

AN EXAMINATION OF HOW ARCHIVES HAVE INFLUENCED THE TELLING OF
THE STORY OF PHILADELPHIA'S CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

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Abstract

This paper examines the way that history and the archive interact with an examination of the civil rights movement in Philadelphia in the 1960s. Lack of accessibility may detrimentally affect historians' analyses. This paper is an assessment of what both writers and archivists can do to help diminish oversights. Included is an investigation of the short-lived Black Coalition and the way the organization is represented in scholarship. How do the representations differ from the story the primary sources tell? Also examined is the relationship between Cecil B. Moore and Martin Luther King, Jr. What primary sources exist that illuminate their friendship? How has their friendship been portrayed in secondary works? The paper outlines the discovery of video footage of the two men and how this footage complicates widely-held perceptions of their association. Lastly, this thesis offers remedies to allow for greater accessibility of primary source documents, most notably the role of digitization within the archive. Included in these suggestions are analyses of existing digital initiatives and suggestions for future projects. Digitization initiatives may be the means by which to bridge the gap currently facing archivists and historians today.

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1. Introduction

Actual events and historians' writings regarding those events are, by necessity, two distinct entities. Historians must rely on archival sources to get as close as possible to writing a realistic account of a time period. How do archives influence the way historians tell the story of the Philadelphia civil rights movement? An extensive scholarship details the African American fight for civil rights in the south. Much less has been written about the struggle in the north. Philadelphia was an active and pivotal city in the civil rights movement, but the city's role has not gotten as much attention as other places. Local archives, repositories, and other document stewards may be responsible for this gap in the historiography. This thesis demonstrates how archives have figured in significant shifts in Philadelphia civil rights history. I argue that access to important collections must be improved and can be, in part, through digital initiatives. This leads one to wonder, what is the role of the archive in completing the picture of the civil rights movement?

This is a particularly important question in Philadelphia. The city of Philadelphia has always had a robust African American community. In 1899 W.E.B. DuBois published his seminal study, *The Philadelphia Negro: A Social Study*.¹ This was the first comprehensive study about black life and has been categorized by some as the first ever ethnographic study. Hugely influential when it was published, it demonstrated that Philadelphia had a large, vital, vibrant black population even in the nineteenth century. DuBois's survey was highly detailed, examining the conditions of the black community.

¹ W.E.B. DuBois, *The Philadelphia Negro: A Social Study* (Philadelphia, PA: The University of Pennsylvania Press, 1899).

He scrutinized how African Americans lived: the housing available to them; their jobs; their religions; every aspect of black life in Philadelphia. By undertaking such an in-depth assessment of Philadelphia's African Americans, DuBois showed the larger importance of the city's African American population. If such an important book laid the foundation for Philadelphia civil rights studies, why did not more scholarship follow? With this book in mind, such an omission seems most glaringly odd, even mystifying.

This is especially confusing in light of the amount of civil rights activity to which the city was host. Philadelphia was home to a robust civil rights movement in the postwar era. The events that took place in the fight for racial equality were often unprecedented and quite influential. Generally, civil rights struggles in the north have been viewed as off-shoots of the southern movement. Alternatively, the northern struggle was often completely overlooked. However, neither of these scenarios created an accurate picture of the appearance of the postwar civil rights movement. The northern civil rights movement was separate and distinct from what occurred in the south, though the movements certainly influenced one another. Racial equality in the north was just as sorely lacking as in the south and northerners fought just as hard for equal rights as their southern counterparts did.

Historians have recently written about the northern civil rights movement more prolifically. Even so, Philadelphia still gets the short shrift in the historiography regarding the struggle for civil rights in the north. This deserves scrutiny. Author choice may be at play. Possibly, there is a lack of archival sources influenced the dearth of literature regarding Philadelphia. However, Philadelphia is home to endless archives and manuscript repositories.

Archives can take steps to allow greater access to their conclusions. Whether this manifests as concerted efforts to change reference interview techniques or greater interaction between archivists and the history community, both are secondary to a new trend. Increasing numbers of archives are undertaking digital initiatives which serve to get greater attention for underutilized collections. By digitizing parts of their collections, archives are exerting greater control over who uses their documents.

Certainly, the archives influence authors' choices in their writings regarding the Philadelphia civil rights movement. But before an analysis of the impact of the archive must come an analysis of the events as covered in the secondary literature. The events in Philadelphia did not happen in a vacuum. I survey civil rights historiography to examine trends in scholarship. I investigate how the Philadelphia civil rights movement has been covered. I demonstrate how overlooked sources could change the existing scholarship. I scrutinize the interaction between the archivist and the historian, as well as how archives document the struggle for civil rights and provide access to such records. Lastly, I will suggest solutions for improving access to underutilized collections, specifically digitization initiatives. I will present a review of existing digital archives and suggestions for future websites. Digitization programs can provide new ways to present the history of civil rights on both national and local levels. What happened in the City of Brotherly love was part of a larger movement all across the northern United States in the postwar era.

2. Civil Rights Historiography: Pre-1990s

The struggle for civil rights has been going on in America nearly as long as the United States has existed. Philadelphia's effort in the mid-twentieth century followed a lengthy pattern of national events. The Plessy v. Ferguson decision of the late nineteenth century, declaring racial segregation legal under the concept that separate and equal facilities were allowable, was a huge blow to equality efforts. As civil rights progress devolved in the south in light of such state-sanctioned segregation, the Great Migration gained speed as African Americans began to move northward in search of better opportunities. This movement continued into the mid-twentieth century. This time period also saw the Brown v. Board of Education decision, which struck down the legality of separate but equal facilities. It was against this backdrop that the Philadelphia movement gathered steam and these events presented a wealth of material for historians to study.

From his vantage point in 1991, Steven Lawson wrote of the historiography of the civil rights movement in *The American Historical Review*.² He detailed the way that the conservatism of the 1980s created an increase in interest in the twentieth century civil rights movement exemplified by the documentary series *Eyes on the Prize*. One of the factors in this upsurge was a public nostalgia for bygone youth. Many people began to share their memories of courageous acts for noble causes despite imminent danger. Meanwhile, in the universities, scholars wanted to understand what happened in the struggle for equality and why the events occurred when they did. The study of civil

² Steven F. Lawson, "Freedom Then, Freedom Now: The Historiography of the Civil Rights Movement," *The American Historical Review*, (96) 1991: 456-71.

rights began mostly as an examination of victories within the court system and less as social history, such as in Carl M. Brauer's, *John F. Kennedy and the Second Reconstruction*.³ This was not only a result of scholarly concern, but also due to the location of the most prominently available archival sources: within government repositories. This created a focus on the leaders of the movement rather than the masses who drove events.

In the 1970s and 80s historians began to shift their focus to community- and grass-roots-based organizations and movements. Larsen offers Charles W. Eagles's 1986 book of essays titled *The Civil Rights Movement in America* as an example of this approach. As the 1980s matured, scholars started to make a connection between national leadership and grassroots movements. Additionally, there was a movement to question the existing hegemony and to begin to incorporate other ideas such as gender, politics, and theology. Many writers brought more nuance to King's persona and explore the factors driving him to act, as did the authors featured in David J. Garrow's 18-volume set titled *Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Civil Rights Movement*.⁴

Greater nuance allowed for an exploration of the division within the black community between conservatives and moderates and more radical Black Power. Rather than investigate the schisms, historians devised a method by which they explored the convergence of the two movements. An overarching theme was the civil rights movement's global view. Many of those who fought for civil rights answered the call to fight to improve themselves and their stations so as to assist the Third World. This

³ Ibid., 456.

⁴ Ibid., 459.

revelation allowed historians greater insight into the way those fighting for equality view the problems of discrimination and poverty as reflexive: discrimination caused poverty. Such connections allowed historians to gain insight into the relationship between black activism and popular political movements such as Communism, as in Robin D.G. Kelly's *Hammer and Hoe: Alabama Communists during the Great Depression*.⁵

This shift in concentration to community-level activities permitted scholars to examine whether the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 60s was break from or a continuation of tradition. Those who argued for continuity point to the NAACP and its activities. Larson cites many examples of this literature, ranging from a Roy Wilkins and Tom Mathews's *Standing Fast* to Robert L. Zangrando's *The NAACP Crusade against Lynching, 1909-1950*. Those like August Meier and Elliot Rudwick called the movement a discontinuation argued that direct assaults on the status quo arose from new organizations or rejuvenated formerly defunct institutions. Each generation, these scholars posited, reacts to a specific set of factors without regard for history. Conversely, the continuity argument gained credence in the 1980s with in-depth studies of NAACP actions and influence. Many NAACP members participated in demonstrations over the course of decades and taught their techniques to younger activists.

Another trend in the analysis of civil rights was an examination of liberal whites who supported black rights. This work proved that there was a wide diversity in white attitudes toward African Americans and the civil rights movements. These small-scale, local histories highlighted racial conflicts and harmonies. From this vantage point, historians studied the multitude of complex factors that blacks faced, including social

⁵ Ibid., 462.

injustice, economic inequity, and political discrimination beyond “separate and unequal.”⁶ Examples ranged from David M. Chalmers’s *Hooded Americanism: The History of the Ku Klux Klan* to Elizabeth Jacoway and David R. Colburn’s *Southern Businessmen and Desegregation*. Doing history in this manner, historians also documented schisms in the black communities and their effects, whether good or bad, as Thomas Sugrue and Matthew Countryman would later do. Additionally, scholars, such as Nancy MacLean began to see the role of women and their involvement in the civil rights movement. Many connected female participation in the struggle for equality to the rise of the women’s liberation movement. To Lawson’s mind, the many ways of interpreting the movement meant that there was much fodder for future histories. However, at the time, historians, including Lawson, concentrated only on the south. Lawson posited that studies of the civil rights movement in the south would become more prolific in the coming years.⁷ Scholarship examining the fight for equal rights in the north would soon appear as well.

⁶ Ibid., 466.

⁷ Ibid., 471.

3. Recent Scholarship and a Northward Shift

Larson did not predict the proliferation of scholarship on the northern civil rights movement since the 1990s. Martha Biondi makes some bold claims in her book, *To Stand and Fight: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Postwar New York City* demonstrates the shift.⁸ When African Americans returned from service in World War II, she asserts, they used their military experience to spur their fight against racism in America. Biondi implies that the civil rights movement in New York was the single most influential movement in the United States during the postwar era. She claims that by the time of Rosa Parks and her 1955 act of defiance against bus segregation, New York had already struggled against white oppression for ten years. Biondi stresses the importance of communism in the fight for equality, as well as the need for jobs and parity in the workplace. Additionally, military service among black men led directly to the militant black movement. As the world's empires fell and the horrors of Nazism were exposed, African Americans expressed sentiments that equal rights would make the United States an exemplar in the face of such oppression.⁹

The civil rights movement was first a fight to acquire and keep jobs. Blacks were largely relegated to the service sector, regardless of education. Many whites opposed fair employment legislation. Once African Americans made in-roads in such areas as industry, then came the necessity for the opening of unions. The result was a class of black union members who became greatly influential civil rights activists. After World War II, however, the vista changed. There were disproportionate numbers of black

⁸ Martha Biondi, *To Stand and Fight: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Postwar New York City* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).

⁹ *Ibid.*, 2, 6-15.

layoffs. A series of factors led to more attention on the problems facing blacks in the 1940s, such as waves of African American migration, increased political activity, and world events that made civil rights more important. These factors served to bring much-needed vigor to the fight and attention to the plight of blacks.¹⁰

The New York civil rights movement saw an escalation of lynching in the postwar period. Therefore, there was an increased need for federal protection in light of the lack of city and state action. Although New York City had a reputation for liberalism, blacks experienced significant discrimination at the hands of service providers. Biondi repeatedly states that the New York civil rights movement created change for African Americans across the country. “The New York movement had a national effect. Many of the targets, whether airlines, trains, YMCAs, or the music industry were national institutions, so the city’s activists were on the forefront of defining the nature of rights and opportunities for a much larger group of people of color in the United States.” Housing was a particularly insurmountable obstacle as segregation in that sector was often enabled by the government. Biondi makes the sweeping claim that New York City’s efforts to desegregate housing singularly launched the American fair housing movement.¹¹

Concurrently, African Americans began to harness the power of the vote. As blacks began taking office, voting reform increased. This extreme fight for seemingly no progress began frustration with the slow process of equality. Black attempts to shape the urban landscape were often overlooked in historiography. In a time of restructuring,

¹⁰ Ibid., 17-27, 59.

