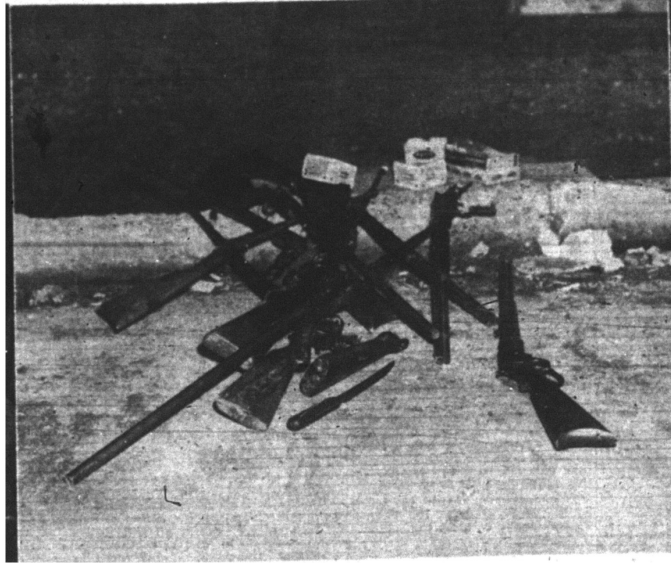


Fig. 1: February 26, 1946, photograph, *Nashville Banner*, p. 1.

This next photo shows a pile of guns and bullets that the caption said was “confiscated in Mink Slide, the colored residential area where the trouble started.” To the right of this photo appeared the following one, again showing an image of black men subdued by white authorities, and again not printed here due to a copy right claim. Here is the link to it: <http://www.apimages.com/metadata/Index/Watchf-AP-A-TN-USA-APHS373407-Race-Relations-In-/42d1af2fb2e44ca6a90154ff53ca7fcd/36/0>

The juxtaposition of these photos of arrested black men on either side of the photograph of ammunition further serves to create a direct connection in the viewer’s mind between blackness and the threat of violence, again in keeping with the story told by the *Banner*.³²²

The main page of photographs in this issue of the *Banner* looked like this:

Highway Patrolmen And Guardsmen Bring Rioting Negroes Under Control



Interior of the Blair Barber Shop after the State Guard took over. Left to right are Lt. Claude Hendrick, Jr., Maj. T. V. Woodring, Lt. Ed Luna, Lt. H. H. Wall, and Capt. A. S. Doyle.



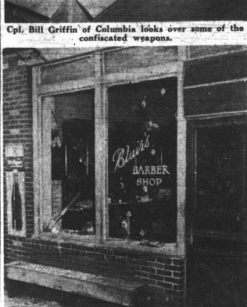
Cpl. Bill Griffin of Columbia looks over some of the confiscated weapons.



Sgt. Don Kelly of Murfreesboro questions James K. Morton, Negro undertaker at whose establishment a number of Negroes surrendered.



Tennessee Guardsmen march down a street in Columbia.



The barber shop from which it is reported that officers were first fired upon. Note the broken glass and the bullet holes.



Here is a typical street scene in Mink Slide, the area where the Negroes were surrounded. Note the broken windows and the chair thrown out on the sidewalk.

VA Hospital Opens Monday

The new Veterans Hospital on White Bridge Road will open with its wards and facilities for 200 patients but will be increased to 400 as soon as the building is completed. The hospital will be supervised by the Tennessee State Hospital, which is being constructed on the grounds. Officers of the hospital are looking for a site for the hospital on the grounds. The hospital will be supervised by the Tennessee State Hospital, which is being constructed on the grounds. Officers of the hospital are looking for a site for the hospital on the grounds.

Local News Roundup

These Negroes received a total of 10 years in prison sentences this morning before Judge Charles C. Bell in Division 22 of Davidson County Court. The sentences were: James J. Decker, 10 years; John, alias James Decker, 10 years; and James J. Decker, 10 years. The sentences were: James J. Decker, 10 years; John, alias James Decker, 10 years; and James J. Decker, 10 years.

Jail Escape Puzzles Police

Police this morning were scratching their heads over the disappearance of a jail prisoner from the second floor of the prison. The search for the man, Homer Nichols, 20, of Bruce L. Street, Va., has been going on since yesterday morning. Police said that he had been arrested in early 1945. A search of the jail books showed that he had been in the jail for more than three years. Police officials said they didn't see him since he was arrested. It was Nichols' second room on the second floor of the prison. Nichols had been arrested for a robbery in 1945. Police officials said they didn't see him since he was arrested. It was Nichols' second room on the second floor of the prison.

Resumes Scout Executive Post

Dr. Edward Lynch, manager of the hospital, had been here about the latter part of last year. The hospital was closed for several months. Lynch resumed his post as executive of the hospital. The hospital was closed for several months. Lynch resumed his post as executive of the hospital.

State Workmen's Compensation Commission Urged

State Labor Commissioner W. E. James today advocated forming a state commission to better administer workmen's compensation laws. He said he was strongly in favor of the formation of such a commission. The Tennessee compensation law is now administered by the state labor department. James said he was strongly in favor of the formation of such a commission.

Nashville Sailor Proves Ability As Sharpshooter

A 21-year-old Nashville Navy recruit, James J. Decker, Jr., recently showed his work as a sharpshooter in the first competition of the 300-yard Camp Malheur rifle range. Decker, who is a member of the U. S. Navy Rifle Team, shot a perfect 100 on the range. Decker, who is a member of the U. S. Navy Rifle Team, shot a perfect 100 on the range.



A group of Negroes in the jail. One in white shirt is Gal Lockridge, said to have been one of the leaders.

Pair Shot at During Columbia Riot

A couple stinger and a revolver, which they found in the riot, were shot at during the riot. The couple was shot at during the riot. The couple was shot at during the riot. The couple was shot at during the riot.

Fire Fund Veto Slated

Mayor Thomas L. Conaway was expected today to veto a City Board proposal to create a fire fund. The proposal was to create a fire fund. The proposal was to create a fire fund. The proposal was to create a fire fund.

Navy Recruiting Gains May End 12-Year Enlistments

The possibility that the Navy Department may shorten two-year enlistments was voted by local recruiting officers today in view of possible increases in regular Navy enlistments all over the nation. The possibility that the Navy Department may shorten two-year enlistments was voted by local recruiting officers today in view of possible increases in regular Navy enlistments all over the nation.

Trustee Asks Tax Payments Before Penalty Deadline

With the penalty period on state and county taxes only two days left, County Trustee Jack Price Jones today earnestly urged all taxpayers who contemplate making payments by mail to do so immediately. The penalty period on state and county taxes only two days left, County Trustee Jack Price Jones today earnestly urged all taxpayers who contemplate making payments by mail to do so immediately.

Cannery Association Officials Relected

Shell C. Cleveland, of Davidson County, was reelected president of the Tennessee-Kentucky Cannery Association today at the concluding banquet of the organization. The banquet was held at the Hotel Hamilton. Shell C. Cleveland, of Davidson County, was reelected president of the Tennessee-Kentucky Cannery Association today at the concluding banquet of the organization.

Negro Given Death Sentence in Slaying

Murphy, Tenn. Feb. 24.—A 21-year-old Negro, James J. Decker, Jr., was given a death sentence today for the slaying of a white woman. The woman was James J. Decker, Jr. The woman was James J. Decker, Jr. The woman was James J. Decker, Jr.

101,219-Acre Burley Droy in State Forecast

Carl F. Felt, state director of agriculture, today forecast that 101,219 acres of burley tobacco would be planted in Tennessee this year. The forecast was based on the current planting season. Carl F. Felt, state director of agriculture, today forecast that 101,219 acres of burley tobacco would be planted in Tennessee this year.

Fig. 2: "Highway Patrolmen and Guardsmen Bring Rioting Negroes Under Control," February 26, 1946, Nashville Banner, p. 16. Reproduced with permission from the Nashville Public Library, Special Collections.

Three of the photos immediately call to mind photos on the front page:

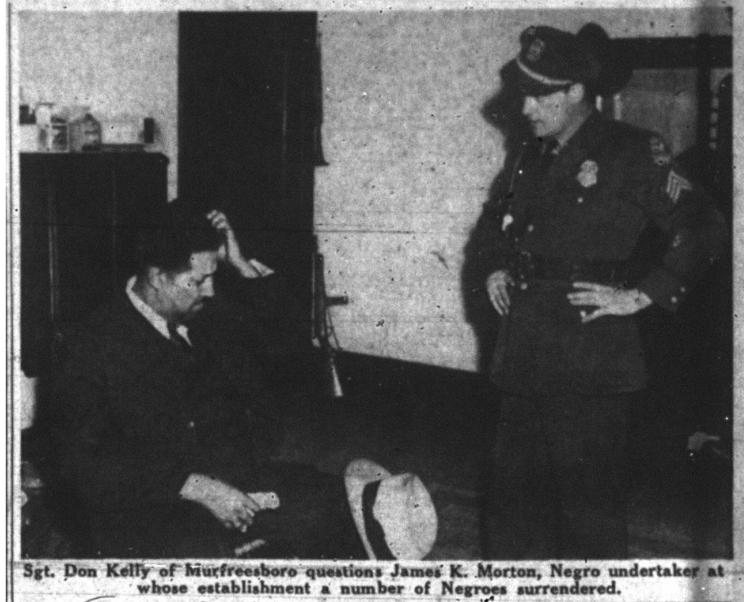


Fig. 3: February 26, 1946, photograph, *Nashville Banner*, p. 16. Reproduced with permission from the Nashville Public Library, Special Collections.

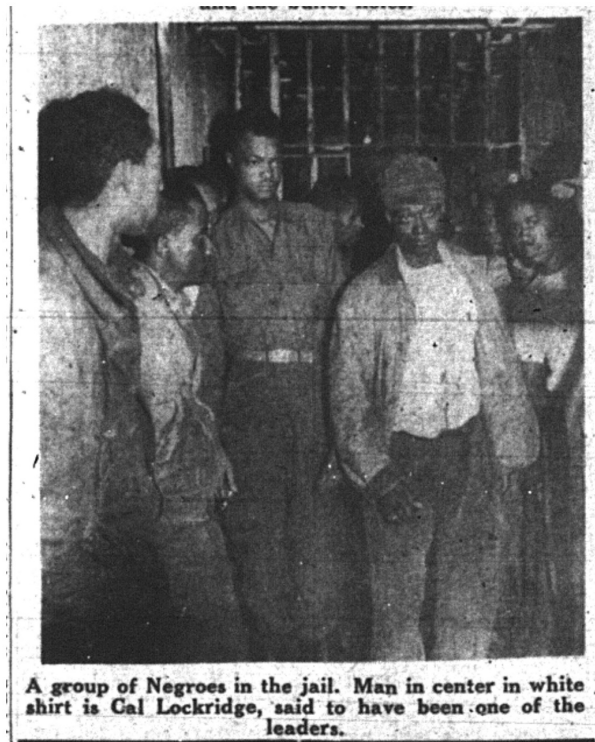


Fig. 4: February 26, 1946, photograph, *Nashville Banner*, p. 16. Reproduced with permission from the Nashville Public Library, Special Collections.