¹¹ Ibid., 97, 112-135.

education was of foremost concern. Schools were segregated due to biased governmental zoning intended to keep African Americans from attending the same schools as white children. Despite the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, New York City schools remained separated by race. Even so, Biondi claims that because New Yorkers fought harder and longer for civil rights, as well as the city's place as a center of business, the city remained a focal point for the struggle for equal rights¹²

While New York City may have been exemplary, its residents were not unique. Detroit was also home to a volatile and high-profile struggle for equality according to Thomas Sugrue's *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit*. Sugrue worked from a model similar to Biondi's, although he never claims that Detroit was exemplary, as Biondi does for New York. His methodology focuses on specifics: why were those affected by urban poverty almost completely people of color, in particular blacks? What policies caused this urban crisis? Sugrue explains that the northern United States were not a bastion of racial equality and support for civil rights as was often believed. Detroit evolved from a city experiencing a massive industrial boom to one undergoing unprecedented and devastating urban decay. Capitalism caused economic inequality and the burden of this inequality was mostly shouldered by African Americans. Business leaders made deliberate choices, the results of which were devastating, intentionally or not. As a result, racial division was prominent in the 1940s

¹² Ibid., 207-8, 222, 279.

and became insurmountable as time went on. Like Biondi, Sugrue places heavy emphasis on jobs.¹³

Additionally, Detroit lacked affordable housing in good condition. New construction was sluggish from the time period between the Great Depression until 1946 and there was a labor shortage. Housing developers could not keep up with demand. The black population expanded rapidly, but was confined to certain neighborhoods due to racial attitudes. Concurrently, public housing was often viewed as a handout and many times not supported by the federal government. As such, blacks, who were the group most often in need of public housing, were further restricted to overcrowded areas.¹⁴

On top of the housing crisis, African American job woes multiplied with the economic restructuring that began in the 1950s. A series of recessions were made all the more devastating by Detroit's reliance on the susceptible automobile industry. Sugrue places some of the blame on the national government. He argues that the New deal started a trend in which the government increasingly funded southern ventures and neglected those in the north which created an area in the Midwest that dominated industry. As car sales slowed, automobile plants closed permanently as did other businesses. Industry leaders made crucial choices in business locales. Many factors contributed to these changes, such as automation, dealings with parts suppliers, costs of labor, and federal policies. The fights against discrimination and deindustrialization were ineffectual.¹⁵

¹³ Thomas Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), i-xx, 5-22.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 34-88.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 126-176.

Still, racial boundaries began changing with encouragement from civil rights activists. Segregation did not. Those who wanted equality pushed for integrated housing, but whites fought such changes at every turn. Whites felt that increased housing privileges for blacks put black rights above those of whites. White resistance to open housing took a violent turn, especially in working-class neighborhoods beginning to integrate. Nevertheless, where little or no violence occurred, whites moved out of the areas as blacks moved in. African Americans were stigmatized as poor or undesirable. Inequalities became insoluble. Racial divisions persisted.¹⁶

Consequently, not many opportunities for change or progress existed in Detroit. Detroit saw a white backlash in the 1970s and 80s which Sugrue attributes to whites being totally ignored in the 1960s push for civil rights. As such, this created an insurmountable discontent. Much as Biondi argued for post-World War II New York, Sugrue posits that the struggles that Detroit faced in the time after the war greatly affected the city from the 1970s to the close of the twentieth century. While the perception was that the crisis in Detroit began with a series of riots which occurred in 1967, the roots of the problem were much deeper.¹⁷

Sugrue expanded his study of Detroit in *Sweet Land of Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the North*. This book offers a picture of the long history of the fight for equality above the Mason-Dixon line. Sugrue argues that the struggle for civil rights was just as hard-fought in the north as it was in the south, and possibly more so. Segregation in the north was more insidious than in the south because the policies in

¹⁶ Ibid., 183-212, 227, 234-257.

¹⁷ Ibid., 261-70.

the north were largely unwritten; often invisible and incomprehensible to outsiders; and changed from situation to situation and place to place. Compounding the issue, many blacks fought in World War I with the hope that their service would gain them compensation and citizenship benefits from a government grateful for their service. These expectations were largely unmet, which added to the sense of African American disillusionment with the government. Sugrue asserts that the failure of the federal government to act and make effective civil rights policies encouraged small-scale grassroots struggles which snowballed into the more famous 1960s actions.

He focuses on grassroots movements that are lesser known and largely out of the limelight of history and the media. These efforts took inspiration from world events, particularly Third World attempts to overthrow colonialism. Sugrue makes clear that the civil rights movement was not the brain child of the few famous individuals who have historically received credit. Instead, he argues, the struggle was a group movement, largely organized at the street level. Sugrue also concentrates heavily on economic factors. Blacks were in search of what they saw as the basic right to live their lives with the same humanity, privileges, and abilities that whites had. Racial inequality, African Americans felt, had its roots in economic problems. Equality in jobs, fair wages, and government benefits would go a long way toward gaining parity in all aspects of life and creating a more equitable balance of power. This struggle was more about dignity than it was about participating in the American dream.

Sugrue asserts that the civil rights struggle succeeded partially as a result of the Cold War against fascism that the U.S. was fighting worldwide at the same time. Civil rights fighters compared blacks' treatment to the way fascist regimes treated their

citizens. However, Sugrue contends that progress in achieving civil rights was not allowed to go far enough. These failures were in large part due to the fractious nature of the various groups fighting for civil rights.

For Sugrue, the civil rights struggle continued even at the time of his writing. African Americans make up a large percentage of the families on welfare; black men comprise a majority of the nation's prison population; and inner cities are still largely segregated. Sugrue proved that the northern struggle for civil rights was just as hard-fought as that in the south, but yet often overlooked. He asserts that one cannot understand the civil rights fight, or indeed, the nation's current racial climate without studying the north and the events that occurred there alongside those in the south.¹⁸

¹⁸ Thomas J. Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the North* (New York: Random House, 2008).

4. What of Philadelphia?

As Sugrue shows, Philadelphia's civil rights fight was pivotal in the northern movement. However, Philadelphia has rarely figured in civil rights scholarship. Richard A. Keiser makes a contribution with his *Subordination or Empowerment? African American Leadership and the Struggle for Urban Political Power*. Keiser's book is a series of micro-studies of cities which experienced particular strife during the postwar civil rights era, including Philadelphia. At times, the book reads like a psychological study but what the volume best offers are definitions and general frameworks for civil rights phenomenon. It demonstrates that breakdowns in majority political machines can pave the way for minority groups to gain political power. Keiser called democratization a slow shrinking of inequities within the political system that led to empowerment by amplifying a suppressed group's capacity for political change. Empowerment signified that subordination, defined as a minority group's ineffectualness, no longer existed. When such a group has no power to influence political outcomes, that group is effectively subordinated with a given society. Therefore, the key was the distribution of political power. Despite this very narrow definition, Keiser gives good outlines for analysis of the fight for civil rights.¹⁹

Whereas Richard Keiser provides general definitions and analyses, Lisa Levenstein offers close analysis. Her book, *A Movement without Marches: African American Women and the Politics of Poverty in Postwar Philadelphia*, is a study of how Philadelphia women used the public assistance resources available to them to gain greater

¹⁹ Richard A. Keiser, *Subordination or Empowerment? African American Leadership and the Struggle for Urban Political Power* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1997), 3-6, 159.

rights and equality. These women effectively followed Keiser's model to buck some level of subordination within Philadelphia. Black women were in a difficult position and their problems were separate from those of men, not the result of male issues. Additionally, their problems were cyclical: discrimination in all areas directly shaped how they could lead their lives. Often the women in Levenstein's narrative turned to public institutions, especially welfare, reluctantly. Black women were heavily criticized for receiving welfare and negatively stereotyped as a result. Women who did not take welfare tended to look down on those who did for propping up the negative label of the African American woman on welfare. This created schisms within the black community.²⁰

Black women turned less reluctantly to the Philadelphia municipal court. This was frequently the first stop for financial assistance before going on welfare as there were fewer stigmas in going to court. However, women still had to face discrimination in the court system. Several factors influenced the choice to go to court, including women's obligations to their children, the availability of other options, and job opportunities. Racism was innate in the legal system, beginning with the police. However, women fought the courts for themselves and their children anyway. Due to such impediments, black women chose to use the option of the court system selectively.²¹

The other option available to African American women was public housing. They and the greater Philadelphia community had high hopes that public housing would improve their neighborhoods and allow upward mobility, as well as reduce crime.

²⁰ Lisa Levenstein, *A Movement without Marches: African American Women and the Politics of Poverty in Postwar Philadelphia* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 5-6, 29, 36-56.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 66-87.

Officials needed women's investment for public housing to work, but the system purposely kept women poor. Public housing conditions were allowed to deteriorate and women found it hard to take pride in and care for their places of residence. Nevertheless, black women were willing to navigate the intricate and preferential public housing application system that was discriminatory and burdensome. White resistance and protests further stigmatized public housing, virtually ensuring the developments would remain segregated. Ironically, this reduced racial discrimination in the application policies, but not toward single mothers. Still, women gained entrance through persistence.²²

The education system was just as racist and segregated as the public housing system. Schooling was important to the African American community, but the public education system was rife with poor administration and intentional segregation. Black women fought to find ways to change the educational system and advocate for their children. The public school system was bogged by lack of funding and an institutionalized resistance to change. Recognizing the problems, women attempted to advocate for their children through meetings with teachers, principals, and other school officials.²³

Along with difficulty in the job market, economic problems, public housing, and education, African Americans faced issues with health. Often, black women had no insurance and were unable to afford doctor visits. Poverty and poor health were

²² Ibid., 90-102.

²³ Ibid., 121-40.

inextricably linked. Therefore, African American women had to rely on public institutions such as Philadelphia General Hospital.²⁴

Levenstein's narrative is narrow in scope. However, a large-scale narrative of the Philadelphia civil rights movement does exist. Quite possibly the most important history of the postwar Philadelphia struggle to better future generations is Matthew Countryman's sweeping *Up South: Civil Rights and Black Power in Philadelphia*. Countryman took the framework Sugrue set up in *Sweet Land of Liberty* and built on the work for *Up South*. The book seeks to put Philadelphia on the civil rights map in a similar way that Sugrue's *Sweet Land of Liberty* did. As Matthew Countryman points out on the very first page of *Up South*, the significance of Philadelphia is often omitted altogether from discussions of the civil rights movement. That the south got so much attention in terms of the historiography of the modern civil rights movement severely limited historians' understanding of the fight for equality and its impact.²⁵ Countryman asserts that the fight for civil rights in the north was the result of black experiences there, along with northern blacks' impressions of the events in the south. The New Deal, not *Brown v. Board of Education*, was the crucial catalyst for the beginning of the movement. Philadelphia events shed light on the relationship between the movement in the south and that of the north. The northern movement was not a response to southern attitudes, but to a lack of progress in the north. The emergence of Black Power and its significance can be illuminated by studying Philadelphia. According to the views of those leading the Black Power movement, racism was inherent to the structure of the United States.

²⁴ Ibid., 158-65.

²⁵ Matthew J. Countryman, *Up South: Civil Rights and Black Power in Philadelphia* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 1-3.