These two, for instance, yet again show black men rendered powerless by white authority figures, much as two of the front page photos did. The central figure in this photo, Cal Lockridge, would be depicted in a much different manner by the *Globe* in a few weeks' time.



Fig. 5: February 26, 1946, photograph, *Nashville Banner*, p. 16. Reproduced with permission from the Nashville Public Library, Special Collections.

This one on the other hand calls to mind the front page photo of the pile of guns that had been confiscated from Mink Slide.

Given the *Globe*'s criticisms cited above that the white press failed to show scenes of destruction in Mink Slide, it will be useful to examine the photographs on this page in the *Banner* that appear to show just that. Indeed, three photographs show clear damage to businesses in the Mink Slide district. Critically, however, no context is given

that would have allowed readers to interpret the images in a way that implicated state officials in the violence:

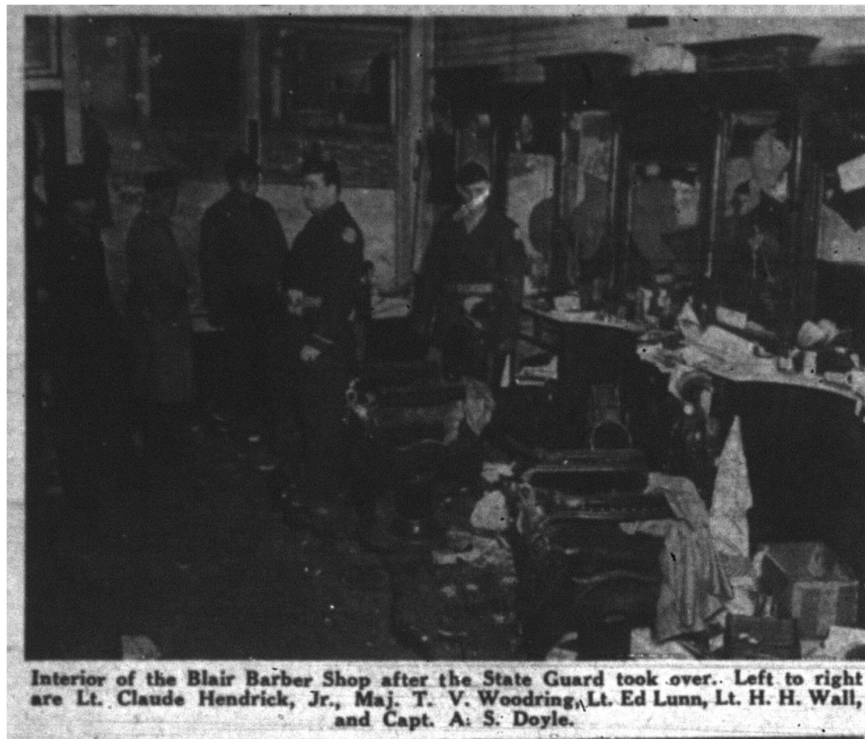
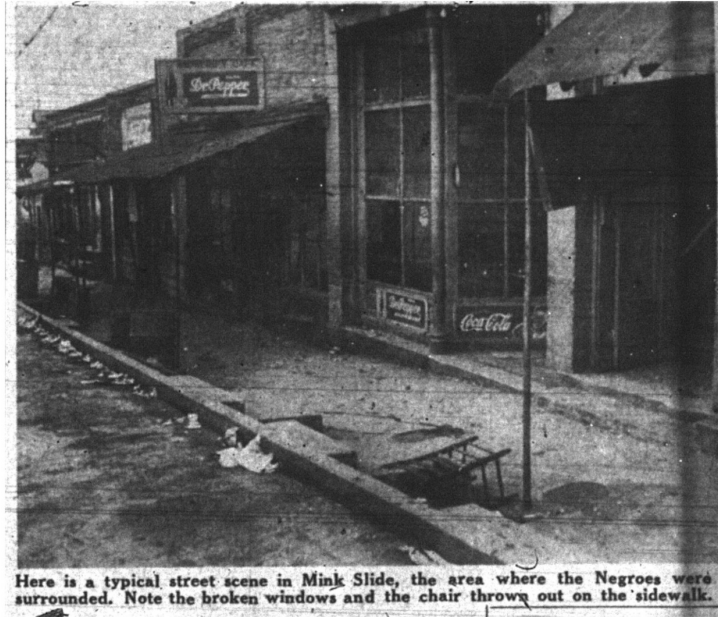


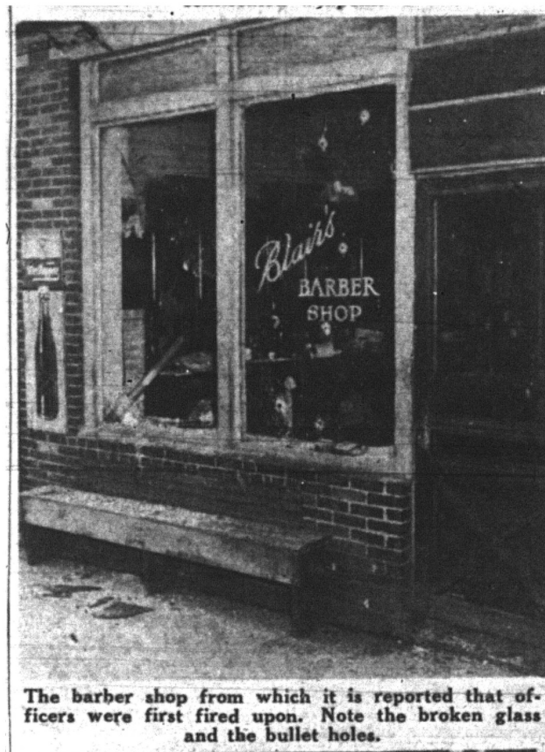
Fig. 6: February 26, 1946, photograph, *Nashville Banner*, p. 16. Reproduced with permission from the Nashville Public Library, Special Collections.

Unfortunately, the image is rather dark, but it plainly shows uniformed officers in a barber shop that appears to be in a state of disarray. Although this image, then, technically contradicts what the *Globe* said about white papers not showing damaged black businesses, it does nothing to contradict the story told by the *Banner*. A reader could not know based on reading the *Banner* or viewing this photograph that it was the state highway patrol that was primarily responsible for such destruction. The same can be said for the other two similar photos on this page:



Here is a typical street scene in Mink Slide, the area where the Negroes were surrounded. Note the broken windows and the chair thrown out on the sidewalk.

Fig. 7: February 26, 1946, photograph, *Nashville Banner*, p. 16. Reproduced with permission from the Nashville Public Library, Special Collections.



The barber shop from which it is reported that officers were first fired upon. Note the broken glass and the bullet holes.

Fig. 8: February 26, 1946, photograph, *Nashville Banner*, p. 16. Reproduced with permission from the Nashville Public Library, Special Collections.

The caption to the second photo not only does not implicate state officials in the wreckage, but explicitly refers to black culpability by noting that “officers were first fired upon” from this barber shop.³²³

Sticking to photographic coverage of the riot specifically, the *Chattanooga Times* ran a couple of photos besides the one referenced above that also appeared in the *Banner*. The first—a slight variation of which also ran in the *Banner* on February 27—largely fits the ideological mold of some of the photos already considered:



Fig. 9: “Weapons Seized At Columbia,” March 1, 1946, photograph, *Chattanooga Times*, p 1.

Here again is a collection of weapons confiscated, according to the caption, from “a Negro section at Columbia, Tenn.” The demeanor of these white men is casual. Two of them seem to be playacting with the weapons, suggesting the conclusion that the

viewer is meant to understand that whereas these weapons were dangerous in the hands of black men, in the hands of white officers they have been denuded of their lethal potential.³²⁴

The two non-AP photos run by the *Times* portray the participation of local Chattanooga men in the Columbia story. One of them is worthy of closer inspection:

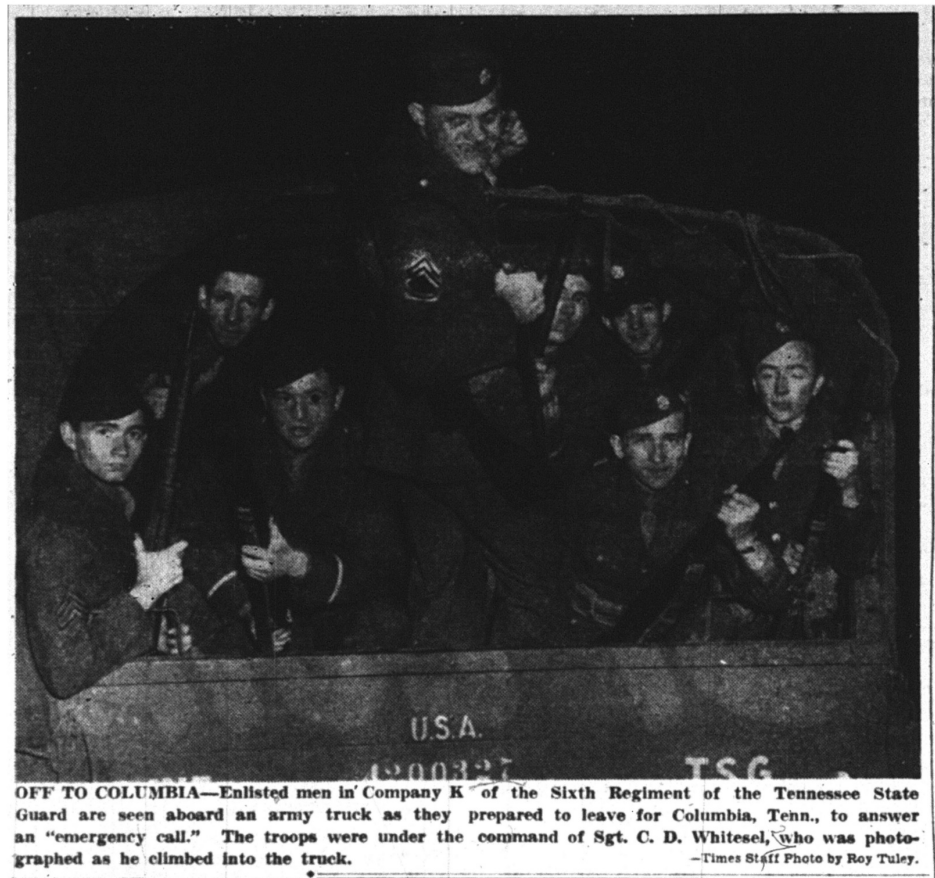


Fig. 10: Roy Tuley, “Off To Columbia,” March 1, 1946, photograph, *Chattanooga Times*, p 1. Reproduced with permission from the *Chattanooga Times Free Press*.

This photo shows several local state guardsmen as they sit in an army truck bound for Columbia. Almost all of them are looking directly at the camera, and a couple are smiling. They could just have easily been going on a routine mission rather than heading to the scene of a major racial conflagration. The fact that these are Chattanooga boys no

doubt engendered a sense of mutuality in many white readers. They could identify with these young men headed out to serve their state. Absent was any trace of the gravity of the events into which these men were traveling. Also gone was any hint of the role that Tennessee state officials had to play in the violence that had torn through Mink Slide.³²⁵

After the riot had subsided, Columbia-related photographs became fewer and farther between in the newspapers. On the rare occasions that they did appear they were likely to deal with the legal aspect of the story, portraying the indicted or the opposing teams of attorneys. Of particular interest to this study are the different ways in which some of the white papers as opposed to the black papers depicted the defendants. In late May and early June both the *Herald* and the *Banner* published similar photographs of the defendants as they sat in court. Here is the photograph from the *Banner*:

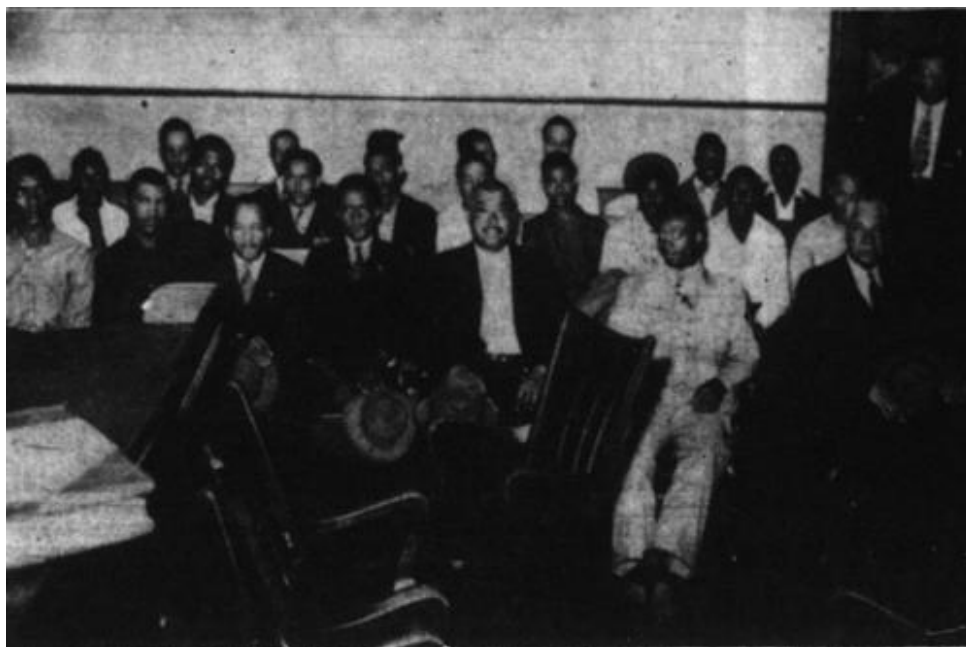


Fig. 11: John Morgan, “Principals In Maury Race Disorder Cases,” May 30, 1946, photograph, *Nashville Banner*, p. 2. Reproduced with permission from the Nashville Public Library, Special Collections.

And here is the photo a week later from the *Herald*:



DEFENDANTS—Shown above are most of the 25 Negro defendants arrested in connection with the Feb. 25-26 racial disturbance as they appeared in the Circuit Court room during the hearing of a plea of abatement filed on their behalf by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

Fig. 12: "Defendants," June 6, 1946, *Columbia Daily Herald*, p. 1. Reproduced with permission from the *Columbia Daily Herald*.

These are the only images of the defendants to appear in either paper after the initial period of the riot. They again show black men in a disempowered position before the law, this time sitting quietly in a court room. Either under arrest or impotently awaiting the machinations of the Southern legal system, these are the only ways these defendants are ever depicted in the pages of these white dailies.³²⁶

The story is quite different in the *Globe* and the *Defender*. Instead of showing black men under the control of white police or seated in a courtroom, the images in the *Defender* grant the defendants agency and humanity. Consider the following photograph that appeared in the paper a couple of weeks after the riot:

5 COLUMBIA 'RIOT' DEFENDANTS AND COUNSEL



Five of the defendants arrested after Negro citizens stood off a white mob in Columbia, Tenn., which intended lynching a Negro naval vet and his mother, confer with NAACP counsel after "attempted murder" charges had been lodged against them. Seated, left to right, are Maurice M. Weaver, Chattanooga, Tenn., attorney; Julius W. Blair, 76-year-old Columbia businessman defendant; Z.

Alexander Looby, Nashville attorney and member of the NAACP National Legal Committee and Walter White, executive secretary, NAACP. Standing, left to right: Defendants James Martin, grocer; James E. Norton, undertaker; Charles E. Blair, Saul W. Blair, barber shop proprietor, and M. G. Ferguson, president, Nashville branch, NAACP. —Anderson photo.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

Fig. 13: Anderson, "5 Columbia 'Riot' Defendants and Counsel," March 16, 1946, *Chicago Defender*, p. 3.

Reproduced with permission from the *Chicago Defender*.

Five of the defendants are here pictured looking well-dressed and dignified, away from the controlled, demeaning atmosphere of the jailhouse or the courtroom. Without the caption, it would be difficult to tell who was an attorney or NAACP official and who was one of the men apprehended in the post-riot dragnet.³²⁷ The *Globe* also published a photograph of one of the defendants, Calvin Lockridge. Lockridge appeared in one of the *Banner* photos reproduced above, looking rather bedraggled as he stood in jail. In the *Globe*'s photo, he appeared quite different:



Fig. 14: "Baptist Pastor," April 5, 1946, *Nashville Globe*, p. 1.

Identified as the Reverend Calvin Lockridge and shown in the attire he may have worn standing behind a Sunday morning pulpit, this photograph stands in stark contrast to the one in the *Banner*.³²⁸ Like the *Defender* photo above, it wrests the humanity of a black defendant back from the belittling grip of the white dailies' images, allowing him to appear as he would in his everyday life; a man, not a prisoner.

One of the white dailies did publish one photo of defendants not in the custody of either a cop or a court. It appeared in the *Tennessean* on the same day that the verdict was announced that cleared 23 of the 25 defendants:



Fig. 16: "Convicted Columbia Negroes," *Nashville Tennessean*, October 6, 1946, p. 2.

There are a couple of noteworthy things about this photograph.³²⁹ First, it is very interesting that the only photograph of apparently free black men the white dailies allowed to be published was of the two men convicted in the trial. They are the only ones who readers would be able to see wearing nice clothes, posing for a photograph with no police around. Why is that? It is almost as if the papers decided that these defendants' convictions neutralized the threat such an image represented. These black men could be portrayed as men, not prisoners, through the publication of this photograph because they had, in effect, been removed from society. At the same time, however, this photograph serves to connect the image of free black men with criminality. The worn out, dazed looking black men in the white dailies' photographs from the period of the riot gave one

picture of guilt. But that was an exceptional circumstance. This photograph takes that assignation and foists it upon more bourgeois conceptions of respectability. In that way the unthreatening, smiling black man wearing a suit and tie becomes just as much the picture of guilt as the t-shirt wearing, confounded men in Mink Slide apprehended amidst violence in the dead of night.

Conclusion

The Columbia riot did not occur in a vacuum. Neither did the reporting that sought to describe it to the larger public. Just as it is important to look at the concurrent context of historical, political events to understand the world in which the riot took place, it is important to study surrounding coverage from newspapers to better grasp the preexisting biases and conventions that inform their coverage, and the language in which those biases and conventions are expressed. Each age has its own rhetorical currency and reference points that informs discourse on a broad range of topics. In the case of 1946, such issues as World War II, an expansionist Soviet Union, and labor strikes informed debates about topics to which they were not directly related. Thus, both pro- and anti-FEPC lawmakers could use Hitler to score a political point, and papers like the *Nashville Banner* could excoriate anyone progressive on the issue of civil rights for being a potential Soviet agent.

Paying close attention to how different voices choose to frame different topics at a given time is crucial to understanding the ways in which negative realities of social life like prejudice were felt, experienced, and perpetuated throughout history. It is one thing to say that racism existed in Tennessee in 1946. It is quite another to say that in Tennessee in 1946 if you were a member of a pro-civil rights organization you might be smeared as a Communist. Since media spoke in the language of the times, to the people of the times, it is as good a place as any to try to get to the heart of these issues.

The purpose of this intensive study of four newspapers in Tennessee in 1946 was to examine the ways in which these newspapers were similar or different in their

coverage of the so-called Columbia race riot. Examining this issue hints at the various ways in which readers of a certain community at a certain time were confronted with information about the most important issues of the day. It is impossible to know for sure whether or not any given reader of the *Tennessean* changed his mind about the Columbia case, or about racial justice in the South more generally, by reading that paper, but an examination of that paper can at least give us an invaluable glimpse at the ways in which issues of race were constructed in the public sphere in 1946.

As to the research questions mentioned at the beginning of this study, first off there were many clear differences and clear similarities between the Columbia coverage in the white dailies. The Nashville *Banner* was clearly the most reactionary voice in the chorus of coverage, transducing its Cold War paranoia into a rhetorical cudgel it used to batter away at any semblance of support for the black victims of state sanctioned violence and injustice in Columbia. This proto-McCarthyite mindset of the *Banner* was joined with a deeply ingrained type of know-nothing allegiance to the Southern status quo. The result was a noxious parade of fear mongering and red-baiting in issue after issue of the paper in 1946. It betrayed no sympathy for the black defendants in Columbia, instead choosing to view their actions as part of an orchestrated plot to overthrow not just local authority but the whole federal government. Doubtlessly, some of its broadsides were designed for maximum political effect—aligned as it was with the forces of filibustering Senator Kenneth D. McKellar and his political master, Boss Crump—but whatever the motive, not only the black defenders of Mink Slide, but any black person who tried to improve civil rights in the south as well as their white allies were treated with utter contempt by the *Banner*.

The Columbia *Daily Herald* was undeniably the paper most closely aligned in its views to the *Banner*. At many times it seemed just as reactionary and just as insistent on looking for causes for the Columbia riot in places other than its own backyard, if not more so. It stood out from the *Banner* in its coverage mainly by dint of its position as the paper of record in the community where the riot occurred. That is to say, it was much more occupied with reassuring white readers in Maury County that the riot was an aberration with no long-lasting effects; that the status quo was fine and would soon be returned to. It also differed from the *Banner* in that it was at least a bit more receptive to dissenting voices, on occasion reprinting articles and editorials from the more liberal Chattanooga *Times*, something it is hard to imagine the *Banner* ever doing. Overall, though, the *Herald* propagated a white supremacist attitude that gave more importance to white lives and white authorities than to black.