African Americans could no longer rely on white benevolence and instead had to unify the black community from the inside out.²⁶

Philadelphia experienced a pivotal year in 1951. Voters approved a charter that limited discrimination and transferred much governmental control to an independent civil service board, rather than the previous system of patronage. Additionally, Democrats won elections that allowed them to oust the existing Republican machine. This transformation was caused by the altered political climate that followed World War II and changes in the city's industry at the end of the war which resulted in an influx of African Americans and other minority immigrants. The events of 1951 were the culmination of decades of work by civil rights advocates. Here, the role of "discursive framing" cannot be overstressed. Discursive framing was the language used by African American leaders and others who wished to change the status quo. They used particular language to describe how they would affect transformation and their reasons for doing so. They wanted to change the way things were and they wanted the public to understand why such changes were necessary. For blacks, changes were necessary to allow economic progress. For whites, changes were needed to prevent the Third World from falling to communism.²⁷

The Philadelphia Branch of the NAACP was split at the end of World War II due to a schism caused by communism within the organization's ranks. Leaders were undecided as to whether to work with members of the Communist party or not. The NAACP realized that an increase in the black population could mean an increase in black

²⁶ Ibid., 4-10

²⁷ Ibid., 13-33.

votes and so it mobilized African Americans to go to the polls. Black votes became important and had a crucial role in ending Republican control. 1951 was just the beginning of changes to come in Philadelphia.²⁸

Immediately postwar, Philadelphia African Americans experienced unprecedented economic gains. Black homeownership, for instance, increased greatly. Economic progress did not tell the whole story, though, and more changes were necessary. Private-sector jobs were still largely off-limits and deindustrialization caused many job losses. As in Detroit, attempts to revitalize the city unintentionally had bad effects on poor black neighborhoods. Often, industry moved to the suburbs, which were without anti-discrimination laws and lacked available housing. Labor discrimination persisted as many local businesses were not hiring blacks or promoting African Americans to skilled positions. In 1960, the Commission on Human Relations (CHR) demanded affirmative action from the construction companies and others. However, the burden of proof was with those seeking jobs. Discriminatory practices had to be proved with concrete evidence.²⁹

While the struggle for job equality was ongoing, so was the fight for fair housing. There was no fair housing legislation at the city, state, or national level. Urban renewal and slum clearance displaced families. Minority neighborhoods were too big a risk for mortgage lenders, which discouraged new construction. In the cases where black

²⁸ Ibid., 41-47.

²⁹ Ibid., 49-68.

families did move into white neighborhoods, threats and intimidation followed. White flight often occurred.³⁰

1950s Philadelphia saw the rise of new black leaders who had roots in the working class outside of Center City, such as Reverend Leon H. Sullivan of the Zion Baptist Church. Juvenile delinquency was Sullivan's first foray into reform. So began his rise as one of the city's most influential civil rights leaders. As Philadelphia's reputation for being on the forefront of the equality movement rose, leaders of national fame took notice. Malcolm X and the Muslim Brotherhood of America came to Philadelphia and influenced its leaders. These more radical visitors resulted in NAACP efforts to rebuild community ties in light of the frustration exemplified by the rise in Nation of Islam membership that highlighted a schism in the civil rights community. The NAACP and other organizations were in disagreement as to how to proceed. The result was a series of sit-ins and protests in 1960.³¹

Sit-ins in the south had two effects in Philadelphia. Their success caused the first Philadelphia civil rights protest in many years. Additionally, the radical actions furthered the distance between the NAACP and other civil rights groups. College students began picketing local Woolworth's, actions which the NAACP was slow to support. Selective patronage movements increased. This marked a change in strategy that showed growing impatience with efforts to gain prospects for blacks. Previous efforts came to be seen as thoroughly unproductive.³²

³⁰ Ibid., 68-73.

³¹ Ibid., 83-98.

³² Ibid., 98-112.

In 1964, Sullivan began the Opportunities Industrialization Center, which was specifically intended to train black workers to have job skills and offered remedial classes in basic education. The increased vigor with which civil rights activists approached new initiatives such as efforts to end patronization of stores that would not hire African Americans and sit-ins exemplified a new wave of questioning the old ways of fighting for equal rights. This began the rise of black nationalism whose most prominent character was Cecil B. Moore.³³

During the time of Moore's popularity, the tactics utilized in the civil rights movement changed. Where once activists used the government for protection, they then began to protest government policies as discrimination. Moore's strength was his ability to bring the NAACP to black nationalism. His popularity signaled a rise in black Philadelphians' desire for more militant efforts. Moore spurred efforts to desegregate employment and schools using the media to garner attention for his platforms.³⁴

Increased protests still made little difference. The police murder of Willie Philyaw at and President John F. Kennedy's assassination were pivotal moments. The resulting tension led to rioting along Philadelphia's Columbia Avenue. Despite his best efforts, Moore was unable to prevent chaos, but was credited with preventing more extensive violence. Countryman asserts that the riots themselves were not as important as the conversation about what the riots meant as well as their influence on future politics. Moore used the opportunity to clarify his position as a man of the people. He called for an increase in male roles in black families and society and more black

³³ Ibid., 112-20.

³⁴ Ibid., 122-40.

masculinity. However, the events of 1963, including the protests, demonstrated the limits of such strategies, as well as that of liberalism. New procedures were necessary.³⁵

One new strategy was John Churchville's founding of the Freedom Library, an effort to educate the African American community. During the day, children were given basic education and black history. In the evenings, the Freedom Library hosted lecturers who spoke about black politics and history. The events were meant to draw those frustrated with the integrationist mainstream and give a greater sense of identity to the African American community. The Freedom Library snowballed into a larger black nationalist movement, which immediately prompted a white backlash and resulted in Frank Rizzo's rise to police commissioner and eventually mayor. Rizzo spearheaded a forceful new approach that situated him as the keeper of white supremacy. His antagonistic tactics were intended to prevent black nationalists from gaining any strongholds within the city. Rizzo intended to damage the reputations and ideas of the Black Power leaders, agitation which led to confrontations with police and a violent dispute over education. Students began organizing for school reform in light of the high dropout rate among African Americans. On the day of the protest, students from across the city clashed with police. Both Moore and Black Power leaders came out in support of the students. However the relationship between the two was an uneasy one exacerbated by Mayor Tate's appointment of Rizzo as the new police commissioner. The chasm between the civil rights factions as well as the races was wider than ever before.³⁶

³⁵ Ibid., 149-79.

³⁶ Ibid., 180-8, 215-31.

On one side of the chasm, Black Power was highly influential in the city at the time. Black Power advocates wanted decisions about primarily African American communities to be made within those communities, not in the remote City Hall. The two factions, Black Power and the liberal coalition, could not agree on strategies, thus making progress difficult at best. For Countryman, one of the greatest weaknesses of either side was the lack of female involvement. Women had to take behind-the-scenes roles in the masculinist Black Power culture which did not value female participation. As social problems worsened, Black Power leadership could not control their communities or political representatives. Once Rizzo was elected mayor, he further polarized the City of Philadelphia. However, the end of the 1960s did see Black Power make substantial gains in community control via neighborhood activists. Greater involvement in electoral machinations allowed leaders to influence government. Still, little changed. Despite the struggle for civil rights that began decades ago, conditions in Philadelphia, especially for African Americans continued to deteriorate throughout the end of the century, much as Sugrue detailed in his study of Detroit. However, an analysis of “the social movement logic” that engendered Black Power is essential.³⁷

The reasons for the failure of Black Power were complex. People no longer felt they were making a difference. The sacrifices were not worth the gains. Black Power was ultimately unable to make governmental change at both local and national levels. The movement could not control black politics and could not get New Deal liberals on their side in any real way. Black Power faded away, leaving black Philadelphians to find

³⁷ Ibid., 256-327.

yet another new way forward.³⁸ There were no easy answers to a tangled situation.

Countryman presents an excellent analysis in a complex narrative of an extraordinarily complex situation.

³⁸ Ibid., 329-30.

5. Philadelphia Civil Rights: Overlooked Sources

Complex historical narratives necessarily mean that some resources must go unplumbed, if for no other reason than time constraints. However, the importance of primary source documents cannot be overstressed. Accounts and records created contemporarily with events can allow historians to get as close as possible to the truth. This thesis aims to show the ways in which history would get done differently if primary source documents, such as Black Coalition manuscripts and newsreels, were more accessible. Archival documents created from day-to-day institutional functions have the least likely chance of being blurred by time and mistaken memories.

The contemporary records of the Black Coalition, an organization briefly touched upon in both Sugrue's and Countryman's work, exist. Temple University's Urban Archives is home to all of the Coalition's organizational papers. While Sugrue does not allot in-depth discussion to the Black Coalition, Countryman presents a more intensive analysis. The existence of the Black Coalition papers allows present-day researchers new opportunities to revisit old questions. Certainly, the Urban Archives of earlier decades is not the Urban Archives of today. This dynamism allows for new interpretations.

Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton, pioneers of the Black Power movement, define the movement in the following way:

The concept of Black Power...is a call for black people in this country to unite, to recognize their heritage, to build a sense of community. It is a call for black people to begin to define their own goals, to lead their own organizations, and to support their organizations...The concept of Black Power rests on a fundamental premise: *Before a group can enter the open society, it must first close ranks.*³⁹

³⁹ Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton, *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America* (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), 44.

Carmichael and Hamilton take this definition one step further:

Only black people can convey the revolutionary idea – and it is a revolutionary idea – that black people are able to do things themselves. Only they can help create in the community an aroused and continuing black consciousness that will provide the basis for political strength. In the past, white allies have often furthered white supremacy without the whites involved realizing it, or even wanting to do so. Black people must come together and do things for themselves. They must achieve self-identity and self-determination in order to have their daily needs met.⁴⁰

Carmichael and Hamilton made this call to arms in 1967, one year before the founding of the Black Coalition in 1968. Their militancy broke from a previous generation of civil rights leadership which advocated patience and partnership with whites.

On the surface, the Black Coalition's beginning may seem like a response to calls for Black Power. However, this was not the case. The Black Coalition was intended to be a joint effort between the black and white communities. Its philosophy, according to a brochure published by the Black Coalition, was that only a black man can truly comprehend the suffering of the black community. White business men, however, could provide the funding for project ideas put forth by a group of black leaders. The intention was to create an atmosphere of mutual respect and to provide assistance to the struggling black community in Philadelphia.⁴¹ In this account, by virtue of its funding, the Black Coalition could not have been a Black Power organization. Even if the definition of Black Power is liberalized, as in Devin Fergus's *Liberalism, Black Power, and the Making of American Politics, 1965-1980*, to include organizations who took money from

⁴⁰ Ibid., 46.

⁴¹ Black Coalition pamphlet, Series I, Box 1, Folder 3, Black Coalition Collection, Urban Archives, Temple University, Philadelphia, PA.

white groups to fund Black Power initiatives, classifying the Black Coalition as a Black Power organization obscures the group's complexities.⁴²

The minutes of the very first meeting between representatives of the black community and white businessmen, held on April 12, 1968, demonstrates just how involved whites intended to be in the Black Coalition. One man expressed the desire of Philadelphia businessmen to understand that which would be most beneficial to the black community. Defying gender delineations pitched another initiative to assist the black community. She pointed out that the white men could potentially profit by investing money in the black community. If they did not, she asserted, society as a whole would suffer due to the deterioration of the black population. Whether she was sincere or saw this pitch as the best way to get funding is unclear. What the first meeting made very clear, however, was that jobs were what the black community needed, along with better access to education. White businessmen could provide funding and find places where African Americans could find employment.⁴³

A letter dated October 9, 1968, to Executive Director Stanley Branche from the Good Friday Group, the umbrella moniker for the white businessmen who administered the \$1 million fund for Black Coalition projects, authored by member Richard Bond, further demonstrates the level of involvement that white businessmen were determined to have in the Black Coalition. Bond expressed his desire that the Black Coalition exert greater control over its organizational structure. This was presumably a reference to the

⁴² Devin Fergus, *Liberalism, Black Power, and the Making of American Politics, 1965-1980* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2009).

⁴³ Minutes, "Meeting of the Good Friday Group, Friday, April 12, 1968, Series I, Box 1, Folder 1, Black Coalition Collection, Urban Archives, Temple University, Philadelphia, PA.