Neither of these newspapers had nearly as much in common with the *Tennessean*, a self-professed champion of liberal causes. The *Tennessean* never bought into the idea that the men in Mink Slide were part of some Communist plot or even that they had consciously staged an uprising because of their discontent with the state of civil rights in Columbia. It acknowledged the central roles that some much more quotidian factors like spreading rumors and fear played in igniting the riot. It also seemed to be a bit more aware of the racial inequalities inherent in the Southern legal system. Although complimentary to authority figures at the beginning of the Columbia story, by the end some editorials made clear that the *Tennessean* recognized that the travesty of the riot was not all the fault of the black men in Mink Slide, a view analogously expressed in the Chattanooga *Times*. The *Tennessean* certainly had less of an axe to grind concerning the

Columbia case than the *Banner* of the *Herald*, even if it did share their dislike of much of what was written in the pamphlets. It was hard to pin down at times exactly what the editorial board thought of the riot. The paper was clearly liberal on many issues, such as the poll tax, but it did not fit the Columbia case into any of its preexisting narratives in the way that the *Banner* did. Race, perhaps, was a bridge too far for its liberalism in that time and place.

It seems redundant to make the point that the Nashville *Globe* provided a black voice and a black perspective on the Columbia story, but that is exactly what it did. While the dailies promulgated an understanding of what happened in Columbia that was decidedly obsequious to state power and often betrayed a stunning naiveté, if not outright denial, regarding the reality of Jim Crow-era oppression, the *Globe* unapologetically, and often caustically, revealed the prejudices and flawed assumptions that underlay such media accounts. It did this often by openly commenting on stories that had been published in the white dailies. It engaged in a level of watchdog journalism about journalism that was not apparent in any of the dailies, or in the *Defender* for that matter. The purpose of this activist media criticism was not simply to denigrate the journalistic integrity of the dailies, but to decry the ways in which the dailies' stories served to dehumanize black Americans by denying them the full range of motives and emotions that they afforded white subjects. In the pages of the *Globe*, the armed veterans in Mink Slide represented brave businessmen and family men who were desperate to ensure both their own safety and that of the Stephensons. Well aware of the lynchings and other racial violence that had plagued the area in the past, they were determined to make sure that history did not repeat itself on February 25.

This humanizing context was glossed over in the white dailies. Even those that did mention the fear of lynching as a motive for the Mink Slide residents' actions were unwilling to view those actions as justified. The overheard statements about white men buying rope were just rumors, after all.

But history underlies all. The *Globe* and the *Defender* recognized that. They saw through the romanticized haze that had transformed, in the paternalistic Southern white imagination, antebellum scenes of contented slaves wiping off their brows after a nice hard day's work, into visions of complacent black Columbians relaxing alongside whites in lawn chairs on the town square. They knew you could not really afford to be black and complacent anywhere in America, especially in the South. They knew it because they were tuned into the innumerable ways white-dominated power structures, whether they be the state police or the government, failed to appreciate the humanity of black experience. The unwillingness of the white dailies to attempt to understand that humanity was their biggest failing.

Looking back at the coverage of the Columbia riot, a couple of important lessons stand out for journalists dealing with racial unrest today. First, is the importance of context and of empathy. Without making themselves conversant with the history surrounding a certain story, a journalist cannot really claim to have covered that story in a responsible manner. Without trying to understand where the people in their stories are coming from, a journalist cannot have truly succeeded in getting to the heart of those stories. Just as white reporters who covered Columbia without casting a more curious eye at the city's violent racial history did a disservice in 1946, so, too, do journalists today who report on situations like that in Ferguson without providing much context concerning

the long, troubled relationship in the U.S. between African Americans and the police force. A similar disservice is committed when journalists fail to recognize that a black mother or father, for instance, is just as devastated by the loss of a child's life as a white mother or father.

Providing context and reporting from a place of empathy takes time and attention, of course, and such reporting has become a rarer commodity in the Twitter era when the rush to be first often seems more important than the drive to be accurate. Just as history underlies all, though, it eventually overlays all, and every article that gets written about racially charged issues today will likely be preserved for posterity. And in posterity, history becomes a judge. The papers examined here each took different tacks in reporting on the Columbia riot. From the modern perspective, decades after Jim Crow breathed its last and the Cold War sputtered out, it's not difficult to conclude which newspapers drilled closest to the truth.

Endnotes

- ¹ Gail Williams O'Brien, *The Color of the Law: Race, Violence, and Justice in the Post-World War II South*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 9.
- ² Robert W. Ikard, *No More Social Lynchings*, (Franklin: Hillsboro Press, 1997), 14-15.
- ³ O'Brien, *The Color of the Law*, 81-83.
- ⁴ O'Brien, *The Color of the Law*, 11-12.
- ⁵ O'Brien, *The Color of the Law*, 18, 97.
- ⁶ Ann V. Collins, *All Hell Broke Loose: American Race Riots from the Progressive Era through World War II* (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2012), 118.
- ⁷ O'Brien, *The Color of the Law*, 25, 28.
- ⁸ Maurice Weaver and Z. Alexander Looby, "What Happened at Columbia," in *Racial Violence in the United States*, ed. Allen D. Grimshaw (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1969), 155.
- ⁹ Ikard, *No More Social Lynchings*, 42-48.
- ¹⁰ Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, "The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past," *The Journal of American History* 91 (4) (March 2005): 1234-1235, <http://www.jstor.org.proxy.mul.missouri.edu/stable/3660172>
- ¹¹ David E. Sumner, "Nashville Banner," *The Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture*, <http://tennesseeencyclopedia.net/entry.php?rec=965>; David E. Sumner, "Nashville Tennessean," *The Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture*, <http://tennesseeencyclopedia.net/entry.php?rec=972>
- ¹² David L. Altheide and Christopher J. Schneider, *Qualitative Media Analysis* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2013), 55.
- ¹³ Archie Brown, *The Rise and Fall of Communism* (New York: Ecco, 2009), 167.
- ¹⁴ James T. Patterson, *Grand Expectations: The United States, 1945-1974* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 107.
- ¹⁵ John Lewis Gaddis, *The Cold War: A New History* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2005), 94.
- ¹⁶ Gaddis, *The Cold War*, 29.
- ¹⁷ Thomas Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001), 74, <http://eds.a.ebscohost.com.proxy.mul.missouri.edu/ehost/ebookviewer/ebook/ZTAwMHh uYV9fMjgyMTUwX19BTg2?sid=00afd218-4c0f-4ec0-988e-87db378566e1@sessionmgr4004&vid=0&format=EB&rid=1>
- ¹⁸ Philip A. Klinkner and Rogers M. Smith, *The Unsteady March: The Rise and Decline of Racial Equality in America* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999), 208.
- ¹⁹ Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line*, 75-76.
- ²⁰ Sean Dennis Cashman, *African-Americans and the Quest for Civil Rights, 1900-1990* (New York: New York University Press, 1991), 76.
- ²¹ Walter White, *A Man Called White: The Autobiography of Walter White* (New York: The Viking Press, 1948), 225.
- ²² Dominic J. Capeci, Jr. and Martha Wilkerson, *Layered Violence: The Detroit Rioters of 1943* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1991), 3-4, 145-146.
- ²³ Capeci and Wilkerson, *Layered Violence*, 87.
- ²⁴ Capeci and Wilkerson, *Layered Violence*, 20.

-
- ²⁵ Richard Polenberg, *One Nation Divisible: Class, Race, and Ethnicity in the United States Since 1938* (New York: Penguin Books, 1980), 74-78.
- ²⁶ Capeci and Wilkerson, *Layered Violence*, 19.
- ²⁷ Elliott M. Rudwick, *Race Riot at East St. Louis, July 2, 1917* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1964), 20, 173.
- ²⁸ Harper Barnes, *Never Been a Time: The 1917 Race Riot That Sparked the Civil Rights Movement* (New York: Walker & Company, 2008), 73.
- ²⁹ Barnes, *Never Been a Time*, 227.
- ³⁰ Rudwick, *Race Riot at East St. Louis*, 45-46.
- ³¹ Rudwick, *Race Riot at East St. Louis*, 67.
- ³² Barnes, *Never Been a Time*, 174.
- ³³ Rudwick, *Race Riot at East St. Louis*, 135.
- ³⁴ Rudwick, *Race Riot at East St. Louis*, 99; Barnes, *Never Been a Time*, 211.
- ³⁵ Jan Voogd, *Race Riots & Resistance: The Red Summer of 1919* (New York: Peter Lang, 2008), 2.
- ³⁶ William M. Tuttle, Jr., *Race Riot: Chicago in the Red Summer of 1919* (New York: Atheneum, 1980), 76, 123.
- ³⁷ Tuttle, *Race Riot: Chicago in the Red Summer of 1919*, 159.
- ³⁸ Tuttle, *Race Riot: Chicago in the Red Summer of 1919*, 4-10.
- ³⁹ Herbert Shapiro, *White Violence and Black Response: From Reconstruction to Montgomery* (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1988), 151.
- ⁴⁰ Tuttle, *Race Riot: Chicago in the Red Summer of 1919*, 43, 64.
- ⁴¹ James S. Hirsch, *Riot and Remembrance: The Tulsa Race War and Its Legacy* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2002), 38, 41.
- ⁴² Hirsch, *Riot and Remembrance*, 164.
- ⁴³ Hirsch, *Riot and Remembrance*, 77.
- ⁴⁴ Scott Ellsworth, *Death in a Promised Land: The Tulsa Race Riot of 1921* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982), 3, 46-49; Mark Robert Schneider, "We Return Fighting:" *The Civil Rights Movement in the Jazz Age* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2002), 156.
- ⁴⁵ Hirsch, *Riot and Remembrance*, 102.
- ⁴⁶ Hirsch, *Riot and Remembrance*, 118-120.
- ⁴⁷ Hirsch, *Riot and Remembrance*, 108-109.
- ⁴⁸ Collins, *All Hell Broke Loose*, 101.
- ⁴⁹ Schneider, "We Return Fighting," 159.
- ⁵⁰ Robert T. Kerlin, *The Voice of the Negro 1919* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Company, 1920), 34.
- ⁵¹ Daniel Kryder, *Divided Arsenal: Race and the American State During World War II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 67-68.
- ⁵² Richard M. Dalfiume, *Desegregation of the U.S. Armed Forces: Fighting on Two Fronts 1939-1953* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1969), 73, 74.
- ⁵³ Philip Dray, *At the Hands of Persons Unknown: The Lynching of Black America* (New York: Random House, 2002), 369, 370.
- ⁵⁴ Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 20.