Coalition's lax bookkeeping practices. Additionally, Bond requested that the Black Coalition seek projects from individuals or groups not affiliated with anyone on the Coalition board or under Coalition employ. Finally, Bond asked that the Coalition begin thinking long-range as the staff had not yet presented long-term plans to the Good Friday Group.⁴⁴

This is not to say that racial cooperation meant organizational harmony. Disgruntled former Black Coalition members later complained about the Good Friday Group's involvement. Good Friday Group member and President of the Philadelphia Saving Fund Society, R. Stewart Rauch, Jr., wrote a letter dated December 16, 1968, directly to Coalition board member Robert N.C. Nix, Jr.⁴⁵ Rauch reminded Nix that the Good Friday Group was the body with the final say as to what Black Coalition projects got funding. The purpose of Rauch's correspondence was to point out what the white group saw as the shortcomings of the Black Coalition. He was worried that these shortcomings would hamper future efforts to get funding from the business community. He wanted the Black Coalition to submit to an audit. Additionally, his letter alludes to another facet of white involvement in the Black Coalition. A letter from Bond to Branche, dated July 11, 1968, established the practice that a white businessman would be assigned to each funded Black Coalition project to oversee the venture and make regular

⁴⁴ Letter from Richard C. Bond to Stanley Branche, October 9, 1968, Series V, Box 5, Folder 4, Black Coalition Collection, Urban Archives, Temple University, Philadelphia, PA.

⁴⁵ Letter from R. Stewart Rauch, Jr. to Robert N.C. Nix, Jr., December 16, 1968, Series I, Box 1, Folder 1, Black Coalition Collection, Urban Archives, Temple University, Philadelphia, PA.

visits to assess progress.⁴⁶ This jurisdiction still was not enough for Rauch who thought a professional audit was necessary.

Rauch went on to assert that the white businessmen wanted better control. He reminded Nix that the Good Friday Group was not trying to dictate which projects the Black Coalition presented for funding, but that not every project would receive funding. Rauch threatened to withdraw funding from the Black Coalition without greater transparency. He made his position very clear: the white businessmen were not going to leave the Black Coalition alone to do its own thing. Not with so much money invested.⁴⁷

Nix's response on December 19, 1968, demonstrates his confusion and emotion. He expressed that he thought that the efforts which spawned the Black Coalition were a joint, equal venture where both parties had equivalent power. Nix accused the white group of reneging on its promises and going back on its word to present more funding beyond the \$1 million at a later date. These exchanges clearly demonstrated just how deeply the white business group was involved with the smallest dealings of the Black Coalition. At the same time, when the businessmen provided funding, it came with strings attached.⁴⁸ Despite Hakim Rahman's insistence at the founding meeting that the white men not patronize the black men and that donations come without conditions, problems persisted. Categorizing the Black Coalition as a Black Power group obscures the experimentative nature of the venture was and just how far interracial efforts and relations still had to go.

⁴⁶ Letter from Richard C. Bond to Stanley Branche, July 11, 1968, Series I, Box 1, Folder 1, Black Coalition Collection, Urban Archives, Temple University, Philadelphia, PA.

⁴⁷ Letter from R. Stewart Rauch, Jr. to Robert N.C. Nix, Jr., December 16, 1968, Series I, Box 1, Folder 1, Black Coalition Collection, Urban Archives, Temple University, Philadelphia, PA.

⁴⁸ Letter from Robert N.C. Nix, Jr. to R. Stewart Rauch, Jr., December 19, 1968, Series I, Box 1, Folder 1, Black Coalition Collection, Urban Archives, Temple University, Philadelphia, PA.

Without access to the Black Coalition papers, Countryman could assert that the Coalition operated outside the white business establishment.⁴⁹ Its papers, however, show that the Black Coalition's funding came from the Greater Philadelphia Group, an association made up entirely of white business leaders. The tent pole of Black Power philosophy was independence from white meddling and, often, avoiding funding for black projects from the white community. But the Coalition is exceptional for another reason. Many of the black leaders most intimately involved with its beginnings came from the old guard of civil rights leadership uninterested in militant actions. Some of the more prominent moderate leaders included Robert N.C. Nix, Jr., who was a judge and sat on the Black Coalition Board of Directors. Along with A. Leon Higginbotham who was another prominent judge, Nix served as one of the Coalition's incorporators. Other members of the board of directors included the Reverend Thomas Logan and journalist Orrin Evans.⁵⁰

One of the most notable features of the Black Coalition was its inclusion of both moderate leaders and those who advocated militancy. Militants included the Reverend Jeremiah X, a Muslim leader; "Freedom" George Brower, an activist who led the young militant movement; and George E. Anderson, also known as Hakim Rahman, who led the Philadelphia arm of the Revolutionary Action Movement. Black Coalition leaders made a peculiar choice in executive director, Stanley E. Branche. Branche was a flamboyant, high-profile, militant civil rights leader from nearby Chester, PA. He was flashy and confrontational, brash and not afraid to speak his mind or call situations as he saw them.

⁴⁹ Countryman, 266.

⁵⁰ Finding aid, Black Coalition Collection, Urban Archives, Temple University, Philadelphia, PA.

His personal irreverence often caused conflicts with the more restrained members of the Black Coalition. Additionally, Branche rushed headlong into volatile situations many times and caused problems the Board had to clean up.

Most notably, bookkeeping was lax under Branche's administration. The Good Friday Group questioned how money was being spent. Representatives from programs, including R.E.A.D. (the Remedial Educational Adjustment Development Program) and the Young Great Society, which the Black Coalition promised to fund, complained to the Good Friday Group about missing monies.⁵¹ Eventually, an independent accountant was brought in to inspect the Black Coalition books. Meanwhile, Higginbotham resigned on February 19, 1969, due to what he saw as laxity in financial matters and other administrative issues. Indeed, the accountant's investigation found discrepancies in the Black Coalition's books. In addition, Branche was responsible for questionable expenditures such as a mobile radio phone in his car and personal purchases made on Black Coalition funds, all of which were garnished from Branche's pay upon his resignation.⁵²

Possibly the most internally controversial Black Coalition expenditure involved the Circle of African American Unity, better known as the Muntu School of Culture. The Black Coalition's association with the Muntu School might explain its characterization as a Black Power organization. However, meeting minutes demonstrate that the decision to fund the Muntu School was very controversial within the organization. The more

⁵¹ Black Coalition documents, Series III, Box3B, Folder 32 and Folder 43, Black Coalition Collection, Urban Archives, Temple University, Philadelphia, PA.

⁵² Memorandum from Elaine Taylor to William Hamer, March 20, 1969, Series I, Box 1, Folder 6, Black Coalition Collection, Urban Archives, Temple University, Philadelphia, PA.

moderate members of the Coalition had reservations about the school and its continuation which eventually led to its termination. Countryman explains the Black Coalition's downfall as owing to its reliance on masculinist rhetoric and a lack of inclusivity towards women.⁵³ However, a far more viable theory, and one born out in the records of the Black Coalition, is that the downfall of the organization was the schism between moderates and militants.

A manuscript housed at the American Philosophical Society demonstrates just how deep-seated such disagreements were. The manuscript, written by Barbara Leff, was the basis for the article that Thomas Sugrue used in his study of the Black Coalition. The manuscript is unedited and not particularly well-written. However, its value is in the transcripts of quotes of interviews that Leff conducted. She talked with many Black Coalition members in the years immediately after the Coalition disbanded. Unfortunately, most of the quotes appear without names, but Leff did include categorizations, such as whether the statement came from a black militant, black moderate, or a white participant.

Despite the shortcomings, Leff's manuscript makes many salient points. She describes the opulence of the thirty-third floor of the Philadelphia Saving Fund Society building. The quotes she included from black militants demonstrate that this setting for the meetings between the black group and the white group caused tension. While the 33rd floor represented success for the whites, the blacks, particularly the young militants, viewed the office as representative of what was wrong with the white community. They

⁵³ Countryman, 262-63.

viewed the opulence as decadent and wasteful, a symbol of white oppression of blacks.⁵⁴ Leff also shows how that the haste with which the Black Coalition came together contributed to its lack of organization. Moderate blacks and young militant blacks never sat down to form a consensus for the way forward. As time went on, the rift grew deeper, creating a division that hampered black efforts to stand up to the white group. Neither side quite knew what to make of the other, which resulted in a lack of trust. Lastly, many participants agreed that a great number of the Black Coalition members were simply inexperienced with business and handling money, which resulted in confusion and a lack of success.⁵⁵

Leff's manuscript also provides insight into the Muntu School situation. Leff's sources informed her that the Muntu School was entirely under the purview of the young militant Hakim Rahman, who lacked any sort of business experience. The school's goal was to give young blacks a sense of identity and community, as well as a place to be where they would not get into trouble. Muntu was also meant to facilitate a stronger relationship between children and their parents.⁵⁶ According to Leff, the Muntu School provided a place for young gang members to go and stay off the streets. In August 1968, militant Malik Yulmid reported that 4,000 gang members participated in Muntu activities, such as Sunday socials and classes in English, religion, black history, health and welfare, karate, and economics taught by a mix of volunteers who ranged from

⁵⁴ Barbara Leff, *The Black Coalition of Philadelphia*, 19, Manuscripts Collection, American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia, PA.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 40-76.

⁵⁶ Request for funding on behalf of the Circle of African American Unity, Series III, Box 3A, Folder 11, Black Coalition Collection, Urban Archives, Temple University, Philadelphia, PA.

college students to professionals.⁵⁷ These numbers made the white community nervous, as ensuing events demonstrated. According to Leff, an advertisement of mysterious and unknown origins appeared in a black paper that caused alarm. This advertisement announced a class on “14 Ways to Kill a White Cop.” This, along with the great numbers of gang members who participated in Muntu activities, led to the idea that the Muntu School was the place that an uprising was being planned or a riot organized. Shortly thereafter, in a disagreement over pay, Rahman shot a Muntu School teacher. This was all the evidence the Black Coalition moderates and white businessmen needed. The joint decision to close the Muntu School was made. Black Coalition board members denounced the school as badly organized and began to distance themselves. Whites felt that the collapse of the school was a reflection of the poor administration of the Black Coalition as a whole. By early 1969, the Black Coalition was no more.

Countryman’s sources for his study of the Black Coalition do not include any contemporary primary source documents beyond newspaper clippings from *The Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, and *Philadelphia Tribune*.⁵⁸ He also used an interview he did in 1994 with Clarence Farmer, a man involved with Philadelphia city politics and events during the 1960s and later. However some of Farmer’s assertions are contradicted by the Leff manuscript and the Black Coalition papers. Countryman’s narrative about the Black Coalition may have changed significantly had he access to these materials. Notably, Sugrue has a very different interpretation of the Black Coalition than Countryman. Sugrue pitches the Black

⁵⁷ Good Friday Group meeting minutes, September 26, 1968, Series V, Box 5, Folder 4, Black Coalition Collection, Urban Archives, Temple University, Philadelphia, PA.

⁵⁸ Countryman, 384-85.

Coalition as a white endeavor aimed at mollifying white guilt and defending white interests. He sees its efforts to bolster ghetto neighborhoods as aimed toward preventing crime from spreading to white areas, and creating a new, untapped black workforce. In this way, white businessmen could then make up for their turning a blind eye to the situation of the burgeoning African American community.⁵⁹

Sugrue's source for this argument was not utilized by Countryman. The article Sugrue cites was published by George W. Corner in *The Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* in 1976.⁶⁰ Corner based his article on research done by Barbara Leff, also in the 1970s. Among its most compelling claims is that Cecil B. Moore had a role in the Black Coalition's founding. The article also sheds some light on the memories that Clarence Farmer relayed to Countryman. According to Farmer, the Philadelphia police civil disobedience squad awaited the black militants outside the meeting that would give rise to the Black Coalition on April 12, 1968. In the Corner article, however, police did not come until later, at a weekly meeting following the decision to stop funding the Muntu School. Leff's manuscript, the basis for the Corner article, supported this assertion. She wrote that the militants, who felt they had been pushed out of the Black Coalition wanted to meet with the white businessmen following the disbanding of the Muntu School. Additionally, Black Coalition meeting minutes from January 20, 1969, also demonstrated that the meeting between the whites and the militants did not take place on April 12, 1968. These minutes detailed the meeting between a number of militants and the whites. The black group came from the National Black Institute (NBI),

⁵⁹ Sugrue, 441.

⁶⁰ George W. Corner, "The Black Coalition: An Experiment in Racial Cooperation, Philadelphia, 1968, *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, (120) 1976: 178-86.

which took over the building formerly inhabited by the Muntu School. NBI did not have permission to occupy the premises and the Black Coalition wished to distance itself from them. The meeting arose because the NBI mistakenly thought that the Black Coalition would continue to fund their activities.⁶¹ Another resource, a memo submitted to the Greater Philadelphia Movement by James Lineberger on January 20, 1969, relayed similar details.⁶²

The Black Coalition story shows how small details can drastically change a historical narrative. A second example is in the relationship between Cecil B. Moore and Martin Luther King, Jr. In 1965, King visited Philadelphia to assist in efforts to open Girard College to black children. Moore, outspoken and brash, led this fight. The struggle garnered much press attention. Countryman writes that when King's visit was announced, Moore did not want King to visit the city. Countryman details how Moore felt that certain factions were trying to undermine his position of authority and leadership.⁶³ Moore believed that unity in the black community was of utmost importance, so his sentiments may be understandable in the face of anything he saw as an attempt to encourage divisiveness. In fact, Moore felt that those in the white community responsible for King's invitation to Philadelphia were doing just that. He claimed that King's visit was an attempt to fracture black unity.⁶⁴ According to Countryman, Moore "called King 'a divisive force' interested in 'headlines and money.'"⁶⁵

⁶¹ Black Coalition meeting minutes, January 20, 1969, Series I, Box 1, Folder 2, Black Coalition Collection, Urban Archives, Temple University, Philadelphia, PA..

⁶² Memorandum from James Lineberger to the Greater Philadelphia Movement, January 20, 1969, Series III, Box 3A, Folder 11, Black Coalition Collection, Urban Archives, Temple University, Philadelphia, PA.

⁶³ Countryman, 174-75.

⁶⁴ "Cecil Moore Vows to Act United with Dr. King," *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, August 2, 1965.

⁶⁵ Countryman, 176.

This quotation comes from a 1965 *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin* article.⁶⁶

However, another source found in Temple University's Urban Archives further illuminates the relationship between Moore and King. Urban Archives has a vast collection of video footage from local news outlets KYW-3 and WPVI-6. KYW covered King's visit to Girard College and the joint press conference that he and Moore held at the Bellevue Stratford Hotel.⁶⁷ As the footage begins, King and Moore can be seen laughing, joking, shaking hands, and posing for photographs. King begins talking:

Certainly from my point of view, I have not been engaged in divisiveness. I've had the privilege of knowing Mr. Moore for quite a while and certainly I have admired him and considered him a friend and I'm sure that a misunderstanding – and this is what I would prefer to call it – came about as a result of the haste in which we had to bring together a committee to sponsor this particular tour. This was not done intentionally and certainly it was not done in any planned way but as a result of certain accidents of circumstances.

As King talked, Moore stood by dressed in his usual well-tailored suit, awaiting his turn to respond:

Your question [a reporter's question] implied that there was an attempt of Dr. King to divide the community. I categorically reject that. My particular statement that was made at that particular time was that we did not impugn his motives or his sincerity or his integrity and we repeat that same situation. We don't think that there's any particular good to be served by continuing to place salt in open wounds once we've attempted to heal them. But we would reiterate and say to you the same thing I said in my opening statement. Dr. King's visit in Philadelphia, including the revised involvement of the broad scope of all Negroes and all white people who are interested in the true American spirit we think has been able to resolve and solve any particular problem.

The "we" to which Moore repeatedly refers is an unknown group. However, Moore's demeanor makes clear that he had an antagonistic relationship with the press. As the

⁶⁶ Ibid., 365, note 121.

⁶⁷ Newsreel, August 2, 1965, KYW19650802A Box #1837, "King," Television Audiovisual Collections, KYW-3, Urban Archives, Temple University, Philadelphia, PA.

conference goes on, he becomes increasingly impatient. He implies that the *Bulletin* quotation about King being a “divisive force” was being deliberately taken out of context.

As Moore finishes his speech a reporter asks, “now that you’re both together on the same platform, does this signify that any divisiveness that may have existed between you in the past is now over?” King responds:

I might say that in every instance I have gone into communities, I have gone as a unifying force, for as my own personal feelings went, rather than a divisive force. When I discovered that certain key and important groups and individuals were not represented in the sponsorship, I was the first one to say that this should be done and I would hold up everything so that kind of broad sponsorship could be worked out. This was not the fault of, as I said, anyone from an intentional point of view, but certainly accidental and certainly developments that took place that were beyond our control.

Officials from the Fellowship House, an organization dedicated to repairing social ills, organized King’s visit, but excluded, intentionally or not, certain of the city’s civil rights groups from participating in the resulting events. Moore was displeased about the snubs, as was, apparently, King. Moore’s response to the reporter’s question was very forceful and emphatic. “Probably persons who would lead you to believe,” he says, “or who believe that there was divisiveness. I never impugned Dr. King or his staff.”

Immediately, a reporter jumped on this statement. “Then you do not feel today, sir,” asked the unknown man, “as you did last week, that Dr. King’s visit would divide the Negro in Philadelphia? Those are your words, sir.” At this point, Moore becomes visibly annoyed:

Actually, what I said to you is that there was never anything that Dr. King was, but what I said last week and I’m gonna repeat that, was that we believed he might be being used as an instrument of divisiveness. But as Dr. King said to you a moment ago, when he realized that there was a large group of people who were ignored or omitted, that it would be necessary and indispensable to achieve the degree of unity and unified front. That was rectified and in answer to your

question, I do not feel that Dr. King is a divisive force. We were saying the situation as it developed, but we also said to you in trying to be intellectually honest with you that we think that the situation that has now resolved itself to the point that the Southern Christian Leadership Conference with Dr. King as the present organizer and who has indicated he is of far greater stature than probably the bickerings of Philadelphia would be able to tarnish or affect. We are going in the same path, along the path of unity and that's my answer.

A reporter then asked a question which further riled Moore: "Gentlemen, do you both still have separate plans for tomorrow night? I believe, Dr. King, you're having a rally at 8 o'clock at a church, and Mr. Moore, you're having one at 8 o'clock at Girard. Are those plans still positive?" Moore, responded, "I can't understand where you got the plan for a rally at 8 o'clock at the wall. There's never been any announcement of that. The answer is the same as we gave to you before. All of the activities as we understand it were scheduled here as one together. Nothing separate and as I understand...we'll be there together tomorrow."⁶⁸

Following more discussion, King stated that he is "not here to lead a movement or organize a new organization. I'm simply here to lend support to a struggle that is going on and will be going on for a good while." Reporters, Moore, and King continued to banter back and forth. Again, a reporter questions a quotation Moore supposedly gave and which Moore refutes. At this time, the journalist seems to get confrontational: "Would you like to trade quotations, Mr. Moore? Would you like to do that?" Here, the video ends.

This press conference complicates the picture of the relationship between Moore and King. Countryman bases his account of King and Moore on an oral history interview with William Meek recorded in 1994. He also examined newspaper accounts from the

⁶⁸ Ibid.

Philadelphia Daily News, *The Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, and the *Philadelphia Inquirer*.⁶⁹ But if Moore's words about divisiveness were truly taken out of context, this may call into question the reliability of the newspaper accounts. Additionally, Countryman investigated documents in the Floyd Logan Collection at Urban Archives. However, none of Moore's papers are known to exist. Short of physical documents, the best representation of Moore's feelings about King are the words that came out of his mouth. Certainly, Moore knew how to manipulate the press. However, there can be little doubt that some bias existed on the side of the press as well. There was no newspaper account that gives a full quotation of Moore's claim that King was a "divisive force." These words may have been indeed taken out of context, as Moore suggested at the press conference. Alternatively, Moore may have been trying to keep himself in the spotlight as he was wont to do. Either way, the video of the press conference provides nuance to an unclear situation.

Sugrue provides a similarly pat analysis of the relationship between the two civil rights leaders. Sugrue's treatment of the topic is very short. He suggests that Moore's influence created a hostile environment for King. "I don't go for that non-violent bullshit of King's," Moore told an interviewer in 1967."⁷⁰ Sugrue's main source, however, is Countryman's *Up South*, though the direct quotation comes from a 1967 interview from the archives of the Moreland-Spingarn Research Center at Howard University.⁷¹ While historians rarely utilize video footage, quite possibly because the process is time-consuming (see appendix), the video footage of Moore and King provides

⁶⁹ Countryman, 365.

⁷⁰ Sugrue, 415.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 637.

invaluable clues to their relationship. The true nature of the rapport between them may be lost, but primary sources such as the video footage of Moore and King's joint press conference is evidence that deserves examination.

6. The Role of the Archive in History and the History of Civil Rights

This thesis does not examine traditional archival literature regarding appraisal and collection development. There is no in-depth study of archival theory or science. I have not presented an examination of the theories put forth by Theodore R. Schellenberg or similar archival thinkers. Also, I have not attempted to offer a survey of more recent theoretical appraisal and collection literature such as Mark Greene's article, "The Power of Archives: Archivists' Values and Value in the Postmodern Age" published in the Spring-Summer 2009 edition of *The American Archivist*, or Larry Hackman and Joan Warnow-Blewett's piece, "The Documentation Strategy Process: A Model and a Case Study" from *The American Archivist* in Winter 1987. Despite this lack, I will still endeavor to provide an overview of the interaction between archives and history in mid-twentieth century Philadelphia.

Philadelphia was clearly a city on the forefront of the struggle for equality and civil rights in the United States. However, scholars have not typically come in droves to study the role of the City of Brotherly Love in the movement. This may be, as Nancy MacLean suggests in *Freedom Is Not Enough: The Opening of the American Workplace*, due to a "hyperspecialization of the knowledge industry." She describes the ways in which historians in various fields often neglect to consult with other types of historians when crafting their works. Historians of certain subjects rarely consult with historians of other subjects which results in partitioning and in a loss of a complete picture of social change.⁷² Additionally, history, much like any other discipline, is prone to trends. The

⁷² MacLean, 343.

southern civil rights movement was a hot topic for many years, leaving little room for studies of northern events.

If history is subject to trends, then examining the way that historians come to their sources is a worthwhile endeavor. In 2003, Helen R. Tibbo published an article in *The American Archivist* titled “Primarily History in America: How U.S. Historians Search for Primary Materials in the Dawn of the Digital Age.”⁷³ She studied the ways in which historians identify primary source materials for use in their own research. The work is a compilation of the result of a study in which historians whose field is American history and who worked at sixty-eight universities were queried about their research methods and habits. This study found that a remarkable ninety-eight percent of historians consulted citations in other historians’ printed work. Additional methodologies included seeking out sources in printed bibliographies, finding aids or repository guides issued in hard copy, and newspaper files that link to other sources.⁷⁴ While consulting other writers’ work was certainly not historians’ only method for finding primary sources, ninety-eight percent is suggestive of a certain way of doing things. Historians can and do think outside the box to do good, insightful history. However, such a high number may mean that more creativity is needed when seeking out sources that refine what is known about the past.

The civil rights movement in Philadelphia was and in some ways still is a lesser known historical narrative. Historians who study the period and events of the twentieth century struggle for equality in Philadelphia have to fight the perception that there was no

⁷³ Helen R. Tibbo, “Primarily History in America: How U.S. Historians Search for Primary Materials at the Dawn of the Digital Age,” *The American Archivist*, (66), 2003: 9-50.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 20.

movement or there was not a need for equality in a place without legalized, institutionalized racism. The relative dearth of literature on the recent struggle for equality in Philadelphia would seem to reinforce this assertion. Even as African Americans were fighting for civil rights, many whites perceived the North in general and Philadelphia in particular, as a bastion of freedom.⁷⁵ While this was obviously not the case, archives, by their very nature, tend to collect the records of the dominant groups and the most powerful societal forces.