-
- ⁵⁵ John Egerton, *Speak Now Against the Day: The Generation Before the Civil Rights Movement in the South* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 359, 365.
- ⁵⁶ Michal R. Belknap, *Federal Law and Southern Order: Racial Violence and Constitutional Conflict in the Post-Brown South* (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 1987), 21.
- ⁵⁷ Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line*, 55.
- ⁵⁸ United Press, "Hostile Public, States' Laws Put Crimp in Klan Comeback," *Nashville Tennessean*, September 9, 1946, 2.
- ⁵⁹ United Press, "KKK Meeting In Knoxville Tonight," *Columbia Daily Herald*, May 18, 1946, 1; United Press, "Anti-Racial Vandalism Runs Riot in Los Angeles Area," *Nashville Tennessean*, May 21, 1946, 4.
- ⁶⁰ United Press, "South Carolina KKK Probe Asked By Negro," *Columbia Daily Herald*, June 13, 1946, 1; United Press, Untitled, *Columbia Daily Herald*, August 16, 1946, 1.
- ⁶¹ Robert A. Garson, *The Democratic Party and the Politics of Sectionalism, 1941-1948* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1974), 74, 76; Robert Shogan, *Harry Truman and the Struggle for Racial Justice* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2013), 82-83.
- ⁶² Egerton, *Speak Now*, 401-402.
- ⁶³ United Press, "Filibuster Kills FEPC; Senate Drops Measure," *Nashville Tennessean*, February 10, 1946, 1; James E. Roper, "FEPC Bill Defeat Set Tomorrow," *Nashville Banner*, February 8, 1946, 1.
- ⁶⁴ United Press, "O'Daniel Raps FEPC Bill as 'Communitic,'" *Nashville Banner*, February 1, 1946, 1.
- ⁶⁵ United Press, "Move To Halt Filibuster on FEPC Fails," *Nashville Banner*, January 23, 1946, 1.
- ⁶⁶ United Press, "Bilbo Warns Of Party Rift Over FEPC," *Nashville Banner*, January 31, 1946, 1, 4.
- ⁶⁷ United Press, "Truman Backs Cloture Move In Filibuster," *Nashville Banner*, January 24, 1946, 1.
- ⁶⁸ United Press, "George Says Communists Back FEPC," *Nashville Banner*, January 29, 1946, 1, 2.
- ⁶⁹ United Press, "Filibuster Kills FEPC; Senate Drops Measure," *Nashville Tennessean*, February 10, 1946, 1.
- ⁷⁰ James E. Roper, "Public Opinion Against FEPC, Russell Says," *Nashville Banner*, January 22, 1946, 1.
- ⁷¹ Associated Press, "FEPC To Doom Enterprise, Ellender Says," *Nashville Banner*, February 6, 1946, 1.
- ⁷² Associated Press, "Southern Senators Hit Truman, Party on FEPC," *Nashville Tennessean*, February 5, 1946, 4.
- ⁷³ United Press, "Bilbo Warns Of Party Rift Over FEPC," *Nashville Banner*, January 31, 1946, 1.
- ⁷⁴ United Press, "Dixie Democrats Dominate Caucus," *Nashville Tennessean*, April 18, 1946, 1.
- ⁷⁵ Cashman, *African Americans and the Quest*, 99-100; Shogan, *Harry Truman and the Struggle*, 87.

-
- ⁷⁶ Dray, *At the Hands*, 366-368.
- ⁷⁷ Ikard, *No More Social Lynchings*, 22.
- ⁷⁸ Dalfiume, *Desegregation of the U.S. Armed Forces*, 123.
- ⁷⁹ Cashman, *African Americans and the Quest*, 81-82.
- ⁸⁰ United Press, "Negro Council Asks Mississippi's Colored To Move," *Columbia Daily Herald*, February 9, 1946, 4.
- ⁸¹ Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights*, 43-44.
- ⁸² Carol Anderson, "From Hope to Disillusion: African Americans, the United Nations, and the Struggle for Human Rights, 1944-1947," *Diplomatic History* 20 (4) (1996): 546, doi: 10.1111/j.1467-7709.1996.tb00286.x
- ⁸³ Bobby L. Lovett, *The Civil Rights Movement in Tennessee* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2005), 17, 21.
- ⁸⁴ Garson, *The Democratic Party*, 187-188.
- ⁸⁵ Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights*, 28.
- ⁸⁶ George Lewis, *The White South and the Red Menace: Segregationists, Anticommunism, and Massive Resistance, 1945-1965* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2004), 15-16.
- ⁸⁷ Michael R. Real, *Exploring Media Culture: A Guide* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1996), 120.
- ⁸⁸ Real, *Exploring Media Culture*, 119-120.
- ⁸⁹ Elfriede Fursich, "In Defense of Textual Analysis: Restoring a Challenged Method for Journalism and Media Studies," *Journalism Studies* 10 (2) (2009): 240, doi: 10.1080/14616700802374050
- ⁹⁰ Norman Fairclough, *Analyzing Discourse: Textual Analysis for Social Research* (London: Routledge, 2003), 11.
- ⁹¹ O'Brien, *The Color of the Law*, 202, 203.
- ⁹² Mary James Cottrell, "Banner Story Cited in Fight On FEPC Bill," *Nashville Banner*, January 18, 1946, 1.
- ⁹³ "Who's Filibustering," *Nashville Banner*, February 7, 1946, 4; Leslie T. Hart, "Discord Seen In McKellar Opposition," *Nashville Banner*, January 26, 1946, 1.
- ⁹⁴ "PAC Political Incubator Claims Its Own," *Nashville Banner*, July 22, 1946, 1.
- ⁹⁵ "Foster Confirms It," *Nashville Banner*, January 17, 1946, 4.
- ⁹⁶ "Quod Erat Demonstrandum," *Nashville Banner*, January 25, 1946, 18.
- ⁹⁷ "Daily Worker Raps McKellar For Lead in Killing FEPC," *Nashville Banner*, May 7, 1946, 1.
- ⁹⁸ James G. Stahlman, "From The Shoulder," *Nashville Banner*, March 12, 1946, 1, 2.
- ⁹⁹ "Mr. Clark, The KKK, and Communism," *Nashville Banner*, May 21, 1946, 4.
- ¹⁰⁰ Merl R. Eppse, "Activities of Colored People," *Nashville Banner*, March 15, 1946, 36.
- ¹⁰¹ "Services In Nashville Churches: Negro," *Nashville Banner*, January 12, 1946, 5.
- ¹⁰² "Cramped Quarters Show Need for New Negro YWCA; Drive To Start January 14," *Nashville Banner*, January 9, 1946, 5; "Here's Easy Way to Contribute To Colored YWCA Building Fund," *Nashville Banner*, January 31, 1946, 23.
- ¹⁰³ "Negro Golf Tourney To Open on Monday," *Nashville Banner*, March 13, 1946, 21; "Negro Scout Camp Site Is Purchased," *Nashville Banner*, April 1, 1946, 7.

-
- ¹⁰⁴ “Negro Bound Over For Stealing Truck,” *Nashville Banner*, January 3, 1946, 6; “Negro Slasher Still At Large,” *Nashville Banner*, April 22, 1946, 6; “Negro Hunted After Attack On Woman,” *Nashville Banner*, March 22, 1946, 24.
- ¹⁰⁵ Roy L. Garis, “The Negro In Nashville,” *Nashville Banner*, October 4, 1946, 1, 4.
- ¹⁰⁶ Roy L. Garis, “The Negro In Nashville,” *Nashville Banner*, October 1, 1946, 1, 3.
- ¹⁰⁷ Roy L. Garis, “The Negro In Nashville,” *Nashville Banner*, October 5, 1946, 1.
- ¹⁰⁸ ““Discrimination,”” *Nashville Banner*, January 30, 1946, 4.
- ¹⁰⁹ James G. Stahlman, “From the Shoulder,” *Nashville Banner*, February 21, 1946, 1.
- ¹¹⁰ “Red Agitators Pushing Negro to Crossroads,” *Nashville Banner*, June 1, 1946, 4.
- ¹¹¹ “‘Minority’ Crusade Hurtful To Real Brotherhood,” *Nashville Banner*, February 19, 1946, 6.
- ¹¹² “Get These Murderers,” *Nashville Banner*, July 27, 1946, 4.
- ¹¹³ Hugh Davis Graham, *Crisis in Print: Desegregation and the Press in Tennessee* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1967), 34-36, 59.
- ¹¹⁴ Jennings Perry, *Democracy Begins At Home* (Philadelphia; Lippincott, 1944), 25.
- ¹¹⁵ O’Brien, *The Color of the Law*, 205.
- ¹¹⁶ “Tickets on Sale,” *Nashville Tennessean*, July 17, 1946, 10.
- ¹¹⁷ “The Veteran’s One (1) Free Vote,” *Nashville Tennessean*, July 2, 1946, 16.
- ¹¹⁸ “Poll Tax Lashed by Speakers As TEA State Convention Ends,” *Nashville Tennessean*, April 20, 1946, 1; “No Place in Constitution For Poll Tax, Lawyer Says,” *Nashville Tennessean*, April 26, 1946, 28.
- ¹¹⁹ “Hi-Y Legislature Heaves State Poll Tax Out Window,” *Nashville Tennessean*, February 3, 1946, 1.
- ¹²⁰ “Now’s the Time,” *Nashville Tennessean*, March 24, 1946, 24-A.
- ¹²¹ “Mississippi’s Chance,” *Nashville Tennessean*, March 3, 1946, 24-A.
- ¹²² “Out of the South,” *Nashville Tennessean*, March 3, 1946, 24-A.
- ¹²³ Joe Hatcher, “Politics: ‘Commie Hunt’ Under Way as Red Herring To Becloud Issues in 1946 Vote Drives,” *Nashville Tennessean*, April 26, 1946, 1.
- ¹²⁴ “Alabama Wouldn’t Scare,” *Nashville Tennessean*, June 6, 1946, 14.
- ¹²⁵ “Whither America?,” *Nashville Tennessean*, June 11, 1946, 8.
- ¹²⁶ W.H. Shackelford, “Happenings Among Colored People,” *Nashville Tennessean*, 31-A.
- ¹²⁷ Special, “Negro Man Killed In Dice Game,” *Nashville Tennessean*, June 17, 1946, 1; “Police Hunting Negro for Assault,” *Nashville Tennessean*, March 22, 1946, 1.
- ¹²⁸ “Negro College Fund Push Opens,” *Nashville Tennessean*, May 2, 1946, 8; “Negro Veterans Organize Club,” *Nashville Tennessean*, September 15, 1946, 14-A; “Fund for Negro YWCA Asked,” *Nashville Tennessean*, February 1, 1946, 4.
- ¹²⁹ “Well Begun,” *Nashville Tennessean*, January 15, 1946, 6.
- ¹³⁰ Alley, “Hambone’s Meditations,” *Nashville Tennessean*, January 2, 1946, 14; Tom Little, “Sunflower Street,” *Nashville Tennessean*, February 2, 1946, 27.
- ¹³¹ “Local Negro, 75, Takes First Ride In Airplane,” *Nashville Tennessean*, April 1, 1946, 9.
- ¹³² “Toll Times Four,” *Nashville Tennessean*, July 28, 1946, 26-A.
- ¹³³ “Back of the K.K.K.,” *Nashville Tennessean*, June 1, 1946, 4.
- ¹³⁴ Ikard, *No More Social Lynchings*, 5; “Maury County’s 1940 Population 40,357,” *Columbia Daily Herald*, October 9, 1946, 1.