If Philadelphia's civil rights movement is in need of a comprehensive history, one might expect that those writing it will take a comprehensive approach to seeking archival records in order to tell a complete story. However, this is not always the case. Indisputably, Countryman's *Up South* and Thomas Sugrue's *Sweet Land of Liberty* are exemplary works of history. Each does remarkable things to put the events of Philadelphia's civil rights movement back into the historical spotlight. Their tomes are both incredibly inclusive, but each also was unable to access some important primary sources in their analyses of civil rights history. Considering the breadth of the works, this may be understandable. Both discuss Philadelphia's short-lived Black Coalition. Neither gained access the collection of Black Coalition materials housed at Temple University's Urban Archives. Surely, the Black Coalition's papers provide important facts unavailable in the sources Countryman and Sugrue uses for their analysis.

The historian certainly cannot be the only party faulted in such omissions. The archive also plays a role in the way that primary sources are accessed. Historically, archives and archivists have grappled with the role of the document repository in the

⁷⁵ Countryman, 1-10.

writing of history. However, there can be no denying that history is created and created from the archive. Therefore, historians and archivists should strive together to do the best history possible. Americans put great stock in their collective past. Historians owe them the most accurate portrayals of the past possible.

According to Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen, Americans put their confidence first and foremost into museums. Nonfiction books rank sixth out of seven items on a list of most trustworthy historical resources, above only television and movies. This statistic points to a lack of trust of historians' writings on some level. Many people prefer books as an entrée into researching their past; they often read histories of events to which they have familial connections. This is a part of the inherent human desire to document and preserve the past; to feel that the average person can participate in history. Rosenzweig and Thelen discovered that the public puts great store in primary sources; being there is important. Perhaps most importantly in the case of civil rights, the public tended to turn to historical narratives to make sense of handed-down family stories. Many of those surveyed wanted to broaden their readings so as to get a fuller understanding of certain events.⁷⁶ The respondents also viewed books as biased accounts to demonstrate a certain perspective.

Perspective is especially important for African Americans who expect the histories they read to be multidimensional. Of all groups surveyed, African Americans were the most likely to turn to books or films, but also felt the most left out or

⁷⁶ Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen, *The Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in American Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 21-4, 37-8, 67, 94.

misrepresented therein.⁷⁷ Quite possibly the most important idea to be taken from Rosenzweig and Thelen's work is the idea of "shared authority," an idea first put forth by Michael Frisch. Frisch wanted scholars to give greater thought to the creation of scholarly hegemonies and the way such an approach shapes the creation of narratives. Scholars needed to give greater weight to the shared authority the public possessed and the lenses through which people view books, exhibits, and other presentations of history.

Part of this authority belongs with the archivist. As Richard J. Cox and David A. Wallace assert in *Archives and the Public Good: Accountability and Records in Modern Society*, archives exist to provide social accountability in both the public and the private sector. For Cox, memory, societal responsibility, and wisdom are all intertwined in archival philosophy and cannot be separated. Nor should they be. Archival records make up societal memory and so reliable records must exist for the sake of accountability. Collective memory is a powerful force for all Americans, as Rosenzweig and Thelen demonstrate, but blacks live more intimately with the past on a daily basis than any other group.⁷⁸ If such an assertion is true, then historians' construction of African American history, or the history of any oppressed group, requires careful consideration.

The archive can both illuminate and obscure histories of oppressed groups. Archival sources not only shape how history is produced after these documents reach the repository, but had an active role in the history they portray. Archives not only provide a representation of events but also assert a power that shapes history. They are physical manifestations of legislation. Records are not only memory, but living memory. History,

⁷⁷ Ibid., 152-56.

⁷⁸ Richard A. Cox and David A. Wallace, eds., *Archives and the Public Good: Accountability and Records in Modern Society* (Westport, CT: Quorum Books, 2002), 3, 64, 165.

similarly, is a conversation that is constantly ongoing and changing depending on archival discoveries. Memory lives within the archive and peeks out of the by-the-book institutional narratives.⁷⁹ The historians' job must be to get to these alternative accounts as accurately as possible while maintaining context.

Although historians are far from the only people who utilize archives, the archive is vitally important to the practice of history. Archival research is the historian's bread and butter; a unique experience, to say the least. Some historians, according to Carolyn Steedman in her book, *Dust: The Archive and Cultural History*, view archival records as princesses in need of rescuing. Historians, Steedman writes, become consumed with a fever once they enter the archive. This is both a metaphorical fever, but also a real one from inhaling the dust from decaying paper particles. This manifests in physical symptoms associated with allergies, such as congestion and headache. But more compelling is the desire to *find* the most appropriate resource.

Steedman cites Jacques Derrida's assertion that pieces of evidence in archival documents may not really be there at all. "They pull against their overt meaning in the unregarded details, in the chains of metaphors, in the footnotes, in all the wilder shores of signification that are signaled by punctuation marks, by absences, spaces, lacunae, all working against their overt propositions." The historian's job is to wade through all of these documents and give life to the pieces of memories found there. Users must remember that what is in the archive was carefully selected, sometimes from materials never intended to be preserved at all. These materials sit there waiting. Eventually, they

⁷⁹ Michelle Henning, *Museums, Media and Cultural Theory* (Berkshire, UK: Open University Press, 2005), 130.

are subjected to historical research. In doing research, historians fill the silences and absences present in history as well as in the archive. The historian's dream, for Steedman, is to animate those who no longer exist. Although Steedman characterizes archival research as "a specialist and minority desire" she is right that research is a modern phenomenon and a way of interacting with the world that is unique to those who wish to know the past. This way of bringing forth knowledge speaks to history as a creation crafted from documents found in the archive, much in the same way a rag rug is created, to use Steedman's metaphor. History, though, is never finished. Historical conversations are always ongoing because inevitably there is always some new document to be found. Every new find changes the narrative slightly.⁸⁰ Clearly, there is immense power in the archive.

Nowhere is this clearer than in the interaction between civil rights history and the archive. Fundamental to this idea is the understanding that the archive exerts power. Archives exert control over the past while creating access to it. Additionally, document repositories are an endorsement of the role of the powerful. Archival institutions exert themselves in political conversations – where do participants get their evidence but the archive? In this way, archives apply considerable force by providing accountability in all sectors of American professional life. However, the archive has influence on far more abstract concepts than just institutions. The record itself shapes the way that historians create their narratives and how the public remembers the past and creates an identity for itself. Therefore, archivists are central to societal memory and the formation of cultural

⁸⁰ Carolyn Steedman, *Dust: The Archive and Cultural History* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2001), 10, 40, 70, 75, 112-37, 149.

identities. Archivists select the documents that allow such processes. As such, archivists must realize that they are not passive actors in the preservation of history and the creation of memory and identity: archivists exercise considerable influence in the creation of history.⁸¹

If the archive is the site of the creation of collective memory and identity, then the document repository is vital to human communication as well. Archives can both broaden communication as well as hamper interactions. Archives facilitate memory but can also forget. However, such a desire to forget can manifest in records being lost. Tragedies and difficult incidents can be highly controversial and provoke heated discussions; many may want to limit or downplay the importance of such events. Author Kenneth Foote pointed out a statement made by historian Howard Zinn. Zinn blamed archivists for choosing to maintain the records of the powerful while ignoring accounts of those who did not belong to the American majority. However, archives are user-driven. What gets preserved in an archive is what users ask to see. So, as historical interests change, the archive does as well. Therefore, if the archive is societal memory, then this may mean that both societal regard for the past and intent for the future can influence the way archivists save material.⁸² If archivists were not saving records pertaining to civil rights movements, all hope is not lost. Historians' examination of the subject can change the archive, just as the archive shapes society.

⁸¹ Joan M. Schwartz and Terry Cook, "Archives, Records, and Power: The Making of Modern Memory," *Archival Science*, (2) 2002: 2, 18-9.

⁸² Kenneth E. Foote, "To Remember and Forget: Archives, Memory and Culture," *The American Archivist*, (53) 1990: 384-85, 391-92.

Many writers, such as Elisabeth Kaplan, place much responsibility on the archive as a creator of identity. Kaplan asserts that allowing minority groups representation within document repositories validates their existence. This is a weighty responsibility, one that Kaplan believes that archivists do not take seriously enough or examine closely enough. Kaplan contends that too few archivists acknowledge just how open to whim and interpretation their jobs are. What one archivist considers a vital document to be saved may be discarded by another. Additionally, authenticity only exists within a document because of societal or archival ideas about authenticity. For Kaplan, archivists do not think sufficiently hard about the records they are saving and the reasons for such preservation. She is particularly concerned with the ramifications of preservation and insufficient forethought. This is especially true in the formation of identity. Kaplan believes that many archivists neglect to notice that identity is a constructed concept. Kaplan's concern is that neither historians nor archivists have paid enough attention to the ways in which identities are created: she feels acknowledging their existence is not enough.⁸³

Matthew Countryman and Thomas Sugrue attempt to shed light on the twentieth century civil rights movement with their examinations of the struggle in the north. Whether the omission of Philadelphia from the historiography was the result of the impulsion to forget difficult issues or something more remains a mystery. Fortunately, records existed in the archive to aid these historians' endeavors. This does not mean,

⁸³ Elisabeth Kaplan, "We Are What We Collect, We Collect What We Are: Archives and the Construction of Identity," *The American Archivist*, (63) 2000: 134, 147, 149.

however, all materials always get utilized. Countryman and Sugrue did not have access to all available documents.

7. The Digital Solution

Why some documents get used in historical research and some do not hard to answer. The Black Coalition papers at Urban Archives were not fully processed until 2010. Prior to their arrangement and description, they were disorganized and daunting, little more than deteriorating binders full of papers.⁸⁴ Utilizing video footage for research is very time-consuming and tedious. However, both the Black Coalition papers and the video of the Moore-King press conference provide precious nuance and insight into both situations. Both sources deserve scrutiny. Finding ways to avoid such oversights is a challenge for both the archival and the historical professions.

The first and most crucial step in facing this challenge is a good reference interview. The archivist must know her user. Certainly, historians are not the only users of archives and archivists cannot tailor themselves to work exclusively with historians. Everyone uses archives, from students to genealogists.⁸⁵ Every type of user seeks a connection to the past and the archivist should have working knowledge how history is written and various research methodologies. As the archival profession moves more toward a library science ideology, archivists should not lose touch with the world of history and the way history is produced.

Archivists must be aware that historians value the relationship the reference interview provides. This is the point at which relationships may be built. A good reference interview can lead to untold discoveries. However, a series of factors have led to a decrease in historians' ability to form long-term rapport with archivists. Many

⁸⁴ I was involved in processing the papers of the Black Coalition.

⁸⁵ Mary Jo Pugh, *Providing Reference Services for Archives & Manuscripts* (Chicago: The Society of American Archivists, 2005), 1, 43-60.

retirements have recently occurred or will soon. Also, there is an increased mobility in the field. Archivists change jobs more frequently than ever before. Although there is a greater interest in how historians come to the sources they do, little literature has been produced on the subject. All of these factors have led to a decrease in many archivists' ability to have true intellectual control over their repository's collections.⁸⁶

Additionally, before an archivist can even sit down to a reference interview with a user, that archivist must understand the institution's collection. She must know where the records came from, who created them, the history of the creator, how the records originally functioned, and be able to locate specific information within the records. Then the archivist can provide a worthwhile experience for the user.⁸⁷ Intellectual control over a repository's holdings is crucial to being an effective archivist. Quite possibly the most important question an archivist can ask is, "what product will be the ultimate outcome of your research?" The answer to this question will allow the archivist to ascertain the depth and range of the user's research, his ability to navigate an archive, including previous research experience, and possible connections. The user may come in looking for a certain collection, but in asking such questions, the archivist can point the researcher to resources he may not have thought to investigate. This requires a great breadth of knowledge on the part of the archivist.

However, dwindling budgets have recently limited archivists' ability to not only adequately process collections, but also to possess in-depth knowledge of records

⁸⁶ Catherine A. Johnson and Wendy M. Duff, "Chatting Up the Archivist: Social Capital and the Archival Researcher," *The American Archivist*, (67) 2004: 128, 115.

⁸⁷ Pugh., 26.

holdings.⁸⁸ One way to increase accessibility and processing speed was suggested by Mark A. Greene and Dennis Meissner in 2005. They suggested that “More Product, Less Process” become the standard for the archival field. Archivists, they argue, should be less worried about re-folding collections, removing metal such as paper clips and staples, and other such processing steps, and more worried about providing maximum access for users. Greene and Meissner wanted to put forth a new methodology for archival preservation that would facilitate quicker access for researchers; allow for just enough arrangement with the minimal amount of steps on the part of the archivist; and allow for enough description for users to understand what is in a given collection. Processing processes should remain simple rather than overcomplicating collections with complex hierarchies of series and subseries.⁸⁹ Simplifying processing could reduce backlogs and get more collections into the hands of users. The downside to this model is less intellectual control. If the archivist is not intimately processing a collection, she has less detailed knowledge of what the collection contains. Certainly, the Greene-Meissner model is not without controversy. Their plan may not even be that new or revolutionary. However, more product, less process puts users at the center of the archival practice, where they should be. Many archives have had much success implementing the more product, less process model. The University of Montana archives implemented the

⁸⁸ Max J. Evans, “Archives of the People, by the People, for the People,” *The American Archivist*, (70) 2007: 388.

⁸⁹ Mark A. Greene and Dennis Meissner, “More Product, Less Process: Revamping Traditional Processing,” *The American Archivist*, (68) 2005: 212, 214.

Greene-Meissner model with great triumph. Their backlog greatly decreased and more records were available for research.⁹⁰

Research may also hold the key to the solution to the problem of access. Currently, there is little investigation being done about how historians and other archives users come to the sources they do or do not use. Getting a handle on how researchers find material and then how they use what they find could be very beneficial to document repositories. Such research could point to ways to better publicize holdings. One possible step could be to create a system by which users can assess an archive and its holdings to get a better grasp on user needs. This could also provide an opportunity to gather evidence when creating requests for grants and other funds. This model could also assess the effectiveness of archival document digitization projects.⁹¹ Digitization could be a means of getting more eyes on an underutilized collection and even more attention for the archive itself. Some authors advocate digitization as a response to increased user demands. Digitization may also be a means of exercising minimal processing. With only a small bit of metadata inserted into a database, collections become easily searchable.⁹² Archivists can digitize records and input the minimum amount of data into the database researchers utilize to search for documents. Visibility on the internet can benefit the archive in myriad ways. However, the archivist must always fight the perception that everything has been or will be digitized when talking to users. Despite drawbacks, creative digitization projects can bring in users as well as garner attention for the archive

⁹⁰ Donna E. McCrea, "Getting More for Less: Testing a New Processing Model at the University of Montana," *The American Archivist*, (69) 2006: 288.

⁹¹ Wendy M. Duff, et al., "Archivists' Views of User-Based Evaluation: Benefits, Barriers, and Requirements," *The American Archivist*, (71) 2008: 162-63.

⁹² Evans, 393.

and its underutilized resources, should such documents be digitized. Alternatively, digitization projects can illuminate little-known local or community history.

One example of this kind of digitization project is Urban Archives' "Civil Rights in a Northern City" website initiative. This project, funded by the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA), will result in the creation of a website utilizing many of the documents in Urban's collections. The website that is currently being created with LSTA funds will serve as a model that Urban Archives will present when applying for future funds. Presently, the site will cover the desegregation of Girard College and the August 1964 Columbia Avenue riots. These two portals will be just the beginning of what Urban hopes will be a larger project. The documents hosted on the site will highlight the notion that there was an active civil rights movement in Philadelphia.

The idea for "Civil Rights in a Northern City" came about because the Urban Archives staff realized that the repository was in a unique position. Urban has a lot of material on the civil rights movement which gets a lot of attention. However, there was an equal amount of primary source material not as readily accessed or available. The thinking was that not only was there a struggle for equality in the City of Brotherly Love, but a repository exists in that same city which can tell the story. This initiative is intended to give access to documents such as photographs, newspaper clippings, film, and correspondence to an audience of college students and others. The hope is that the portal will be a service to professors who teach classes that examines civil rights; serve to facilitate new opportunities for research throughout the history community; and be a means to undertake further civic engagement with surrounding communities. "Civil Rights in a Northern City" will be a starting point for further research to be done in-

person at Urban Archives. While in-person research is important, the digital initiative will bring materials from across collections to one easily-accessible place.⁹³

Most importantly, the effort includes digitizing newsreel footage from the 1960s. This footage is extraordinarily rare and important. Many news stations have destroyed their early footage, so the existence of Urban Archives' film collections is unique. Urban received many boxes of film from local news stations WPVI and KYW from the 1950s and 60s. This footage covers every topic, but is especially adept at showing the events of the civil rights movement, as evidenced by the illumination of the relationship between Moore and King. Such materials may not exist elsewhere and digitizing them makes them accessible and preserves them where once they were neither easily accessed nor systematically preserved. Before digitization, researchers needed significant assistance or in-depth knowledge of handling film reels to use this material. As such, a plethora of rare materials, from documents to photographs to film will be preserved digitally and made accessible to researchers around the world. Additionally, the project will serve as an example, not only for Urban, but for other repositories, of a worthwhile undertaking which deserves further funding for increased digitization efforts.

Public historians have been interested in many digital projects in the last few years. When undertaking digitization initiatives, an examination of precedents is vital. The recent trend in the creation of digital initiatives has created a virtual archive of what works and what does not. In this way, those who want to mount a site can look back and

⁹³ Temple University Libraries' grant application to the LSTA for the program year 2010-2011 as given to me by Brenda Gallagher-Wright in March of 2011.

learn what to do and what not to do. What follows is an analysis of such precedents.

Baltimore '68: Riots and Rebirth⁹⁴

The University of Baltimore created this website in 2008 on the 40th anniversary of Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination. Its intention was to bring more attention to the civil rights movement and support scholarship and discussion regarding the era. The site offers a wealth of resources, including oral histories, photos, documents, and a timeline discussing the progression of events as they unfolded in Baltimore. Though a timeline is offered, there is no contextualization of local events against a national scale. Despite this timeline only capturing events which occurred in Baltimore, the presentation is very text-heavy. "Baltimore '68" offers easy navigation with a set of large tabs arranged horizontally along the top of the page, below a simple yet appealing banner. The banner presents the site logo, along with an image of the Baltimore skyline. Overall navigation is easy, however some items, such as documents, including newspaper clippings, are difficult to find. This difficulty arises from their being presented as secondary topics under otherwise noticeable tabs. These secondary items are presented as links in white text which are simple to overlook, thus making finding certain aspects of the site somewhat more difficult. Additionally, each set of documents loads as a very large PDF which takes some time to open even on a fast Internet connection. "Baltimore '68" offers several sets of photographs; however, many lack captions, resulting in a feeling of, "What am I looking at?" Unfortunately, there is no search functionality to enable finding a specific document or information on a given topic.

⁹⁴ "Baltimore '68: Riots and Rebirth," University of Baltimore, accessed April 1, 2011, <http://archives.ubalt.edu/bsr/>.

One of the site's strengths is the driving tour created by those who mounted the site. Those who want to take the tour can download a podcast or a text version of the audio and visit the sites delineated on the timeline as having been affected by the events of 1968. However, the driving tour section is marred by an unfortunate joke inexplicably chosen by the site's creators for inclusion. The quotation comes from The Baltimore City Paper, and describes the excursion as a means of foisting off in-laws: "But seriously, if you feel like scaring the bejesus out of some annoying, inner city-fearing in-laws, you could do worse than downloading a map and podcast and sending them on their way." The inclusion of such language was not the best decision and takes something away from the content.

If unfortunate choice leaves the public undeterred, "Baltimore '68" presents itself as an option for sharing photos or other documents from those who were involved. The site includes a page by which the public can contact the administrators to share materials they might have. Finally, "Baltimore '68" provides a series of useful external links for those who want further resources to learn more about the topic. Considered in its entirety, the site is a good example of a simple, navigable, concise website presenting archival materials for broad use.

The March on Milwaukee Civil Rights History Project⁹⁵

The University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee put together this website in 2010 in order to situate Milwaukee within the national civil rights movement of the twentieth century as well as to allow greater accessibility to the content from its libraries. "The

⁹⁵ "The March on Milwaukee Civil Rights History Project," University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, accessed April 1, 2011, <http://www4.uwm.edu/libraries/digilib/march/index.cfm>.

March on Milwaukee” also includes a timeline. The timeline contains a lot of text, but presents local events against the background of what was happening nationally. Another nice touch is the inclusion of links along the right side of the page which allow users to jump to a specific year.

“The March on Milwaukee” creators put together a list of key terms which are reasonably concise and easily accessible from anywhere within the site. The longest key term, describing Martin Luther King, Jr., totals 600 words. Once again, a series of links allow users to jump to a specific topic. However, the definitions, especially the lengthier ones, are slightly difficult to read set as they are as a smaller page advanced by a scroll bar within the larger page. This page-within-a-page format works well for the bibliography, but feels like working too hard to read the definitions of the key terms.

One of the site’s strengths is an assisted search. This is presented on the home page as a series of words whose popularity is represented by size. Most frequently searched for terms appear larger; seldom sought words are small. Users can click on a given word and view pertinent documents. This also allows users to get an idea of which topics are most popular. Visitors to the site can either search for a particular topic or browse the documents by format or by collection.

The sources are diverse, from audio clips, to videos, to traditional photographs and text documents, but the interface with the library’s cataloging system may be a little cumbersome to users not used to using such technology. The site uses the interface provided by ContentDM and the presentation can be somewhat overwhelming and unattractive. This gears the site naturally toward academics and students used to such an interface. However, the strength of this functionality is that ContentDM forces site

administrators to create captions and a plethora of metadata for each uploaded document. Much information accompanies each piece of evidence so the user is never unsure as to what is presented.

Seattle Civil Rights and Labor History Project⁹⁶

This project, mounted by the University of Washington in 2004, contains a wealth of information, but may be the weakest in presentation of all the websites surveyed. Though created in 2004, the page looks far older and more primitive than its date suggests. The color scheme is unappealing and all of the content, of which there is an extraordinary amount, is squashed into three columns in the center of the page. The vast majority of this content is text.

The creators' intention is admirable in that they hoped to bring much-needed attention to the oft-overlooked and forgotten civil rights struggle experienced in Seattle. However, the user is overwhelmed by the very text-heavy and link-heavy presentation of the site. The content demonstrates the diversity of the movement which included not only African-Americans, but Filipino-Americans, Japanese-Americans, Chinese-Americans, Latinos, and Native-Americans and was propelled by labor and unions. However, such diversity resulted in an intense amount of information which means that users must know what they are looking for and which does not allow for casual or pleasurable browsing. The site is not easy on the eyes.

A wide range of resources is available, but much of the content is presented in the form of uploaded PowerPoint presentations, which is both cumbersome and outdated. In

⁹⁶“Seattle Civil Rights and Labor History Project,” University of Washington, accessed April 1, 2011, <http://depts.washington.edu/civilr/>.

order to reach individual documents, users must do an inordinate amount of clicking; in fact, the site requires a lot of clicking for simple, general navigation. Each topic is a page which then presents links for more in-depth information on each topic. This results in a lot of clicking on links and then a lot of pressing the browser's "back" button.

The site offers many very informative essays. However, these essays are very long without any images or other features to break them up. Additionally, the essays are often quite long and presented in a narrow section of the center of the page. The result is overwhelming and tiring.

The great strength of the website, though, is its presentation of neighborhood information. Titled "Segregated Seattle," the section lists each neighborhood and allows users to find restrictive laws, covenants, or deeds for each specific area. The particular racial restrictions, from prohibiting "Malay" to "Semites" to "Negroes" are puzzling in their specificity and fascinating in their strenuous efforts to exclude. If the site's creators could find a way to present the material in a more user-friendly, less overwhelming way, the site would be a powerhouse among civil rights pages on the Internet.