-
- ¹³⁵ “17 New Books At Library,” *Columbia Daily Herald*, April 8, 1946, 1.
- ¹³⁶ United Press, “Houston Strike Is Temporarily Averted; Detroit Dispute Mediated,” *Columbia Daily Herald*, February 23, 1946, 1; “Maury Hit Hard As 2 Phosphate Plants Closed By Rail Strike,” *Columbia Daily Herald*, May 24, 1946, 1.
- ¹³⁷ United Press, “Riots Spreading Through India But Order is Finally Gained In Bombay,” *Columbia Daily Herald*, February 25, 1946, 1.
- ¹³⁸ “President Truman and the Congress,” January 5, 1946, 2.
- ¹³⁹ “Surprise Move Puts FEPC Into The Senate Again,” *Columbia Daily Herald*, January 21, 1946, 2.
- ¹⁴⁰ “Another Reason Why We Will Support McKellar,” *Columbia Daily Herald*, February 6, 1946, 2.
- ¹⁴¹ “Nation’s Health Bill,” *Columbia Daily Herald*, April 11, 1946, 2.
- ¹⁴² “All Groups Of People Should Be Treated Equally,” *Columbia Daily Herald*, April 26, 1946, 2.
- ¹⁴³ “Colored News,” *Columbia Daily Herald*, May 16, 1946, 6.
- ¹⁴⁴ “Pete Polk, 35, Negro, Killed By Shot Gun Blast,” *Columbia Daily Herald*, January 21, 1946, 1; “Negro Held In Death of Common-Law Wife,” *Columbia Daily Herald*, March 25, 1946, 1; “Negro Knifing Puts One In Jail, One In Hospital,” *Columbia Daily Herald*, August 20, 1946, 1.
- ¹⁴⁵ United Press, “Negro Kills White Woman And Wounds Her Daughter, 26,” *Columbia Daily Herald*, July 24, 1946, 1; United Press, “Negro Is Held For Shooting White Girl,” *Columbia Daily Herald*, June 19, 1946, 1; “2 Negroes Are Held After White Girl Hit By Car,” *Columbia Daily Herald*, August 20, 1946, 1.
- ¹⁴⁶ “Negro Veterans Told Of Plan For Farm Training,” *Columbia Daily Herald*, March 6, 1946, 1; “Center Star Negroes In Garden Contest,” *Columbia Daily Herald*, April 24, 1946, 4.”
- ¹⁴⁷ “Negroes Pledge \$4,000 Toward New School Building,” *Columbia Daily Herald*, February 21, 1946, 1.
- ¹⁴⁸ “Columbia Negroes Show Patriotic Spirit,” *Columbia Daily Herald*, February 22, 1946, 2.
- ¹⁴⁹ “An ‘Outsider’ Reports,” *Nashville Globe and Independent*, July 12, 1946, 4.
- ¹⁵⁰ “James Alvin McGee 1st of 33 White Babies Born Here During December,” *Columbia Daily Herald*, January 26, 1946, 1.
- ¹⁵¹ “9th Annual Stork Edition,” *Columbia Daily Herald*, March 19, 1946, 9.
- ¹⁵² “Lynching Never Justified,” *Columbia Daily Herald*, July 27, 1946, 2.
- ¹⁵³ United Press, Untitled, *Columbia Daily Herald*, June 22, 1946, 1; United Press, “6 White Men Held For Death Of Negro Thief,” *Columbia Daily Herald*, July 30, 1946, 1.
- ¹⁵⁴ United Press, “KKK Meeting in Knoxville Tonight,” *Columbia Daily Herald*, May 18, 1946, 1.
- ¹⁵⁵ Dorothy Beeler, “Race Riot In Columbia, Tennessee February 25-27, 1946,” *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* Volume 39, No. 1(Spring 1980): 49.
- ¹⁵⁶ Henry Lewis Suggs, ed., *The Black Press in the South, 1865-1979* (Westport, Ct.: Greenwood Press, 1983), 329, 331; Lewis L. Laska, “The *Nashville Globe*, 1906-1960 Abstracted,” <https://www.scribd.com/doc/56125629/History-of-the-Nashville-Globe-by-Lewis-Laska>.

-
- ¹⁵⁷ Gabriel A. Briggs, *The New Negro in the Old South* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2015), 129.
- ¹⁵⁸ "Center of the Center," *Nashville Tennessean*, February 24, 1946, 22-A.
- ¹⁵⁹ "Plans To 'Resettle' All Negro Business Institutions Revealed," *Nashville Globe and Independent*, March 1, 1946, 1.
- ¹⁶⁰ Mary Jane Brooks, "City Auditorium, Plaza Plans Announced," *Nashville Banner*, February 23, 1946, 1, 2.
- ¹⁶¹ "Plans To 'Resettle,'" 1.
- ¹⁶² United Press, "14 Mississippi Negroes Held For Shooting Officers," *Columbia Daily Herald*, August 21, 1946, 1; United Press, "Posse Narrows Negro Man Hunt," *Nashville Tennessean*, August 20, 1946, 12; Associated Press, "12 Negroes Surrender In Mississippi," *Nashville Banner*, August 20, 1946, 1, 2.
- ¹⁶³ "Truth of the Matter," *Nashville Globe and Independent*, September 6, 1946, 4.
- ¹⁶⁴ "Truth of the Matter," 4.
- ¹⁶⁵ "Figures On Crime," *Nashville Globe and Independent*, September 13, 1946, 4.
- ¹⁶⁶ "Good News, If True," *Nashville Globe and Independent*, January 11, 1946, 4.
- ¹⁶⁷ "Negro Soldiers Want To Get Out Of China," *Nashville Globe and Independent*, January 4, 1946, 1.
- ¹⁶⁸ "Consider the Source," *Nashville Globe and Independent*, April 19, 1946, 4.
- ¹⁶⁹ "Ponder What Hitler Said," *Nashville Globe and Independent*, June 28, 1946, 4.
- ¹⁷⁰ "Down With Filibustering," *Nashville Globe and Independent*, February 15, 1946, 4.
- ¹⁷¹ "Dishonest and Dumb," *Nashville Globe and Independent*, February 1, 1946, 4.
- ¹⁷² "NAACP Must Reform," *Nashville Globe and Independent*, July 26, 1946, 4.
- ¹⁷³ "News of Neighborhood Towns," *Nashville Globe and Independent*, January 4, 1946, 3.
- ¹⁷⁴ "Criticism Of Officers In Difficulty Here Saturday," *Columbia Daily Herald*, January 14, 1946, 2.
- ¹⁷⁵ "2 Negroes Held for Attack On Veteran," *Columbia Daily Herald*, February 25, 1946, 1.
- ¹⁷⁶ Ikard, *No More Social Lynchings*, 14; O'Brien, *The Color of the Law*, 9
- ¹⁷⁷ Tom Ketterson and Paul Page, "70 Are Held In Local Jail After Seven Are Wounded In Night-long Racial Riots," February 26, 1946, 1, 8.
- ¹⁷⁸ Ketterson and Page, "70 Are Held," 8.
- ¹⁷⁹ O'Brien, *The Color of the Law*, 82.
- ¹⁸⁰ Ketterson and Page, "70 Are Held," 8.
- ¹⁸¹ "Keep Calm," *Columbia Daily Herald*, February 26, 1946, 2.
- ¹⁸² "Keep Calm," 2.
- ¹⁸³ "State Highway Patrol and State Guardsmen," *Columbia Daily Herald*, February 28, 1946, 2.
- ¹⁸⁴ "Mayor Says Goal Here Is Return To Normal," *Columbia Daily Herald*, March 4, 1946, 1.
- ¹⁸⁵ "All But Few Negroes Are Freed On Bail," *Columbia Daily Herald*, March 2, 1946, 1.
- ¹⁸⁶ "FBI Probe Only Activity Today From Disorders Here Last Week," *Columbia Daily Herald*, March 5, 1946, 1.
- ¹⁸⁷ "Mayor Eldridge Denham's Sunday Broadcast Was Good," *Columbia Daily Herald*, March 5, 1946, 2.

-
- ¹⁸⁸ “Striking Back,” *Columbia Daily Herald*, March 9, 1946, 2.
- ¹⁸⁹ “Our Appreciation,” *Columbia Daily Herald*, February 27, 1946, 2.
- ¹⁹⁰ “Agitators Brought on the ‘Columbia Case,’” *Columbia Daily Herald*, February 28, 1946, 2.
- ¹⁹¹ “Local Officials Say Charges Of Mishandling Of Disorders Untrue,” *Columbia Daily Herald*, March 14, 1946, 1.
- ¹⁹² “Arsonists At Work,” *Columbia Daily Herald*, March 18, 1946, 2.
- ¹⁹³ Leslie T. Hart, “Order Restored In Columbia; Officers Probe Arms Source, Outside Contacts,” *Nashville Banner*, February 26, 1946, 1-2.
- ¹⁹⁴ “A Lesson At Columbia,” *Nashville Banner*, February 26, 1946, 6.
- ¹⁹⁵ “Agitators Brought on the ‘Columbia Case,’” *Nashville Banner*, February 27, 1946, 4.
- ¹⁹⁶ Benwah Kail Sparkes, “Maury Official Hints White Persons Helped To Incite Negroes,” *Nashville Banner*, March 1, 1946, 2.
- ¹⁹⁷ “Long Distance Calls To Columbia After Riot Are Being Checked,” *Nashville Banner*, March 2, 1946, 1.
- ¹⁹⁸ Leslie T. Hart, “Probes are Continuing in Columbia,” *Nashville Banner*, March 8, 1946, 8.
- ¹⁹⁹ Special, “FBI Files Columbia Report, Maury Official Raps ‘Agitators,’” *Nashville Banner*, March 14, 1946, 1.
- ²⁰⁰ “Arsonists At Work,” *Nashville Banner*, March 15, 1946, 22.
- ²⁰¹ Staff Correspondents, “Four Police, Two Civilians Shot in Maury Race Clash; 500 Troopers Called Out,” *Nashville Tennessean*, February 26, 1946, 1.
- ²⁰² Beasley Thompson, “Columbia Quiet As Race Clash Violence Eases,” *Nashville Tennessean*, February 27, 1946, 1.
- ²⁰³ Walter Hurt, “Nashville Colonel Halted Columiba ‘Death March,’” *Nashville Tennessean*, February 27, 1946, 2.
- ²⁰⁴ Beasley Thompson, “Alleged Leaders In Columbia Row Freed On Bond,” *Nashville Tennessean*, March 2, 1946, 2.
- ²⁰⁵ M. Beasley Thompson, “State Guard Leaves Columbia,” *Nashville Tennessean*, March 4, 1946, 1.
- ²⁰⁶ “Nick of Time,” *Nashville Tennessean*, February 27, 1946, 10.
- ²⁰⁷ M. Beasley Thompson, “State Guard Leaves Columbia,” March 4, 1946, 2.
- ²⁰⁸ Walter White, “White Southerners’ ‘Superiority’ Perplexing,” *Chicago Defender*, April 13, 1946, 15.
- ²⁰⁹ “Columbians Acted in Self-Defense,” *Nashville Globe and Independent*, March 1, 1946, 2.
- ²¹⁰ “Columbians Acted in Self-Defense,” 1.
- ²¹¹ “Columbians Acted in Self-Defense,” 4.
- ²¹² “Columbians Acted in Self-Defense,” 4.
- ²¹³ “Walter White Visits State and Puts NAACP Behind Defense of Columbia Citizens,” *Nashville Globe and Independent*, March 8, 1946, 1.
- ²¹⁴ “Dailies Prefer Fiction,” *Nashville Globe and Independent*, March 8, 1946, 4.
- ²¹⁵ “Dailies Prefer Fiction,” 4.
- ²¹⁶ “Dailies Prefer Fiction,” 4.
- ²¹⁷ “Facts And Pictures On Columbia Prove Daily Press Mised Public,” *Nashville Globe and Independent*, April 12, 1946, 1.

-
- ²¹⁸ “Facts and Pictures,” 1.
- ²¹⁹ Associated Press, “Race Disorder Brings Curfew For Columbia,” *Chattanooga Times*, February 27, 1946, 1.
- ²²⁰ “Wild Shooting in Columbia,” *Chattanooga Times*, February 27, 1946, 8.
- ²²¹ Associated Press, “Columbia Probing Outside Influence,” *Chattanooga Times*, March 3, 1946, 23.
- ²²² Springer Gibson, “Nation’s Attention Centered On Columbia, Disorder Site,” *Chattanooga Times*, March 24, 1946, 1, 23.
- ²²³ “Nation’s Attention Centered,” 1, 23.
- ²²⁴ Springer Gibson, “Lies, Wild Rumors Traveled Fast During Columbia Race Disorders,” *Chattanooga Times*, March 25, 1946, 1, 2.
- ²²⁵ Springer Gibson, “Columbia Bewildered at Notoriety Attached to Recent Race Discord,” *Chattanooga Times*, March 26, 1946, 1, 2.
- ²²⁶ “Columbia Bewildered,” 1, 2.
- ²²⁷ “Columbia Bewildered,” 1, 2.
- ²²⁸ “Two Slain As Race Rioters Terrorize Tenn. Town,” *Chicago Defender*, March 9, 1946, 1, 12.
- ²²⁹ “Columbia Boasts Long Tradition As Lynch Town,” *Chicago Defender*, March 9, 1946, 12.
- ²³⁰ Richard Durham, “Eyewitness Describes Riot Town,” *Chicago Defender*, March 9, 1946, 2.
- ²³¹ “HITLERISM IS NOT DEAD,” *Chicago Defender*, March 9, 1946, 14.
- ²³² “HITLERISM IS NOT DEAD,” 14.
- ²³³ Belknap, *Federal Law and Southern Order*, 19-20.
- ²³⁴ O’Brien, *The Color of the Law*, 187, 201.
- ²³⁵ “U.S. Probe Fine: Why Not Broaden?,” *Columbia Daily Herald*, March 26, 1946, 2.
- ²³⁶ Special, “White Men May Be Indicted By Federal Jurors For Pamphlet,” *Columbia Daily Herald*, April 8, 1946, 1.
- ²³⁷ “U.S. Probe Fine,” 2.
- ²³⁸ “Local Negroes In Vote League, Red Newspaper Says,” *Columbia Daily Herald*, April 16, 1946, 1.
- ²³⁹ “Many And Varied Race Riot Stories Are Told,” *Columbia Daily Herald*, April 30, 1946, 1.
- ²⁴⁰ “Many And Varied,” 1.
- ²⁴¹ “Many And Varied,” 1, 3.
- ²⁴² “What Is The Purpose Of The Race Riot Propaganda,” *Columbia Daily Herald*, April 30, 1946, 2.
- ²⁴³ “What Is The Purpose...,” 2.
- ²⁴⁴ “No Civil Rights In Maury Abused, U.S. Jury Reports,” *Nashville Tennessean*, June 15, 1946, 1.
- ²⁴⁵ “The Truth About The Columbia Cases — The Grand Jury Report,” *Columbia Daily Herald*, 2.
- ²⁴⁶ “Those Who Veer From Truth Render All A Disservice,” *Columbia Daily Herald*, June 15, 1946, 2.
- ²⁴⁷ “Freedom of Press - Lack May Mean War,” *Columbia Daily Herald*, August 17, 1946, 2.

-
- ²⁴⁸ Special, "Communist Daily Worker Pushes CIO Drive In South," *Nashville Banner*, April 12, 1946, 1.
- ²⁴⁹ "Communist Daily Worker Editor for South Helps Maury Negroes Organize," *Nashville Banner*, April 16, 1946, 1; Special, "Leaflet Seeks Funds To Aid Maury Negroes," *Nashville Banner*, April 27, 1946, 1; "Negro Defense Drive Here Reported Set," *Nashville Banner*, April 29, 1946, 1.
- ²⁵⁰ "Grand Jury Puts Blame Where It Belongs," *Nashville Banner*, June 15, 1946, 4.
- ²⁵¹ "South Can Handle Its Own Affairs," June 17, 1946, 4.
- ²⁵² "To the Bottom," *Nashville Tennessean*, March 17, 1946, 28-A.
- ²⁵³ "'Tennessean' Breaks With South's Tradition On Federal Authority," *Nashville Globe and Independent*, 22 March 1946, 1.
- ²⁵⁴ "To the Very Bottom!," *Nashville Globe and Independent*, March 22, 1946, 2.
- ²⁵⁵ "Federals Take Over In Columbia," *Nashville Globe and Independent*, March 8, 1946, 1.
- ²⁵⁶ "FBI Making Careful Probe At Columbia," *Nashville Globe and Independent*, March 15, 1946, 1.
- ²⁵⁷ "Federal Grand Jury Begins Probe," *Nashville Globe and Independent*, April 12, 1946, 1.
- ²⁵⁸ "Secrecy Maintained On Grand Jury Probe," *Nashville Globe and Independent*, April 19, 1946, 1.
- ²⁵⁹ "U.S. Grand Jury Fails To Make Its Report," *Nashville Globe and Independent*, May 3, 1946, 4.
- ²⁶⁰ "Too Late, Your Honor," *Nashville Globe and Independent*, June 21, 1946, 4.
- ²⁶¹ "Council Finds Rights Abused," *Chattanooga Times*, June 15, 1946, 1.
- ²⁶² "A Lesson For The South," *Chattanooga Times*, June 18, 1946, 8.
- ²⁶³ "Facts Conflict With Findings," *Chicago Defender*, June 22, 1946, 1.
- ²⁶⁴ Walter White, "Columbia Whitewash," *Chicago Defender*, June 22, 1946, 15.
- ²⁶⁵ "The Columbia Grand Jury Whitewash," *Chicago Defender*, June 29, 1946, 14.
- ²⁶⁶ Special, "Judge Tells Attorneys To Speed Venire Quiz Or He Will Take Over," *Columbia Daily Herald*, August 21, 1946, 1.
- ²⁶⁷ "New Jury Panel Will Be Drawn In Lawrence Soon," *Columbia Daily Herald*, August 31, 1946, 1.
- ²⁶⁸ "Lawrence Verdict May Come Tonight," *Columbia Daily Herald*, October 4, 1946, 1.
- ²⁶⁹ "Underwood Denies Rights Of Negroes Were Violated," *Columbia Daily Herald*, September 25, 1946, 1.
- ²⁷⁰ "23 Columbia Negroes Freed, 2 Guilty Ask For New Trial," *Columbia Daily Herald*, October 5, 1946, 1.
- ²⁷¹ "No Prejudice Here," *Columbia Daily Herald*, October 5, 1946, 2.
- ²⁷² Danny Bingham, "Bumpus Flays Communists In Maury Case," *Nashville Banner*, July 1, 1946, 1, 6.
- ²⁷³ Danny Bingham, "Jury Selection Begins After Delay Attempt," *Nashville Banner*, August 15, 1946, 1.
- ²⁷⁴ Associated Press, "Negro Pastor Prefers Communism to U.S. Democracy," *Nashville Banner*, August 26, 1946, 1.
- ²⁷⁵ "The New York Times Looks At Columbia," *Nashville Banner*, July 9, 1946, 1.
- ²⁷⁶ "The New York Times Looks At Columbia," 2.

-
- ²⁷⁷ “The New York Times Looks At Columbia,” 2.
- ²⁷⁸ “The New York Times Looks At Columbia,” 2
- ²⁷⁹ “The Times Enlightens,” *Nashville Banner*, July 11, 1946, 6.
- ²⁸⁰ “An ‘Outsider’ Reports,” *Nashville Globe and Independent*, July 12, 1946, 4.
- ²⁸¹ Danny Bingham, “State Resumes Arguments in Negroes’ Trial,” *Nashville Banner*, October 3, 1946, 1.
- ²⁸² Danny Bingham, “Letters Threaten Maury Judge As Case Nears Jury,” *Nashville Banner*, October 4, 1946, 1.
- ²⁸³ “Letters Threaten,” 6.
- ²⁸⁴ Danny Bingham, “Source of Shot Key Point In Defense,” *Nashville Banner*, September 19, 1946, 1.
- ²⁸⁵ “Source of Shot,” 2.
- ²⁸⁶ “Letters Threaten,” 2.
- ²⁸⁷ “Justice Under Law,” *Nashville Banner*, October 5, 1946, 4.
- ²⁸⁸ “South Can Handle Its Own Affairs,” 4.
- ²⁸⁹ “Justice Under Law,” 4.
- ²⁹⁰ Lois Laycook, “Courtroom Filibuster Opens Columbia Case,” *Nashville Tennessean*, May 31, 1946, 16.
- ²⁹¹ Lois Laycook, “Filibuster Continues In Columbia Case,” *Nashville Tennessean*, June 1, 1946, 2; Lois Laycook, “Filibuster on Negro Jury Service Continued in Maury Hearing,” *Nashville Tennessean*, June 5, 1946, 3; Lois Laycook, “Columbia Filibuster Can Go On ‘Until Christmas’ Prosecutor Says,” *Nashville Tennessean*, June 6, 1946, 13; Lois Laycook, “Court’s Effort Fails To End Filibuster,” *Nashville Tennessean*, June 8, 1946, 2.
- ²⁹² Lois Laycook, “Columbia Defense Closes ‘Filibuster,’” *Nashville Tennessean*, June 12, 1946, 9.
- ²⁹³ Lois Laycook, “State Attempts to Devalue Previous Testimony of Negroes,” *Nashville Tennessean*, June 14, 1946, 31.
- ²⁹⁴ H.B. Teeter, “Lynching Rumor Revealed As Cause of Race Clash,” *Nashville Tennessean*, September 26, 1946, 1.
- ²⁹⁵ “Lynching Rumor Revealed,” 1, 2.
- ²⁹⁶ H.B. Teeter, “Negro Tells Graphic Story Of Columbia Racial Tension,” *Nashville Tennessean*, September 28, 1946, 1; H.B. Teeter, “Witness Airs Hanging Threat At Columbia Negro Trial,” *Nashville Tennessean*, October 1, 1946, 1; H.B. Teeter, “Columbia Defendants Taken At Random, Defense Says,” October 3, 1946, 1.
- ²⁹⁷ Danny Bingham, “Defense Offers Alibis for Julius Blair,” *Nashville Banner*, September 28, 1946, 1; Danny Bingham, “Defense Rests Case in Maury Negroes’ Trial,” *Nashville Banner*, October 1, 1946, 1; Danny Bingham, “State Resumes Arguments in Negroes’ Trial,” *Nashville Banner*, October 3, 1946, 1.
- ²⁹⁸ “The Columbia Case,” *Nashville Tennessean*, October 6, 1946, 24-A.
- ²⁹⁹ “Columbia Leaders To Go On Trial Tuesday,” *Nashville Globe and Independent*, May 24, 1946, 2.
- ³⁰⁰ “Bumpus Pledges To Spring Big Surprise,” *Nashville Globe and Independent*, August 30, 1946, 1, 7.
- ³⁰¹ “Desperate If True,” *Nashville Globe and Independent*, August 30, 1946, 4.
- ³⁰² “Unfair Newspapers,” *Nashville Globe and Independent*, August 23, 1946, 4.