Freedom Now! An Archival Project of Tougaloo College and Brown University⁹⁷

This website was mounted as part of the Brown-Tougaloo exchange, a joint project of the two institutions that arose as part of the Mississippi Freedom Movement project. This was a research initiative undertaken by the two schools to bring greater attention to a specific portion of the civil rights era, the Mississippi Freedom Movement. The creators felt that this movement was an important example of grass-roots efforts

⁹⁷ "Freedom Now! An Archival Project of Tougaloo College and Brown University," Tougaloo College and Brown University, accessed April 1, 2011, <http://www.stg.brown.edu/projects/FreedomNow/>.

during the civil rights era as well as in American history that helped to advance efforts but which was not widely understood among many students. The site does not contain huge amounts of data. The page is visually appealing and the text is of a size and amount that is easily readable and readily approachable. Where there are large amounts of text, pertinent pictures offset and break up the information. Unfortunately, the site does not offer the ability to browse its content. Users can only search the documents, which requires that visitors have some facility with the topic to know what they are specifically looking for. Another weakness is that links to other sites do not open into new pages or new windows. Therefore, if a user clicks a link to an external page, they are taken away from the “Freedom Now!” site, which requires them to click the “back” button on their browsers should they be interested in returning. Such functionality is an easy HTML code worth taking the time to include.

Television News of the Civil Rights Era, 1950-1970⁹⁸

This site is simple, clean, and visually appealing at first glance. The aim of the venture is to make rare civil rights-era video footage more easily accessible to a wider variety of researchers. The creators combined both text and images to create a page that charms the eye and draws the visitor in. However, once the visitor dives in, navigability is somewhat more complicated. A sample page features a series of oral histories, but the links to the text or audio are not offset with a different color or font, making them difficult to locate. Such links should be immediately obvious. Only when the user hovers the mouse over the links do they change colors. Additionally, the links to the

⁹⁸ “Television News of the Civil Rights Era, 1950-1970,” The University of Virginia, accessed April 1, 2011, <http://www2.vcdh.virginia.edu/civilrightstv/index.html>.

other sections of the site are positioned at the bottom of the page, creating the impression that the only resources the site offers are whatever content being viewed at the time.

Even the name of the progenitors of the site, the University of Virginia, is only listed on the homepage and is not immediately obvious from elsewhere on the site. The site offers a series of essays which were not created specifically for the page, but which are still relevant. However, these essays, often hosted on outside sites, do not open into a new window or page. Some of the proffered links on the “Essays and Interpretations” page are broken. The site does offer a useful glossary but navigation here is cumbersome as well. The visitor clicks a word and is taken to a page giving details. There is no back button. A good alternative to this format may be that the user clicks on the word and the link expands – on the same page – to the definition which could then be collapsed. Alternatively, the words could be links to the definition further down on the page which then has a “Back to Top” link. This would allow scrolling and browsing as well. As presented, the visitor must work hard for each definition.

The Civil Rights Digital Library⁹⁹

This website serves as the paragon for a good compendium of civil rights history using traditional archival documents to create a digital resource. The page is an initiative of The University of Georgia as a contribution to the Digital Library of Georgia under GALILEO, a virtual library for Georgians. The creators hoped to facilitate better understanding of the civil rights movement. The website is very simple while still attractive. The resource offers three types of evidence. There is considerable video

⁹⁹ “The Civil Rights Digital Library,” The University of Georgia, accessed April 1, 2011, <http://crdl.usg.edu/?Welcome>.

footage consisting primarily news coverage. Also included is a library of documents sourced nation-wide. Lastly, the site offers web-based secondary sources to provide context for the primary documentation. “The Civil Rights Digital Library” is both browsable and easily searchable. The site offers a glut of information without being overwhelming. If the user chooses to browse the documents, clickable lists arranged in a hierarchy expand and collapse on command. The viewer clicks a topic, which expands to a more specific dataset, which then offers documents or further information. While a lot of clicking is necessary, the action is fruitful, bringing forth more useful evidence with each click of the mouse. Throughout the navigation, the search bar and main menu remains along the left-hand side of the page. “The Civil Rights Digital Library” makes good use of pertinent links to outside websites, each of which open into a new page or window. The page uses a library catalog interface similar to ContentDM, but which is more easily navigable and which provides plenty of description without being overwhelming. The site is very clean and makes clear that a lot of thought went into its design and content.

Documenting the American South¹⁰⁰

This site was created by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in order to advance the study of all things Southern. Though the site does not specifically pertain to the civil rights movement, it does contain documents on civil rights both in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Additionally, “Documenting the American South” is a good example of using archival documents to create a web portal. The site presents an

¹⁰⁰ “Documenting the American South,” The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, accessed April 1, 2011, <http://docsouth.unc.edu/>.

overwhelming amount of material, but the existing material is both easily browsable and searchable without specific subject knowledge. The portal possesses two flaws common to sites such as this. The top navigation bar which names the topics and pages is very small and easy to overlook. Additionally, there is a lot of text and the font-size is rather small. However, content is a strong point. The documents have been included in a very sophisticated manner. There is no library catalog interface, but rather each item is embedded into the site. Users can download full-text files of each document. There is little audio or video content, but “Documenting the American South” offers a plethora of text-based and photographic documentation. The site is very light on text generated specifically for the site and lets its documents speak for themselves. Despite some flaws, “Documenting the American South” is an important example for those hoping to mount a similar online resource as a means for providing accessibility to important historical resources.

8. Conclusion: Suggestions for “Civil Rights in a Northern City”

Accessible archives are necessary for doing good history. Examining the stories of the Black Coalition and the relationship between Cecil B. Moore and Martin Luther King, Jr., demonstrates how even good archives can be better at making records available. Recently, the best way to do this is with online tools. However, even then, archivists and historians must work together and think creatively about how to maximize these resources. Not every document lends itself to an online presentation and digitization can be expensive and time-consuming. While careful consideration must be given to proceeding with digitization, such efforts can be an investment in social justice. As such, many institutions have chosen to participate in the trend to launch digital initiatives, creating a powerful opportunity to learn from such precedents.

A survey of existing history websites provides a foundation for Urban Archives' online initiative “Civil Rights in a Northern City.” The sites' designers must remember that a website is not a book, nor is a digital initiative like any sort of physical resource found in a library or archive. Online text needs something to break it up visually. Photos and other images usually work best for this. A lot of text is unnecessary, but everything should be presented with a brief caption so the user understands what he is looking at. This is especially vital with photographs or other documents which are inherently text-free. The viewer should be able to quickly figure out what he is viewing at any given time without significant effort.

More than any other asset, simplicity is key. Utility is far more important than ostentation in a digital archival initiative. Ease of access to documents is preferable to a fancy presentation that gets in the way of finding content. Creating large amounts of

original text is relatively unimportant when the site presents primary documents effectively. Documents can and should speak for themselves; researchers should feel free to contextualize the material in their own way. Sites such as civil rights digital portals appeal to a specific subset of the population. Likely, visitors will not be casually interested in the topic, but probably researchers or students with a specific document or purpose in mind. Creators of such sites should pick a particular audience and keep this audience in mind. Do not condescend to the users. This does not mean, however, that the site should be beyond the abilities of the general public. Such efforts are bound to catch some public attention and interest and, therefore, should be accessible. That said, the best examples are geared toward academic audiences and other types of researchers. The idea, here, is to facilitate study and investigation of this topic for those who will create material with a wider popular appeal. Trying to appeal to all types of audiences at once in a single website can lead to a lack of focus and a product that is at best ineffectual. A survey of the aforementioned sites seems to bear out that most users who utilize these sorts of sites are academic researchers. Alienating this audience with condescension means that the site only appeals to a narrow slice of the general public with the technological facility and scholarly know-how to navigate the site, thus defeating the purpose of getting greater accessibility for rarely-seen documents.

However, attempts to involve the public are not harmful. Exemplary ways of soliciting public involvement are requests for donations. People want to feel that they are part of history and a repository willing to post their stuff proves that history happens to “real” people as well. In such a way, greater public interest in topics such as civil rights arises and more documents are more readily available for research.

Easy accessibility is of utmost importance. Tabs for browsing different topics should be readily noticeable and remain in place no matter where a user is on the site. Also, the search bar should always remain, as in “The Civil Rights Digital Library.” Links should be obvious and any link to an external page should result in a new browser window or page. All collections and documents should be browsable as well as searchable. Sometimes browsing can result in a discovery which a search function would never allow.

In terms of original content, quite possibly the most important creation could be a site-specific timeline. “Baltimore ’68” and “March on Milwaukee” provide excellent examples of useful timelines. Most useful is when the site places local events on the same table with national events. But creators should keep brevity in mind. Text can be overwhelming on a website. Timelines need not be grammatically correct; communicating the information is what is important.

Finally, brevity has a time and place. Offensiveness, however, is never okay. Studying the civil rights movement is serious, sometimes disheartening, business. Inclusion of a humorous picture or a light-hearted speech is certainly appropriate. However, including questionable jokes, such as the one in the newspaper quote on the “Baltimore ’68” site is in bad taste, particularly when taking stakeholder sensitivity into account. The first obligation, in creating such a web portal, is to the viewer. There may be something a particularly sensitive viewer may find offensive, but such a phenomenon cannot always be predicted. Still, that which is obviously of questionable taste should be left off. Publicity is good, but not at the cost of respect for those who created the documents, who participated in the movements, and who utilize the website in question.

With all of these stipulations in mind digital archival web portals could serve to bridge the gap between history and archives. Online initiatives have the power to bring greater attention to overlooked historical narratives, such as the civil rights movements in twentieth century Philadelphia. Certainly, digitization is not a panacea nor should every archival object be digitized. However, increased interest in and a heightened awareness of collections can bring more traffic into archival repositories. Digitization, thereby, aids in bringing seldom-utilized collections out into the light, especially in the case of video footage. Transferring film to digital formats makes such footage widely and easily accessible and is crucial evidence where primary source evidence may be lacking, such as in the case of Cecil B. Moore. In such a way, digital initiatives can assist historians and researchers in creating more accurate narratives that more readily advance scholarship.

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Appendix: My Participation in “Civil Rights in a Northern City”

Over the course of my time at Temple University, I was privileged enough to undertake two internships at Urban Archives. The first, an archival position, during the summer of 2010, brought me in contact with the Black Coalition papers. I processed them to a greater extent than they had been previously. Before I worked with them, they existed in a disorganized fashion in a two large boxes. I refoldered them, gave them greater organization, and created a finding aid. While researching the finding aid, I got acquainted with the accounts of the Black Coalition and all of its participants. I knew I wanted to work with the story more.

My second internship at the Urban Archives was undertaken during the spring of 2011 as a digital initiatives position. I was tasked with curating the film that is to be included in the final project. I was to look for footage pertaining to the desegregation of Girard College and the Columbia Avenue riots and then determine which films had the greatest research value. In this way, I discovered the footage of Martin Luther King, Jr., and Cecil B. Moore together and began to think about the ways that the film, inaccessible as it was, could impact scholarship. Before digitization, the film existed only as the original 16 mm reels. Since the films are fragile, anyone who desired to view them needed assistance. In order to view the films, users had to make special arrangements for an archivist to be on hand to queue up the footage on a special machine and then run the film. This was quite time consuming for the visitor and the archivist. Now digitization efforts such as the one I participated in during my internship will remove this obstacle.

Additionally, I was assigned to write interpretive essays to go along with the primary source documents that will appear in the “Civil Rights in a Northern City” portal.

Three topics were given to me, including a biography of Cecil B. Moore, a long history of the Columbia Avenue neighborhood, and an overview of the black militant involvement in the Columbia Avenue riots. The research I undertook to complete these endeavors gave me far greater insight into my thesis topic. In this way, both of my internships played an integral part in my thinking as I wrote my thesis and crafted my argument.