-
- ³⁰³ Lones Seiber, "The Battle Of Athens," *American Heritage* Vol. 36, Issue 2(February-March 1985). <http://www.americanheritage.com/content/battle-athens?page=show>
- ³⁰⁴ "Unfair Newspapers," 4.
- ³⁰⁵ "Endure No Longer," *Nashville Tennessean*, August 3, 1946, 4.
- ³⁰⁶ "Fortunately Too Late," *Nashville Tennessean*, August 6, 1946, 10.
- ³⁰⁷ "Want Trials Moved To Nashville," *Nashville Globe and Independent*, June 28, 1946, 1, 2.
- ³⁰⁸ "Judge Ingram Picks 2 Jurors For Trial," *Nashville Tennessean*, September 20, 1946, 1.
- ³⁰⁹ "We Can Hope For Justice," *Nashville Globe and Independent*, September 6, 1946, 4.
- ³¹⁰ "Truth Vs. Fiction," *Nashville Globe and Independent*, September 27, 1946, 4.
- ³¹¹ "Bumpus' Case Wilts Under Fire," *Nashville Globe and Independent*, October 4, 1946, 1.
- ³¹² "'Columbia Trial' And Verdict Held Unjust," *Nashville Globe and Independent*, October 25, 1946, 1.
- ³¹³ "Time Marches To and Fro," *Nashville Globe and Independent*, October 18, 1946, 4.
- ³¹⁴ "As the 'Nation' Sees It," *Nashville Globe and Independent*, November 1, 1946, 4.
- ³¹⁵ "An Outstanding Verdict," *Chattanooga Times*, October 6, 1946, 22.
- ³¹⁶ "Bias Rules At Riot Trial," *Chicago Defender*, August 31, 1946, 4; "Judge Writes Own Laws At Columbia Trial," *Chicago Defender*, September 7, 1946, 1.
- ³¹⁷ Enoc P. Waters, Jr., "Nears End In Fury Of Hate," *Chicago Defender*, October 5, 1946, 1, 6.
- ³¹⁸ Enoc P. Waters, Jr., "23 Riot Victims Freed," *Chicago Defender*, October 12, 1946, 1, 6.
- ³¹⁹ "Maurice Weaver—A Fearless Defender," *Chicago Defender*, November 2, 1946, 14.
- ³²⁰ Hart, "Order Restored in Columbia," 1, 16.
- ³²¹ "U.S. Grand Jury Fails To Make Its Report," *Nashville Globe*, May 3, 1946, 4.
- ³²² February 26, 1946, photograph, *Nashville Banner*, 1.
- ³²³ "Highway Patrolmen And Guardsmen Bring Rioting Negroes Under Control," February 26, 1946, *Nashville Banner*, 16.
- ³²⁴ "Weapons Seized At Columbia," March 1, 1946, photograph, *Chattanooga Times*, 1.
- ³²⁵ Roy Tuley, "Off to Columbia," March 1, 1946, photograph, *Chattanooga Times*, 14.
- ³²⁶ John Morgan, "Principals In Maury Race Disorder Cases," May 30, 1946, photograph *Nashville Banner*, 2; "Defendants," *Columbia Daily Herald*, June 6, 1946, photograph, 1.
- ³²⁷ Anderson, "5 Columbia 'Riot' Defendants and Counsel," March 16, 1946, photograph, *Chicago Defender*, 3.
- ³²⁸ "Baptist Pastor," April 5, 1946, photograph, *Nashville Globe*, 1.
- ³²⁹ "Convicted Columbia Negroes," October 5, 1946, *Nashville Tennessean*, 2.

Bibliography

- Altheide, David L. and Christopher J. Schneider. *Qualitative Media Analysis*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2013.
- Anderson, Carol. "From Hope to Disillusion: African Americans, the United Nations, and the Struggle for Human Rights, 1944-1947." *Diplomatic History* 20 (4) (1996): 531-564. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-7709.1996.tb00286.x
- Barnes, Harper. *Never Been a Time: The 1917 Race Riot That Sparked the Civil Rights Movement*. New York: Walker & Company, 2008.
- Beeler, Dorothy. "Race Riot In Columbia, Tennessee February 25-27, 1946." *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 39 (1) (Spring 1980): 49-61.
- Belknap, Michal R. *Federal Law and Southern Order: Racial Violence and Constitutional Conflict in the Post-Brown South*. Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 1987.
- Borstelmann, Thomas. *The Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001.
<http://eds.a.ebscohost.com.proxy.mul.missouri.edu/ehost/ebookviewer/ebook/ZT AwMHhuYV9fMjgyMTUwX19BTg2?sid=00afd218-4c0f-4ec0-988e-87db378566e1@sessionmgr4004&vid=0&format=EB&rid=1>
- Briggs, Gabriel A. *The New Negro in the Old South*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2015.
- Brown, Archie. *The Rise and Fall of Communism*. New York: Ecco, 2009.
- Capeci, Jr., Dominic J. and Martha Wilkerson. *Layered Violence: The Detroit Rioters of 1943*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1991.
- Cashman, Sean Dennis. *African-Americans and the Quest for Civil Rights, 1900-1990*. New York: New York University Press, 1991.
- Collins, Ann V. *All Hell Broke Loose: American Race Riots from the Progressive Era through World War II*. Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2012.
- Dalfiume, Richard M. *Desegregation of the U.S. Armed Forces: Fighting on Two Fronts 1939-1953*. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1969.
- Dray, Philip. *At the Hands of Persons Unknown: The Lynching of Black America*. New York: Random House, 2002.
- Dudziak, Mary L. *Cold War Civil Rights*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000.

-
- Ellsworth, Scott. *Death in a Promised Land: The Tulsa Race Riot of 1921*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982.
- Egerton, John. *Speak Now Against the Day: The Generation Before the Civil Rights Movement in the South*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1994.
- Fairclough, Norman. *Analysing Discourse: Textual Analysis for Social Research*. London: Routledge, 2003.
- Fursich, Elfriede. "In Defense of Textual Analysis: Restoring a Challenged Method for Journalism and Media Studies." *Journalism Studies* 10 (2) (2009): 238-252.
- Gaddis, John Lewis. *The Cold War: A New History*. New York: The Penguin Press, 2005.
- Garson, Robert A. *The Democratic Party and the Politics of Sectionalism, 1941-1948*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1974.
- Graham, Hugh Davis. *Crisis in Print: Desegregation and the Press in Tennessee*. Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1967.
- Hall, Jacquelyn Dowd. "The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past." *The Journal of American History* 91 (4) (March 2005): 1233-1263.
- Hirsch, James S. *Riot and Remembrance: The Tulsa Race War and Its Legacy*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2002.
- Ikard, Robert W. *No More Social Lynchings*. Franklin: Hillsboro Press, 1997.
- Kerlin, Robert T. *The Voice of the Negro 1919*. New York: E.P. Dutton & Company, 1920.
- Klinkner, Philip A. and Rogers M. Smith. *The Unsteady March: The Rise and Decline of Racial Equality in America*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999.
- Kryder, Daniel. *Divided Arsenal: Race and the American State During World War II*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- Laska, Lewis L. "The *Nashville Globe*, 1900-1906 Abstracted."
<https://www.scribd.com/doc/56125629/History-of-the-Nashville-Globe-by-Lewis-Laska>.
- Lewis, George. *The White South and the Red Menace: Segregationists, Anticommunism, and Massive Resistance, 1945-1965*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2004.

-
- Lovett, Bobby L. *The Civil Rights Movement in Tennessee*. Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2005.
- O'Brien, Gail Williams. *The Color of the Law: Race, Violence, and Justice in the Post-World War II South*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1999.
- Patterson, James T. *Grand Expectations: The United States, 1945-1974*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996.
- Perry, Jennings. *Democracy Begins At Home*. Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1944.
- Polenburg, Richard. *One Nation Divisible: Class, Race, and Ethnicity in the United States Since 1938*. New York: Penguin Books, 1980.
- Real, Michael R. *Exploring Media Culture: A Guide*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1996.
- Rudwick, Elliott M. *Race Riot at East St. Louis, July 2, 1917*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1964.
- Schneider, Mark Robert. *"We Return Fighting:" The Civil Rights Movement in the Jazz Age*. Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2002.
- Shapiro, Herbert. *White Violence and Black Response: From Reconstruction to Montgomery*. Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1988.
- Shogan, Robert. *Harry Truman and the Struggle for Racial Justice*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2013.
- Suggs, Henry Lewis, ed. *The Black Press in the South, 1865-1979*. Westport, Ct.: Greenwood Press, 1983.
- Tuttle, Jr., William M. *Race Riot: Chicago in the Red Summer of 1919*. New York: Atheneum, 1980.
- Voogd, Jan. *Race Riots & Resistance: The Red Summer of 1919*. New York: Peter Lang, 2008.
- Weaver, Maurice and Z. Alexander Looby. "What Happened at Columbia." In *Racial Violence in the United States*, edited by Allen D. Grimshaw, 153-156. Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1969.
- White, Walter. *A Man Called White: The Autobiography of Walter White*. New York: The Viking Press, 1948.